Caring Together in Decolonial Healing

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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis explores what it means to be human guided by Sylvia Wynter's thought provoking trajectory "Toward the Human, after Man" and Denise Ferreira da Silva's encompassing book *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007); and argues that at the core of contemporary humanness lies a struggle defined by a racialized order of human existence. This struggle informs not only those racialized Others but to varying degrees impacts all human beings on a global scale. As a form of tentacular thinking this thesis contributes in troubling the colonial category of the human by introducing the figure of the human adoptee of color in relation to a decolonial ethics of care and healing. Pushing against normative notions of modes of being human the adoptee of color radically rethinks what it means to reclaim humanness and an ethic of care.

Introduction

This thesis explores what it means to be human by reading Western science and philosophy through the lens of Afro Caribbean writing and Black philosophy. In response to the classifications of human and nonhuman life created by Universal reason, this thesis aims to refuse and disturb the ground upon which the contemporary hegemonic mode of humanness is built by re-thinking the question of care.

I propose to do this by rethinking my own sense of humanness in relation to the concept of care. More specifically I want to zoom in on *care* in relation to the complexities of transnational and interethnic adoption from the Global South to North. Inspired by Sylvia Wynter's itinerary "Towards the Human, After Man" I will explore how the transnational adoptee of color comes into being by the coloniality of power and exists to reinforce the hegemonic position of power of Western societies governed by a modern, capitalist, neo-colonial, nation-state orientated mindset. Matters of care are vital to the becoming of the transnational adoptee of color and work within a highly individualized, isolated and disunifying context. A paradigm shift is needed in approaching care as a collective practice to a collective global problem. Simply put if it's bad for you it's bad for me too. This requires a commitment to rework power structures and responsibilities. For a decolonial future to exist we need to push forward, actively unlearn and undo Western normative notions of the human and create a new radical ethic of care.

Chapter 1: What does it mean to be human?

A question that touches the core of everyday life; as humans we think, we feel, we touch, we listen, we care. It seems so obvious that we are indeed human that we tend to disregard the complexity of this statement. Our conception of what it is to be human is not however a matter of fact, but ascribed to "the production and reproduction of our present order of knowledge" (Scott 2000). For the task of unpacking the concept of the human being and its human other I will look closely at the work of Sylvia Wynter and Denise Ferreira da Silva: reading Western philosophy and science through the lens of African diasporic literature and black philosophy. In response to the classifications of human and nonhuman life created by Western thought and ideology with "its violent imposition of colonial myths and racial hierarchy" (Jackson 2020, 1) their work aims to refuse and disturb the ground upon which the contemporary hegemonic mode of humanness is built.

It is not only the depth and relevance of the ideas and critiques they put forward that I find of importance but the situated positions from which they speak. In an academic world dominated by a patriarchal/white male Eurocentric perspective it is crucial to create space for a counteractive sound or movement to exist and to be able to respond to. Both writers come from colonized countries and by being black and female their position is marginalized before they were even born: their voice is "never meant to survive" (Lorde 1997, 398) or heard for that matter let alone finds its way into academia. This makes for a very powerful

argument as to why we have to listen to these truly amazing revolutionary minds at the frontiers of decolonial worldings.

Sylvia Wynter

Wynter's thinking and writing comes out of the anti-colonial movement starting in the 1940s in Jamaica, the Caribbean. As a teenager (born in Cuba 1928, raised in Kingston, Jamaica) she daily witnessed the fight against the total control of colonialism. Up to that moment it was unimaginable that a "'native' subject could take any action on their own." Looking back at this period she says: "all in all, the whole sense of activity, of a self-initiated new beginning - I would say that movement determined everything I was going to be or have been" (Scott 2000, 125). Wynter went on to study modern languages, Spanish and English at London University in Great Britain. Here she further witnessed the political and artistic transformation of the anti colonial movement (as well as meeting other West Indians, Africans, students from India: all sharing the struggle for colonial independence). A transformation which depended on the displacement from the colonies to imperial Europe, creating a new perspective. Wynter explains "that education in the Caribbean was intended to constitute you as a British subject and as long as there is no counter-voice, you are trapped in that conception" (131). In Europe however, your blackness is contested and read through the eyes of the European white men. This creates a "double consciousness" for black people (People of color), a concept introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* written in 1903, to think with the experience of blackness in

the United States as oppressed people in an oppressive society: "a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 1903, 13). Wynter's work follows these lines of thought, and her insights on *sociogeny* help us understand how the black social being comes into reality.[1] Critically engaging with the process of subject formation Wynter continuously asks herself "How do I experience myself?" (Scott 2000, 136), "How do I deal with the stereotyped view that I myself have been socialized to accept?" (131). Later in her life when she accepted a teaching position at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in 1974 following the black civil rights movement in the United States she experienced again what it means to be black. "The society of the United States is itself based on the insistent negation of the black identity, the obsessive hyper valuation of being white." To be American was "being white, being above all, *not-black"* (173). In Jamaica the anti-colonial movement led society from a British colony to formal independence on the basis of a liberal-capitalist democracy which gave rise to "a middle classness which cancels out the negativity of the sign of blackness" (173). Which meant although

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[1] Sociogeny according to Wynter means 'the way we normatively know Self, Other and the social World' (Wynter 2003, 269). According to Wynter's argument of the existence of varying *genres of the human* with their *adaptive truths-for*, there are different modes of sociogeny in line with the dominant descriptive statement of the human at a particular epistime, time in history. (269). All constructed to conserve and reproduce the order of power of the status quo functioning as an autopoietic system.

you were black your social status within society could be rescued in terms of your economic status.

In the United States Wynter is able to teach courses beyond the Caribbean context and to consider the black African diaspora as a whole and the beginning of the Third World focussing on what it means to be human, re-thinking the grounds on which the human order (i.e. the categorization of people based on color) exists and demonstrate why it needs to be challenged. This marks a new phase in her life and all her experiences come to inform her intellectual project "Towards the Human, after Man" (Wynter 2003, 257). As scholar Katherine McKittrick argues,

> Sylvia Wynter's work speaks to the interrelatedness of our contemporary situation and our embattled histories of conflicting and intimate relationalities. About how our long history of racial violence continues to inform our lives and our anticolonial and decolonial struggles (McKittrick 2015, 3).

In direct response to her daily life and experience she asks why, how and when did the categorization of people based on specific properties emerge which still lie at the core of today's global society. Wynter argues that these categories did not exist prior to Columbus' discovery of the Americas in 1492 and suggest that this "encounter is vital to the formulation of European representations of the Human which would epistemologically foreclose ways of being Human otherwise" (Tilley, n.d.). If indeed categorical thinking is introduced by the West, how did Europe

bring this into existence? How was European society organized in and around 1492? What made Europe decide to expand its horizons and how did they explain their findings when they did? How *does* Europe continue to justify their dominance over other groups of people; the existence of violence and oppression in current times?

