POROUS BODIES: REWRITING THE HISTORICITY OF THE BODY FROM A POSTHUMANIST AND DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the need to rethink the way in which the historical temporality of the body has been articulated as a transition from an animal/prehistoric embodiment to a human/historical one, using as a point of departure a dialogue between feminist posthuman and decolonial thought. Current trends of the historiography of the body tend to consider the body as constituted by human culture or as determined by biological and natural structures, giving to each perspective different temporalities and chronological frames. Through a genealogical exercise focused in narratives from the sixteenth century (Bartolomé De Las Casas and Juan Ginés Sepúlveda) and the nineteenth century (Daniel Wilson), I argue that each of these perspectives is anchored in an iterative citationality of a colonial/modern understanding of the temporality of the body with two stages defined by colonial classifications: In one, the materiality of the human body is porous to external forces that bring it closer to the body of the animal and make its temporality much slower. In the other one, Man exceeds this animal materiality and is porous to his autonomous internal forces bringing a progression towards his full humanity. This shows that rethinking the historicity of the body beyond the bodies of Man requires recognizing that anthropocentric differentiations are sustained by colonial classifications in the current modern/colonial system, which invites to look at the posthuman through decolonial eyes, as well as opening decolonial thought to the innovative conceptualizations of the feminist posthumanities. To develop this, I cross-fertilize the thought of Elizabeth Grosz and Sylvia Wynter, with the purpose of searching theoretical paths that unsettle this prefiguration of modern/colonial bodies. First, their thought proposes a dynamic and undetermined relation between biology and culture and matter and meaning. Second, they open the temporality of history to the future and the virtual, which challenges the narrative of progress towards Man through accumulation. Furthermore, for them, history is not about the reproduction of the past, but about opening spaces for remembering different embodied futures.

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Introduction

"Feminist theory, at its best, in its ideal form, is about the generation of new thought, new concepts, as much as if not more than it is about the critique of existing knowledges" Elizabeth Grosz. Becoming undone.

"Doors that lead to other types of truths whose basis is not being but the coloniality of being, the colonial wound" Walter Mignolo. Epistemic disobedience

We tell stories about our future, our past and our present that emerge from our desires, hopes and imaginations. Narrations about where we come from, who we are and who we want to be spur our actions and give texture to our beings. They open or foreclose, although never completely, possibilities for remembering, for acting, for becoming. In our colonial/modern present[1], Western history has been a fundamental part of the macro-origin story that, according to Sylvia Wynter[2], has led to the overrepresentation of the human with Man. As a knowledge system, Western history has been key for the naturalization of one of our origin stories as the only universalizing explanation of who we are as human[3]. The narration of the past done by historians is done through different disciplinary rules[4] that allow them to make sense and imagine what humanity has been through and where it is going. These rules are embedded in prefigurations that shape the image of the past inside the Western macro-origin story of humanity.

The way history explains changes and continuities (historical temporality) is rooted in a certain understanding of the stages/periods that humanity has gone through. The division between prehistory and history, that goes back to classic authors, with the subdivision of the latter one in Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modernity, configurates the Western grasp of the development of the human through time. Although there are many shortcuts and deviations, this story has a main axis, a separation from animality, a dematerialization, that functions as an immunological measure for keeping human identity together. This perspective is enhanced by mainstream

[1] This refers iterative citationality of the center-periphery colonial relations that continue in the present, even if the forms of domination have been transformed continuously. In this sense, coloniality is not necessarily tied with colonialism as a political form of domination, and continues in what is considered by some as a postmodern order. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, xxvi; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, *El giro decolonial*, 13, 19.
[2] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument."
[3] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, xiv.
[4] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 5.

historical narratives, like the ones written by the best seller author Yuval Noah Harari in his books *Homo Deus* and *Sapiens*[5]. From an ape origin, to an imagined hyper technological/transhuman present, and the utopian/dystopian expectations of humans as creators of artificial conscience, human history is told as the tale of Man's mastery and overcoming of nature, as the transition from animality to humanity. The colonial, anthropocentric and Eurocentric character of such temporality is sensed, but not always reflected on, which requires a reconsideration of the ontologies that sustain these epistemological rules.

What ways of narrating the past can be opened if historians dig into the roots of this prefiguration and try to disassemble the colonial/modern order in which their work is founded? Can history be told only under the overrepresentation of the human as the Western Man? Departing from these questions, the main objective of this thesis is to open ways to historicize the body that unsettle the colonial/modern temporalities assigned to it by our current and dominant version of humanity[6]. Coming for a genealogical inquiry of the colonial roots of this way of thinking the historical temporality of the body, specifically, the division between prehistory/premodernity to history/modernity, as a transition from animality to humanity, the main problem of this thesis is how feminist decolonial and posthuman reflections on temporality and the body evoke an unsettling of this prefiguration.

Considering this main objective, this thesis digs into the colonial/modern sense of embodied temporality, as I consider that it permeates the periodization implicit in body history, which keeps swinging between two parallel notions of the modern body placed in different temporalities and spatialities: constructionism (a plastic body, internally determined, opened to change by culture) and materialism (a biological, externally determined and closed body). This preoccupation comes from a feminist posthuman decolonial perspective that reasserts the need to continue a close relation between history and critical theory. Genealogy[7] and deconstruction[8] are necessary to show the way historical knowledge and its performative prefiguration of the

[5] Harari, *Homo Deus*; Harari, *Sapiens*.
[6] I understand the concept of the human as the core of the modern/colonial differentiation that defines a hierarchical frontier between the realm of being (West, Europe, man, white, reason, mind, human) and the realm of non-being (East, America, woman, black, matter, body, animal). It is, for this reason, broader than a conception of the human as a biological species and implies a colonial histories and logics of power.
[7] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.
[8] Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, sec. Nietzsche, history and genealogy.

temporality of the body are inside a colonial logics. Taking this into account, I discuss first the need to connect posthuman and decolonial approaches in the history of the body and the current challenges to anthropocentric temporalities within history.

De-sedimenting this prefiguration will require a genealogical inquiry of the power relations in which European historical periodization, specifically the sharp divisions between premodernity and modernity, and prehistory and history, emerged in an embodied and spatial dimension. In order to do this, I will analyze discontinuous sources (in space and time) to show how there is an iterative citationality[9] of this prefiguration of the temporality of the body. This means that is not simply a repetition of the same or a development of a notion through time. Instead, it implies a dissemination of meaning which gives a spectral or haunting force (never fully present) to that which is being iterated. For this reason, the temporality of this iteration is not a progressive deployment and change through time, it does not have a clear point of origin or a fixed forward directionality.

To do this, I go back to the sixteenth century to examine the way in which the debate about the humanity of the colonized "Indians" between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés Sepúlveda, two Spanish intellectuals of the time, articulates a colonial difference through the construction of a historical transition from an animal body (porous to external forces) to a fully human one (determined by autonomous reason). Then I go to the nineteenth century to analyze how David Wilson's *Prehistoric Man*, one of the first texts to develop the notion of prehistory, iterates this transition and difference between two kinds of bodies. I selected these two discursive contexts because they belong to two crucial moments in the genealogy of the modern/colonial genre of being human proposed by Sylvia Wynter[10]. First, the sixteenth century that transforms the difference between spirit and flesh, into one between the rational and the irrational (Man1). Second, the nineteenth century that naturalized this division in a biological determination between the bodies of the selected and the dysselected, leading to the biocentrism of Man2. In these two discursive contexts, the "New World" reflects the past of the civilized world, an anterior stage of humanity not completely emancipated from an animal embodied condition. A key aspect of this is showing how they add a historical and temporal dimension, deeply rooted

[9] Derrida, *Limited Inc*.
[10] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument."

in a transition from an animal embodiment to a human one, to the colonial differentiation in which they are embedded and iterate. To show this, my analysis departs from Mignolo's notion of the dark side of Modernity, the colonial realm of non-being that sustains Modernity[11], together with Wynter's genealogy of the overrepresentation of the human as Man, to understand how the version of humanity developed there sustains the modern/colonial understandings of the body dominant in Western historiography.

This genealogical exercise takes further the need to establish a dialogue between feminist posthuman and decolonial discourses to develop conceptualizations that unsettle the modern/colonial understanding of the historicity of the body. To do this, I develop a theoretical discussion in which I cross-fertilize and diffractively read the reflections of Elizabeth Grosz[12] and Sylvia Wynter[13], which problematize the temporality of the human body as a transition from the animal (biology) to the human (culture). In this sense, they show ways to go beyond a teleological vision of historical temporality as a path from the animal to the human and stop conceiving the animal other (the non-human or the quasi-non-human) as something that Man has left behind to enter humanity (as the true historical time). First, I focus on how these thinkers question the dichotomies between nature and culture, matter and meaning, by asserting the openness and indeterminacy of both without conflating one side of the dichotomy into the other. Second, I reflect on they articulate a temporality of history opened to the future, to the virtual, that reconsiders time as a dispersion of difference rather than a teleological accumulation.

Reading these thinkers diffractively [14], not reflectively, goes beyond an exegetic work with their texts and focuses in mapping the cross-fertilizations[15], the performative effects of differences, continuities and limitations between them[16]. In this sense, this exercise works with the impossibility to arrive to a true meaning of these texts and uses this productively to open different theoretical paths. Furthermore, it requires the appreciation those moments of tension

[11] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*; Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.
[12] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*; Grosz, *Time Travels*; Grosz, *The Nick of Time*; Grosz, *Becomings*.
[13] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument"; Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter"; Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?"
[14]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.; Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others"; Braidotti and Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary*, 101.
[15] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 95.
[16] Without ignoring the limitations of these authors, I want to focus on their valuable contributions for the main problem of this research. The focus is not in what these authors truly mean, but how their conceptualizations have a performative force that invites to a reformulation of our ontologies, epistemologies, ethics and politics.

and contradiction as something that might be productive in the intra-action between them and me as embodied/situated subjects of knowledge[17]. This implies that my exercise of reading is in itself an embodied interpretative exercise that gives to these words a reality other than themselves, making inevitable certain perversion[18] of them.

Cross-fertilize feminist posthuman and decolonial thought allows to go beyond constructivism and materialism without erasing the political aim of knowledge. In this sense, this reflection aims to contribute to the opening of new ways of remembering the past from a feminist, posthuman and decolonial ethical and political view on the present and the future. In addition to this, the ideas here can provoke questions and new understandings, within gender studies, about how bodies have changed historically within relations of power. Hence, the core problem of this research contributes to the comprehension of the processes of materialization of difference, both as resistance and sovereignty, beyond cultural and biological reductionisms. This can help to think how bodies have incorporated and exceeded materially the workings of power. Furthermore, it can lead to new theoretical perspectives that consider the embodied character of the colonial temporality of history, which can convey a new angle to the critiques of Eurocentric teleological progress and different ways to think temporality and history. Finally, it provides ideas to explore how racial differentiations are intertwined with a specific understanding of the relation between nature and culture within the modern/colonial order, which makes necessary to consider the posthuman question in the broader concern with the coloniality of power.

[17] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective."
[18] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 95.

Chapter 1: Historical bodies beyond Man

This chapter discusses the current need to establish a dialogue between posthuman and other critical oriented approaches like postcolonial and decolonial thought in three discursive contexts relevant for this thesis. First, in the theoretical reflections of the feminist posthumanities and Latin American decolonial thought, which are the core of the theoretical framework of this thesis. Second, in the historiography of the body, specifically, cultural history and works within the material turn. Third, in the posthuman and postcolonial/decolonial critiques on moderncentric and anthropocentric temporalities in history.

1.1 Theoretical framework: Feminist posthumanities and decolonial thought

One fundamental issue that joins, but also brings tensions, between feminist posthumanities[19] and decolonial thought[20] is the questioning and recreation of what it means to be human beyond its overrepresentation as Man[21]. This has led these perspectives search for different ontologies, epistemologies, ethics and politics that dissemble this dominant version of humanity. Usually linked with these feminist posthumanities, Elizabeth Grosz shows how a rupture of the dichotomies between the human and the non-human, between culture and nature, has revolutionary possibilities for the Humanities and the Natural sciences. For her, putting the non-human, the animal, "not only before the human but also within and after the human" [22] has the potentiality to evoke new kinds of knowledges beyond our anthropocentric assumptions. Reconsidering the privilege of the discursive and symbolic in critical thinking, posthuman and new materialist perspectives try to erode the opposition between nature and culture, not just by

[19] These efforts include the work of feminist theorists like Rosie Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and Elizabeth Grosz that articulate epistemologies and ontologies in which the relation between the human and the non-human is reconsidered beyond anthropocentric terms, taking into account the current political and ethical need of such attempt. However, there are multiple tensions and differences within this broad categorization, which makes any umbrella term a reduction of diverse perspectives. Here I take the term feminist posthumanities to define broadly, but never definitively this wide tendency in feminist theory. Åsberg and Braidotti, *A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities.*, 4.

[20] In this perspective it is possible to locate the work of Latin American decolonial theorists like Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Santiago Castro, Maria Lugones and Sylvia Wynter whose work puts the coloniality of power at the core of modernity and current global dynamics of power. This takes them to rethink our epistemological, political and ontological assumptions beyond the universalization of Western European models. As feminist posthumanities, these are diverse perspectives that cannot be simply grouped in one term. Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, *El giro decolonial*, 20.

[21] In this general sense, these perspectives could be considered as critical posthumanisms, which refers to perspectives that critically question what it means to be human beyond the terms given by the Eurocentric Man, problematizing the posthuman as a condition that goes after the human. Braidotti and Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary*, 94.

[22] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 13.

explaining how culture produces nature, but by a new understanding of nature, materiality and the body, in which their agency and movement is not reduced to human culture[23]. This exercise is moved by a recognition of the political and ethical urgency of rewriting human relationship to nature and the nonhuman.

On the other hand, Latin American decolonial thought has challenged the colonial foundations of knowledge by digging into the 'dark side' of Modernity[24]. Authors like Sylvia Wynter and Walter Mignolo emphasize how the development of the notion of humanity within Western modernity is deeply rooted in the racial assemblages that sustained colonialism since the sixteenth century. Along with this critical challenge, they articulate innovative epistemologies by recognizing the fundamental relation between coloniality and modernity. Sylvia Wynter has tried to unsettle the Western version of the human, tracing a genealogy that shows how colonial difference and the place of blackness in it provide the field from which this concept emerges. Wynter attempts to look into other ways of thinking the human opened by seeing through experiences and traditions located in the underside of the macro-origin myth/story of the human as the Western Man. This implies a recognition of the creative force that narrations have in the shaping of bodies and the constitution of the uneven positions, experiences and marginalizations of the present. In her words, "the goal of our mode of production is not to produce for human beings in general, it's to provide the material conditions of existence for the production and reproduction of our present conception of being human"[25].

These posthuman and decolonial efforts dig into the other side of humanity (the nonhuman, the animal, the beast, the black), to problematize the temporality that places one (human) as the overcoming of the other (non-human). In this sense, this underside is not a past condition, but the present and the future of humanity. They reactivate this realm of non-being to give different meanings to humanity beyond the world of the Western Man. Nevertheless, these perspectives come from different ontological, historical, and epistemological assumptions which makes impossible to harmonize or overlook their tensions. Decolonial thought places colonial racial differentiation at the core of the violent development of Man's version of the human, which is why they look with suspicion, in a similar way as black feminism does, the overlooking of these

[23] Alaimo and Hekman, *Material Feminisms*, 3.
[24] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 20.
[25] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 160.

histories of violence by the posthuman decentering of anthropocentrism and gender differences[26]. These different points of departure are shown in the two chronological frameworks adopted by both in their genealogies of the human. Posthuman discourses tend to center on the Enlightenment (eighteenth century), while decolonial ones focus on the sixteenth century as the site of emergence of the racializing assemblages that articulate the modern/colonial genre of being human[27]. Considering this tensions and points of continuity, I argue that anthropocentric differentiations are sustained by colonial classifications in the current modern/colonial system, which requires looking at the posthuman through decolonial eyes, as well as opening decolonial thought to the innovative conceptualizations of the feminist posthumanities. Hereunder, I show that this lack of dialogue is present in the Western historiography of the body, as well as in the current attempts within history to rethink temporality and periodization.

