

1990-1991

TOWARD A
GLOBAL DE
OF RAIL

BORDERLINES SERIES #27

- productive nomos*: The conception of reason that describes it as the producer or regulator of the universe
- scene of regulation*: The account of how reason performs its sovereign role as a regulating power
- scene of representation*: The account of how reason performs its sovereign role as a productive power
- science (the field)*: The region of modern knowledge that posits space as the privileged ontoepistemological dimension, that is, as in disciplines such as classical physics and chemistry
- stage of exteriority*: The mode through which scientific knowledge describes the setting of natural phenomena
- stage of interiority*: The setting in which philosophy (as well as history and other humanities disciplines) places human phenomena
- strategy of engulfment*: The scientific concepts that explain other human conditions as variations of those found in post-Enlightenment Europe
- strategy of intervention*: The methods, techniques, and procedures of the sciences of man and society, highlighting how they apprehend other modes of human existence as variations of post-Enlightenment conditions
- strategy of particularization*: The categories of human beings deployed by the sciences of man and society
- transcendental poesis*: Hegel's rewriting of reason as a transcendental force
- transparency thesis*: The ontoepistemological assumption governing post-Enlightenment thought
- transparent "I"*: Man, the subject, the ontological figure consolidated in post-Enlightenment European thought
- universal nomos*: The first, nineteenth-century, physics conception of reason as the exterior regulator of the universe
- universal poesis*: The formulation of reason as the sovereign interior producer of the universe

Introduction: A Death Foretold

Not only can man's being not be understood without madness, it would not be man's being if it did not bear madness within itself as the limit of his freedom.

—JACQUES LACAN, *ÉCRITS*

What does Nietzsche's madman already know when he yells, "I seek God"? What does he mean when he says that the "murder" of God unleashed a history "higher than all history hitherto"? Why does he ask, "Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?" and "Is not night continually closing in on us?"¹ What he knows—and what his listeners do not care to hear—is this: that the great accomplishment, the culmination of the victorious trajectory of reason that instituted man, the Subject, also foreshadowed his eventual demise. He knows that the philosophical conversation that instituted Man at the center of modern representation also released powerful weapons that threatened his most precious attribute. Why? Because that which falls prey to Reason by becoming its object has no place in the realm of Freedom.

While Nietzsche's madman recognizes that the arsenal that manufactured the transparent "I" threatened his freedom, he seems to ignore that reason, the powerful force that signaled that man had gone beyond the horizon of his finite existence, produces more than a limited human being. For this productive "Will to Truth" authorizes

the “creation” of various and diverse kinds of human beings, as it has instituted subjects that stood differentially before universality when it deployed the powerful weapon, the concept of the racial, which manufactured both man and his “others” as subjects that gaze on the horizon of their finite existence. Many contemporary critics of modern thought, like the madman, show a limited engagement with modern thought when ignoring the role the racial has played in manufacturing man. From the other side of the critical terrain, contemporary race theorists also provide a partial critique when inquiring into how the productive narratives of science and history have consistently contained the others of Europe outside the trajectory of the subject that emerged in post-Enlightenment Europe. None, I think, engage the task at hand, which is to consider how both productive narratives—History and Science—of modern representation have worked together to institute the place of the subject. Put differently, in neither stream does the analysis of the racial guide a critique of the whole field of modern representation.

Why undertake such an insane task? the reader may ask. Why return to old moral and intellectual anxieties? My answer is simple: I find no moral or intellectual ease in quick dismissals of the racial as a scientific concept. I am convinced that the most crucial challenge for critics of modern thought requires displacing history’s privileged ontoepistemological standing by engaging with science as the proper domain for the production of the truth of man. What is required, I think, is a radical gesture that clears up a critical position by displacing transparency, the attribute man has enjoyed since his institution as the sole self-determined being; consequently, it also requires creating a critical arsenal that identifies science and history as moments in the production of man without rehearsing either the logic of discovery or the thesis of transparency.

What the reader will find in the following pages is my attempt to meet this challenge, that is, a critique of modern representation guided by the desire to comprehend the role the racial plays in modern thought. I trace various philosophical, scientific, and national statements to identify the signifying strategies that have produced both man and his others. In other words, I provide a mapping of the *analytics of raciality*: a description of its context of emergence, its conditions of production, and the effects of signification of the conceptual arsenal generated in scientific projects that sought to dis-

cover the truth of man. In tracing the analytics of raciality, I identify the productivity of the racial and how it is tied to the emergence of an ontological context—globality—that fuses particular bodily traits, social configurations, and global regions, in which human difference is reproduced as irreducible and unslatable. With this, I challenge the ontological privilege accorded to historicity and offer an account of modern representation that refigures the subject as *homo modernus*. That is, I demonstrate how the productive weapons of reason, the tools of science and history, institute both man and his others as global-historical beings.