Towards the Human, after Man

Wynter argues that the global human condition including our present social, economic, environmental, climatic and political struggles are all different expressions coming from the epistemological (knowledge and meaning making) order of Western European societies, a historical trajectory in which "science enabled the naturalization of this order organized around the colonial category of the human" (Edwards 2016, xii). A global human condition formed by a systemic pattern of struggle between the privileged, colonial white Man who considers himself to represent the human norm and the "colonized" human Other who is denounced, marginalized, excluded and violently denied the same human rights. Wynter declares: "the struggle of our times, is the struggle against this overrepresentation" (Wynter 2003, 262). Wynter considers the human species as a "hybrid bios-mythoi"[2] (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 23); a living species which is caught up in its own biological, self-inscripting, meaning making, storytelling condition. To the effect that it becomes almost impossible to experience other

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[2] or 'hybrid nature-culture, ontogeny-sociogeny mode of behaviour' (Wynter 2003, 273).

ways of being human beyond "the descriptive statement of its own reinvention(s)." Wynter guides us back and forth through time and space to expose how the human being and its human Other is invented and institutionalized.

She demonstrates how "the sociogenic principle" or "governing master code of symbolic life and death" (Wynter 2003, 272), determines the descriptive statement of humanness according to a binary logic of what is considered good and evil. According to Wynter, this principle or code has created different "genres of the human" by which terms we can alone "experience ourselves as human" (Scott, 183). These different modes of experiencing ourselves, the other and the social world around us are created by the "dynamics of the colonizer/colonized" (Wynter 2003, 264) relationship and reformulated over time as Man1 and Man2 and its human Other. A dynamic of power reinforced and perpetuated by the development of natural, physical and biological sciences which invented the construction of race. Western epistemology gained dominance and "was discursively constituted and empirically institutionalized on the islands of the Carribean and, later, on the mainlands of the Americas" (264). Informed by a value divide of good and evil, these knowledge making systems function to create social domination in which an order of human existence is actualized by a power matrix based on the invention of the human being and its human Other. A master narrative of human normalcy "represented as if true to all humans." Those who do not conform to the norm are throughout history considered "deviant ones," "significant-ill," "cast-off," "animal-like," "residual parts of the lower worlds" (Wynter 2003); a legitimate threat to the order of society, and thus

need to be cured, saved, forcefully oppressed and regulated into a marginalized existence.

Wynter argues that "for an order to exist, the articulate section of a population, mainly public culture and the intellectuals, need to live in accordance with the categories by which the order understands itself and for an order to survive it must understand its own adaptability to secure its own reproduction in ever changing societies" (169). A human order who controls the narrative and determines "the politics of being" in which the Other will never "own the Word, but can only ever have the use of it" (137). Wynter argues that "The epistemological order of the Western World mandates its political order" (168) which determines how the global order is organized.[3] Wynter's project "Towards the Human, after Man" deconstructs this coded history of the overrepresentation of Man (*Man1 and Man2*) defined by the "coloniality of being"[4] (Wynter 2003, 260) enacted by the "coloniality of power"(263), as the single answer or truth to the ontological question of what or who is considered–to varying degrees–a human being or its counterpart human Other. Wynter demonstrates how the sociogenic principles of good and evil are replicated from Western European civilization during the Middle Ages (i.e. determined by a Judeo-Christian

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[3] A political order embodied by the violent manifestations of its terms: authority, power and leadership as deconstructed by Cedric J. Robinson in his book *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (2016).

[4] Wynter defines "the Coloniality of Being on the basis of Aníbal Quijano's founding concept of the coloniality of power" (Wynter 2003, 268) as presented in the series of papers presented/made available by Aníbal Quijano at the 1999 and 2000 conferences held by the Coloniality Working Group at SUNY-Binghamton.

theocentric worldview); to the Renaissance up to the 18th century, the era of Colonialism,European Imperialism (i.e. respectively determined by Renaissance Humanism and Western natural, physical and biological sciences materialized during the Enlightenment) and up to this day are still governing on a global scale in order to secure Eurocentric hegemony. A governing instrument which has provided, for more than 500 years, the ethical and juridical justification for the ongoing violence and oppression against people of color, the indigenous, LGBTQ communities and other marginalized groups worldwide. A global reality in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer as seen reflected in the Global North-Global South divide.

"The overrepresentation of Man" according to Wynter, follows the genesis of the religious Christian subject *homo religiosus* during the Middle Ages; to the becoming of Man1: a self determined, rational human being envisioned as the modern political subject or *homo politicus* during the Renaissance period; to the becoming of Man2 in purely secular terms; "a bio-economic subject" from the end of 18th century (Enlightenment) onwards in which the human being is regarded as a purely biological, natural organism "who practices and indeed normalizes accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom" (McKittrick 2015, 10), identified as *Homo Oeconomicu*s (Wynter 2003, 282) . The *Homo Oeconomicus* which today, represents the white Western middle class as the dominant genre of being human.

Wynter insists on the urgent need "to make visible the processes by which we institute ourselves as what we are and to consider a new mode of experiencing ourselves in which every mode of being human, every form of life that has ever

been enacted is part of us; We, a part of them" (Scott 2000, 197). Humanness is no longer considered a noun, referring to a normalized thing (*governed by dominant genres of the human with each its own adaptive truths–for reflecting varying epistemes*), but reflects an active state of 'being human as a praxis' (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 23). A praxis in which the human being is considered as an endless creation in which life, life (*bios*) and narration (*mytho*i) create meaning together side by side, simultaneously, the one not preceding the other.

Homo religiosus

Within European history there are two main institutions which seek power and governance over its people; the Church and the State. Wynter points out two moments of transformation in European history which enabled the continuation of a dualistic ordering principle (of symbolic life and death) and its corresponding power dynamics to secure its hegemony. Firstly Wynter mentions "a shift from a theocentric Latin Christian Europe to an emerging secular society which is also the emergence of the modern political subject" (Scott 2000, 177) situated on the edge of the Middle ages and the beginning of the Renaissance period.

Medieval society was a hierarchical ordered system influenced by Aristotle's *Scala Naturae (Ladder of Nature)* and Plato's *Theory of Forms & Idea of the Good*, adapted to a theocentric Christian worldview. Plato envisioned the universe as a "full, perfect space which contains all possible forms of existence":

"Everything that can exist, does exist", i.e. the *principle of plenitude* (Brake 2009, 91), according to a hierarchy of the low, changeable, empirical world and the high, permanent, perfect, Ideal world of the Forms (objects of knowledge). The highest form, the ultimate principle, being the Form of the Good (Scandalon, n.d.).

  Aristotle's *Scala Naturae* or the concept *Ladder of Nature* aims to describe and organize "every aspect of nature with minerals at the bottom, then plants, then more and more perfect animals, with man at the top" (Brake 2009, 92). A linear natural order which allowed for "the arrangement of all (non)living things into a hierarchy, reflecting degrees of perfection" (91). This hierarchy was based on "the relative quality and proportion of spirit and matter" of every imaginable creature or object: "the less spirit and the more matter, the lower down" (Sapp 2009, 7) its place on the (ascending) ladder. Additional determining factors were defined in a more anthropocentric manner according to its "utility and attractive aesthetics" to man. It was impossible to abandon or change one's place on the ladder, disturbing the unbroken chain of mutually linked species. For an order to survive and remain powerful it could not allow disorder. The only motion or disorder Aristotle acknowledged was in the realm of physics when "an object is in motion only to return to its proper position while being out of place". Aristotle's biology held the "idea of final causes" meaning "each substance had an essence for what it was for" and to which all "material and effective" interventions are thought of as inferior (Brake 2009, 93). Aristotle's philosophy of nature and Plato's prominence of the realm of ideas over the senses were adopted by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages as Christianity grew. The vertical

hierarchy of "increasing advancement and value" (Marino 2014), continuity, permanence & change, were now read through the divine will of God reflecting an "authoritarian social order" (Brake 2009, 90) of the monarch, nobles, high clercs, the bourgeoisie, small farmers, artisans, common laborers and added "spiritual beings to the ladder, placing angels above humans and at the very top, God" (Marino 2014). A theocentric, essentialist worldview controlled by *The Great Chain of Being*, actualized in a divine order of immutable species and a feudal system[5] instituting social stratification. "The Medieval universe was a static world, impervious to change. A cosmic inventory of creation, cast in permanence by God" (Brake 2009, 95).