1.2 Literature review: between nonhuman and human bodies and temporalities

Feminist posthumanities and decolonial thought have not permeated deeply the field of body history. Even if there are some works that have started to use explicitly posthumanisms and new materialisms to frame their historical research[28], and many others address the colonial character of discourses in the constitution of the body[29], these approaches have not been theoretically discussed together to rethink historical methodologies, concepts and prefigurations at the core of this field. On one side, the works within cultural history, which sometimes overlap with gender history, history of sexuality and history of science address the historicity of the body as a question of cultural/human constitution and have a tendency to focus in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as the emergence of the modern order. On the other hand, the emergent fields of brain history, environmental history, deep history and animal history seem more open to the consideration of the body as a biological reality in connection to the nonhuman and try to expand their chronological focus to the deep past[30]. These two perspectives are put in different

[26] Braidotti and Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary*, 97; Luciano and Chen, "Queer Inhumanisms," 196; Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, 14–15.
[27] Braidotti and Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary*, 97.
[28]Salmela, "Fleshy Stories. New Materialism and Female Suicides in Late Nineteenth-Century Finland"; Mak, *Doubting Sex*; Pearson, "Dogs, History,and Agency [This Is a]."; Domanska, "Beyond Anthropocentrism in Historical Studies"; Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*.
[29] Pedraza Gómez, *En cuerpo y alma*; Castro-Gómez, *Tejidos oníricos*.
[30] This is clear in overviews of the current perspectives and debates in history. See Tamm and Burke, *Debating New Approaches to History*.

periods of history with different historical speeds (prehistory/premodernity vs history/modernity) and are treated by different disciplines (biology/archeology vs history). Such tension is clearly seen in the material turn in the history of the body[31] that, reacting to the linguistic focus of cultural history, has tried to bring experience and materiality back to this field. However, these efforts seem to have led historians to under-theorization and an emphasis on objectivity and consensuses[32] in their desire to overcome postmodern criticisms on knowledge. Indeed, the emergent posthumanist and new materialist history that embraces the link between history and the natural sciences does not usually have a critical and self-reflective perspective regarding the theoretical and methodological tools embraced by them: Deconstructive and decolonial criticisms are left aside or seen as suspicious, insufficient or as an impediment for the knowledge of the past[33]. This has led to the iterative citationality of colonial epistemologies within the field of body history, like the understanding of the temporality of the human body as continuous transition and path from animality (biology) towards humanity (culture)[34], which shapes the prefigurations of historical transitions: from prehistory to history and from premodernity to modernity[35].

1.2.1 Cultural history and the return to materiality and experience

Western historiography of the body arose from the political interest on embodiment by the social movements of the 1960's[36]. With the recognition of the role of power in the constitution[37] of the body, came the need to deconstruct the embodied justifications of subordinations according to race, gender and ability within critical theory. Taking this challenge, authors like Foucault[38] highlighted the intertwining between the body, discourse and power, which opened the door for an explicit historization of what was usually considered as natural, emphasizing the role of

31 Clever and Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History?"; Schouwenburg, "Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism."
32Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History."; Ethan Kleinberg, "Haunting History: Deconstruction and the Spirit of Revision."
33 The works of Domanska ("Beyond Anthropocentrism in Historical Studies"; Domanska and LaCapra, "Posthumanist History."), as well as the ones of Smail (*On Deep History and the Brain)* go in this direction.
34 Ingold, *Being Alive : Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description.*
35 I developed this idea in a previous work. See Heredia, "Cuerpos Construidos, Cuerpos Inéditos: Prefiguraciones de La Historiografía Del Cuerpo En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX [Constructed Bodies, Original Bodies: Prefigurations of the Historiography of the Body in the Second Half of the 20th Century]."
36 Porter, "Historia Del Cuerpo [History of the Body]."
37 Tucker, "The Flowering of Aesthetic Politics: May 1968, the New Social Movements, and the Global Justice Movement."
38 Foucault, *Discipline and punish the birth of the prison*; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*.

knowledge systems in its constitution. Within the historiography of the body, this political fuel exploited a modern understanding of the body as a produced/constructed reality opened by historical change[39]. Pioneer works like *The Making of the Modern Body*[40], by Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, and *The Making of sex*[41], by the last one, try to understand how our current ways of understanding embodiment where produced by a shift in the discourses of sex difference by medicine and science during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Clearly influenced by Foucault, works inspired by postcolonial and decolonial thought, like Pedraza's *En Cuerpo y Alma*[42], focus in the transition from the premodern to the modern, located in the threshold of the European eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the point of emergence of the current way of living the body within discursive practices[43]. Cultural history's strategy to deconstruct the binaries nature/culture, body/mind, was the demonstration of the way in which our way of being has been constituted by the history of the cultural representations of the body embedded in power mechanisms[44].

Some historical works have tried to redirect cultural history's focus on discourse to concentrate on materiality, practice and experience. For instance, Barbara Duden's *The Woman beneath the Skin*[45], investigates the lived experience of female patients in eighteenth century Germany through the analysis of their own accounts in their correspondence with their doctor. More recently, the work of Geerje Mak, *Doubting Sex*[46], explores the emergence of the medical practicalities that shaped the experience of sex assignment in nineteenth century Europe,

[39] For an excellent overview of the historiography about the body see Porter, "History of the Body Reconsidered"; Porter, "Historia Del Cuerpo [History of the Body]"; Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History."; Clever and Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History?"; Cooter, "The turn of the body.". I also developed an overview in my philosophy MA thesis Heredia, "Comprender en el silencio : el cuerpo vivido como lugar de la ontogénesis? : la corporalidad en la fenomenología existencial [Understanding in silence: the living body as the place of ontogenesis- Embodiment in Existential Phenomenology]."

[40] Gallagher and Laqueur, *The Making of the Modern Body*.

[41] Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

[42] Pedraza Gómez, *En cuerpo y alma*.

[43] For example, in both *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality I,* the historical narrative that Foucault constructs locates in modernity (beginning in the European eighteenth century) the nodal point for the constitution of present subjectivities. He identifies a point in historical time in which the modern body started to be shaped in contraposition with a past in which the body was different and strange, more animal and excessive. See: Heredia, "Foucault Aesthetic Politics: The Plastic Body in the Social Movements of the 1960's"; Heredia, "Cuerpos Construidos, Cuerpos Inéditos: Prefiguraciones de La Historiografía Del Cuerpo En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX [Constructed Bodies, Original Bodies: Prefigurations of the Historiography of the Body in the Second Half of the 20th Century]."

[44] This has led to an excessive focus on the analysis on normative discourses about the body. See: Alaimo and Hekman, *Material Feminisms*, 3.

[45] Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*.

[46] Mak, *Doubting Sex*.

developing a praxiographic approach that focuses on the different enactments of the body. However, these historical investigations maintain the chronological focus of cultural history which is symptomatic of their ontological assumptions about the body. Even though these works destabilize the dichotomy between practice/experience and discourse, they do not develop a problematization of the distinctions between nature and culture and between non-human and human. As well as other works, like Caroline Bynum's *Christian materiality*[47], they keep considering that the constitution of the body is just a matter of socially and culturally determined human worlds. However, according to Barad [48], stating that nature and the body are simply a matter of human cultural construction shows an anthropocentric, logocentrist and, I would say, colonial perspective. The limit of cultural constructionism, which still permeates the field of body history today, is that the fear of falling into a biological reductionism complicit with oppression has led to underestimate of the role of the nonhuman, as well as its own colonial undertones. In the following section, I discuss recent posthumanist perspectives on the body and temporality in history.

1.2.1 Posthumanist histories and temporalities

Historians like Smail, Domanska and Chakrabarty have already questioned how cultural history is extremely centered on modernity and human culture to explain the development of our current way of being[49]. There seems to be a necessity inside new trends of historiography, marginal nevertheless, to rethink the way historians have sedimented an articulation of temporality through periodization, as well as the relation between history and the natural sciences[50]. There is a comeback of big temporalities that consider the role of biology and nature inside the gestures of deep history, big history, environmental history and animal history. In a broad sense, these efforts can be joined around the decentralization of the modern human as the limit of the temporality of history and the consideration of non-human agency, which is why they can be characterized broadly as posthuman.

[47] Bynum, *Christian Materiality*.
[48] Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," 808.
[49] Wahrman, "Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History Be Rigorous?"; Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*; Domanska and LaCapra, "Posthumanist History"; Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses."
[50] Tamm, "A Framework for Debating New Approaches to History."

In *On Deep History and the Brain.,* Daniel Smail[51] critiques harshly historical periodization and advocates for a deep history of human species. For him, deep history attempts to acknowledge the full scope of human past, blurring the distinction between history and prehistory. This distinction has to be overcome, Smail argues, because it was originated in Western sacred notions of history that conceptualize the emergence of civilization as the exit from the Garden of Eden, a primitive state, towards civilization[52]. He calls this notion of historical temporality the grip of sacred history that compresses historical time and has been maintained in a secularized form even if, since the nineteenth century, the discovery of geological and evolutionary time shook Europe's chronological convictions. Keeping this caesura between a time of biology and a time of culture, according to him, has implied a disciplinary division in the knowledge of the past between natural history and human history. His proposal is to extend the elastic of historical time back to human ape origins in Africa in order to establish interactions between biology and culture. Extending the temporality of history is possible for him thanks to the overcoming of epistemological obstacles. He highlights that the genetic and archeological archives are much richer now, allowing an engagement with the deep past. In his view, a history of the brain is the key to establish the connection between human culture and human behavior and biology. He proposes that the focus of such history is the establishment of connections between universal cognitive and physiological traits and historical cultures.

Smail's work is a clear example of a kind of a posthumanist questioning of the temporality of history in which the body is the place of interaction between biological and cultural forces. However, even if he does not establish a diachronic sequence between a biological time of the primitive body and a historical time of the civilized body, he seems to synchronically superimpose their temporalities in particular contexts. His work implies that in any historical particularity there is a biological universal human slow structure that is then affected by the contingent and hectic cultural/historical temporality placed above the former. Even if he seems to be aware of the historicity of the biological notion of the human, he attributes the historicity of the definition to the progress of science, which is foreclosed by the grips of history that prevent the knowledge of past[53]. He does not question if the terms of the grand narrative that

[51] Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain.*
[52] Smail, 12–39.
[53] "The grip of the political has been significantly weakened; so too the grip of European civilization. All that remains for us to shake off is the grip of sacred history". Smail, 55.

he proposes rely in the colonial/modern attempt to define the human, the nature of the body, and the development of history (even in its evolutionary terms) around the axis of the white European Man. It is important to ask which human is being constructed here, given the level of abstraction in which this grand new temporality attempts to recreate the history of the human body. He relies on the desire to create a homogenizing notion of the human that is neutral and inclusive politically, without considering, as Sylvia Wynter has shown[54], the multiple historical contestations and violences that this notion reproduces and from which it emerges, not only in the past, but in the present and in visions of the future. Put briefly, he does not recognize the political grounds of any kind of knowledge.

With a clearer political orientation, for Ewa Domanska and Dipesh Chakrabarty[55] the task of a posthumanist history has to be oriented towards the future and address the problem of the present environmental crisis that jeopardizes future human survival. This implies building a non-anthropocentric approach to history that shows the interdependence between the human species and the environment. Chakrabarty, in "The Climate of History: Four Theses.", advocates for a universal history in terms of species that confronts the challenges of the environmental crisis. This, he argues, can allow the emergence of a collective force and a global view on politics thanks to a shared sense of catastrophe that will make all humans equally vulnerable. The overcoming of the division between natural history and human history emerged in the eighteenth century is fundamental for him, considering the human as a form of life that is part of the history of the planet. According to him, history needs a bigger scope of temporality beyond the last four hundred years, the usual chronological scope of historians. He justifies this gesture explaining that a history of the capital is not sufficient to give account of the environmental crisis and requires an understanding of the conditions that allowed the prospering of human life in Earth since the Holocene, conditions that now are being threaten. Domanska, in "Posthumanist History", argues that a posthuman history cannot simply add the nonhuman, without developing theoretical and methodological frameworks. For her, establishing a dialogue between the humanities and natural sciences, a focus on materiality and a return of big picture questions are key issues to accomplish this. This implies, she argues, going beyond the excessive focus on

[54] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument."
[55] Domanska and LaCapra, "Posthumanist History"; Domanska, "Beyond Anthropocentrism in Historical Studies"; Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses."

textuality left by the "postmodern" turn. In this sense, the problematization of traditional epistemological frameworks should come from the examination of the concrete and material presence of the past, not its discursive reality. Similarly, Chakrabarty claims that the critiques that see humanity as an effect of power are insufficient to deal with the environmental crisis, and that they just work to address global or local dynamics of oppression.

Even if Domanska and Chakrabarty do not ignore the link between the history of the crystallization of the notion of humanity and material effects of violence, they underestimate the role of critical thinking in evidencing the links between Western epistemologies and colonial/modern power relations. In a discussion with Domanska, Dominick LaCapra[56] explains that the debates about humanism have required a radical other, which makes critical thinking fundamental for questioning the assumptions of history and any type of knowledge practice. The assumptions not just limit knowledge practices but reproduce violent dynamics. The desire to overcome the limits of postmodernism cannot be translated into a dismissal of the importance of critical theory in its multiple sources (queer, feminist, postcolonial, decolonial, disability studies, animal studies, etc). Indeed, reacting to the claim that postmodernism is dead, LaCapra[57] explains that it has been vital to posthumanism and its efforts to decenter human exceptionalism and resist totalization and essentialism. Perhaps the recent efforts to establish interdisciplinary dialogues between the natural sciences and the humanities can benefit from a critical thinking that does not take for granted the teachings of neither of them. Because of this, he says, critique has a fundamental place in historic posthumanist efforts. The embrace of materiality as a strategy to overcome constructionism and postmodernism should not engage uncritically with the natural sciences, flirting with a reductive materialism[58] that considers materiality as a static, fixed and underground explanation that surpasses the specific relations of power in which we live. Returning to matter and experience, should not result in an unawareness of the historical violences through which our current notions of the human body have been constructed and the multiple violences that this has implied.

[56] LaCapra, *History and Its Limits : Human, Animal, Violence.*
[57] Domanska and LaCapra, "Posthumanist History."
[58] This criticism is raised by Elizabeth Grosz. She highlights the need to develop a new "new materialism" that develops a non-reductive ontology in which the real is never closed by fixed and static dynamics of matter, given the current overemphasis in the brain in materialist discourses. Grosz, *The Incorporeal*, 17.

A key issue regarding the future oriented preoccupations of Domanska and Chakrabarty is the lack acknowledgement of the unequal way in which precarity has been distributed, making certain groups much more vulnerable than others. Knowledge has had a key role in these violent processes, making difficult to put into parenthesis this past and present condition if we are thinking about a future. It is unclear, for example, why an environmental crisis can lead to a global political force. Perhaps it can indeed generate coalition efforts, however, it cannot ignore the multiple dimensions of violence that have surrounded the emergence of a notion of a human species. In the edge of an environmental crisis, not everyone will be equally affected. Indeed, through history, many beings have already experienced (and are experiencing) the collapse of their worlds. For this reason, is it not extremely abstract to worry about the future of human survival if the current notion of humanity is overrepresented by its Western, Christian, white and bourgeois version[59]?

It is not clear how historians can delink, or simply superpose, a posthumanist project with race, gender and class dynamics of oppression. As Sylvia Wynter has shown, the history of the notion of humanity defined as a species is dependent on a colonial differentiation that locates the human unevenly in racialized bodies. This shows the need to continue genealogical and deconstructive efforts in relation to the performativity of the Western notion of the human and the multiple dichotomies that surround it, if we want to decentralize it from our knowledge practices. This is not motivated by the will to know the truth about the past, but by the reflection on the way these violences are displayed in our theories and methodologies. Posthumanism is not about the decentering of humanity, but a decentering of Man, a universalizing force that today arises from and triggers multidimensional violences. A posthumanist history has to ask what version of humanity it is decentralizing and how seriously it is taking non-western challenges of colonial/modern humanism[60].