Initially, I began this project because of my dissatisfaction with the way the sociology of race relations “explains” racial subjection. The matter became all the more urgent to me when I realized how the sociological account of racial subjection continues to govern the contemporary global configuration: cultural difference, the mode of representing human difference presupposed and (re)produced by the sociology of race relations, has become the obvious basis for framing demands for global justice and for punishing the global subaltern as well. From my desire to understand the conditions of emergence of this double-edged weapon, and seeking to avoid rehearsing the dominant ideology thesis, I have generated an account of racial subjection which can no longer be distinguished from global subjection, that refuses to either resurrect the (universal) subject or write its other as dormant, innocent, particular (historical) beings. Instead, I argue that the markers of the death of man—the proliferating subaltern (racial, ethnic, postcolonial) “ontologies and epistemologies”—indicate how the powers of the subject remain with us, that the strategies of the modern Will to Truth, the tools of science and history, remain the productive weapons of global subjection.

THE BURIAL GROUNDS

St. Anselm’s “ontological argument” goes more or less like this: if a supreme, infinite and eternal, perfect being can be conceived, and if God is an infinitely and eternally perfect being, God must exist. Even before the first signs of its demise, however, the subject—the self-determined being that would finally occupy the seat of “perfection” at the close of the eighteenth century—could never be described in the same way. Although self-evidence would become man’s exclusive attribute, neither infinity nor eternity could be ascribed

to him precisely because he is thoroughly a worldly, global, finite being. And yet, when the rumors of his death began to be heard, many seemed taken by surprise, as if they had forgotten their inheritance. Following the demise of the divine author and ruler in late eighteenth-century Europe, as the madman laments, should we not expect that a lesser entity would eventually share in the same fate? For one thing, the philosophical statements that transformed reason from an exclusive attribute of the mind into the sovereign ruler of science and history—the sole determinant of truth and freedom—situated this process entirely within the spatial and temporal borders of post-Enlightenment Europe. Furthermore, although it has been said that the process that found completion with the realization of man's transcendental "essence" has always already comprehended other modes and moments of being human, never and nowhere, the apostles of reason proclaimed, has a figure akin to man ever existed. Hence, if the Subject, the thing that actualizes reason and freedom, had been born somewhere in time, would it not also eventually die?

What was probably less self-evident, perhaps, was that the subject's passing would not result in its complete annihilation. I am not referring here to how the former private holdings of the subject, Truth and Being, were being invaded by its others, because it was precisely their "fragmentation" that led many observers to announce his death. What has yet to be acknowledged, however, is how this invasion belies the productive powers of the very tools that carved and inscribed the place of the subject. To wit: "learning" about his passing in college in the 1980s, I was annoyed by the nostalgic accounts of that unseemly and untimely death. The metanarratives of the subject seemed too far removed from what was at stake in my corner of the globe. Freedom and reason had an immediate significance that seemed lost in most accounts of his passing. I could not quite comprehend the relevance of this loss for those of us engaged in the struggle to overthrow a nineteen-year-old military dictatorship in Brazil. I was young then. Also young were the transformations accompanying the announcement of the subject's death. And what we did not immediately realize was how this Brazilian moment was part of an event unfolding in so many elsewhere. Lyotard's (1984) crisis of the metanarratives of Western culture and Vattimo's (1992) announcement of the "end of modernity" were playing out

everywhere: black activists in Rio, along with graffiti artists in New York, First Nation leaders in Vancouver, and people of color elsewhere had somehow changed knowledge in its production and circulation; black feminist writings in the United States were advancing new statements of "truth" and "being," challenging scientific and literary canons while defending the validity of their local narratives (Carby 1887; Collins 1989; Wall 1991); hip-hop artists, rappers, and break dancers, in addition, had surely participated in bringing about the loss of culture's "integrative" role; in "looking to getting paid" (Kelley 1997), they commodified culture, helping to rewrite the logic of capitalism (Jameson 1991) and the grounds for knowledge (Lyotard 1984). We had something to do with the crisis of science; we, the others of man, were upsetting history; our words and deeds unleashed the predicament of the "modern order."