The Medieval (single) Christian God was intended to rule over a lower reality and to be the measure of all things: a human being can only develop within his religious determination and human salvation can only be established in the afterlife, after one's death. Societal life is defined by God's law & order and political decisions "served to confirm the hegemony of the church over the lay (common people) world of the state, and of the clergy intelligentsia over the lay intelligentsia" (Scott 2000,178).

According to Wynter "every human order, all mapped the structuring principle of their societies, onto heavenly bodies, onto the regularities of their movements" (175), creating a supernatural or extranatural correlation between terrestrial life and the cosmic universe, invented to sustain the order and truth of human existence.[6] Christian medieval Europe had inherited Greek astronomy

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[5] In a Feudal society your status was based on land ownership.
[6] Wynter argues that "all such knowledges of the physical cosmos, all such astronomies, all such geographies, whatever the vast range of human needs that they had successfully met, the range

with "the premise of a value divide, a 'non-homogeneity of substance' between heaven and earth" (Wynter 2003, 176) and mapped this onto its own dividing spirit/flesh (matter) principle. Creating a superior order of "religious clergy men, freed from Adamic sin, actualizing the redeemed spirit (the order of the Church), mapped onto the incorruptible heaven"; and a inferior order of "the laity, the married men and woman, actualised as the fallen flesh, the sinful human (the order of the State); mapped onto earth or terrestrial realm"(176). This order is supernaturally explained and carefully planted in the (sub)consciousness of society, presented as the objective truth making it very difficult to disregard this logic. During the Middle Ages the common belief was that God created the universe with the Earth as its fixed center. The earth was the place where the fallen flesh from heaven–embodied as the "significant ill enslaved to Original Sin" (Wynter 2003, 276) lived their life *free* to decide whether to accept God's guidance or be led by the sinful flesh as a Devil's child in rejection of God. When the moment of death arrives, God's final judgement will decide to either forgive your sins and accept you to heaven. Or God refuses access to Heaven and your sinful soul will be directed to Hell. The realm of the earth/flesh symbolizes Death (Evil) and the realm of spirit/ Heaven symbolizes eternal Life (Good).

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of behaviors they had made possible—indeed, however sophisticated and complex the calculations that they had enabled to be made of the movements of the heavens (as in the case of Egypt and China)—had still remained adaptive truths-for and, as such, ethno- astronomies, ethno-geographies" (Wynter 2003, 271)... "enabling them to serve as objective truths" (272).

Homo politicus

During the Late Middle Ages, society is confronted with numerous crises which disrupted Europe's stability and endangered its theocentric feudal system: the Black Death caused by travelling, the Hundred Years' war between the English Kingdom and the French Rulers, the Western Schism (disunity in the European Catholic Church), the rise of other religions. People are dying massively which consequently led to an increased value of human labor and at the end of the Dark Ages, societies demand / need for a new social order is materialized by "the secularizing intellectual revolution of Renaissance humanism" and "the rise of the modern political state" (Wynter 2003, 262).

Inspired by the works of classical Roman and Greek philosophers, Renaissance humanism explores the human potential beyond theological restrictions and seeks to find the essence and objective truth of the human experience through ethics, art, natural & political philosophy. Crucial to the formation of this human-centred paradigm is however the continuous "tension between the humanist discourse on the one hand and the religious and moral convictions of the humanist themselves" (Grudin 2020, 1) on the other and has profound implications for the construction of reality defined as the world of the state. An intellectual movement which questioned the Christian Church not "as a theological structure but as a political institution" (Grudin 2020). In other words "Humanist political discourse did not regard politics as reflecting a natural or divine order of things but rather presupposed that politics was a human creation"

(Yoran 2002, 1). The human condition is re-invented due to the declining political power of the Christian Church, which by no means meant that people stopped believing in God. There was still a firm belief in God's creation, and his religious order but this order no longer exclusively determined the rules of social life. An epochal shift occurred which created room for intellectual exploration of the human experience which enabled political governance to transform and a new order of reality to come into existence. Wynter writes "the ultimate goal" is no longer to obey to the laws and rules of "the City of God, the *civitas dei"*, but the new goal becomes to secure "the stability, order and territorial expansion of the state; in a competitive rivalry with other Christian European states", "serving the secular city, the *civitas secularis*". The members of society are no longer ruled by the power of God but by the power of the state; one is no longer primarily a "religious subject of the church but a political subject of the state" (Scott 2000, 181). Wynter defines this moment as the possibility for the intellectual laity (common people) to escape their subordination to the Church and to redefine the human outside its theocentric conception, as "the first degodded (*if still hybridly religio-secular Man1*) 'descriptive statement' of the human in history, as the descriptive statement that would be foundational to modernity" (Wynter 2003, 266).

Human Otherness

Both Columbus and Copernicus are positioned as key markers for this new mode of being human and the emergence of its human Other. Wynter argues that Columbus's arrival to the lands that would later be known as the Americas in 1492 and Copernicus' introduction of a new astronomy in 1543 both challenge theological conceptions with far reaching implications. Columbus travelled beyond the "theologically presupposed (un)inhabitable regions"[7] (192), due to the belief that "God created all regions to be habitable and all seas to be navigable" (195). While Columbus calls into question the non-homogeneity (value divide) of God's created (un)habitable worlds, Copernicus shatters the non-homogeneity of God's creation of heaven and earth with the introduction of a new astronomy in which he proposed the earth is not the center of the universe, but rather moves around the sun similar to other matter occupying the physical universe. Copernicus astronomy is fundamental to "an emancipatory process of cognition[8], one that will lead to the development of the physical sciences[9]" (193). Wynter argues that Columbus' encounter with the Americas and the native Amerindians initiated the construction of *the colonial difference* (Mignolo 2000) and *the concept*

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[7] 'Before the fifteenth-century voyages of the Portuguese and Columbus the earth believed to exist out of two non-homogenous areas,those inside God's grace which were habitable and those outside it which had to be uninhabitable' (Scott 2000, 192).