Authors like Lorenz[61] and Chakrabarty[62] have challenged Eurocentric notions of temporality displayed in historical periodization considering seriously the challenges of postcolonial

[59] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument."
[60] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, 9.
[61] Lorenz, "'The Times They Are a-Changin'. On Time, Space and Periodization in History."
[62] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. He has redirected his postcolonial point of departure to think about time in a big planetary scale as I showed before.

thinking[63]. Lorenz has highlighted the reluctance of historians to reconsider their periodization's and chronologies and how a few of them are historicizing notions of time previously taken for granted. According to Lorenz, the teleological conception of time, with its differentiation between stages and a progressive acceleration, allowed comparison between the primitive and the civilized (in evolutionary and developmental terms) from the eighteenth century. Furthermore, historical temporality was assembled by a spatial experience of the Other made possible by European colonialism. Decolonial authors, like Walter Mignolo[64], have also explained that coloniality, as a fundamental part of modernity, requires and articulation of history and geography based in colonial differences. For this reason, periodization, in its temporal and spatial dimensions has a performative political character that historians cannot simply ignore. However, these critiques on the coloniality of time and space have not developed how this is anchored in particular notions of the body.

Cross-fertilizing feminist posthuman and decolonial reflections can open the door to emphasize that this periodization relies bodily dimension that articulates a difference between the animal body and the human body in a temporal and spatial matter, not just between groups of beings (the beast and the human) but inside the individual itself (matter-body and meaning-reason) and between racial classifications of the human species (from whiteness to blackness). Through the articulation of a material and embodied difference, colonial notions of time and space could articulate a distinction between the self and the other. This could explain why, as feminist decolonial and black thinkers have highlighted[65], the processes of submission and conquest during the early stages of colonialism implied not only racializing, but also gendering, bestializing and infantilizing the dominated bodies. In addition, this could develop the insights of feminist posthuman approaches that complicate the dichotomy between matter and meaning regarding the body by questioning the temporal and spatial locations of these distinctions. Understanding the genealogy of this temporality and spatiality of embodied difference, as well as developing

[63] Postcolonial thinking here refers to Anglo-Saxon studies, which are distinguished from Latin American decolonial thinking through different chronological and geographical genealogies of the modern/colonial order. Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, *El giro decolonial*, 14–15.

[64] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*; Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*; Mignolo, *La idea de América Latina*.

[65] Ochoa Muñoz, "El Debate Sobre Las y Los Amerindios: Entre El Discurso de La Bestialización, La Feminización y La Racialización [The Debate about the Amerindians: Between Bestializing, Feminizing and Racializing Discourses]"; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument"; Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book."

theoretical discussions between traditions of thought, becomes fundamental to establish dialogues between feminist, posthuman, new materialist, black and decolonial efforts to unsettle the overrepresentation of the human as Man.

Chapter 2: The animal body of the past, the human body of the future: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Juan Ginés Sepúlveda and David Wilson

The Western image of the past of humanity as a savage, excessive and primitive state outside the human has a long history that goes back to the writings of Roman authors like Tacitus, Cicero, and Plutarch and the biblical narratives of the Genesis. Since then, the construction of a historical transition from a state outside civilization (the paradise or a state of savagery) had a fundamental role[66] in explaining the origins and nature of humanity. The dawn of the sixteenth century reshaped this image of the past and this hope for the future with the "encounter" of the "New World". The "virgin lands" became the presence of the past that the Western world had/needed to overcome[67]. The nineteenth century expanded the temporal horizons of this trope with the rise of prehistory and evolutionary theory, but it did not transform the prefiguration of the historical transition from an animal premodernity to a human modernity and the role of the "New World" in its reinforcement. The notions of premodernity, prehistory or protohistory kept reinforcing the imagination of historical time as a linear movement from animality towards humanity, civilization or modernity[68]. With the purpose of digging into the iterative citationality of this trope and its colonial character, this chapter analyzes how, in the discontinuous narrative contexts (in time and space) of the debate between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés Sepúlveda, and Daniel Wilson's coining of the term prehistory, the making of colonial difference implies an embodied location of the Other in the temporality of human history. Going further from postcolonial and decolonial critiques on teleological historical temporality[69], I explore how this requires an embodied differentiation between the animal and the human in which this Other becomes the physical embodiment of the past in the present.

2.1 Las Casas and Sepulveda: The porous and vulnerable body of the "Indian"

Between 1550 and 1551 Charles V of Spain summoned a debate in the city of Valladolid with the purpose of evaluating the rightfulness of the conquest and domination over the native peoples of the "New World". The main axis of the discussion was the nature of the "Indians"

[66] Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory," 17–18.
[67] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, xi.
[68] Schmidt and Mrozowski, *The Death of Prehistory*, 13.
[69] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*; Lorenz, ""The Times They Are a-Changin'. On Time, Space and Periodization in History"; Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.

and which was the best kind of rule to impose on them. The deliberation included a questioning of the ways these communities could be part of the European (Christian, human) way of life through conversion and political rule[70]. In this debate members of a designated council evaluated the arguments of two highlighted figures of the Spanish intellectual elite: Bartolomé De Las Casas and Juan Ginés Sepúlveda. Las Casas (c. 1484- 1566) had criticized the actions of the conquistadors, which led him to set the frame for the New Laws of the Indies (Leyes Nuevas) that forbade the enslavement of native populations in 1542[71]. Las Casas defended the humanity of the American native peoples and advocated for a pacific colonization, an opinion deeply rooted in his experience in the colonies. On the other hand, Juan Ginés Sepúlveda (1494- 1573) was a recognized cleric and Spanish intellectual that had served as royal confessor and chronicler[72]. He asserted the inferiority of the indigenous populations, which for him justified a permanent tutelage and the war for their subjection to Spanish Christian civility. In the academic analysis of this debate, Sepúlveda has been more clearly linked colonial discourses, while Las Casas has been analyzed as a precursor of human rights[73] and a defender of the "Indians" [74]. For this reason, hereunder I focus on Las Casas narratives, while showing his continuities with Sepúlveda's visions on the inferiority of the colonial Other.

The way Las Casas asserted the humanity of the "Indian" is deeply rooted in his hopes for a pacific subjection of the "New World". On one hand, he conceived the "natives" as having reason and volition that allowed them to develop a life with the knowledge of God and in society (civitas). For Las Casas, the "Indians" were potentially fully "rational animals" with the possibility to be indoctrinated and drawn to a life ruled by order, reason, and faith, which gave

[70] Alicia Mayer, "El Pensamiento de Bartolomé de Las Casas En El Discurso Sobre El Indígena [Bartolomé de Las Casas' Thought in the Discourse about the Indian]," 1125.

[71] The New Laws gave to the "Indian" the status of a free subject of the crown that needed, nevertheless, a tutelage to become part of Christian way of life. In this sense, the New Laws did no end in the long term (given the great pressure from the conquistadors) the "Encomienda", the main institution for the distribution, organization and governing of land and labor. The Crown conceded a piece of land to a colonizer which gave him the right to exploit the land and demand labor and tribute from the "Indians". The colonizer had the obligation to protect and evangelize the native population in return for his right of exploitation. See: Colmenares, *Historia económica y social de Colombia, 1537-1719 [Economic and social history of Colombia]*, chap. 3..

[72] Lepe-Carrión, "Civilización y Barbarie: La Instauración de La 'Diferencia Colonial' Durante Los Debates Del Siglo XVI y Su Encubrimiento Como 'Diferencia Cultural' [Barbarity and Civilization: The Instauration of the Colonial Difference during the Debates of the Sixteenth Century and Its Concealment as a Cultural Difference]," 71.

[73] García, "Bartolomé De Las Casas y Los Derechos Humanos [Bartolomé de Las Casas and Human Rights]."

[74] Alfonso Maestre Sánchez, "'Todas Las Gentes Del Mundo Son Hombres' El Gran Debate Entre Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566) y Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573) ["All the Peoples of the World Are Men" The Great Debate between Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés Sepúlveda]."

them the dignity to possess natural and inalienable rights[75]. As creatures of God and reason, "Indians" were capable of developing a human way of life, which made them members of humanity and required a duty of the Crown in relation to them. Las Casas thought that his time had fallen in an enormous mistake by "considering these oceanic peoples as lacking being men, making them brutal beasts uncapable of virtue and doctrine, ruining the good that they have and increasing the bad that can be found in them, as uncultured and forgotten for so many centuries, to them someway extend a hand"[76]. So, Las Casas asserted the capability of these peoples for living a virtuous life according to the doctrine of the Christian faith, something that could be solved by acculturation and the passage of time. It was a process that required the help and guidance of a leader; which was key to explain the historical transition towards humanity. Instead, Sepúlveda denied the full humanity of the "Indians" as lacking rational capacity, which condemned them to the state of natural servitude. He conflated the condition of the "Indian" with the state of natural submission of animals, savages, slaves, women and children, through which he denied them access to full humanity. By locating them in a different ontological realm, outside of reason and inside the body and the appetites, he justified their dominion as the imperfect part that must be dominated by the perfect one. He claimed that

> the natural and just is that the soul dominates over the body, that reason presides appetite (…) Man and other animals are subjected to this law. This is why beasts are tamed and subjected to the rule of man. This is why the male rules over the female, the grown man over the child, the father over the children, this is, the most powerful and perfect over the most weak and imperfect. This same thing is verified among men; some being by nature masters, others by nature serfs. The ones that excel in prudence and wit, although not in corporeal strength, these are by nature masters; instead, the tardy and lazy in understanding, although they have the corporeal strength to fulfill all their necessary obligations, are by nature serfs, and is just and expeditious that they are so[77].

While Las Casas provided the "Indian" with potential autonomous reason, Sepúlveda highlighted his lack of such feature and the naturality of his subordination. However, both based their classification of beings on the Aristotelian arguments about inferiority of slaves, animals and women, which were subjected to the rule of their bodily appetites contained in perception and desire, to external forces that put into question their capacity of self-government through

[75] García, "Bartolomé De Las Casas y Los Derechos Humanos [Bartolomé de Las Casas and Human Rights]."
[76] De las Casas, *Historia de Las Indias [History of the Indies]*, chap. Prologue p. 30. This and the following quotes, including the ones from Sepúlveda and excepting the ones from *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies,* have been translated by me from the Spanish editions.
[77] Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo o De Las Justas Causas de La Guerra Contra Los Indios [A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of War with Indians]*, 13.

the dominion of autonomous practical reason, this is, the ability to independently deliberatively define ends and means according to virtue[78]. However, this did not mean that they were completely unresponsive to reason but that they were incapable of using it in an autonomous way[79]. This classification between an ontological realm of servitude and one of mastery was reproduced at the individual level (reason vs bodily appetites), between different kinds of humans (masters vs slaves) and between different kind of beings (Man vs beasts of nature). It mixed the Aristotelian theory of natural slavery with a Christian cosmology, shown in texts like the ones from Pico della Mirandola, that showed Man's place and aspiration in the Great chain of beings from beasts to angels[80].

The virtual humanity of the "Indians" was constructed in the Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación* by showing their body as an extremely porous and vulnerable one, this is, a body highly sensitive to the affection of the outside world and susceptible to the rule of nature. This had a key role in placing the "native" closer to the animal phase of human history, but always with the potentiality to accomplish full humanity. Through his account of the destruction of the "New World", Las Casas presented the "Indians" as tame sheep or innocent lambs that have endured the violence of ferocious wolfs and lions. This animalization of both actors led him to advocate for the protection and tutelage of the natives against the barbarity of the conquistadors: "It was upon these gentle lambs, imbued by the Creator with all the qualities we have mentioned, that from the very first day they clapped eyes on them the Spanish fell like ravening"[81]. For that matter, the presentation of the "Indians" did not question the need or authority of the Spanish presence, but the way in which this process had taken place and the need to redirect it, given that these were not ferocious savages but servile, innocent and vulnerable ones[82]. His description highlighted that

> God made all the peoples of this area (…) as open and as innocent as can be imagined. The simplest people in the world – unassuming, long-suffering, unassertive, and submissive – they are without malice or guile, and are utterly faithful and obedient both to their own native lords and to the Spaniards in whose service they now find themselves. At the same time, they are among the least robust of human beings: their delicate constitutions make them unable to withstand hard

[78] Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery," 244.
[79] Heath, 244.
[80] Truglia, "Al-Ghazali and Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola on the Question of Human Freedom and the Chain of Being."
[81] De las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, chap. preface.
[82] "that this infinite multitude of souls, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, do not perish forever, but that they know their Creator and be saved" De las Casas, *Brevísima Relación de La Destrucción de Las Indias*, 155.

> work or suffering and render them liable to succumb to almost any illness, no matter how mild (…). They are also among the poorest people on the face of the earth; they own next to nothing and have no urge to acquire material possessions (…) Most of them go naked, save for a loincloth to cover their modesty; at best they may wrap themselves in a piece of cotton material a yard or two squares[83].

The "Indians" are described as innocent, simple, servile and pacific to show their susceptibility and need for protection and guidance. Furthermore, these characteristics are supported by describing their bodies as delicate and vulnerable to harm. This description is enhanced by highlighting the nudity of their bodies and their lack of material possessions. Receptivity and possibility of external affection are two key characteristics of the body of the "Indian" in Las Casas narrative. By adding simplicity, goodness and pureness to the picture, the "Indian" presented here reflects more the picture of the biblical Garden of Eden[84] corrupted by sin and bestial animality. America and its natives become feminized and infantilized by showing their innocent, fertile, servile, vulnerable and precarious nature, which makes easy to justify a paternal rule over them. However, America is also a place of another kind of animality, of bestial and incontrollable violence of lions and wolfs, which Las Casas transfers to the Spanish that become bestial in the "New world". In his words, "Spanish fell like ravening wolves upon the fold, or like tigers and savage lions who have not eaten meat for days"[85]. By contrast, this is the trope in which Sepúlveda locates the "Indian". F`or him, their bestialized nature justified a war against them, given that their bestiality was excessive and incontrollable by their own autonomous reason. Sepúlveda asserted this bestiality by insisting in practices such as cannibalism and human sacrifices, which proved their savagery: "you cannot believe that before the arrival of the Christians they lived in the peaceful reign of Saturn depicted by poets, instead, they were continuously in fierce war between each other, with so much rage that victory was valuable just if they could satisfy their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies"[86].

Again, inferiority was justified by their porosity to the materiality of their bodies, their appetites and instincts, death, lack of moderation, in other words, by the submission to the external rule of nature outside the realm of civilization and culture. The tension around the "Indians" shows

[83] De las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, sec. Preface.
[84] Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind*, 18.
[85] De las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, chap. Preface.
[86] Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo o De Las Justas Causas de La Guerra Contra Los Indios [A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of War with Indians]*, 17.

a correlated tension regarding the notion of femininity as the locus of purity and sin[87]. The bodies located in the American continent are displayed precisely in this tension between an innocent and vulnerable animality and a ferocious and violent one. It is the source of sin and the source of purity. In any case, America was a place where humanity reversed. There were no proper humans there, it was the place of the Other.

Under this light, it is significant that the body of the child and the body of the woman are the main receptors of violence throughout Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación*. The mutilation of this innocent flesh, anterior to the time of humanity, highlights the atrocity of the conquistadors' actions: "all those orphaned by him, all those whose children he stole, all those whose wives he took, all the women he widowed, and all the adultery, violence and rape that could be laid at his door"[88]. The image of the vulnerability of the body of the "Indian" is reinforced by associating terrifying violence with the flesh of those considered in need of protection[89]. Burnt, dismembered, impaled and massacred bodies, the "Indians" lose any kind of human (in its Euro-Christian version) potentiality and become flesh[90], undifferentiated meat at the disposal of beasts. In the case of Sepúlveda, the body of the "Indian" was not just the one that suffers violence but the one that displays it, it is the body that eats human flesh, spills blood without any purpose and obeying external and monstrous instincts: "banish the heinous blunders and the portentous crime of devouring human flesh, crimes that offend nature (…) these monstrous rites with the immolation of human victims"[91]. This kind of monstrous bestiality is what justifies the war against the "Indians" according to Sepúlveda. By showing these bodies as vulnerable flesh, porous to incontrollable, ferocious and external impulses, Las Casas and Sepúlveda made visible their inhumanity as the annihilation of the potential of being saved by entering into the Christian

[87] Spanish colonizers brought with themselves an image of the ideal woman constructed in the dichotomy of two figures: Eve and Mary. Through the first woman, subordination was justified by explaining the source of evil. On the contrary, Mary was seen as a redeemer of evil, a sign of purity and chastity. See: Borja, "Sexualidad y Cultura Femenina En La Colonia [Sexuality and Culture in the Colonial Period]."