In seeking to comprehend this Global event, however, writers of postmodernity and globalization could only announce the death of the subject.² Not surprisingly, social analysts described these circumstances as the onset of a new site of political struggle—the politics of representation, that is, the struggle for the recognition of cultural difference—that registered the demise of the metanarratives of reason and history that compose modern representation. Looking back, it seems a matter of course that, in reading this event as a proliferation of smaller "reasons" and "histories," social analysts would describe it in terms of the ascension of culture. After all, culture was the one thing they had ascribed to these suddenly speaking others, the peoples formerly described as lacking reason and placed outside history. Expectedly, anthropologists, the manufacturers of culture as a scientific concept, were the first to respond, recognizing the threat to their craft. Some welcomed the crisis as a relief, providing them with an opportunity to rewrite the discipline's project (Marcus and Fisher 1986).³ Finally, the anthropologist could share her burden with her object: the "natives" of today could and should represent themselves, we were told, and she could finally (critically) inhabit her own position of privilege (Clifford 1988).

The problem, however, was that this epistemological emancipation seemed out of sync with the concept's ontological inheritance. As Lisa Lowe (1996) notes, culture has "become the medium of the *present* [and] the site that mediates the *past*, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction" (6).

italics in the original). Nevertheless, the speech of the other could never be a thoroughly *historical* “voicing,” because cultural difference is also a product of the scientific tools of reason. Hence, a truly emancipatory recrafting of the cultural also requires a critical engagement with how scientific universality institutes spaces of history, a radical move that few seem willing to make. Michael Taussig (1987) captures this necessity when he argues, “With European conquest and colonization, these spaces of death [symbolic spaces instituted by terror and torture] blend into a common pool of key signifiers bidding the transforming culture of the conqueror with that of the conquered” (5). Postmodern anthropologists have succeeded in rewriting culture out of fixity, boundedness, and “ethnographic authority,” a move that places the objects of anthropological desire in the comfortable ontological niche historicity rules, but one that can be celebrated only if one forgets the discipline’s complicity, how its tools (concepts, theories, and methods) participated in the production of these “spaces of death.”

For most sociologists, on the other hand, the passing of the subject threatened a terrifying ontoepistemological crisis.⁴ But, unlike many of their anthropological cousins, most sociologists decided to hold onto the bars of their disciplinary cage, rejecting postmodern descriptions of the demise of the “modern (social or moral) order,” that is, the universal-historical order.⁵ Not surprisingly, epistemology and ontology would follow more familiar paths, for the divide here is between competing accounts of the emerging social or moral order, a global order—accounts that produce the world as a small community or a fragmented moral whole. Regardless of the positions taken, however, writers of globalization, global culture, and consumerism would describe a process that echoes Durkheim’s account of the emergence of “modern civilization,” one tied to the spread of mass media, expanded means of transportation, and growing consumption (Featherstone 1990, 1991). Unlike anthropologists who engaged in a battle to redefine the discipline’s project, then, most sociologists held fast to their disciplinary grounds,⁶ revisiting debates that seem to belong to a past long gone.

Many of my undergraduate students, some actively involved in the struggle for global justice, stare blankly at my mention of the death of the subject. “The death of whom?” they ask, demanding clarification. After my initial surprise, I usually find myself trying to

explain why the political significance of his death derives precisely from the ontoepistemological irrelevance of his death: the subject may be dead, I tell them, but his ghost—the tools and the raw material used in his assemblage—remain with us.

AN UNHOLY GHOST

Each time I attempt to explain to my students how the productive narratives of the subject render his death irrelevant, I become more convinced that the power of cultural difference lies in its reconfiguration of the racial and the nation, concepts that instituted the political subjects described in accounts of postmodernity and globalization.⁷ After all, their generation witnessed a return to political economy unleashed by mobilizations against the neoliberal reorganization of the global economy⁸ coincident with the institutionalization of postmodern and global accounts of cultural change, as reflected in recent international governmental and nongovernmental organizations’ stipulations that multiculturalism and diversity should now constitute the new standard for social justice. What one finds in this new global juridical-moral agenda that gives women’s rights and cultural rights the same ethical weight attributed to the original declarations of human rights are not only outlines for government initiatives, such as affirmative action and diversity policies. It also defines an ethical mandate that legal and social reforms be informed by multiculturalism, that is, that public policy include racial and ethnic minorities, not merely juridically and economically, but also as bearers of cultural difference.