[8] Cognition is defined as 'the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses'.
https://www.cambridgecognition.com/blog/entry/what-is-cognition

[9] Physical sciences are those academic disciplines that aim to uncover the underlying laws of nature - often written in the language of mathematics. It is a collective term for areas of study including astronomy, chemistry, materials science and physics.
https://www.nature.com/subjects/physical-sciences

of race (Quijano 2000). The discovery of this new civilization and its people was initially read (by the West) through a theocentric descriptive order of natural history i.e. *the Great Chain of Being*. An essentialist worldview which explained the difference of all things as "it is their nature to do so" (Brake 2009, 92). Authorizing "some men to be masters", while others were "natural-born slaves" (93). Knowledge production aimed to legitimize and institute a human order governed by global systemic violence and extraction to those classified as human and non-human Others and its natural surroundings. A hegemonic mode of humanness built on the premise of "the degradation of one as an essential and integral component of the elevation of the other" (195), was used to secure its own position as leader (oppressor) of a yet to discover habitable earth.

Amidst all these developments a new human order is generated by the power matrix of symbolic life and death, translating the value divide (Spirit/Flesh, Clergy/ Laity, Good/Evil) as instituted by the Church during the Middle Ages, now mapped onto the Renaissance and the Colonial era, (i.e. 1st wave of European Imperialism). The human norm is re-invented as the *hybrid religious-secular Man1* representing the superior political European colonizer: "divinely created, to-be-natural-rational-good human beings". And simultaneously, Man's human Other is re-invented as the inferior native Amerindians i.e. the colonized: "divinely created-to-be-natural-irrational animals" (306). The value divide is now Rational/Irrational, Human/Animal, Good/Evil and continues to justify a total system of social domination and oppression.

The European Man classified the Amerindians as evil, devil worshipping cannibalistic savages with different gods and relations to nature. Amerindians were deemed otherly different species who needed salvation, to be cured from being "significantly ill" (Scott 2000, 181); to be corrected in behavioural terms, dominated, enslaved, murdered and forcefully made into Christian State abiding citizens.

Informed by the theological belief that God created all living creatures, the Indians were regarded as slaves by nature, lacking of Western rational and spiritual qualities, and considered to be living in a geographic area which was created outside the Grace of God, an uninhabitable region, because it was under water. Species that did exist in this space of Otherness could only be a group of "diverse animals, the cast off and residual parts of the lower world" (Wynter 2003, 287).

"Columbus's voyages had led to enormous suffering for the local people of the New World as well as of Africa" (191); Western European colonizers brutally destroyed the Indigenous civilization, its traditions and appropriated and occupied land. The Spanish conquistadores transplanted the social & economic hierarchy of feudalism to the colonies and introduced "the *encomienda* neo-serf labour institution" (Scott 2000, 176) in which the Spanish colonizers owned the Amerindians living on their land. After 1492 Western colonizers rapidly established commercial routes also known as the Triangular Trading system between Europe, Africa, the Americas (during the 16th and the 19th century). The "Columbian exchange" came into existence which refers to the global

displacement of diseases, animals, plants, manufactured goods and extracted natural resources. The transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans i.e. The Middle Passage came into being to solve the labour shortage on the plantations in the Americas "where crops like sugar, wheat, fruits, vegetables were grown". The black African slave became property of the plantation owner, used as forced free labour, to be sold as commodity for profit purpose: considered an object, a thing outside the human register. The black African slave was denied any human rights and given inhumane treatment. Denise Ferreira da Silva argues in *Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End Of the World* that slavery as a crucial dimension of "the juridic,economic & symbolic architecture of colonial expropriation, continues to sustain global capital" in today's 21st century. "Expropriation of the productive capacity of the conquered lands and enslaved bodies" (Ferreira da Silva 2014, 83) in both the Americas as West indies could only be achieved by what C.L.R. James "calls a regime of calculated brutality and terrorism" (C.L.R. James 1963, 10). The black African slave does not have a self determined subjectivity; is by property law obstructed to have an economic relationship and thus takes no part in the capitalist mode of production (Ferreira da Silva 2014, 85). The global capital order still lives of this economic dispossession and the subjective death of Man's human Other and the only way to "reclaim the expropriated total value is to demand nothing less than decolonization" (85).

Human reason

During the 18th and 19th century with the emergence of the natural, biological and physical sciences; Darwin's evolution theory and natural selection of the survival of the fittest; "differentiation emerges as the result of the rational principle" (Ferreira da Silva 2016, 61). The Enlightenment period brings forth a "tremendous intellectual and scientific progress" which carries "the expectation that philosophy in the broadest sense would dramatically improve human life" (Bristow 2017).

The age of philosophy and its quest to reveal how humans acquire knowledge, builds on the existing intellectual work of René Descartes' separation of body and mind, in which the mind has access to the true meaning of the human body while the senses are disregarded as an authoritative source of knowledge. During the Enlightenment the science of man and in particular the science of the human mind led to controversy between European philosophers in their understanding of reality and concepts of matter and mind. Within this intellectual climate, humankind is finally "released from its self-incurred immaturity" and can freely use its "own understanding without the guidance of another" (Kant 1784). Alternative means of knowledge production such as "established religion, tradition, superstition, prejudice, myth and miracles" were consequently confronted with "high suspicion and hostility" (Bristow 2017), while they openly question the legitimacy of human reason and "conscious" experience as instituted by the Western philosophical discourse. Human's subjectivity is no

longer measured on a scale of religious degrees of perfection but on a scale of

rational degrees of perfection; a rational order of human existence is now mapped

onto the expanding geographical borders of European imperialism.

Darwin thus introduces the *principle of natural selection* and "an element which

is absent in previous (Eighteenth-century naturalists' and philosophers')

descriptions of the global as a site of human differentiation, namely, *affectability*

[10] *vs transparency*[11] "(110). Which renders a modern representation of non white

Europeans as outer-determined–almost objectified–Others devoid of a

self-determined subject formation vs historical, white Europeans as

self-determined subjects who solely embody the power of universal reason which

produce and regulate all human conditions.

Homo oeconomicus

In 1801, French zoologist George Cuvier "identified fossil evidence of 23 extinct

species" (Brake 2009,102) no longer living on earth. The idea of extinction

undermined the divine wholeness of the "Great Chain of Being", which regards

all human and non-human life on earth as a well-ordered, static whole

categorized on a scale from low to high according to the complexity of its lifeform,

without any missing links. Missing links could not be explained by the Chain, but

Darwin's evolution theory by natural selection did provide an explanation and

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[10] Denise Ferreira da Silva defines *affectability* as "The condition of being subjected to both natural (in the scientific and lay sense) conditions and to others' power" in *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), xv.
[11] Denise Ferreira da Silva defines the *transparency thesis* as "The ontoepistemological assumption governing post-Enlightenment thought" in *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), xvi.

considers how "organisms evolve over time as a result of changes in heritable physical or behavioral traits (...) which allow an organism to better adapt to its environment (...)" (Than 2018) in order to survive and reproduce. In other words some species live while others become extinct.

Cuvier's formulation of the science of life in *The Animal Kingdom* (1863) and Darwin's theories of evolution as written in *The Origins of Species* (1859) contribute to a taxonomy or comparative anatomy which aims to "determine degrees of differentiation, complexity, and specialization of parts and movements" (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 102) of any animal and human species in a "class or subdivision" (idem), according to its relative proximity to the "universal self determined mind" (105), i.e. "the human intellect" (104), the productive *nomos[12] (xvi)*.