[88] De las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, chap. The province and Kingdom of Guatemala.

[89] "All those captured – pregnant women, mothers of newborn babes, children and old men – were thrown into the pits and impaled alive" De las Casas, chap. The province and Kingdom of Guatemala.

[90] This could be interpreted through the concept of flesh and pornothropy developed by Alexander Weheliye in his appropriation of the work of Hortense Spillers. See: Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.

[91] Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo o De Las Justas Causas de La Guerra Contra Los Indios [A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of War with Indians]*, 27.

world. When this body was thorn into pieces or turned others into pieces it could be visible as the loss of virtual humanity.

Developing this point further, in *Apologética Historia Sumaria,* Las Casas explained what it meant to be barbaric and the kind of barbarisms there were[92]. The first type referred to those whose reason had been degenerated leading them to inhuman acts and denying the consideration of their wrong opinions and acts. Then, there were those that lacked the study of letters and a proper use of language. Third, being barbaric referred to a savage state that such individuals were unable to leave behind given their natural lack of practical and autonomous reasoning. These were the serfs by nature that required the perpetual rule by the wisest. Finally, Las Casas talked about all peoples that were not Christian, either from a lack of knowledge of it or from a denial to recognize the rightfulness of its principles. This explanation implied that just the first and third definition entailed an ontological difference that could not be overcome given the lack of reason of these subjects[93]. Instead, other ways of barbarisms could be virtually exceeded through time and guidance: "not all barbarians lack reason or are serfs by nature, and cannot be, given this explanation for their barbarism, subjugated by force, because they are kingdoms and free"[94]. Sepúlveda and Las Casas shared their articulation of the colonial difference between the barbaric and the civilized, what changed was the kind of barbarism they assigned to the "Indian". In any case, for neither of them, were these kinds of "barbarians" full and complete members of the community of Men, which brought them closer to the bestiality of the animal, this is, to being ruled by the external forces of the body, the appetites conditioned by perception and desire.

Christianity had a fundamental role in the possible overcoming of this animal state. Indeed, it was a condition of possibility for entering into the world of Man and exiting the one of beasts: "all of those that lack of the true faith, not fully men, but beasts they are and can be named as such"[95]. Without Christianity, Las Casas argued, there could not be a perfect society, since the lack of the Christian faith is what led to their imperfections (idolatry, human sacrifices, cannibalism). Hence, a true human community, Las Casas said, washed its imperfections through

[92] De las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria [Apologetic and Summary History]*, chaps. 264–266.
[93] Lepe-Carrión, "Civilización y Barbarie: La Instauración de La 'Diferencia Colonial' Durante Los Debates Del Siglo XVI y Su Encubrimiento Como 'Diferencia Cultural' [Barbarity and Civilization: The Instauration of the Colonial Difference during the Debates of the Sixteenth Century and Its Concealment as a Cultural Difference]," 81.
[94] De las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria [Apologetic and Summary History]*, chap. 45, p. 690.
[95] De las Casas, chap. 266, p. 691.

the Christian faith allowing the discernment of the proper goals and means for practical and autonomous reason. In his words, "so much easier to the culture of the true and perfect virtues that are based in the Christian religion (because this is the only one that rushes and cleans all the feces and barbarity of the uncultured nations) can be induced and persuaded those that in greater part and in many particularities concerning social life and human language are ruled and governed by reason"[96]. As it is possible to see in this quote, being governed by reason was a precondition required to induce easily the Christian way of life on what is considered a barbaric population or individual. Conversion was required given that only through Christianity barbarism could be truly overcome to reach human virtue, because, in his words, "without faith and without Christian doctrine, there cannot be in any community of men something perfect, but full or mixed with many imperfections" [97]. This is why Las Casas defended so deeply the peaceful evangelization of the "Indians", given that for him they had the potential faculty (reason) to recognize and develop the Christian life as the true, universal and perfect one.

On the other hand, conversion was not enough for Sepúlveda. Instead, he claimed that subjugation was the only way to bring these "savages" closer to humanity and virtue. He said that "such peoples must subdue to the rule of cult princes and nations, so, exposed to the virtue and prudence of their laws, they can depose barbarity and reduce to a more human life"[98]. Political subjugation of the "Indian" peoples was justified by Sepúlveda because it could introduce them to the virtues and correctness of the Christian and "human" way of life, opening the door for the overcoming/taming of their bestiality. What must be highlighted here is that both of them asserted the division and hierarchy between a state of humanity and a state of animality, the only thing that changed was the place in which they located the "Indian" and the way they conceptualized the transition from one side to the other.

One important part of this argument, particularly for De Las Casas, was to place the "Indian" in an anterior phase inside a temporality of history directed towards the accomplishment of full and perfect humanity. What defined this previous stage (not just regarding the "Indian" but the savage, wild or animal way of life) was a pre-social condition with nomadism, lack or agriculture, without law or letters, living in nudity, and lacking knowledge of God. According to Las Casas,

[96] De las Casas, *Historia de Las Indias [History of the Indies]*, chap. Prologue p. 25.
[97] De las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria [Apologetic and Summary History]*, chap. 45, p. 118.
[98] Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo o De Las Justas Causas de La Guerra Contra Los Indios [A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of War with Indians]*, 13.

"there was a time in which men always lived in the fields and bushes as beasts wandering, surviving from wild food as animals; for some reason they were not governed but everything revolved around corporeal forces; they did not achieve any knowledge of God, exercised religion, or reason; (…) the utility of the equality of Law and justice was ignored"[99]. In this previous stage, Las Casas said, the source of movement was not the rule of reason, but the display of immediate and external embodied forces that led to sin and wrong doings.

It is key to highlight how he linked this previous historical stage with a phase of animality outside a life in an organized community and in which the blind forces of the body were the rule. Bodily, animal and irrational acts, he insisted, did not require time and were immediate since the womb, while the things produced by reason required time, cultivation and help by others. This seems to suggest that organized social life provided the mediation and cultivation necessary to provide a space in which humans became independent and immune from these forces and were able to tame them according to their purposes. Law, religion, reason, industry, writing, agriculture and sedentary life were signs and provided the necessary conditions for the separation and independence from such animal/wild state. He explained that the animal like character of this way of living brought the "barbaric" subjects closer to a primitive stage of humanity that had been overcome by the civilized subjects through time and the actualization of the autonomous force of reason over the extrinsic forces of the body[100]. It is clear then that in this differentiation between stages of historical temporality there is a lack of time (or the stillness in an original phase subjected to external forces) in the side of the animal, while developing into the side of the human requires the deployment of time that leads to changes through the exercise of autonomous reason. Then, this previous stage is thought as the Other to a true human way of life in which the potentialities of the human are realized and not just virtual. Historical time was articulated as the desired, not always actual or given, transition from animality to humanity.

In this sense, Las Casas said that living in this primitive stage did not imply a lack of reason, but a lack of cultivation through education and guidance that allowed the actualization of such

[99] De las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria [Apologetic and Summary History]*, chap. 47, p. 123. The same idea is found in the following passage of the prologue to *Historia de las Indias,* but focusing more on irrationality, idolatry and sin: "como no hubo generacion ó gentes de las pasadas, ni ántes del diluvio ni despues, por política y discreta que fuese, que á sus principios no tuviese muchas faltas ferinas é irracionabilidades, viviendo sin policía, y despues de la primera edad exclusive, abundase de gravísimos y nefandos delitos que á la idolatría se siguen, y otras muchas, que hoy son bien políticas y cristianas, que ántes que la fe se les predicase sin casas y sin ciudades y como animales brutos vivian" p. 21

[100] De las Casas, chap. 48, p. 128.

potentialities. Indeed, referring to Cicero and Plutarch, he explained the transition towards a human way of life as the result of a pacific persuasion of a lord, or of the welcoming of foreign peoples that could show the way towards their own realization[101]. For this reason, Las Casas tried to locate the "natives" in a temporal locus that was between full humanity and animality, defending that some of them were in a more advanced stage of history than the pure animal and primitive origins of Man, but without entering yet fully and actually into his idea of humanity. This is why, considering the existence of communities living in a very similar state of "primitivism" in the "New World", Las Casas attributed this difference to a matter of time and experience: "they haven't had place or time of growing and having experience in this region of things"[102]. The virtual and potential humanity of peoples living in such a "backward" stage was explained through their figuration as infantile figures with a lack of education, or an uncultivated soil. In his own words, "we find such wild peoples in the world, they are like uncultivated soil that can produce easily bad weed and useless thorns but has inside so much natural virtue that when it is cultivated and tilled it produces domestic, healthy, and beneficial fruits"[103]. Cultivation through the exercise of reason is what separated the caesura between a prehistoric and a historic time, between animal and properly human times.

Sepúlveda also accepted the virtual humanity of the Indian to a certain degree, claiming that time and the right dominion could bring natives closer to a human way of life, which gave them the right to a better treatment. For him, the ontological disjunction between the civilized and the barbarian was also a matter of time: "when time itself makes them slowly more human and the probity of customs and religion flourishes among them, more freedom and a sweeter treatment must be given to them"[104]. However, this temporal transition from being beast to being human was not clearly projected into a general history of the European Man. It is clear, nevertheless, that his Aristotelian arguments place the peoples of the "New world" in an anterior phase of animality, outside a social and cultivated life with written language, laws, institutions and history that allowed the exercise of autonomous reason. In his words, "in these little men you will barely find remains of humanity, they do not possess any science and do not even know letters or

[101] De las Casas, chap. 47, p. 123.
[102] De las Casas, chap. 47 p. 122.
[103] De las Casas, chap. 48, p. 128.
[104] Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo o De Las Justas Causas de La Guerra Contra Los Indios [A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of War with Indians]*, 31.

preserve any monument of their history, just certain obscure reminiscence (…) neither written laws, just barbaric institutions and customs"[105].

From this, it is possible to say that Las Casas made sense of the difference of these Other ways of life as a temporal difference that was the reflection the historical development of Western communities in the past. This means that he was able to explain the condition of "barbarity" by locating it in his sense of the past of his own community, which made this last one the image of the present and the future. There was a notion of the history of humanity as the transition from an animal state governed by the extrinsic forces of the body, thanks to which it was a state full of sin, immediate and less developed through time, to a human one in which autonomous reason was exercised, allowing the organization on complex societies governed by laws and institutions, with written language and the proper religious beliefs that provided immunity to external instincts ruled by desire and perception . This particular notion of humanity as living in *policía* (police) and with a knowledge of the Christian God became the telos of historical time, the source of movement and desired arrival point of every virtually human community. Sepúlveda shared this notion of humanity as the telos of history when he established the differentiation between the savage native and the civilized Spanish. Written language, religion, science and a notion of history was what these "Little men" lacked. To conclude, Las Casas assertion of the humanity of the natives was defended as a virtual capacity and not a fully actual one, in a similar way as Sepúlveda does. This was accomplished through a conflation of the historical development of different communities with the historical development of the Christian/ European/ Western notion of the human that dictated the path.

In these narratives, the innocent or bestial animality of the "Indians", anchored in the vulnerability and porosity of their body, is what made possible a peaceful or violent transition to the realm of the fully human and an exit from a primitive stage closer to animality. This backwardness in the civilization process required dependency in order to bring out as much as possible their responsiveness to autonomous reason. Immature, backward, underdeveloped, their condition relied in their anachronic state in history. They were the face of a past that the sovereign had managed to overcome, which justified the supervision/rule of a paternal figure. This is a proto-idea of the notion of progress and a particular way to articulate historical time as the overcoming of an animal, vulnerable and porous body, which justifies its subjection. Hence,

[105] Sepúlveda, 17.

it is located inside a colonial matrix in which the Other (the beast, the animal) is placed in a state anterior to humanity. This idea is the door that opens a philosophy of history that supposes a difference and a model that dictates the path of development through time, from the animal to the human, from barbarity to civilization. In this teleological story, America is the place of inhumanity, the space in which innocent and evil beasts can still be found.

2.2 David Wilson: the animal body of the prehistoric man

The nineteenth century evidenced a great chronological revolution in the study of the past in the West. Archeological, anthropological, geological and biological findings (specially the finding of flint tools, remains of extinct species and the development of evolutionary theory), allowed by a new wave of colonial expansionism[106], shook the biblical certainties regarding the origins and antiquity of humanity found in the Genesis[107]. Through the studies of antiquities, material culture and the evolution of the human body, the deep past was found and with it the image of the prehistoric man emerged[108]. The study of the prehistoric man extended the chronologies of the beginning of humankind, of the threshold that allowed the transition from a state of nature to a state of culture. More precisely, it allowed the expansion of older tropes regarding the existence of a human past outside the life of civility. Indeed, the study of Man's past divided between the study of primitive peoples, living in a state closer to the state of nature without written evidence to be analyzed, and the study of civilizations with writings to be studied as evidence of their great accomplishments. This is how history split from prehistory, taking different chronological points of departure, methodologies, sources and disciplinary fields[109]. The first relied deeply on the findings of the natural sciences regarding man as a natural organism and the material world organized by laws, while the second focused on the study of the culture of modern civilizations[110].

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the term prehistory gained popularity thanks to the work of Daniel Wilson (1816-1892) in his book *Prehistoric Man* (1862) and John Lubbock's (1834-1913) *Prehistoric Times* (1865)[111]. Both works relied on the three-stage system of

106 Schmidt and Mrozowski, *The Death of Prehistory*, 15.
107 Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*, 2.
108 Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory," 22.
109 Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory"; Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*, chap. 1; Lorenz, "'The Times They Are a-Changin'. On Time, Space and Periodization in History."
110 Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory," 35.
111 Kehoe, "'Prehistory's' History."

classification of tools (Stone, Bronze, Iron) developed previously by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen in 1837[112]. This system implied a teleological direction from the primitive use of simple stone and wood tools to the fabrication of complex weapons and utensils made of bronze and iron as the characteristic of civilized societies. In this way, it iterated the narratives of material progress already found in Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment[113].This translated into a story that imagined human origins as hunter-gatherers and the human present and future as a highly advanced and technological one. While extending the chronology of the origins of humanity, the chronological revolution of the nineteenth century did not alter much the narrative of progress from a primitive/animal past to a civilized present and future. The bestial beings living in the deep prehistorical past provided an image against which the progress of the present and the hopes for the future were measured[114]. It asserted linearity of historical time with its directionality from the non-human towards modernity, towards humanity.

The "New World" again became the embodied presence of such primitive past. The investigation of "untouched" communities living there was a fundamental methodology for testing theories that tried to explain the transition from a state of nature to a state of culture. In *Prehistoric Man,* Daniel Wilson examined the "New World" as a field that could provide the necessary evidence to make sense of this period of Europe's past[115]. Lubbock too made an extensive study of the "modern savages" in his *Prehistoric times,* contrasting the way of living of peoples in New Zealand, America and Africa with the present state of European civilization[116]. The purpose of both was to show how this "prehistoric" communities followed a historical path analogous to the journey of advanced societies. The difference, both concluded, was a matter of virtual time and lack of cultivation which had left these societies in a state of infancy in comparison with the maturity of the "Old World".

The shift from a state of primitiveness found in the deep past to the development of civilization was, according to Wilson, a transition "from infancy to vigorous manhood"[117]. The "New World" could provide a way to know which were the factors that led to this fundamental change

[112] Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory," 25.
[113] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, 45–71.
[114] Schmidt and Mrozowski, *The Death of Prehistory*, chap. 1.
[115] Wilson, *Prehistoric Man*, chap. I. As this version of the Wilson's text does not have pagination, I will reference the book chapters.
[116] Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, chaps. XI–XIII.
[117] Wilson, *Prehistoric Man*, chap. I.

since it constituted the living presence of the past of Western history and its development was thought as an iteration of the path that European societies had already been through. The isolation and lack of contact of these communities, they argued, permitted a closer access to the natural and pristine state of man since the evidence was still alive and present. Wilson arrived to such conclusion through his experience living in North America, claiming that "much that had become familiar to me in fancy, as pertaining to a long obliterated past, was here the living present; while around me, in every stage of transition, lay the phases of savage and civilised life"[118]. This is how the "New World" provided access to the infancy of humanity, the primitive condition in which history began, and reproduced the phases that led to full human development[119]. In Wilson's words, "there the latest developments of human progress are abruptly brought face to face with the most unprogressive phases of savage nature; and many old problems are being solved anew under novel conditions"[120]. The "New World" was the key to understand the origins of civilization.