What is it that connects those “small [historical] narratives” that now crowd the symbolic postmodern saloon, those whose noisy emergence both announced the fall of the nation and reinstated it as a political force, if not the laborers that sustain the global economy and those whose traditions are now the new target of global crusaders fighting in the name of freedom and human rights? What is it that links *maquiladora* workers in Tijuana; undocumented immigrants and refugees from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East who hang under the high-speed trains that cross Europe; their Mexican counterparts who sneak under barbed wire fences and dodge bullets along the border of the southwest United States; villagers starving in refugee camps in Sudan and Angola; the Palestinian mother mourning the death of another son; black

and brown teenagers killed by police officers in Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, and Caracas? In exasperation, I ask myself, Why is it not self-evident that, despite the pervasiveness of cultural difference, the racial and the nation still govern the global present precisely because of the way each refers to the ontological descriptors—universality and historicity—resolved in the figure of the Subject?⁹

I contend that we fail to understand how the racial governs the contemporary global configuration because the leading account of racial subjection—the sociohistorical logic of exclusion—(re)produces the powers of the subject by rewriting racial difference as a signifier of cultural difference, an argument I will return to and elaborate in chapter 7. What characterizes this construct is the fact that it presupposes what Foucault (1980) terms the juridical-political conception of power, informing both liberalism and historical materialism, which, I argue, entails a view of subjection (domination or oppression) as exclusion from universality resulting from unbecoming socio-historical (cultural or historical) strategies motivated by physical (sexual or racial) traits. As a consequence, the racial subaltern is always already inscribed as a historical subject who finally comes into representation as a *transparent "I"* when articulating an emancipatory project. In this way, this formulation rehearses transparency, the modern ontological presupposition, when deploying universality and historicity as the privileged modern ontological descriptors: it suggests that racial emancipation comes about when the (juridical and economic) inclusion of the racial others and their voices (historical and cultural representations) finally realizes universality in postmodern social configurations.

My task in what follows is to demonstrate how this account deploys the authorized modern ontological descriptors—that is, as exclusion from universality and historicity—to construct the racial as an improper aid to otherwise appropriate strategies of power. I also seek to demonstrate how its “explanation” of social subjection merely describes how the racial, along with other social-historical categories, produces exclusion without really explaining how or why it does so. In what follows, I describe this tendency shared by feminist and critical race studies scholarship that has its origin in their reliance on the sociohistorical logic of exclusion and its account of social subjection.

The Bounds of Historicity: Race and Class

In “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” Stuart Hall ([1980] 1996) advocates the use of Gramsci’s conception of social formation in the study of race because it enables an analysis of the “historical specificities” of racism that are lost when the latter is conceived of as a universal and unchanging structure: it enables an examination of how racism functions in different settings with different histories of colonialism and slavery, how it changes in time and how it operates in tandem with other social relations. More important, this perspective enables one to challenge conventional explanations of the relationship between racism and economic structures by demonstrating, for instance, how the needs of slavery can explain the emergence of attitudes of racial superiority rather than the other way around. In this formulation, racism would no longer be conceived as something that needs to be explained away. Instead it is recentered as a theoretical device necessary for any analysis of multiracial societies.

Following the spirit of Hall’s proposal, critical analysts of racial subjection have produced a significant body of work that, while still tied to the main concepts and formulations of the sociology of race relations, provides a distinctly different approach to racial subjection. Their work does not fall into a particular disciplinary field—to be sure, it is consistently interdisciplinary—but it remains sufficiently coherent to be identified as a field of scholarship. I call the critical field of racial and ethnic studies (CRES). Michael Ondaatje and Howard Winant’s (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States* is by far the watershed intervention in this field. The authors define racial formation as the “socio-historical” process through which racial categories and racial meanings are constantly produced and challenged in ongoing political struggle about how society should be organized, ruled, and represented.¹⁰ “Race,” they argue, “is concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies”; it is “an unstratified and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (55). To address how race links social structure and representation, the authors introduce the concept of “racial projects,” defined as “simultaneously an interpretation or representation or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to

re-organize or redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (56). That is, racial projects are competing ideologies deployed in the political arena; they also provide the basis for common-sense "racial identification" and explanations for differential positionings in the U.S. social structure.