Cuvier places the human body at the "highest order of the animal kingdom" (105), with different "human bodily configurations found in distinct global regions" "corresponding to a particular degree of social development or progress or civilization" (106). A human classification system which places the white "Caucasian"–above the yellow "Mongolian" and black "Ethiopian"–at the top as the privileged "most civilized nation" (106).

Western imperial goals of sovereignty over new lands continued to provide problems with their systems of legitimacy while exercising their dominance over other groups of people. Darwin's explanation of evolution by natural selection is

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[12] Denise Ferreira da Silva defines *productive nomos* as "The conception of reason that describes it as the producer or regulator of the universe" in *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), xvi.

used to strengthen its claim of superiority moving away from the rational/irrational divide to a bio-evolutionary divide between the naturally racialized superior Europeans and the naturally racialized inferior non European human Others. A racialized mode of humanness, reflecting "differential degrees of evolutionary selectedness (eugenicity) and/or dysselectedness (dysgenicity)" (Wynter 2003, 316); on which the sociogenic organizing principles of symbolic life and death are founded; give rise to Wynter's purely bio-economic Man 2, otherwise known as homo *oeconomicus*. A biocentric mode of being human which operates in today's "techno-industrial, capitalist mode of economic production" (317) navigating between global classifications of class, gender, sexuality and race. From the end of the 18th century onwards up to present times, humanness is defined by its struggle of climbing the civilized ladder upwards with at the top the white Western middle class presented as the dominant norm. By evolution legitimized as the superior race and justified in their belief that the top is their only destination, defined by their intellectual, economic and social progress. Wynter argues that racial differences and the colour line–of varying degrees of lighter and darker pigmentation of the human skin–are used as human and cultural signifiers mapped onto the contemporary upward trajectory of civilization.

With her project "Towards the Human, after Man" Wynter determines the conditions prior to each epochal shift and places the epistemological struggle of what it means to be human at its center; in other words "the politics of being" is

and forever will be fought over and will be reconfigured in a manner which is both continuous and discontinuous in order to secure the contemporary hegemonic mode of humanness.

The end of the World as we know it

Denise Ferreira da Silva sees how Wynter's excavation of the epistemological framework of humanity offers a critique to modern thought (Ferreira da Silva 2015, 91). Da Silva argues that Wynter's "analyses of how in the Renaissance and post-Enlightenment epochs, two moves of naturalization–the secularization of rationality and the representation of the human through the workings of natural selection, respectively–would position Man in such a way as to disavow other, coexisting modes of being human" (91).

Da Silva considers Wynter's "radical move to be to ask the ontological question of who and what we are in relation to the question of race" (93); and exposes how colonial power systems continue to affect how we come to know and extract meaning from today's reality. Da Silva however is mainly interested "in the emergence of the space of Otherness, the order of race or racial difference" (91), and urges us to take Wynter's work at heart but wonders whether explaining systems of knowledge is the answer to solving the social, juridic, economic and political injustices of the global present.

Da Silva proposes to focus more on the potentiality of "methodological questions rather than ontological ones". She concludes: "instead of the question of who and what we are, we need to go deeper into the investigation of how we come up with answers to the questions." (104) Taking a step back from the need to self-determine ourselves as human species and the continuous cycle of violence it produces, Da Silva puts forth her own radical move, proposing the only way forward: "As the end of the world as we know it" (Ferreira da Silva 2016, 58) approaching the world not as a quantifiable physical universe with distinct objects and subjects but imagines "the World as a Plenum"; "a complex whole, without order"; "an infinite composition" of endless relationalities which are "entangled beyond the constructions of space and time" (58).

Both Wynter as Da Silva trouble the category of the human by deconstructing how the Western human norm came into existence and how human normalcy has oppressed other modes of being human. Both thinkers address the space of human Otherness; Wynter's study on humanism is informed by the anticolonial movement of the Caribbean during the 1940s where she experienced the colonial struggle on a daily basis. Da Silva established a critique of modern thought by a critical social analysis of the deployment of raciality in national subject formation of the inhabitants of Brazil and the United States of America. Her objective is to demonstrate how the science of man divides global human subjectivity in twofold; the self-determined subject *transparent* "I" who produces meaning and knowledge and the *affectable* "I" whose interior and exterior subjectivity is determined and produced by others.

The next chapter further explores what it means to be human and aims to excavate the human subject formation of the adoptee of color through the lens of care. Human difference is read through the mind of the transnational adoptee of color whose subjectivity–shaped by displacement, assimilation and integration–can be regarded as the embodiment of the "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1987) between coloniality and modernity. The practise of transnational and interethnic adoption is brought into existence by the coloniality of power, a term used to identify how Western Europe has come to exercise its colonial power and control of economic resources, authority (institutions), gender & sexuality, subjectivity & knowledge over colonized lands and people; breaking down existing forms of sociality, kinship and collective care. In an attempt to reclaim control, this thesis proposes to reclaim the concept of care as a non-normative construction with a disruptive potential to contemporary hegemonic liberal humanism. Care is an intrinsic part of everyday reality, but "remains ambivalent in its significance and ontology" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 7). We, humans, can not live without care.

The next chapter proposes to engage with care outside the governing orderings principles of modern thinking and explores how the adoptee of color practices decolonial care and healing. How does one relate to the question of care when difference no longer divides or separates but is understood as being an "uncertain expression of an elementary entanglement" (Ferreira da Silva 2016, 65)? How can I reclaim care?

Chapter 2: How to care?

 To further unravel the contemporary hegemonic mode of humanness this thesis
wants to address the subject formation of transnational adoptees of color from
the Global South to the Global North which informed my own personal sense of
humanness. Inspired by Sylvia Wynter's philosophical itinerary "Towards the
Human, After Man" I will explore how the transnational adoptee of color comes
into being by the coloniality of power and exists to reinforce the hegemonic
position of power of Western societies governed by a modern, capitalist,
neo-colonial, nation-state orientated mindset. Thinking with matters of care is a
useful way to delineate the research area; to deepen and intensify the study on
the one hand and put pressure on the underlying power dynamics which shaped
transnational adoptees of color from the Global South to the Global North on the
other hand. Transnational and interethnic adoption practices are still widely
accepted, even encouraged to some degree. For a decolonial future to exist such
practices are to be re-thought, re-considered, we need to push forward, actively
unlearn and undo normative Western caring practices for the possibility to occur
to experience being human together otherwise.

Practicing decolonial thought

Spacetime coordinate: Bogotá, Colombia 1979. October 20, 3:30 PM.

I was born in Hospital Materno Infantil, Calle 71 No.18-10 and named Lucila Novoa. Daughter of Ana Lucia Novoa Guzman, age 17; father unknown. After being born I spent a few days at a monastery before being taken care of by an elderly couple of Dutch and Colombian origin who ran an adoption agency. Not long after, my mother and father flew in from the Netherlands and I was united with my new parents. I grew up in a predominantly white environment in a small city in the Southern part of the Netherlands. My family entailed myself, my mother, my father and my adopted brother from Bogotá, Colombia, who is 2 and a half years older than me. From Colombia I have a few artifacts which link me to the place I come from; a birth certificate; a Colombian passport, a ceramic vase, a woolen poncho, a wall tapestry. My parents raised us with love and commitment; despite their divorce they continue to take care of us, although we (my brother and I) are both over 40 and have family lives of our own.