Wilson considered that this unprogressive phase of savage nature brought the communities of these regions closer to nature as hunter gatherers living still in the Stone Age. Wild, nomadic, rude, bestial, this man was subjected to rule of nature because of his lack of complex tools. There was no history, no complex art, no literacy, no metallurgy. It was a state in which Man has not been emancipated from the rule of nature, condemning him to dedicate all his energies to the satisfaction of his bodily appetites and survival through the immediate use of nature. Wilson explained this phase in the following terms: "as a Stone Period signifies, as has been already sufficiently indicated, that condition in which, in the absence of metals, and the ignorance of the simplest rudiments of metallurgy, man has to find materials for the manufacture of his tools, and the supply of his mechanical requirements, in the commoner objects which nature places within his reach"[121]. It is precisely this subjection to their natural needs, given by the lack of industry, what condemned these "primitive men" to an unintellectual life in state anterior to true humanity. Wilson argued that "the very element which begets the unintellectual condition of the savage is that his whole energies are expended, and all his thoughts are absorbed, in providing daily food and clothing, and the requisite tools by which those are to be secured"[122]. Living in

[118] Wilson, chap. Introduction.
[119] Wilson, chap. II.
[120] Wilson, chap. Introduction.
[121] Wilson, chap. VIII.
[122] Wilson, chap. II.

this primitive animality implied for Wilson the subjection to the most immediate natural needs, which occupied most of the "primitive man's" energies and skills. The porosity of this primitive creature to the external rule of nature foreclosed the possibilities to develop a way of life independent and autonomous in relation to the forces and needs of nature. The dominion to these extrinsic forces was the reason why "we see him, even as an artificer, presenting characteristics which are altogether wanting in the lower animals"[123].

The "savage hunter-gatherer" was in an intermediate state in relation to Man, the master and creator of his own world, and the animal who suffered passively the commands of its natural instincts and needs. According to Wilson, "a savage hunter, armed solely with weapons of flint and bone, frequenting the lake and river margins of a continent clothed in primeval forests and haunted by enormous beasts of prey. Displaced by intrusive migrations, this rude pioneer disappears, and his traces are overlaid or erased by the improved arts of his supplanters. The infancy of the historic nations begins. Metallurgy, architecture, science, and letters follow, effacing the faint records of Europe's nomadic pioneers"[124]. According to Wilson, such state requires the return to primary instincts which sometimes led to a display of fierceness, aggressiveness and cruelty or to a state of passiveness and weakness[125], which emphasized the subjection to corporeal and natural forces. To develop this trope, Wilson uses the examples of the Caribs of the Antilles, whose fame as human flesh eaters, bestial and fierce warriors dated back to the beginnings of the sixteenth century. Instead, the communities of the larger Antilles like the ones to which Columbus arrived were presented as submissive and servile. After this animal state, civilization, marked by written language, architecture, accumulated knowledge and industry, provided Man's immunity to nature and, with this, the possibility to grow in separation from it and aiming towards its mastery.

If the Stone Age man was the imagined and present past of humanity, Wilson anchored his perception of the present and his hopes for the future in a notion of humanity centered in the potential for cultivation, for civilization. He conceived the human as rational being with the potential to develop a civilized life through the accumulation of knowledge and experience. For this reason, civilization was the actualization of the capacities already latent in the human physical

[123] Wilson, chap. VII.
[124] Wilson, chap. I.
[125] Wilson, chap. IV.

configuration: "Civilisation is for man development. It is self-originated; it matures all the faculties natural to him, and is progressive and seemingly ineradicable"[126]. The distinctive feature of humanity were not the innate faculties given by its biological configuration, but the progressive and collective improvement and growth of these potentials. For example, it was not technology in itself that gave a proper humanity to Man, Wilson showed multiple examples of animals like beavers or bees that have a technology that matches many human constructions. He said that

> the works of the ant and the beaver, the coral zoophyte and the bee, display singular ingenuity and powers of combination; and each feathered songster builds its nest with wondrous forethought, in nature's appointed season. But the instincts of the inferior orders of creation are in vain compared with the devices of man (…) Their most ingenious works cost them no intellectual effort to acquire the craft, and experience adds no improvements in all the continuous labours of the wonderful mechanicians (…) To such architects and artists history does not pertain, for their arts knew no primeval condition of imperfection, and witness no progress. Of their works, as of their organic structure, one example is a sufficient type of the whole[127].

In opposition to the animal, what gave humanity to Man was his historicity, the ability to learn from the past and plan for an improved future in which his potentialities are progressively fulfilled. Wilson's differentiation between the animal and the human presupposed that animal technology was the product of uncontestable natural drives that programmed each being to act as such. Their behaviours was biologically and uncontestably determined by external natural forces, while humans, through culture and society, could progressively become autonomous from such drives, master them and improve them. He argued that "accumulated knowledge is the grand characteristic of man. Every age bequeaths some results of its experience; and this constitutes the vantage-ground of succeeding generations. The deterioration which follows in the wake of every impediment to such transmission and accumulation of knowledge no less essentially distinguishes man from the ingenious spinners, weavers, and builders, who require no lesson from the past, and bequeath no experience to the future"[128]. The core of humanity, he said, was the capacity for progression or degradation, the ability to thrive towards perfection and complexity through cultivation and learning. What distinguished Man was his plasticity, this is, his capacity for cultivation and improvement through which he was able to surpass nature, build his own future and master his own materiality. In other words, living in civilization made possible

[126] Wilson, chap. I.
[127] Wilson, chap. II.
[128] Wilson, chap. II.

the progressive construction of a bubble in which Man became independent from his natural and given drives.

Wilson explained the gulf between the "New and the Old World" through this lack of cultivation through time. The "primeval and childish man" stayed in a state of primary instincts and infantile reason, but this could be overcome with the accumulation of experience and knowledge. The path towards the full potential of humanity and civilization was not a fixed trajectory. It could have different speeds and paths given that the plasticity inherent in Man's nature implied the possibility for improvement and degradation. This malleable and plastic body could go forward or backward, but it had a clear line of direction:

> Man depends for all on his teachers; and when moral and intellectual deterioration return him to the toolless condition of the uncivilised nomad, he is thrown back on the resources of his infantile reason and primary instincts, and reaches that point from which the primeval colonist has had to start anew in all lands and work his way upwards, through stone, and bronze, and iron periods, into the full co-operation of a civilised community, treasuring the experience of the past, and making for itself a new and higher future[129]

Wilson highlighted continuously that even the European went back to primitive stages when he settled in the New World[130]. Starting again from primary instincts and infantile reason the European had to reproduce the historical trajectory of his culture, going from stone to iron, from animality to humanity. Even if Wilson recognized the different speeds and states of human development of peoples around the world, his vision of their historicity was teleological. It identified a point of departure (the animal primitiveness of the primeval man) and a desired point of departure (a highly technological and intellectually developed humanity). Man "is capable of searching into the past, anticipating the future, of looking inward, and being a law unto himself"[131]. Then, moving forward in this narrative of progress, this is, transitioning from a state of primitiveness to one of civilization, requires a human agency that provides Man's immunity to nature. In other words, it needs the mastery of the own past, through which the present and the future are built as a progressive separation from a state of animality that actualizes the

[129] Wilson, chap. VII.
[130] "There the old process was reversed; and the offspring of Europe's highest civilisation, abruptly transferred to the virgin forest and steppes of the American wilderness, was left amid the widening inheritance of new clearings to develop whatever tendencies lay dormant in the artificial European man" Wilson, chap. I.
[131] Wilson, chap. VII.

intellectual potentiality of a Man capable of shaping his own materiality and leaving behind the porosity to external forces of his own embodied self.

It is possible to say that there were two kinds of porous bodies located in different historical times. First, a body opened to external and natural drives which foreclose its own autonomous and fast change, condemning it to a slow temporality and stillness. Second, a body that controls its porosity to these extrinsic forces, making it immune to them, by progressively building and exercising the dominion of internal and autonomous ones. This last one refers to a plastic body[132] that can be molded according to self-determined goals and means that manage the porosity to outward determinations. The contrast between these two bodies was fundamental to nineteenth century discussions about race, which debated its environmental/cultural or biological determination. Furthermore, as Schuller has shown[133], racial differentiation in evolutionary theorizations of the nineteenth century implied a classification between the civilized and the savage according to the kind of impressibility of their bodies, which justified the possibility to the civilized to control their own evolution through the control of such impressibility. This does not mean that the savage body lacks porosity and malleability, but that the agent that shapes it is external and uncontrollable rather than internal and self-determined.

2.3 The colonial/modern temporalities of bodies

By analyzing two discontinuous discursive contexts, this chapter has shown that the modern iterative citationality of the historical temporality of the body, as the transition from an animal body to a human one, is fundamentally anchored in a colonial differentiation that emerged in its intertwinement with a coloniality of power. Walter Mignolo[134] explains that this entwinement between the colonial and the modern requires a recognition of the ways in which Western modernity emerged with and through coloniality. In this sense, understanding this darker side[135]

[132] I take this term from Susan Bordo, who highlights that the Modern body involves an enhancing of the body's plasticity as is shaped by individual wishes and self-determined goals. For her this is an essential part of a consumerist imagination of human freedom and bodily determination. She locates the emergence of this plastic body in the second half on the twentieth century in the Western world. However, I argue that this has an essential part in the development of the modern/colonial body since sixteenth century and its racial connotations. See: Bordo, *Unbearable Weight Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, 245–77.

[133] Schuller, "Taxonomies of Feeling: The Epistemology of Sentimentalism in Late-Nineteenth-Century Racial and Sexual Science."

[134] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 20. This concept is also the core of his more historical research like his rethinking of the Renaissance in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.

[135] Mignolo, *La idea de América Latina*, 18.

or, in Sylvia Wynter's words, "destructive underside of that broader narrative of modernity"[136] must be at the core of any attempt to disturb Western epistemologies. Then, unsettling the modern prefigurations of the temporality of the body requires digging into the different axis of colonial differentiation that establish a planetary classification[137]. This is, the definition of places of liminality and superiority for every kind of being in the planet according to a universal measure, which is, according to Sylvia Wynter, the notion of humanity overrepresented as Man[138]. Man becomes the source of desire, hope, the central destination and cause of the several structures that materialize internal and external borders among a realm of non-being (the nonhuman/not-quite-human) and being (the human). This classification fuels the aspiration to construct global/universal designs at the center of modern/colonial epistemologies[139].

Las Casas, Sepúlveda and Wilson articulate this classification through the construction of a historical transition from an animal body and way of living to a fully human one. For them, the "New World" reflects the past of the civilized world, an anterior stage of humanity not completely emancipated from the animal condition. A key aspect of this differentiation is showing how the history of humanity and true historical development starts once communities leave behind their animal embodied past an embrace a present and a future ruled by reason. They add a historical and temporal dimension, deeply rooted in a transition from an animal embodiment (porous to extrinsic forces) to a human one (porous to self-determinate ones), to the colonial differentiation in which they are embedded and reiterate. Hence, the historical temporality of their narratives implies an embodied differentiation that has different levels through which the distinction between Self and Other emerges 1) between groups of beings (man/animal or civilization/nature); 2) inside humanity as a particular group of beings whose internal differentiation is built according to their proximity to such animality and state of primitiveness (in terms of gender, race, maturity, accumulation); 3) inside the individual itself split in two ontological realms: a materiality (body/organism) and a meaning (reason/ consciousness). This means that in each level beings are located in different times, spaces and aesthetics according to the distance in relation to a state of animal porosity.

136 Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 187.
137 Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 17.
138 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," 260.
139 Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 17.

Mignolo suggests that the establishment of colonial difference required not just the colonization and homogenization of memory and history[140], but also of space and geography[141]. According to him, the universalization of the teleological and accumulative temporality of history, defined by the possession of written language, a sign of civilization, as well as the division between the "Old and the New world", were fundamental aspects for the development of the modern/colonial order. To this, Sylvia Wynter adds the importance of an aesthetic corporeal measure[142] that classifies or locates beings inside or outside humanity. The genealogy of colonial/modern human that Wynter traces back to the sixteenth century highlights precisely the importance of the body in the described dimensions and levels of this planetary classification. It emphasizes that producing and grasping material differences between bodies as a lack of "the West's ontologically absolute self-description"[143] was fundamental for this classification. She proposes that coloniality reshaped profoundly the Western notion of humanity by providing the physical referents of alterity, around which the human was overrepresented as the Western Man. For her, the colonial Other (Negras/os, Indias/os) became the physical embodiment of human otherness[144] in the modern/colonial world.

Wynter identifies two essential shifts in her genealogy of the colonial/modern human: the first during the sixteen century (centered on human reason) and the second in the nineteenth century (centered on the biological organism). In the context of the colonization of the Americas, the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, the Christian version of mankind as the fallen flesh was transformed into one for whom God created the world, commanding Man to rule and know all its creatures by exerting his autonomous reason[145]. The dichotomy between rational and irrational transformed the anxiety towards sin into an anxiety about "being enslaved to the irrational aspects of your "state of nature", human nature"[146]. Nature started to be that place of anxious extra-human agency that needed to be known and controlled to serve Man purposes on

[140] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 125–71. Here he addresses the centrality of the written language to idea of recording of history in the colonial/modern context of the sixteenth century. However, there is not a discussion on historical periodization as such. See also: Lorenz, "'The Times They Are a-Changin'. On Time, Space and Periodization in History."
[141] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 259–315.
[142] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 60.
[143] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," 282.
[144] Wynter, 265.
[145] Wynter, 278.
[146] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 181.

Earth. This expressed the placing of Man in the in-between of animality and divinity, but aiming always towards the divine by dominating irrational, lower, sensory passions and beings through his rationality[147]. In this movement towards the divine, the "negro" and the "Indian" were produced as beings closer to those irrational and external passions and as the "missing link between rational humans and irrational animals"[148]. The nineteenth century, Wynter explains, saw the emergence of a purely biocentric version of the human (Man 2) that placed the classification of the great chain of being in the natural and purely biological organism. The classification between the irrational and the irrational was now the differentiation between the selected and dysselected. In this way, the possibilities for reaching a fully human status close to the mastery previously attributed to divine beings were sustain by in an organic and incontestable basis. In Wynter's words, "one's selected or dysselected status could not be known in advance, it would come to be verified by one's (or one's group's) success or failure in life"[149]. With a different time, a different space and a different body, in the "negra/o" and the "india/o", the physical referents of alterity in relation to the human, the individual, intra-species and inter-species levels of planetary differentiation intersected and were fixed.

The subjection of human nature to the extra-human forces of biology attempted to naturalize/determine the colonial matrix of planetary classification by proving the supposed inability of some groups to progress according to the potentialities of autonomous human reason. The "homo oeconomicus" emerged as a subject that, enabled by his natural possibilities, was able to master nature and not just be subjected to it. The biological structure of the organism was the universal base to classify the selection or dysselection of groups upon which the cultural or social aspects of human development could allow some to advance in the teleological path to development. In this way, an organic basis is supposed to preexist, fix, universalize and legitimate the colonial planetary classifications. In Wynter's words, the organic base of the human "supposedly preexists—rather than coexists with—all the models of other human societies and their religions / cultures. That is, all human societies have their ostensibly natural scientific organic basis, with their religions / cultures being merely superstructural"[150]. This implied also that just some kinds of humans, supported by such fixed organic base could thrive towards the

147 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," 290.
148 Wynter, 266.
149 Wynter, 310.
150 Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 21.

desired version of the human separated from animality through "techno industrial economic growth"[151], a sign of the fulfillment of the human potentialities contained in Man's biological organism. The telos, the reason for movement and object of desire of this biocentric version of the human evolution was/is the "successful "masterer of Natural Scarcity""[152].

Coming from a vitalist, posthumanist and feminist preoccupation, Elizabeth Grosz highlights that this modern version of the human implies a restrictive notion of nature that also needs to be rethought in any attempt to decenter Man. Without attributing a colonial side to the successive temporal relation between biology and culture established here, she explains that here "the given, that is to say nature, is that which is to be transformed and overcome or superseded through human labor, which remakes the given according to its own interests"[153]. With this, Grosz highlights that the modern ontologies of the body and their relation to history involve not just a biological determinism, but also an assertion of human (Man) agency in opposition to the agency of the nonhuman forces of nature, as well as the establishment of a relation of domination rooted in the anxiety of losing control over a self-owned fate. In her words, this ontology presents "the fabricating, productive, form giving structure of the social and the cultural, and of nature as what must be overcome, remade"[154].