Though Omi and Winant's historical-materialist rewriting of race as a sociohistorical concept postpones the descriptive manner in which the term is used in the United States, the privileged onto-epistemological status attributed to historicity poses a problem: if every historical (cultural or ideological) principle always interprets something structural, what would a racial project's structural, material referent be?¹¹ After all, Omi and Winant are not merely stating that race exists solely in the minds of badly educated individuals who misrepresent racial differences or that it is the product of zealous, profit-hungry capitalists. For them, race is a principle of social configuration, a social signifier, a symbolic construct that identifies certain social conditions as "racial formations." My point is this: if racial difference precedes race, the sociohistorical concept, either it is an empirical referent (as construed by quantitative analysts) or it is tied to another signifier. Even as they attempt to avoid it, Omi and Winant construct racial difference as a substantive bodily trait, an empirical (as opposed to material) referent of social signification. Thus, in repeating the ethically correct gesture, that is, in denying race any biological (scientific) soundness, they fail to demonstrate why racial difference, which is already an appropriation of the human body in scientific signification, should constitute a central dimension of social representation.

When incorporated into historical analysis, then, racial difference—otherwise conceived of as ("empty") irrelevant bodily difference—becomes phenomenon: the empirical referent of social scientific signification. And when framed in this way, the critical social analyst, suspicious of empiricism as he or she is, has no other choice than to write the racial as an unbecoming symbolic aid to what are otherwise properly modern (sociohistorical) mechanisms of exclusion from economic and juridical universality. This is evident in Hall's ([1980] 1996) description of race as a qualifier of class: "Race," he argues, "enters into the way black labor, male and female, is distributed as economic agents at the level of economic practices, and the class struggles which result from it; and into the way the fractions of

the black laboring classes are reconstituted, through the means political representation . . . , as political forces in the 'theater politics'—and the political struggles which result; and the manner in which class is articulated as the collective and individual 'subjects' of emerging ideologies—and the struggles over ideology, culture, and consciousness which result" (55).¹² That is, while no more guilty than other historical theoretical perspectives, historical materialism resists any account of the racial as an inherently mode (post-Enlightenment) strategy of power. The bounds of historicity are similarly evident in Balibar's genealogy of racism, which reduces it to an element of nationalism and class. The author argues that the idea of race, initially a signifier of caste that circulated among the European aristocracy, now circulates among the working class where racism "tends to produce . . . the equivalent of a caste closure at least for one part of the working class," providing the "maximum possible closure where social mobility is concerned" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 212). Thoroughly capitalist, from the nineteenth century on, racism would be added to other symbolic mechanisms of class exploitation as an excessive ideological device the dominant class imposed upon the exploited.

What troubles the account of racial subjection informing the CRES project is that its analysis of the racial in post-Enlightenment social configurations simultaneously embraces the post-Secor World War moral command to erase it from the modern political lexicon. Because the sociohistorical logic of exclusion assumes the racial difference and the exclusionary symbolic (cultural or ideological) strategies it entails are extraneous to the modern ethnic landscape, it can write the racial only as an unbecoming aid to (economic) class subjection. In saying this, it may seem that I have ready thrown out the proverbial baby because, rather than joining those who excavate contemporary social configurations to collect specimens of racism, I have decided to engage precisely this "false" (ideological or cultural) construct, racial difference, that critical social analysts disavow by placing scare quotes around the term *race*. I could justify this choice by listing CRES statements, by unpacking arguments, to demonstrate how they repeatedly deploy the underlying account of racial subjection described here. But instead, rather than engage in such a superficial exercise, I seek to demonstrate how this investment in exclusion limits our understanding of ho

the racial works along with gender, that other crucial critical device also haunted by bodily difference. As I will argue, this follows from feminist scholarship's own investment in the sociohistorical logic of exclusion.

An Odd Coupling: Race and Gender

Feminist scholars have been struggling to develop adequate accounts for how race and gender work together to institute subaltern social subjects.¹³ I suspect that part of this difficulty lies in the fact that gender addresses exclusion (from juridical universality) more comfortably than the racial, precisely because of how female subjection is articulated in the founding statements of modern thought:¹⁴ while the female's role in (physical) reproduction would seem to immediately explain her incarceration in domesticity, gender subjection rests on the liberal rewriting of patriarchy as a juridical-moral moment ruled by "natural (divine) law," a political domain subordinated to the "laws of society." From Locke's formulation of the "political society" to Hegel's account of "civil law," patriarchy as a mode of power circumscribes the domestic sphere, where females are locked away, yet within the political body created by the rational political subject, the male owner of property, ruler of the household, and citizen (Pateman 1988). In so articulating the female role, these founding statements postulate female subjection according to (divine) conceptions of the natural and the universal. This notion was subsequently displaced by nineteenth-century articulations of "laws of nature" when reason was consolidated as the privileged ground for modern ontoepistemological accounts. Hence, although the female body would also come under the scrutiny of scientific tools in the nineteenth century, biological difference would remain a secondary basis for gender subjection, that is, though grounded on "naturalization," gender subjection, unlike racial subjection, does not presuppose a scientific account of bodily difference.¹⁵