A family shaped by transnational and interethnic adoption is inherently complex and precarious, it's not easy to stay connected and keep investing in a shared relationality. When irreconcilable differences have an inclination to separate, practicing decolonial thought can help those families unravel and work through the complexities and precarious situations which more often than not exceed their ability to survive.

Adoptees of color

Je hebt een kleur, maar je bent Nederlands (*You are coloured, but you are Dutch*) is a report on the research project "Identity formations of adoptees of color" (2007), conducted by the Gender Studies research group at the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University (NL), commissioned by the Adoption Services Foundation. The study sheds light on identity formations of adoptees of color who are formed by "the silent migration" (Selman 2002) of adoption practices from the former colonies to the West to fulfill the–white middle and upper class–wish to have children. Silent migration refers to the invisibility of child migration whose voice is not heard because babies or children are denied agency in juridic and social terms and are not able to voice their opinion about their own adoption. For this report adult adoptees of color are questioned about their identity; how they see themselves and how their environment perceives their identity as adoptee of color. Does their identity formation challenge normative assumptions about identity, kinship or family within Dutch society?

The Gender Studies research group intentionally refrains from using the terms race and racial in the discourse about transnational adoption practices due to its "problematic connotations which they aim to deconstruct" (Wekker et al. 2007, 6). Instead, they opt for "interethnic adoption to give meaning to the adoption of children with a different ethnic positionality, from non-western countries, by white, western adoption parents" (6). The term "adoptees of color" is used to refine their experience and socialization growing up in white families; having to deal with discrimination and racism; trying to make sense of their

origin and ethnic, national, cultural identity. They express lived ethnic identities which do not correspond with existing terminology. "Color functions as a visible marker of the adoptee's ethnic descent while simultaneously being the site of embattled ethnic Otherness" (76). As the study shows adoptees of color "embody multiple ethnic and cultural identities, going beyond mutually exclusive subjection formations of blackness and whiteness" (7). The term adoptee of color wants to contribute to an "imaginary community of adoptees of color who despite their differences regarding skin pigmentation, ethnicity, gender, class and national descent share similar lived experiences and identity formations" (6). The term adoptee of color is part of the decolonial processes which aim to expose oppression and give a voice to minorities who are marginalized. White parents with adopted children are known to raise the adoptee of color as if there's no difference with their biological kin. Although the intention is loving, color blindness denies ethnic difference between the adopted child and their white parents and denies the possibility for the adoptee of color to positively engage with their ethnic descent and self-image.

The terminology of adoptee of color is an extension to the term people of color which aims to express solidarity among the collective experience as nonwhite. The terminology "of color" is also criticized because it fails to attend or sometimes overlooks the differential experiences of racism between Black, Indigenous, Latin, Arabian etc. communities. Not all share the same struggle. Nonetheless without disregarding the guiding power of language I would argue

that any terminology should be considered as a process of meaning making and never an end in itself.

Tobias Hübinette (Korean name: Lee Sam-dol), Associate Professor in Intercultural Education at the Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies (ISLI), Karlstad University, and researcher in critical race and whiteness studies; draws on Judith Butler's performativity theory to argue that transracial adoptees "perform" whiteness by "constantly copying, imitating and mimicking whiteness on an everyday level" (Hübinette 2007,143). He noticed a desire towards whiteness for colonial subjects which is not uncommon for adoptees of color. Aligning one's self-subjectivity with whiteness is expressed in behaviour, body-language, speech, clothing, hairstyle; a preference for white partners or friends; even to the extent of covering up external traits which signify a different ethnicity. Adoptees of Color growing up in white families "recount childhood memories of their desire to be white" or at times not feeling comfortable "being non-white and being associated with their land or origin". Troubled by the colonial gaze which presents the origin of the transnational adoptees of color, the Global South, "as nothing but poverty and underdevelopment, something you do not want to be associated with". While growing older some adoptees of color express their initial aversion - to their birth country, their body and skin color - gradually shifting into a sense of pride; honouring their heritage. Even to the extent of falling into "bio-essentialist ideas, which may be informed by prevailing stereotypes" (Cawayu and De Graeve 2020,12). Those same bio-essentialist and cultural essentialist views which

according to Wynter's "Towards the Human, after Man" were used to establish an order of non-white, non-western, irrational, animal-like, non-evolved, dysgenic, subhumans who were justifiable dominated, cured, saved, treated less by an order of white European rational, political, bio-economic human subjects. This paradoxical reality informs the struggle of adoptees of color on the "macro level" but also "infiltrates the most intimate spheres" of their lives (Cawayu and De Graeve 2020,4). The displacement of the transnational adoptee of color by the West represents the gift of prosperity, possibility and progress which inform the Western mode of being human; the adoptee of color leaves behind their colonial past while embracing the promise of belonging to the modern world. The adoptee of color resides in anticipation of a future life forever indebted to their white European parents; a shared burden generated by the coloniality of power.

Hübinette even refers to transracial adoptees as "ethnic drags who are troubling, mocking and parodying supposedly fixed, racial, ethnic and national identities and belongings" (Hübinette 2007,143). The argument being that the transracial adoptee can pass as a Western subject in spite of having a physical appearance which suggests otherwise. However, the question remains how the adoptee of color can reclaim control over their own narrative and identity formation? What comes to mind is the queer transformative power of José Esteban Muñoz's "disidentificatory performances" (Muñoz 1999) which recognizes the impossibility of any stable account of identification formation; a recognition which resonates with the adoptee of color. According to Muñoz, disidentification is the

interpretation of a "process of production, and a mode of performance (...) enacted by minoritarian subjects who must work with, resist the conditions of (im)possibility that dominant culture generates" (6). This dominant culture for the adoptee of color consists of an overrepresented white environment in which the adoptee of color remains a minority. Daily and repetitive disidentificatory performances create new worlds which come into being by "working on and against dominant ideology," a strategy of survival that "neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it" (11). Munõz's mode of resistance could help the adoptee of color in reclaiming their identity and subjectivity and feel free to imagine other ways of making sense of their reality; a mode of resistance which does not revolve around negotiating whiteness but aims to transform the coloniality of power which marks their bodies into new social narratives and political reformulations. While shaking off the burden of gratitude, the adoptee of color aims to find joy and fulfillment in their positionality of being the "outsider within" (Wekker et al. 2007, 12). Positioned both inside and outside Western society, the adoptee of color has the magical ability to "produce knowledge and skills which question traditional understanding of ethnicity and nationality"(76). Disidentificatory performances empower the adoptee of color into reclaiming the speculative power which underlies the uncertain grounds of their being and instead of longing stability embrace a queer social identity in constant flux.