Considering Wynter's genealogy of the human, is clear that the transformations of the versions of humanity are not located in a temporal succession. Rather, these versions overlap and give multiple faces to the modern/colonial genre of being human. Following this thought, it is possible to say that the ontology of the modern/colonial body overlaps biological determinism with the praising of Man's rational agency on it through culture. The origin story told by evolution reflected this ambiguity in relation to the comprehension of the human body. On one side, more Darwinian (mis)interpretations of evolutionary theory, like Galton's asserted the lack of agency of the human in its own process of development, establishing a complete natural determination of ancestry that led later to ideas of genetic determination[155]. Other versions, more anchored in Lamarck's theory and Spencer's interpretation of Darwin, asserted the possibility of

151 Wynter and McKittrick, 22.
152 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," 321.
153 Grosz, *Time Travels*, 46.
154 Grosz, 46.
155 Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory*, chap. 7.

human agency in the processes of evolution in relation to the accomplishment of progress (leading to later ideas of social Darwinism)[156].

Taking into account this and the analysis of the sources of this chapter, I could say that the modern/colonial version of the human body is articulated in two directions that permeate the levels and dimensions of the colonial/modern planetary classification that I explained before. These are in continuous tension and permeate contemporary assumptions of socio-cultural constructionism and their opposition to biological and material determinism. First, it is possible to find the naturalized body studied by the natural sciences and located in an underground inevitable and everlasting past. This body is supposed to live in remote, primitive spaces with an animal aesthetic ruled by precariousness, nudity, raw materiality and porous to external and determining forces. This is the animal side of the human body. Second, there is the constructed, civilized and trans/human body separated from its animality by claiming its artificiality. This second body is located in a teleological and desired future in which humans master and determine the world and their own selves in metropolitan advanced spaces, with an aesthetic that asserts accumulation, luxuriousness, technological advance, with an evaporated, mastered, cooked materiality that makes it porous just to internal forces that construct immunity to external ones. These are the two bodies present in the "teleological hunter- gatherer- to- manufacturing-accumulating society framework" as the "the template for all of human history"[157], but also in the spatial construction between East and West, North and South[158]. The dysselected have different bodies, different space, different time, but also a different configuration of in relation to their own selves, their own kin and other species.

A history of the body that unsettles the temporal and spatial caesura between these two modern/colonial bodies rethinks and recreates the ontological assumptions sustaining political, ethical and epistemological ones. Borrowing the words of Grosz, "if the body is to be placed at the center of political theory and struggle, then we need to rethink the terms in which the body is understood"[159] by the modern/colonial order, Wynter would add. Framed differently, such history thinks through the body overrepresented in the terms given by Man in the levels, dimensions and directionalities that I just explained. For this reason, it requires a decolonial

[156] Larson, chap. 8.
[157] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 40.
[158] Mignolo, *La idea de América Latina*, 19.
[159] Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 3.

perspective capable of establishing a dialogue with other criticisms and conceptualizations of modernity that address the anthropocentric character of Western knowledge disciplines, even if these fall short in the recognition of the role of the colonial side of modernity in the constitution of such epistemologies. In the following chapter, I cross-fertilize or diffractively read the thinking of Elizabeth Grosz and Sylvia Wynter to show that a posthuman, postmodern and decolonial history of the body requires such dialogue given that they attempt to decentralize the notion of humanity in its modern/colonial definition of the bodies of Man from different and necessary angles. Given that the modern/colonial bodies are not just naturally determined (in a prehistorical time), but also the object of Man's unique self-determination (in history), both biological determinism and cultural constructionism need to be rethought in relation to their supposed temporal succession. Despite of their tensions, their creative conceptualizations aim at rewriting the human in a continuity rather than an opposition to its multiple alterities, which is a very fertile ground to rewrite also the body and the kind of porosity assigned by its colonial/modern faces.

Chapter 3: Rewriting the porosity of our colonial/modern bodies: A cross-fertilization of Sylvia Wynter and Elizabeth Grosz

The previous chapter showed that the modern/colonial body articulates its historicity in two directions of porosity located in different levels. This chapter cross-fertilizes the conceptualizations of Elizabeth Grosz and Sylvia Wynter with the purpose of searching theoretical paths that unsettle this prefiguration of the modern/colonial bodies. First, their thought proposes a dynamic and undetermined relation between biology and culture and matter and meaning that rewrites its porosity as a possibility rather than a limitation. Second, they open the temporality of history to the future and the virtual, which challenges the narrative of progress towards Man through accumulation. Furthermore, for them history is not about the reproduction of the past, but about opening spaces for remembering different futures. Being aware of the possible incompatibilities of the traditions of thought from which Wynter and Grosz come from (decolonial thought and feminist posthumanism), my goal here is not to decipher the true meaning of their concepts but using them as a stepping stone to think differently the historicity of the body, given that they are challenges to Man from different and necessary angles. This exercise of diffractive reading and cross-fertilization implies assuming productively the impossibility of remaining completely faithful to the sources and of harmonizing their tensions and contradictions.

3.1 Grosz and Wynter in the threshold of matter-biology and meaning-culture

Grosz and Wynter rethink the body as materially and not just discursively or culturally undetermined. This gesture challenges the different temporalities of the two modern/colonial bodies explained in the previous section: the materially/biologically determined one opposed and previous to the culturally/civilized open one. Without collapsing or conflating the material and discursive dimensions of the body, they think about the indeterminacy of both dimensions as simultaneous or, rather, as the two sides of the same coin that enable one another, instead of being opposed in a relation of domination. The key here is simultaneity and dynamism between matter and meaning, nature and culture that enables the openness of any level of existence. However, this does not dissolve their tensions and sometimes incompatible ontological groundings of their thought, like their disagreement regarding the explanation of the intersection of different axis of embodied difference.

3.1.1 The hybrid nature of the body: Sylvia Wynter

To contest the biological determinism that fixes in nature the dysselection of liminal subjects by locating them closer to death, Wynter rereads humans as autopoietic beings that write themselves ontologically, inscribing in their own flesh the different versions of themselves that they create and live. Autopoiesis refers to processes of self-production of a unit through a circular and dynamic web of interdependent components. This means that our own being emerges materially in the processes through which we assemble, live and imagine our own lived worlds as members of a particular community. Put differently, humans are simultaneously narrative and biological beings that give meaning and shape to their own matter, a possibility enabled by their own material configuration that makes them "self-inscripting and inscripted flesh"[160]. This is "the singularity of our hybrid bios-logos, nature-culture mode of self-inscripting human beingness"[161]. Taking up the conceptualizations of Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, Wynter explains that we have two set of instructions (processes of genesis) that enable one another and do not preexist each other. The first ones refer to the ontogenetic and phylogenetic (bios) processes of materialization that form the biological materiality of the organism. The second ones are the sociogenic narrations (mythoi) that emerge in a collective recognition of ourselves and the desires and hopes for this collective being. In the dynamism and co-emergence of these two set of instructions, specific genres of the human emerge and materialize in the living bodies of the world. In Wynter's words,

> kin- recognizing member subjects' law- likely and performatively enact themselves / ourselves as "good men and women" of their / our kind according to a nongenetically determined, origin-mythically chartered symbolically encoded and semantically enacted set of symbolic life / death instructions. At the same time, at the level of bios / the brain, the above second set of instructions are genetically (neurochemically) implemented. This implementation occurs according to the "laws of nature" first set of instructions, with the second set of instructions, thereby, being alchemically made flesh![162]

Here Wynter expresses that subjects that recognize themselves as members of a "we" live themselves and materially configure their worlds according to the desires inspired by specific myths or narrations that enact what is considered life and death. The desire enhanced by these sociogenic and symbolic set of instructions allows the living and shaping of a world according

[160] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 206.
[161] Wynter and Scott, 198.
[162] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 27.

to what should be/is and what should be/is not in relation to the particular sense of self (genre of being human) that such communities desire and create. An important consequence of this idea is that these genres are not simply a coping with the material differences between bodies, but the materialization of such differences in those bodies. In the first level of instructions, such desires and hopes carve themselves in the embodiment of the subjects by means of a neurochemical engraving that fuels and creates, at the same time, those impulses and tendencies through what she calls "opiate reward / punishment (placebo / nocebo) behavior- regulatory system"[163]. With this, Wynter explains how particular genres of being human, through which we articulate a specific sense of "we", materialize in the body and are enabled by its materiality. For this reason, Wynter says, the human body is a hybrid in which what is virtual and what is actual dynamize. They open bios to the logos and the logos to the bios, since the processes of materialization that occur in each and across both are co-constitutive and enable each other.

This is how she explains materially the effects of race in the colonial/modern version of the human, at the same time that opens such genre to contingency and contestation. Being human is always a verb, not a noun based on an immutable essence found the biological laws of our bodies: "humanness is no longer a noun. Being human is a praxis"[164]. In this sense, for her, "the human- as- a- *homo- narrans*- species cannot preexist their hitherto always genre- specific or culture- specific representations of origin"[165]. We write, live and create the human as a "we", there is not a "we" that preexists such enactment and determines its form and way of being. Being human is a performative and contingent enactment of our collective being ("we"), not an established essence. This makes us autopoietic beings.

One key element her rewriting of the human involves a rereading of evolution in which humans developed their embodiment as *Homo Narrans* or storytellers, through the development of the parts of the brain that allow the creation of myths and language. She explains that this, the "Third" event, follows the explosion of biological life and the creation of the universe and opens the auto-speciating, hybrid and autopoietic characteristic of the human. In her words, "the very same environmentally interacting bio-evolutionary processes that had given rise to the human species, had pre-adapted it, by means of the co-evolution of language and the brain, to artificially

[163] Wynter and McKittrick, 65.
[164] Wynter and McKittrick, 22.
[165] Wynter and McKittrick, 72.

programme and reprogramme its own social behaviours"[166]. Her rereading of evolution undoes the fixedness given to human biological nature by the colonial/modern genre of being human, showing that the same embodied evolutionary conditions, usually interpreted as the justification of embodied subordinations, actually open the possibilities for claiming the open-ended character of this biology and its lack of closed determination. Not by avoiding biology, but through biology, she presents humans as storytellers that re-create themselves continuously as part of a community that reinvents the origin stories that define who/what they are as human. Narration introduces to the real (what is) a force, a virtuality that has the capacity to reorient or give texture to it by interpreting it, in the Nietzschean sense. This texture never forecloses or determines what is completely. Understanding meaning beyond an opposition to matter becomes fundamental to think the body beyond its reduction to biological determinism and social constructionism.

It is not clear how Wynter thought is open to a posthuman (non-anthropocentric) perspective, given that her emphasis in the distinctiveness of humans as autopoietic beings (capable of self-producing their own collective worlds through narration) seems to rely on an ontological abysm between human species and other living beings. Indeed, Wynter says that human consciousness is not "genetically determined, as is that of any purely organic species"[167], but has that poietic/sociogenic side that makes it irreducible to physiologically determined processes. In the case of the human, meaning systems are what "determine how the mechanisms of the brain will implement our experience of being human"[168]. Furthermore, the autopoietic unit of her re-reading of human evolution is closed and restricted to the members of the human species that shape their own being through the creation of their genre of being human. Restricted to the space of the human species, it is possible to understand how, for her, matter and meaning, culture and biology are co-constitutive and not opposite. In the case of the non-human, is more complicated to see how her thought could lead to an undoing of anthropocentrism that unsettles the vision of nature given by Man's version of humanity. Wynter recognizes that the current biocentric version of the human (Man2) is directly linked with the environmental catastrophe given the model of material provision that attempts to universalize. Borrowing Wynter's words, the usual explanation of the environmental disaster "thinks the causes of global warming are

[166] Wynter and McKittrick, 203.
[167] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 189.
[168] Wynter and Scott, 189.

human activities, but they are not! (…) It's all of us—the Western and mimetically Westernized middle classes—after we fell into the trap of modeling ourselves on the mimetic model of the Western bourgeoisie's liberal monohumanist Man2"[169]. However, the way she addresses non-human nature and biology is within the modern/colonial interpretation of it as fixed and determined, which is precisely what founds the dominant model of material provisioning. The materialization of bodies that occurs through Man2 implies not just the disposability of racialized bodies, but also, through colonial differentiation and not outside of it, of the earth and nature itself[170].

It is not completely clear how the sociogenic origin of the genres of being human and their materialization interact with nonhuman agencies given her focus on the narrative and linguistic[171]. Indeed, the way in which the autopoietic speciation occurs seems to stay within the walls of the human species, without considering the connections with the environment that provoke these embodied transformations. However, I think that Wynter's thought has the potential to be opened to a more posthuman perspective if language and meaning are reframed in continuity to the non-human and stop being the source of human exceptionality. Of course, this can bring out the tension regarding the flattening of the differences between human and non-human, and a lack of consideration of intra-human hierarchies[172], which is an issue that cannot be ignored given that is the central focus of the tension between decolonial thought and posthuman feminisms. Nevertheless, we can open the thought of autopoiesis to the non-human, considering how it could imply rhizomatic connections in which we can always become other and not just self-determine ourselves. Referring to this multispecies and connective process of becoming human, Donna Haraway says that "to be one is always to *become with* many (…) species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters"[173]. If the autopoietic unit refers to communities that write their own being through meaning systems carved in their beings, it is not necessary that such communities have to be restricted to a kind of being or members of one species. It is not clear either that such systems of meaning have to be reduced to linguistic and representational ones. Furthermore, the "we" that is the basis of autopoiesis and hybridity does not have to be restricted to the terms through

[169] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 21.
[170] Hantel, "What Is It Like to Be a Human?: Sylvia Wynter on Autopoiesis," 71.
[171] Hantel, 72.
[172] Hantel, 73; Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, 15.
[173] Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.

which the modern/colonial version of the human has anchored human identity in a biological configuration as a species in opposition, dominion and separation with other kind of beings. If the human is not a noun, but a contingent praxis, does this not give us the possibility to rewrite such "we" beyond our own kind and in consideration of those other beings with whom we shape our own self in an interdependent world?

This is an essential part of any project that attempts to destabilize the colonial/modern planetary classification that locates the human and the non-human in different spaces, temporalities and bodies, which is precisely what sustains Man's desires of control over the non-human, the inhuman or the not-quite-human. The thought of Grosz can come into play there, reframing the boundaries of the ecumenical "we" in which the autopoietic unit is defined[174]. These cannot be stay inside the fixed definitions of species given by Man's biocentrism. Instead, they could be open to multiple forces that are human and nonhuman, becoming a "multispecies affair"[175]. Rather than being, the autopoietic/hybrid body is a doing, a praxis, or perhaps, using Grosz terminology, a continuous movement of becoming that opens the human to indeterminacy. Under this perspective, then, nature can be also poetic which is essential if one wants unsettle the overrepresentation of the human as Man (with its production of disposable bodies). In this sense, rewriting the human implies rewriting also all the oppositional terms through which this notion has been crafted in its modern/colonial planetary classification, precisely because it is at the core of colonial/racialized relations of power. Reconsidering biocentrism, as well as anthropocentrism, and the different temporalities given to each has a key room in a decolonial history of the body.

[174] This might require that the auto- of this unit is never a completely closed and defined one but implies a circularity and excess of the constitutive relation between the self and the other. Communities, as self-inscribing systems, do not have predetermined and fixed boundaries that can define an essence in which the belonging to such community resides. Not even a biological organism can be defined as an entirely closed unit that guarantees the identity and boundaries of the self. Perhaps this might take us to go beyond Wynter's thought, considering other conceptualizations of being in common, like Nancy's. In his words, "Community therefore is neither an abstract or immaterial relationship, nor a common substance. It is not a common being; it is to be in common, or to be with each other, or to be together. And "together" means something that is neither inside nor outside one's being. "Together" is an ontological modality different from any substantial constitution, as well as from any kind of relation (logical, mechanical, sensitive, intellectual, mystical, etc.). "Together"(and the possibility of saying "we") takes place where the inside, as an inside, becomes an outside; that is, where, without building any common "inside," it is given as an external inferiority. "Together" means: not being by oneself and having one's own essence neither in oneself nor in another self. It is a way of not having any essence at all. This is existence: not having any essence, but having being, as existence, as one's only essence (and thus this essence is no longer an essence" Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, 154.