For this reason, feminist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s could assume (with moral ease) that sexual difference served as the self-evident universal (empirical) basis for female subjection.¹⁶ However, during the 1980s, at the height of the politics of representation, when feminist scholars deployed "experience" and "difference" to rewrite gender as a sociohistorical category—thereby retrieving it from the dangerously "naturalizing" waters of sexual difference—their proj-

ect was immediately unsettled by denunciations of gender's own universalizing tendency.¹⁷ Western and non-Western feminists of color refused the absorption of their difference into a universal female experience, insisting that race, class, and culture also be recognized as axes of subjection,¹⁸ a move nicely captured by one of the keenest critics of Anglo-feminism, Chandra Mohanty (1991b), who proclaimed: "I want to recognize and analytically explore the links among the histories and struggles of third world women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and monopoly capital. What I am suggesting, then, is an 'imagined community' of third world oppositional struggles, . . . with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic" (4). While relatively brief, then, the trajectory of theorizing gender has covered considerable ground, from the divine and natural category of "woman," which produces the excluded female global subject via naturalization, to the analytic conception of gender, where sociohistorical constructions of difference and experience delimit female exclusion and seek to include female trajectories determined by other exclusionary mechanisms. It has also witnessed a productive debate about the representation of the gendered subaltern subject.

What has yet to be acknowledged, I think, is the troublesome coupling of gender and race, how these principles of social exclusion form a strangely compatible pair: both identify sociohistorical processes, both refer to supplemental cultural or ideological mechanisms that subordinate women and people of color, and each captures a particular way in which women of color experience that subordination. Nevertheless, this march made in patriarchal hell, I argue, has hindered the theoretical labor necessary to capture how they produce the female of color as a subaltern subject.

During the past twenty years or so, a large library has been built by scholars using difference and experience to address the combined effects of race and gender. Few dare to deploy one without gesturing toward the other, for it has become conventional wisdom that neither can adequately capture all dimensions of a subject's sociohistorical trajectory. Even fewer scholars go beyond the assertion that these categories operate as exclusionary principles—that is, most analyses can be catalogued in terms of analyzing the effects of gender on race or of race on gender—for the social trajectories of women of color.¹⁹

That is, when coupled with gender, race produces additional gender exclusion and, when coupled with race, gender produces additional racial exclusion, and so on.²⁰

What I am suggesting is that precisely this sociohistorical logic of exclusion that makes the racial and gender such a suitable pair also hinders our understanding of how gender and race work together to institute a particular kind of subaltern subject. As Joan Scott (1991) argues, the conception of historicity has informed writings of the experience of women, blacks, and homosexuals limits our understanding of the trajectories of these subaltern collectivities. Because most analyses that privilege experience and difference fail to address discursive power, she contends, they reproduce the very logic that instituted the authority of the subject, the epistemological figure against which they write the other in history. Noting that this derives from the separation between language and experience, which leads to the naturalization of the former, she advocates a strategy of historical interpretation that “historicizes the terms by which experience is represented, and so historicizes ‘experience’ itself” (795). Put differently, the subject’s transcendental manta and the subalterns’ immanent (naturalized) experience are made of the same “essentialist” threat, for prevailing critical strategies produce the latter as a specimen of the “individual,” the liberal-historical being.

Beyond the theoretical quandary the racial crates for contemporary critical analyses drawing from historical materialism—the labor of slaves and indentured workers, for instance, has been considered productive and yet never fully integrated into the historical-materialist arsenal—the most troubling aspect of examinations of the intersection of race, class, and gender is that they deploy these categories as descriptive devices. For this reason, rather than attempting to avoid the accusation of ignoring gender and class by recounting the ways each furthers racial exclusion, I have decided to follow Scott’s suggestion. In doing so, however, I will not revisit history to indicate how, in various sociohistorical moments, alone and in combination with class and gender, the racial brings about exclusion from universality. Rather, I seek to engage in the kind of analytical groundwork necessary for a critical account that moves beyond listing how each excludes and, instead, examine how the racial combines with other social categories (gender, class, sexuality, culture, etc.) to produce modern subjects who can be excluded from

(juridical) universality without unleashing an ethical crisis. Because a guiding question here is why, despite its moral ban, the racial still constitutes a prolific strategy of power, it is also necessary to chart the symbolic terrain the racial shares with the other tools the narratives of history and science have deployed to carve the place of the subject.