Non-Western epistemologies

When entering the domain of human adoption and fostering it is important to acknowledge that its practice is not just a modern phenomenon invented by Western European societies. As long as the human species is living together in smaller or bigger groups or communities, adoption or fostering has always found its way into the organisational structures of both Western and non-Western cultures and societies. For many societies "relationality does not depend on biological filiation" (Bowie 2004, 16). Studies outside the normative Western nuclear family formation demonstrate "the variety and complexity of child-rearing practices around the world" (16). "Who is considered family and kin is also culturally variable" (xv) exposing a wider, extended network of social relationships between the child and its (multiple) caretaker(s). In some societies "adoption or fostering is not only common, but an essential and often preferred means of raising children" (4). As Wynter argues, the colonial matrix of power employed by the West dismantled and destroyed existing forms of social organization in the colonized worlds. With Western colonialism and imperialism uncountable systems of knowledge have disappeared including ways of raising children and their pedagogical logic. Dominating knowledge is still a powerful tool of current Western and non-Western governments and is inscribed in their often neo-liberal, right wing, fascist legislation machinery. One contemporary example speaks to "Brazil's conservative government that has worked to erode and erase" (Accioly 2020) Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968)

because it proposes a praxis of freedom by literacy and critical thinking for all citizens of Brazil in all layers of the societal order. Study material which the government of Jair Bolsonaro considers a communist threat, is forbidden and removed from the curriculum of schools and universities. Controlling knowledge is a standardized and oppressive tool key to many adoption as well as other child foster practices. A paradigm called "the clean break" promotes cutting any ties to "the child's pre-adoption past" (Cawayu and De Graeve 2020, 2) to improve the overall adoption process and stimulate the bonding process between the child and their new family. I can't help but wonder how adoption processes would benefit if the clean break paradigm would be replaced without its separating intention and affect. What if the pre-adoption past would still be very present in the adoptee's new environment and considered a nurtured and cared for aspect to their identity? Would the practice of adoption as we know it still exist?

Care as political theory

To care means something different to different people in different situations (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 1). We may have cared about, taken care of, given care or received care (Tronto 1993, 105-108) in various ways and to various degrees. Care can be a sign of affection, a moral obligation, a generous gesture, an act of labor or maintenance work. Care is often disregarded or taken for granted; but it is often used as a tool of oppression; to assert power over certain (groups of) people. The access to care, the labor of care and the appropriation of care is widely contested and its global distribution is highly unequal and unjust.

Political theorist Joan C. Tronto has written two books about the ethics of care: *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* published in 1993 and *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality and Justice* published in 2013. Both books affirm the importance of thinking about and with care. In close collaboration with feminist activist scholar Bernice Fisher, Tronto offers the following definition of care: "On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (Tronto 1993, 103).

In response to the daily realities of Western neo-liberal capitalism Joan Tronto argues "that the world would look very different if we put care at the center of our political lives" (Tronto 2013, ix). She argues that care is mostly

considered a moral claim or demand,which can be seen as the principles of right and wrong behaviour determined by a community, an institution or any other dominant force who sets the public norm. Within western society morality and care have been considered a woman's affair. Historically the woman's role in society is to nurture, to care, to mother, to sustain human relationships; as Tronto writes "women can be more moral because they are outside of the marketplace" (Tronto 1993, 1). This assumption reveals how the division between the domestic and public sphere within modern societies compromises the status and power of women (in favour of men). A dichotomy which is harmful and signifying a structural way of thinking about human nature as part of the history of Western modern knowledge systems. Feminist thinkers from as early as the 19th century have always been trying to understand and correct problems of power inequities and oppression but unfortunately early white liberal feminism—in their drive to liberate woman from the position of caring about and giving care to taking care of and receiving care—has often excluded "many woman of color, immigrant women, poor women, lesbians and women who were not 'fit' mothers" (Tronto, 1993, 2), including women suffering from mental and or physical disabilities. The inclusion of some women resulted simultaneously in the exclusion of others thus uncovering the unequal political order of power and privilege in society as outlined by Wynter and Da Silva. To respectfully and justly deal with implications of the entanglement of care and morality we have to consider questions of care within a political context. Tronto argues for an ethics of care that can move beyond the periphery of western philosophical tradition into the centre of current political theory.

She asks "how we might differently understand democracy and caring in order to create such societies" (Tronto 2013, ix). Tronto believes that every society has to organize care one way or the other, whether it's a "feudal society, a slave society or a democratic society." Depending on the "political context care evolves into a political theory." She argues that democracy should be "redefined by allocating care and responsibilities in society in such a way that every voice is heard," and that "in order for a democracy to be truly inclusive it must not exclude anyone or any parts of human life" (Tronto 2014). Looking closely at the neo-liberal paradigm of the Western world, the main social institution around which society and all other social institutions is organized, is not care but the market economy. In the late 70s and beginning of the 80s care was professionalized, a social process of moving care out of the private sphere "the household" into the public sphere. Care becomes a "profitable" industry or part of a government agency under state control situated in a rapidly growing capitalist society. Economic prosperity becomes more important and valued than the need of care. Care under neo-liberal governance becomes an individualized affair with high regard for self-responsibility and frowned upon caring communities or caring-bodies to find support. As a result care work is "undervalued, underpaid and as an occupation given a less high standard in societal life." According to Tronto the democratic practice or process of allocating care and responsibilities is undermined in two ways; first, the exclusion of those voices (from this process) who society deems as irrelevant; the less powerful or disadvantaged minorities. Second, a mechanism Tronto refers to as "privileged irresponsibility" (Tronto 2014), those who think

they have more important things to do for society than concern themselves with the futile task of thinking about care and being responsible for care. This means even if you want to be inclusive it is impossible to make sure care and responsibility is distributed in an equal and fair manner. Tronto argues the need to reconsider how society takes care of its people and how a society provides for this care. An intersectional feminist approach is suggested which considers at the root of any research or analyses a complex web of different positionalities & interdependencies in understanding and addressing any kind of power inequities and oppression. She affirms the importance of thinking about and with care that reach far beyond traditional feminist issues of equal rights & opportunities for women. We need to think about care as a collective problem and speak to those who feel they can ignore the presence of an ethics of care in both academia and politics, or in any other aspect of social, juridic-economic and/ or cultural institutional life. To persist on a "political way of thinking about care that can ultimately have a political impact in the world" (Tronto 2014).

Sylvia Wynter's historic analyses of what it means to be human gives a better understanding of the dynamic forces underlying the trajectories of adoption. I would argue that adoption practices are an extension of the two modes of naturalization as described by Wynter's intellectual project "Towards the Human, After Man" which "positions Man in such a way as to disavow other, coexisting modes of being human" (Ferreira da Silva 2015, 91). Transnational, interethnic adoption from the Global South to the Global North operates within the same logic of naturalization built on the classifications of human and

nonhuman life. European humanism including an ethics of care is built on the premise of a value divide between human and nonhuman others; transnational, interethnic adoption as such is an extension of this mode of operandi. The Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) — a governing body of the state in charge of handling and processing immigrants into The Netherlands — works to oversee adoption procedures. To govern the transition of a previously considered nonhuman into becoming human; otherwise known as the adoptee of color.

María Puig de la Bellacasa, writer of the book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in more than Human Worlds* (2017) revisits Fisher & Tronto's definition of care to utilize its "open-ended" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 6) quality to confront and disrupt the hetero-normative notion of care represented by the logic of Western European liberal capitalism. Puig de la Bellacasa considers "care as maintenance work with ethical, affective and political implications in interdependent worlds" (5). She argues that a politics of care "remains ambivalent in significance and ontology" (1) in which the three dimensions of care–"labor/work, affect/affections, ethics/politics"–exist in an "unequally distributed position of unresolved tension and contradiction"(5).