[175] Hantel, "What Is It Like to Be a Human?: Sylvia Wynter on Autopoiesis," 74.

3.1.2 The nature of culture, the culture of nature: Elizabeth Grosz

Without a recognition of the colonial and racialized planetary classification that sustains such vision, Grosz intends to rewrite the human in a continuity rather than in opposition to the biological, the natural, the material, the nonhuman. Instead of being a fixed reality, subjected to universal laws that determine the essence of the beings, nature enables continuous change, indetermination and movement (beyond the agency of the human). Grosz considers that this rewriting of nature is a fundamental feminist task that requires "thinking materialism and idealism together"[176]. For her, the anxiety towards biology in relation the embodied construction of difference has led to the reproduction of a vision of nature and agency under the terms given by Man. Grosz explains in order to rethink feminist and antiracist politics, it is necessary to question "also the ontologies of change that underlie them"[177]. Nature in her thought is a dynamic field of change and variation that opens life to exceed its possibilities and actual forms. It is not what closes and determines identity but is "that which enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change, indeed that which ensures that the cultural, including its subject-agents, are never self-identical, that they differ from themselves and necessarily change over time"[178]. However, Grosz does not recognize that these terms are developed, in the modern/colonial context of racialized power relations, which makes difficult to consider how these ontologies have emerged and materialized within the colonial/modern system.

Grosz' reflections on nature are anchored on her rereading of Darwin, Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze among others. Through their thoughts she articulates a notion of life that opens matter to variation and excess, enabling culture as an elaboration of nature, not its contrary. The concept of life, in its Darwinian undertones, provides a way to understand the difference and continuity among beings as a matter of degree and not as an oppositional and hierarchical ontological breach. The degrees that differentiate living beings by multiple axis come from the same movement of life. Human particularity is not the product of the deployment of human culture and intellect that has allowed us to dematerialize, to detach from our bodily nature. Instead, Grosz explains that it is part of the general movement of life, this is, the continuous movement towards the realization of potentialities and tendencies without a clear purpose or aim, but as a matter the experimentation and excess that produces difference. For her, life is "the ongoing

[176] Grosz and Bell, "'The Incorporeal': An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz."
[177] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 8.
[178] Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 47.

exploration of and experimentation with the forms of bodily activity that living things are capable of undertaking"[179]. This is the main movement of beings, their motor of change. It is not a privilege of the human that aims to master his biological conditioning through the domination and control of the intellect. Grosz highlights that this movement does not come only from the need to survive and adapt, but also from the excess of desire and pleasure without necessary reproduction. Through these multiple movements, involved in natural and sexual selection, life elaborates itself in diverse lines that are not more deep or complex between one another. Nature moves continuously and enables every creation, every new thread of difference through life. This concept is what builds the bridge between nature and culture, since it is "that which registers and harnesses the impact of contingency, converting contingency into history, and history into self overcoming, supersession, becoming-other"[180].

Grosz explains that life provides the porosity of the body that allows unexpected connections and flows of intensities, bringing contingency to the world and transforming the bodies that live in the universe. This movement of life, as an assemblage of human, "inhuman, subhuman, and extrahuman forces"[181], exceeds any human attempt to determine the transformation and materialization of difference in bodies, even if, paradoxically, it enables it. The material energies of nature have never been and will never be mastered and contained by Man. In fact, the accomplishments that supposedly have separated us from the animal are actually part of the movement of life. If they are "forms of self-transformation and part of the evolutionary becoming in which all of life partakes (…) then reason, language, culture, tools, and other distinctively human accomplishments must now take their place, not as the overcoming or surpassing of an animal ancestry, but as its most recent elaboration, as one of the many possible lines of elaboration that life has enabled"[182]. Human species does not go beyond the movement of life, but elaborates on it and because of it, as any form of life does. For this reason, nature and culture cannot be sharply distinguished in our historical temporality. Instead, every historical transformation, human or not, involves biology and culture, this is, beings articulating their own lived worlds to deal with what they encounter in their trajectories. Culture is the reflection of nature on itself, a deepening of nature, an articulation of itself rather than a rift from it. Grosz

[179] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 22.
[180] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 40.
[181] Grosz, 4.
[182] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 24.

asks if "is it possible, and productive, to understand culture as the way in which nature reflects on and articulates itself, as nature's most generous and complex self-reflection? Is culture nature's way of thinking itself, of gaining consciousness of itself, of representing itself, and of acting on itself?"[183]. Put differently, culture is not less natural or more artificial than bees, oceans and dirt, it is an elaboration of nature and a part of it.

Grosz refers to Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh to explain that culture is an elaboration of nature or the unfolding of the beings of nature in themselves. With his understanding of the body as flesh, Merleau-Ponty tried to pay attention to the body as an interweaving the subject and the object, the Self and the Other in which the genesis of their being takes place. The flesh is the intertwining of bodies that are sensible (felt by the Other) and sentient (being able to feel the Other). Being permanently inside/out, the flesh is reversible, in other words, is always in the midst of feeling and being felt (passivity and activity). For this reason, the flesh is the connective and conjunctive tissue, the generality or the element (in the antique sense of air, water, or fire) that weaves the world and the community in which every being acquires its texture (subjectivity/shape). It is the belonging to a sensitive connectivity what gives birth to the different textures of the beings of the world, which, in the process of perceiving their surroundings an establishing a sensible bond with it, shape their worlds by giving/dealing meaning (texture) to what they encounter and becomes part of themselves. Grosz explains that "the flesh is composed of "leaves" of the body and "leaves" of the world: it is the chiasm linking and separating the one from the other, the "pure difference" whose play generates subjects and things, and their belonging together"[184]. Carving the texture of these leaves is precisely the core of culture, the processes of grasping and creating the meanings that constitute the worlds of each being.

This conceptualization of culture has several consequences. One of them is that culture emerges from the sensible, practical, but always opened and excessive, material connections between the body and the world. The realm of meaning that we tend to attribute to culture is not exclusive of the human, nor is ontologically different from biology and nature. Life interprets, in the Nietzschean sense, the assemblages of forces in which it is embedded and gives them a texture that opens a virtuality, an excess that surpasses what is given. Such interpretation is no less material than ideal,

[183] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 50.
[184] Grosz, 126.

human than nonhuman, and never exhausts the real, even if it always transforms it, leaving it open to contingency. Grosz puts it beautifully, when she says that "nature itself is musical, composed of material notes which each play their own melody, a melody complicated, augmented, syncopated and transformed through the melodies of the other living and nonliving things with which it engages"[185]. Beyond a metaphoric explanation, this fragment highlights the sensible and artistic character in which the engagement of the beings of the world is shaped. Rather than abstract and symbolic figurations, the narrations of the worlds of living and nonliving creatures are material forces that cut into the given virtual fissures and contingencies: "Culture can be understood as part of the ongoing evolution of the natural, the variable spirals and complications of a nature that is always already rich in potentiality to be developed in unexpected ways"[186] .

Following this thought, Grosz considers the possibility to think about language, art and technology beyond the walls of the human and not in an opposition to the biological and the natural. For her, nature is in itself technologic, artistic, linguistic, dimensions that are not the product of human artifice. This is a key issue to connect Grosz and Wynter because if we understand meaning as sensory textures and tunings, the hybrid and autopoietic nature that Wynter attributed to the human is not just enabled by nature, but something shared and build ontologically with the living and non-living beings that inhabit the world. Certainly, this requires rethinking the centrality that Wynter gives to the brain for the articulation of meaning and consciousness, which leads to the qualification of non-human worlds as poor or lacking[187]. It is important to ask if this ontological drift is not departing from the presupposition of the lack of complexity and openness of the meanings of such worlds. Living beings articulate the meaning of their world in ways that are not necessarily linguistic or representational, but this does not translate into an ontological poverty of their worlds. Taking this further, we could question too if the symbolic meanings of human worlds are so differently and exceptionally built. Perhaps this requires rethinking the place in which the inscription and deployment of meanings takes place in human bodies too. Why does the brain have to be so central and necessary to think about the configuration of meaning?

In addition, the opening of the hybridity of bios/logos to the nonhuman leads to reconsider the processes of embodied transformations of evolution in connection to beings of different kind and

[185] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 174.
[186] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 52.
[187] In a similar way, Heidegger established an ontological abyss between welt and umwelt (world and environment) to explain the difference between human articulated meanings that build a world and the mere survival and biological determination of the animal.

kin. Instead of an auto-speciation, human evolution could be rewritten as a co-speciation, in a connection to other living and nonliving beings (it is not just a "multispecies autopoiesis"[188]), that opens us to continuously become other. To exemplify this, Grosz points out that "the snapdragon and the bumblebee evolve together, form a becoming, and enhance and transform each other so that each can only be understood in relation to its counterpoints with the other"[189]. She also considers the involvement of prosthetic relations between bodies and things, explaining that "the living being and the objects now rendered prosthetic transform each other, and each undergoes a not entirely determinable becoming through their interaction. The living transforms nonliving objects, and these objects in turn transform the parameters and possibilities of life"[190]. These two ideas unsettle the way in which Man builds a relation to nonhuman agents. First, the historical transformations of the human embodiment are essentially and bidirectionally connected with the embodiment of other living beings. Second, the interaction with nonliving objects is not simply about the human shaping of technological devices that we use according to human purposes, but also about the possibilities that these objects open for the living and for themselves. In short, the nonhuman does not precede the human, but enables and co-creates the human. This is how Man could be "forced, at least enticed, to listen, to respond, to observe, to become attuned to a nature it was always part but had only aimed to master and control"[191].

It is not clear how Grosz gives account the specific power relations that have produced the current overrepresentation of the human as Man in the colonial/modern system, which leads to flattening some of the multiple axis of difference under which the colonial/modern planetary classification is built. Perhaps this is not Grosz' primary interest, as she considers the urgency to address ontological questions rather than political and historical ones. This leads her to consider a notion of power that also goes beyond human agency in a Nietzschean interpretation. In her words, "this would require biopower to be considered not only as a body insofar as it is regulated by historically specific forms of power, but the powers of a body, in principle unknowable to the extent that we do not know what a body can do"[192]. However, framing a question as ontological and not primarily political (within particular contexts of oppression) can lead to neutralize and universalize discourses and concepts, which is a colonial gesture of projecting

[188] Hantel, "What Is It Like to Be a Human?: Sylvia Wynter on Autopoiesis," 74; Haraway, *When Species Meet*.
[189] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 174.
[190] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 151.
[191] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 24.
[192] Grosz, Yusoff, and Clark, "An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz: Geopower, Inhumanism and the Biopolitical," 134.

universally a particularly local design, neutralizing the interests and positionalities from which it emerges. This is shown in her account of race, which she constructs as a matter of beauty and taste subordinated to sexual differentiation. Darwin's take on sexual selection, Grosz argues, as a principle that explains the deployment of difference and excess in life beyond any functional perspective, allows us to see that nature is not a passive, empty, mechanistic materiality, opposed to the excessive character of human creation that starts once our biological body is constituted**.** Sexual selection refers to the activities of beings to make bodily connections and encounters in which an energetic excess, a bodily intensification, is produced beyond survival. It is "the uncontainable production of intensification, not for the sake of the skills of survival, but simply because of its force of bodily intensification, its capacity to arouse pleasure or desire, its capacity to generate sensation"[193]. From there, she explains that racial differentiation arises from the attraction of bodies that find specific body features desirable and beautiful, making it dependent on sexual differentiation. This can be highly problematic given that there is not a recognition of how such intensities and flows are/have been regulated and materialized within specific and historic relations of power, even if these overflow any attempt to regulate them. As productively as it is, this vision of race, in relation to sexual selection and differentiation, appears as romantic and disconnected with the reality of the materialized colonial/modern matrix of differentiation.

Wynter allows us to see that aesthetic parameters of attraction and beauty are materially produced within specific genres being human that involve hierarchical differentiations between bodies subjected to disposability. Said otherwise, "the governing sociogenic principle that is a characteristic of our varying verbally defined modes of being human, and in whose terms we experience ourselves as humans"[194] is what orients the materialization of differences between bodies placed in the outside and inside borders of a specific genre of being human. In this sense, Wynter's thought allows to understand how the materialization of embodied differences in particular and historical relations of power intersect, thanks to the contingent, performative and comprehensive character given to the notion of humanity. Her conceptualization is not limited to race as the only axis of difference but is open to the way in which each community of beings materializes embodied differentiations, through the articulation of the meaning of what is like to live as themselves; of what constitutes life and death being members of a particular kin (a community of beings). Considering if gender could be an overarching category of difference, she explains that "what is central, what is, in effect, the class of

[193] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 118.
[194] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 186.

classes, is the code of symbolic life/death that institutes our genres of being human. This means that while the gender opposition had served to enact the raw/cooked, biological/symbolic code by enabling it to be anchored and mapped into the anatomical differences of the sexes, and therefore had been the archetypal form of all such codes, it is not the code itself"[195]. The code itself refers to a specific genre being human that constitutes the core of the definition of axes of difference. With this, it is possible to understand that race or gender do not have a given ontological priority over other axes of differentiation. Instead, each genre of being human builds a particular intertwining between such differences. In the case of the modern/colonial overrepresentation of humanity as Man, the one in which the contemporary world's inequalities are built according to Wynter, race represents a fundamental axis, considering that the colonized Other became the physical referent of otherness that gave meaning to the interior and exterior boundaries of Man.

3.2 The open temporality and historicity of the body: Wynter and Grosz on time and history

3.2.1 Grosz and the temporality of becoming

In her work, Grosz continuously reflects about a temporality opened to chance and indeterminacy, this is, a temporality opened to the future, difference and the impact of events. This is a possibility given by the changes and transformations of life as it is "that which registers and harnesses the impact of contingency, converting contingency into history, and history into self overcoming, supersession, becoming-other"[196]. In here Grosz explains that the contingency and movement attributed to history and human agency is not a privilege of Man, since life is in itself historical, continuously changing. Her appropriation of Darwin's thought leads her to consider that the historicity of the body is not an accumulation of changes with a clear direction that unifies the transformations of living beings through time. Life is precisely the movement of differentiation of virtualities in the light of the contingencies which impact it. Under this light, evolution, the story that addresses the temporality and historicity of the body, "represents a force of spatial and temporal dispersion, rather than linear or progressive development, movements rather than goals, processes rather than ends"[197]. The key to understand this temporality is to see the movement of change as a dispersion and diversification of trajectories and lines of transformation that do not have a previously given direction or goal. These are temporalities in

[195] Wynter and Scott, 186.
[196] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 40.
[197] Grosz, 30.

which multiple, multilinear and multidirectional becomings, in the entanglement of the human and the non-human, of the material and the ideal, of nature and culture, become visible and start to happen. In here relies the importance that Grosz attributes to Darwin: "Darwin has helped multiply, pluralize, proliferate all kinds of becomings, becomings in directions that cannot be known in advance, becomings which sweep up man in their forces along with all other living things"[198].

What is the movement of time that allows such dispersion of paths of becoming? Grosz explains that time's movement towards the future, or better, towards the virtual, the non-actual, is what makes possible such dispersion. In her own words, this refers to "the inherent capacity for time to link, in extraordinarily complex ways, the past and present to a future that is uncontained by them and has the capacity to rewrite and transform them"[199]. The future is the virtual force capable of transforming every reality dispersing its unfolding beyond the actual, present and existing. If happenings repeat, the force of the virtual introduces an excess that displaces the repetition of the same making it impossible, even if repeating is essential for the unfolding of time. The movement towards the future is not a movement thought under a linear progression of time, but a rhizomatic (without a clear direction, hierarchy or organizing principle) movement towards the not actual, what is perceived as not yet. Accordingly, time is not a succession of the past into the present and the future, but a movement between virtualities that fissures the present. Hence, the key notion to understand the flow of time is duration rather than progression.