THE SYMBOLIC TRINITY

Which of the two meanings of culture should one employ when analyzing collective practices and products? Should it be the normative meaning, the one that refers to standards and values, products and practices (classical music, the opera, etc.) that distinguish modern culture? Or should it be the descriptive meaning, the one that refers to particularity, which writes a collectivity as a unified (geohistorical) consciousness? Following Bourdieu’s (1984) lead, I argue that one can understand the meaning of culture, in either sense, only by engaging the anthropological sense, where one finds that the normative and the descriptive refer to two other concepts with which the cultural shares the task of instituting modern subjects, namely, the racial and the nation. For centuries they have been used to describe human collectives. Nevertheless, as modern signifying devices—as signifiers in the text of science and history—they have a shorter trajectory, one whose pace has increased so dramatically over the last fifty years that it has become difficult to establish their signifying boundaries and combined effects.

Much of what I do in the following chapters, mapping the analytics of raciality, is an attempt to unpack this conceptual mess by delimiting the signifying boundaries of the racial, establishing how it differs from the cultural and the nation by delineating the regions of signification—science and history—in which these modern productive tools thrive. This strategy, a crucial task for any critique of their effects of signification, enables us to trace their post-Enlightenment trajectories. In doing this, I demonstrate how in the mid-nineteenth century, (a) the scientists of man deployed an arsenal that produced self-consciousness as an effect of scientific determinants (the laws of “fecundity” and “heredity”) and (b) the nation was consolidated as the concept that instituted modern politics as historical (moral) subjects, that is, as bound by principles expressed in its common language, religion, art, and so on, and how in the twentieth century

(c) the cultural emerged as a scientific concept that wrote the mind as a historical thing, but insofar as it produced moral relief, it did not displace, but actually repeated the effects of signification of the racial (Stocking 1968). In short, because the cultural is neither the racial nor the nation under an assumed name, the ontocriptomological placing of the cultural, in both senses identified by Bourdieu, determines effects of signification that overflow the borders it shares with each.

What makes this critical analytical groundwork necessary is precisely the fact that in the late twentieth century the cultural seems to have displaced the nation and the racial to become the governing political signifier. Prior to this, the racial and the nation guided constructions of the foremost modern political subject, namely, the nation-state, and both were appropriated worldwide by subaltern subjects in transnational and transcontinental alliances against colonialism and imperialism (Von Eschen 1997; Brock and Furtres 1998). It was not until the late 1960s, however, that the nation would frame projects of racial emancipation. For example, many have identified how the anticolonial wars in Africa influenced the Black Power, Chicano, American Indian, and Asian American (nationalist) movements in the United States, which sought not merely inclusion but a radical transformation of the U.S. social configuration. As far as I am aware, however, no one has asked why the racial could not become the sole basis for an emancipatory project that could, for example, reclaim what Ture and Hamilton ([1967] 1992) refer to as “[black] history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism” and “the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized,” which is “the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend” (35). It seems that precisely because these movements aimed beyond inclusion toward that ever-receding promised land of self-determination—that is, transparency—race (the social scientific signifier) could not sustain their projects. Instead, in the 1960s black, Chicano, American Indian, and Asian American activists and intellectuals deployed the nation, the historical signifier, to write the trajectory of the racial subaltern subject as a transparent “I.” Whether this was the inevitable course of the racial and the nation it is not clear. But the extent to which they were bound to meet each other

in twentieth-century political statements is relevant only because of how short-lived these emancipatory struggles were, joining concepts that refigured different modes of representing modern subjects.²¹