A way to reclaim the narrative of care within the context of transnational and interethnic adoption practices is to start to unravel how Puig de la Bellacasa's three dimensions of care create their own "thick co-presence" (Haraway 2016, 4) to borrow the words of feminist ecologist Donna J. Haraway. Since the procedure of adoption entails many agents and subjectivities I will not

attempt to give a thoroughly informed analysis of the above stated dimensions;

rather I will treat this attempt as an exercise to expose some of the politics

involved in the matter of care in relation to adoption. The labor or work that's

implied in adoption is versatile; first and foremost it is an exclusive kind of labor

which speaks to only those individuals or couples who are by legislation proven to

be qualified. Criteria to these qualifications are; educational level,

economic/income stability, healthy lifestyle, adhering to social norms and values,

etc. In other words, one's chances to adopt is completely defined by "degree of

civilization" which is granted approval in social, juridic and civic terms as defined

by the power of the state. By these standards care as work and labor is a

politicized affair; with obtaining national citizenship for the adoptee as ultimate

reward. Another aspect of adoption and care involves its relation to money and

ethics in the sense that adoption works on the interstices between "child and

commodity" and "challenges the moral distinctions between a person and a thing

in the neo-liberal globalized world" (Wichelen 2019, 17). Intentions to adopt are

often two-folded: one being adoption is considered a way for Western couples to

form a family and the second often outspoken intention is an ideological,

humanitarian response to help a child in need. This is where an ethic of care and

an ethic of love meet. A care ethic is not necessarily a love ethic as bell hooks

writes in "Values: Living by a Love Ethic," in *All About Love* (2000). Care is one

dimension of love; giving care does not mean we are loving. Hooks continues to

write "Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love —

'care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge' — in our

everyday lives" (94). I would argue that for a decolonial approach to care and

healing in relation to the practice of adoption, bell hooks' love ethic can be a great starting point.

An engagement with care (and love) similar to Haraway's proposal of "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) is complex and interrelated such as the aforementioned experiment demonstrates. Staying with the trouble is a way of living and dying together in damaged worlds of response-ability. Crucial to the concept of living and dying with each other is the presence of human and non-human life, finding each other in "unexpected collaborations" (4). Haraway calls this "tentacular thinking", which allows us to create "speculative fabulation" (2) to imagine alternative futures. Tentacular thinking can be a way of sharing knowledge without hierarchical orders or values attached to them or a way of practicing collective care in sharing the work and labor. Tentacular thinking is taking responsibility together without the individual responsibility of care. Tentacular thinking is about collective love, joy and fulfillment.

Caring together in decolonial healing: a conclusion and a beginning

you will not heal the wound

the wound will heal you

— Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Discussions about the colonial past of The Netherlands have erupted in the public sphere numerous times during the course of 2020. Black Lives Matters demonstrations; the "zwarte piet" controversy; the re-naming of the art institution Formerly Known as Witte de With; the smearing and destroying of colonial statues; racist tendencies in the police corps; court trials relating to racism etc. Covid-19 raised the stakes and created momentum for people to raise their voice against the oppression of black people, people of color and other minorities. The Netherlands is no different than other colonial countries in protecting their status quo in vocalizing their disapproval of any group who threatens their position of power. National government practices a rhetoric of polarization which disguises the growing struggle, injustice and inequality seeping through every layer of Dutch society. In order to keep momentum and push for political change, this thesis can be read and understood as a small but important act of decolonial activism, starting from the very personal to creating collective awareness which hopefully enforces the momentum to push forward.

The movement or the displacement of children otherwise known as adoptees of color from Colombia to The Netherlands can be interpreted "as a colonial practice embedded in a larger history of exploitation of the Global South and the stratified

migration dominated by the Global North."(Cawayu and De Graeve 2020, 4)

Decolonial thought and the term coloniality are used to point to the "global

socio-political reality that shapes transnational adoption" (4). The coloniality of

power has affected the adoptees embodiment of the coloniality of Being which

informs and constitutes their modern experience in contemporary times.

According to Maldonado-Torres "coloniality survives colonialism" and "modern

subjects breathe coloniality all the time and everyday" (2007, 243). For the

adoptee of color it's important to delink from the exterior forces who control the

narrative of their lives. This would entail a rejection of victimisation,

necessitating a "narrative shift from the (individual) primal wound to (a

collective) colonial wound" (Cawayu and De Graeve 2020, 14). Such work offers a

decolonial perspective which contributes to actual care and healing for adoptees

of color but also creates awareness for the families and social environment

adoptees of color take part in.

In line with Sylvia Wynter, many other decolonial thinkers have contributed to

the concept of the coloniality of being including Maldonado-Torres and Walter

Mignolo. It is stated very clearly in the beginning of this thesis that one of the

main objectives of this textual space is to give prominence to female black writers

who exist within a predominantly patriarchal white academic environment and

will always be questioned, stigmatized and undermined because of their

positionality. This thesis wants to create awareness of the inner workings in the

field of academia and be cautious of canon formation within the decolonial

discourse and thus in the overall thesis gives prominence to Wynter, Ferreira da Silva and Gloria Wekker over Maldonado-Torres or Walter Mignolo and others.

Inspired by Denise Ferreira da Silva I want to continue exploring the possibility of experiencing being human outside Western Modern philosophy's produced subjectivity — created by universal reason — with fixed notions of efficient causality, certainty, separability and sequentiality, according to a hierarchical order of time and space (Ferreira da Silva 2016, 61). The crucial question Da Silva puts forward which will continue to inform my artistic practice remains: "How would an ethics of care be practiced when stripped of value?"

I propose to further attend to Da Silva's quest, in re-thinking an ethics of care (and love) in relation to the speculative possibilities of engaging with the figure of *Ketan*, a one celled organism known as Slime Mold, *Physarum Polycephalum*. The question then becomes: how can a project driven by care and love can serve as a decolonial queer feminist science project? A project that concerns itself with the daily practices of meaning making which trouble, disrupt and reconfigure assumptions about nature, difference, species, human existence in general? As an exercise in thinking beyond the "human adopted" Self, this project challenges the boundaries of daily reality and speculative fabulation guided by the shape-shifting movements of Slime Mold, Physarum Polycephalum and its complex lifecycle. Ketan becomes a living compass, a directed experience which in and of itself disrupts any normative human orientation, constantly re-orientating their relation to the world. What follows is a journey of sharing the complexities of estrangement, disidentification and disorientation; unravelling subversive

moments of "human" and "more than human" performativity; allowing the imagination to create the possibility of being, knowing, caring and loving together otherwise.

This thesis has explored what it means to be human guided by Sylvia Wynter's thought provoking trajectory "Toward the Human, after Man" and Denise Ferreira da Silva's encompassing book *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007); and argues that at the core of contemporary humanness lies a struggle defined by a racialized order of human existence. This struggle informs not only those racialized Others but to varying degrees impacts all human beings on a global scale. As a form of tentacular thinking this thesis contributes in troubling the colonial category of the human by introducing the figure of the human adoptee of color in relation to a decolonial ethics of care and healing. Pushing against normative notions of modes of being human the adoptee of color radically rethinks what it means to reclaim humanness and an ethic of care. A proposition which entails non-human life forms such as Slime Mold, *Physarum Polycephalum*, otherwise known as the figure of Ketan.

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