According to Grosz, duration is the motion of divergence between what was and what will be, the movement from one virtuality (the past) to another (the future). Thus, its form is not the actualization of given possibilities or the accumulation of happenings: "duration proceeds not through the accumulation of information and the growing acquisition of knowledge, but through division, bifurcation, dissociation—by difference, through sudden and unpredictable change"[200]. This makes the virtual quite different from the possible, considering that it does not move through the unfolding of given potentials or preset directions, but always in the dispersion of paths, bifurcations and divisions that exceed the repetition of the same. In this regard, the past is as open as the future, with a virtual force capable of rewriting what is, through the force of what is yet to come. For this reason, the future (what is yet to come) is not located after the actual past and present but penetrates/haunts

[198] Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, 24.
[199] Grosz, *Becomings*, 7.
[200] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 111.

every single instance as a spectral presence. Borrowing Grosz's words, "if the past constitutes a remnant, a ghost or mode of haunting of the present, this is only insofar as we can no longer consider the present itself to be fully self-present. The present can be seen, through this inhabitation, which is as unavoidable as it is problematic, as a mode of differing or differentiation"[201]. The future is not what comes next, after the present, but what unsettles the present by an untimely reactivation of the virtualities of the past that give it a spectral nature. Hence, what is yet to come can be found also in the past as a latent and in-appropriable virtuality. The future, she argues, "has no existence in the present, is generated through the untimely reactivation of the virtuality of the past which has been unactualized in the present"[202].

Understanding time in this way reformulates what history is and can be. Instead of attempting to capture what actually happened, history would grasp retrospectively and creatively the movement of time in its dispersive and undetermined nature, opening a space for what is yet to come, for the future. The purpose of history goes beyond the reproduction of the past; it makes "something positive of this past without betraying it, without repeating or continuing it, to produce a future that both breaks with the past yet at the same time refuses to disown it"[203]. History digs retrospectively into the virtualities of the past, not just to explain the conditioning of the present, but to create fissures on the actual that can crack into unseen futures. Perhaps history should be thought better as a recreation that opens our perception of time to the virtual. According to Grosz, history is

> at the point of junction of a fixed or given past that is irretrievable as a present, an opaque present whose interests cannot be given to itself, and a future that has the capacity not only to rewrite but also to entirely overwrite events of the past or present—that is, while history itself is at the mercy of temporality and a temporal structure that makes reconstruction / remembering and anticipation possible—it is also true that it is history (history as both the past itself and as the story of that past) that provides the conditions for and inflects the way time is conceptualized and the weight placed on it as an explanatory concept[204]

Here Grosz expresses that history is made possible by the open-ended nature of time itself and the virtual character it introduces in the past, the present and the future, which makes the works of history essentially creative, retrospective and always contesting. The past, the present and the future are not appropriable, retrievable or reproduceable and yet they make an incomplete and creative anticipation and remembering possible. At the same time, history shapes the perception

[201] Grosz, *Becomings*, 18.
[202] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 3.
[203] Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 119.
[204] Grosz, *Becomings*, 5.

of temporality through its conceptualization and can open or foreclose the virtuality and indeterminacy of time, the necessity of its continuous rewriting. History would not homogenize temporality, instead, it would show its dispersive nature, its contingency and spectrality, the space for change and chance, for indetermination, given that "it is only that which has happened, those beings in existence, now or once, that provide the germs or virtualities whose divergence produces the present and future"[205]. Put differently, the "past is what gives us that difference, that tension with the present which can move us to a future in which the present can no longer recognize itself"[206]. For this reason, history creates not only reproduces; opens up a clearing for the contingent and the virtual to appear.

3.2.2 Wynter and the rewriting of origins

The preoccupation for a different kind of history and temporality occupies also Wynter's thought. This is key for her since she wants to rewrite the human asserting our hybrid nature. The past and history are susceptible to a continuous rewriting that shapes our mode of being. Consequently, Wynter gives a fundamental importance to the origins stories through which we live ourselves as part of a collective of beings living together with shared origins and futures. These stories about origins, about the past, are, therefore, an enactment, a performative reliving that clears up the space for different futures, different modes of being. The challenges that Wynter raises to Man's version of the human do not stay in a negative critique or reproductive and historicizing gesture of the past. They imply a creative reappropriation of the past, an imagining and living of other beginnings. Wynter says that this involves "the quite different enactment of our species' origin, its vastly extended past (…) to now collectively give humanness a different future, itself historically chartered by that past"[207]. What is at stake on the imagination and re-enactment of this past is the reactivation of different ways of being human that bring new futures to the fore, not the knowledge of the past for the past itself, in an attempt control it and appropriate it through its knowledge. The contingency and indeterminacy of our past, our present and our future is precisely what allows the rewriting, re-enacting, re-imagining of our origin stories from a different gaze. In her words, the task is "to assume our past (…) reconceptualize that past (…) take it positively (…) we needed to assume our entire past"[208].

[205] Grosz, *Time Travels*, 32.
[206] Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 117.
[207] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 73.
[208] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 147.

This thought about the temporality of history leads to the consideration of origins that are always multiple and contesting, never completely definitive and homogenizing ones. History implies the permanent imagination of new beginnings that take to new rebirths. It is not the knowledge of a progressive accumulation of instances that determines the reality of the present and the future. History is the continuous return of instances for rebirths, according to Wynter "the representations of origin, which we ourselves invent, are then retroactively projected onto an imagined past. Why so? Because each such projection is the shared storytelling origin out of which we are initiatedly reborn. In this case we are no longer, as individual biological subjects, primarily born of the womb; rather, we are both initiated and reborn as fictively instituted inter-altruistic kin recognizing members of each such symbolically re- encoded genre- specific referent-we"[209]. The imaginative and performative reactivation of the past implies a rebirth, the emergence of new beginnings through which our collective being is rewritten. Our life begins in this collective narration inscribed in our biological being. This means that our bodies are not born biologically set and then shaped by sociogenetic processes, instead, our biological and cultural origins are mingled and multiple. Furthermore, our being and its origins extend beyond our individual existence and are collectively and historically instituted continuously. Wynter says that "the human story/history becomes the collective story/history of these multiple forms of self-inscription or self-instituted genres, with each form/genre being adaptive to its situation, ecological, geopolitical"[210]. Historical temporality is the return of these rebirths that open our being to indeterminacy and contingency, showing us every time that being human is a verb, not a noun or an essence.

This temporality opens us up to the virtual, to futures and pasts yet to come, unactualized and left in in a realm of not-being. History is not just about remembering the actual, what is perceived as the present state of being. It is also about remembering futures through the narration of the past. For Wynter, this is essential in order to imagine and living the human beyond its modern/colonial overrepresentation as Man. Such gesture is enabled by a different gaze, a gaze from below that shows the contesting and contingent nature of our being. From this point of view, history has two equally important tasks in the narration of the past. First, it traces back the emergence of our current and dominant genre of being human within specific relations of power

[209] Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 34.
[210] Wynter and Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 206.

and subordination. Second, it rewrites our genre of being human through and beyond its current overrepresentation, laying out the narrowness and fissures that anticipate new futures and pasts. These two gestures show that a posthumanist history cannot simply overlook the modern/colonial roots of the specific version of the human that they are contesting, which leads them to a simple rejection of the human. In other words, this kind of history always looks into the actual and the virtual, understanding that our being is not exhausted by any specific genre of being human. History requires also the creative exercise of rewriting of our ecumenical "we" that needs a rewriting of the past. The narrations of this history understand bodies in permanent and unexpected connections in which we become other and are not contained the modern/colonial version of the human. These histories rewrite the human, narrate it again, re-remember it. Borrowing Wynter's words, history would grasp/create "a new mode of experiencing ourselves in which every mode of being human, every form of life that has ever been ever enacted, is a part of us. We, a part of them"[211]

Unsettling the transition from an animal body to a human one, not just requires rethinking the relation between nature/matter and culture/meaning, but also the temporality of the body, this is, how its present being is shaped by what it was, what is and what is not yet. Rather than an accumulation of instances building up to a desired fate and open future, the way Grosz and Wynter think about historical temporality hijacks any homogenizing line of progression by affirming the embodied openness of both the past, the present and the future. Their rethinking of temporality makes the past something that is continuously enacted and lived, rewritten, not just known and determined. In this sense, a history of the body would not take the temporal shape of a line of progression from the animal to the human, in which the body actualizes an essence contained in its moment of origin and is the telos that mobilizes and predetermines change. Instead, it would show retrospectively the contingency of the different lines, paths, connections, trajectories, through which we become different, other. This movement opens time to indetermination, to chance and unpredictability both in what is and what is yet to come, the actual and the virtual, in Grosz' terms. The body is, for both, historical, open to changes and transformations in its cultural and biological being. Such historicity is given by its own open temporality, which troubles any linear, homogenizing and teleological transition from the past into the present and the future.

[211] Wynter and Scott, 197.

The thought of Elizabeth Grosz and Sylvia Wynter problematizes the temporal succession between the two modern/colonial bodies (the biological determined and the culturally opened) in two ways. First, they rewrite the constitutive link between nature and culture thinking them in continuity and not in opposition and domination. Through this, they assert the simultaneous biological and cultural openness, contingency and porosity of the body. In this respect, cross-fertilizing their thought invites us to open Sylvia Wynter's reflections to the non-human, considering that the overrepresentation of the human as Man is defined through an opposition and domination of it. Furthermore, this takes us to rethink meaning beyond linguistic and representational terms contained in anthropocentric figurations of culture. However, such gesture cannot lead to affirm the ontological anteriority, as Grosz seems to suggest, of the non-human in relation to the specific colonial/modern power relations in which we currently live. Secondly, Wynter and Grosz propose to rethink historical temporality as something embodied and constitutively open to the future (what is not yet), to the virtual. This challenges accumulative, progressive and teleological models of temporality since the virtual is not place after the past and the present, but haunts every instance, fissuring the past and the present as that which is yet to come. History would grasp this openness of time to what is yet to come, to the virtual, instead of reproducing the actual, what is or has been. Because of this, such history becomes part of the rewriting of our own being that unsettles our current genre of being human, reimagining continuously our origins, trajectories and destinations.

Conclusion

Considering the body as historical requires rethinking its malleability beyond cultural and biological reductionisms. Not because these are impediments for truer and authentic knowledge of the historical transformations of the body, but because both are anchored in the colonial/modern planetary classification of beings in a realm of being and in a realm of non-being. As I showed in my analysis of Las Casas, Sepúlveda and Wilson, joined by Sylvia Wynter's genealogy of the Man's version of the human, it is precisely this classification what articulates the temporality of the body as a caesura between a body that is porous to external biological forces (an animal body) and a body that is malleable by autonomous human ones. The historical path of the individual body, the body of the human species, and the body of the civilized Man is understood as the overcoming of an animal body by a human one. Put differently, the time before Man (prehistory, premodernity, precoloniality) is the time of animalized bodies determined by nature and without autonomous agency (they can even jeopardize it). This animal embodiment, an ontological realm of non-being, a place of exteriority, is located not just outside humankind, but also inside each individual and inside human species. Man's desired human body, the realm of being, a place of interiority, is defined in an opposition and dominion of the body of the animals of nature, the body of the "Negros/as" and "Indios/as", and the predefined passions, appetites and instincts of the individual. The time of Man (history, modernity, coloniality) is the time of a human body that transcends and dominates this animal one. The bodies of the colonized Others, the bodies located in the "New world" became the physical referents and missing links between these two ontological realms (the animal and the human). To sum up, the colonial/modern teleological temporality of history requires the distinction of two different times, bodies and spaces that define the ontologies of both biological and cultural reductionisms.

The colonial/modern classification of bodies is articulated from a specific definition of the human and also from a particular definition of the non-human. This means that any attempt to unsettle the epistemological prefigurations anchored in a coloniality of power requires the disarrange of both oppositional characters and not the conflation of one with the other. For example, questioning the biological givenness of our bodies cannot result in the taking over of human culture in every aspect of our being. Rewriting the human implies also a rewriting of the

non-human, as Man defines his humanity in opposition to it. In this regard, the rethinking of nature, the animal, and matter has a fundamental role in a decolonial epistemology. Hence, the posthuman question has room in decolonial thinking, if it does not translate in the overlooking of the histories of colonial violence that have allowed the universalization of Western local models. In other words, it cannot translate in the conflation and disregard of the present colonial/modern dynamics of oppression. Rewriting the human beyond Man implies the unsettling of the way in which our relation to matter, to nature, to biology and to the animal has been materialized. This demands a reflexive and critical engagement between the sciences and the humanities, in the recognition of the political ground that is at stake in our ontologies and epistemologies.

Sylvia Wynter and Elizabeth Grosz allow us to reconsider the temporal succession and ontological rift from a biological body to a cultural one. For both of them, biology and culture are ontologically continuous and simultaneous, not opposed. Their conceptualizations on the body are not restricted by the distinction between a biological body that is closed by its porosity to external forces and a cultural one opened by its porosity to internal self-determined ones. Instead, for both the body is biologically and culturally porous and undetermined dynamically and simultaneously. Wynter states that the human body is produced hybridly (as both bios and mythos) and autopoietically by our collective inscription of our specific genres of being human, this is, the contingent ways in which we articulate and materialize our lived worlds recognizing ourselves as part (or dis-part) of a particular kin. This reformulation implies a dynamism and simultaneity between ontogenetic, phylogenetic and sociogenetic processes of embodied inscription and transformation. In this sense, her thought allows to articulate a simultaneity and dynamism between biology and culture that keeps recognizing the role of specific systems of subordination and oppression in the constitution of our bodies. However, for Wynter, this hybridity is restricted to the human species whose evolutionary trajectory has allowed the biologically and performative effects of narrations.

On her part, Grosz thinks the human in a continuity rather than in opposition to the biological, the natural, the nonhuman. Instead of being a fixed reality, nature enables continuous change, indetermination and movement. Indeed, nature enables the historicity of the body, its openness to change and transformation as life is the continuous experimentation of beings that explore their embodied capacities and connections to the environment in order to carve the meanings

of their own lived worlds. In other words, nature enables culture, which decenters it as the privilege of the human. The meanings that constitute the cultures of living and nonliving beings are not understood as representations put above the material and practical realities of our worlds. Instead, meanings can be explained as the textures and tunings that articulate the senses (orientations) of lived worlds. These worlds are not contained by the connections of beings of the same kind (same species). Rather, the carving of these worlds implies bonds with living and non-living beings of many kinds. However, Grosz does not consider the central character that coloniality has had in the materialization of the difference between the human and the non-human. Indeed, some of her ontological claims, like the ones regarding the origins of race, show an unclear and perhaps conflating vision in relation to the intersection of different axes of difference.

Grosz and Wynter also provide conceptualizations of time and history that the unsettle the closed character of the past in opposition to the open character of the future. Instead, the temporality of history is one in which the future, the virtual, fissures every actual moment. This means that both the past and the present are open to the dispersion and differentiation of the future, of what is yet to come. History grasps this dispersion and fissures showing that every moment and event is not completely appropriable and definable, but that there is an infinity in each instance that allows the continuous creative appropriation and reactivation of the past directed to a future yet to come. This means that history does not reproduce the past, but is in charge of remembering different futures, virtualities left unactualized that call for a continuous exercise of rewriting our being, of rewriting our past, present and future. A history of the body, within this notion of temporality, would grasp the fissures and virtualities that cross our biological and culturally open bodies to show potentialities of being (futures) left in the dark, in the colonial realm of non-being. The body is both open in its past and is future and not precisely by the agency of Man. History does not stop in the recounting of the processes that have constituted our present way of being but is also interested in listening to other futures found in the past, in the realm of the colonial other to unsettle the genres of being human overrepresented as Man. History requires, as Wynter does, the continuous re-enactment of our origins.

This research is a stepping stone to develop a more extensive dialogue between feminist posthumanities and decolonial thought regarding the question about the historicity of the body. Both the genealogical inquiry and the cross-fertilization that I developed need to be opened to

the consideration of more perspectives within and beyond these discursive contexts. Periodization and temporality are not the only prefigurations that need to be rethought. As I showed, rewriting the temporality of the body implies also rethinking agency and language beyond colonial classifications. This might lead to the unsettling of the way historians select topics, sources, analyze them and create narratives. Questioning materialism and cultural constructionism takes historians to broader theoretical and methodological discussions about the historicity of the body that could not be developed here. The richness of feminist posthuman and decolonial thought provides a fertile ground to evoke these conversations in historians of the body that recognize the political and ethical performativity of epistemologies and the ontologies that sustain them.

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