During the next two decades, the cultural would fill in the gaps of earlier nationalist projects, guiding attempts to recuperate the particular “histories” of racial subaltern collectivities. In the 1970s, for instance, U.S. blacks would gesture toward Africans and the black populations of Latin America and the Caribbean, claiming slavery as a common historical past, to manufacture a black “culture” that spread beyond the borders of the United States (Karenga 1993; Asante 1987; and Howe 1998; among others). Facing these sweet gifts of 1960s nationalist struggles, however, was the bitter fate of thriving in a conjuncture that no longer supported “essentialist” projects. In the 1980s, the heyday of the politics of representation after this nationalist desire had been discarded along with many other promises of the 1960s—the cultural would be consolidated as the racial’s historical companion (Gilroy 1993a and 1993b; Baker et al. 1997; Kelley 1997). During those years, cultural politics met innumerable challenges, the most serious of which, multiculturalism, now moves forcefully ahead as it guides the official agenda for global justice.²² This liberal appropriation of multiculturalism is especially troubling because it embraces the sociohistorical logic of exclusion as the correct account of social (racial, ethnic, gender) subjection and accepts the emergence of claims for recognition of cultural difference as proof of the failure of assimilation (Mabry 1996; Silva 2005): it simultaneously normalizes claims of cultural difference in arguments that are seemingly critical of the earlier project of “assimilation” while retaining the earlier sociology of race relations argument concerning the extraneousness of the others of Europe that the biologic of racial difference is superseded by a sociologic of cultural difference to incarcerate the others of Europe in bounded transparency. As postmodern accounts sent the earlier formulation of the cultural to join the racial in ethical exile, the others of Europe embraced another doomed strategy of emancipation, namely, the project of producing and interpreting crafts that communicate their particular sociohistorical trajectories as subaltern travelers on the road to transparency.

The problem of cultural politics that undermines the postmodern emancipatory agenda is one of correlation: as any number cruncher

knows, when two independent variables affect each other, the result of a linear regression is biased. In the same way, the equation of the racial and the cultural undermines cultural politics projects insofar as the effect communicated by both scientific concepts, which produce "meanings and beings" as effects of exterior determination, is oversignified. Therefore, although the postmodern rendering of the cultural has shed its "boundedness and fixity" when used to describe black cultural politics, not only does the old cultural resurface; it also resuscitates racial difference to produce a doubly "fixed" and doubly "bounded"—that is, a doubly determined—black culture. For instance, Gilroy (1993b) identifies this effect in what he calls the "ethno-absolutist" view of black culture.²³ Unfortunately, Gilroy's alternative does not fare any better. His "Black Atlantic," which he offers as an alternate approach to black cultural politics and is based on a transnational, trans-Atlantic, and consistently English-speaking formation, errs in the same (historical) direction. The early twentieth-century black U.S. American male intellectual trans-Atlantic travelers who, according to Gilroy, shared in the "desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (19), seemed to have wished nothing but these very things. In other words, the two trends Gilroy identifies rehearse the central themes of modern representation. I grant that he recognizes that the "politics of fulfillment" houses the "spirit" of the liberal project, namely, juridical universalism. But why does he not recognize that his account of "the politics of transfiguration"—which marks "the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance and between that group and its erstwhile oppressors" (37)—produces a bit more than a transparent "I" in blackface? Without its nicely chosen postmodern or modern Habermasian communicating disguise, how different is his account of black culture compared to those he designates using terms of "cultural insiderness" or "ethnic absolutism"? Not much, I am afraid.

This, I argue, is the effect of the *transparency thesis*, the ontological assumption governing the social descriptors universality and historicity that has survived the death of the subject. The fact that it remains at the core of critical accounts of racial subjection and "post" mappings of the global configuration is clearly reflected in

the postmodern refashioning of the cultural. Despite the patronizing project of giving "voice" or "agency" to their object, these anthropologists' intentions have (as always) been good. The critical reassessment of the fixity and boundedness of culture has also deflated the discipline's "ethnographic authority." Nevertheless, the cultural still authorizes (re)writings of the others of Europe, but now as incarcerated subjects of cultural difference.

Because they presuppose the ruling ontological premise, namely transparency, ethnographic descriptions of the global subaltern as a cultural "other" (re)produce the racial's effect of signification which is to write all that is particular to post-Enlightenment Europe as a signifier of the subject, the transparent "I." When deployed to address the products and practices of people of color, the culture produces a kind of transparency that is self-defeating, as is the case with Gilroy's "racial community of interpretation" and its counter cultural "politics of transfiguration." No matter how fluid, hybrid or unbounded, when addressing a collectivity the racial has already inscribed as subaltern, the cultural acquires a descriptive sense that does not and cannot communicate interiority, as is the case with the nation, the historical signifier. It does not and cannot precisely because it remains fully within a scientific (anthropological) terrain of signification. As such, it reinforces the effects of signification of the racial: exterior determination. In short, it cannot institute a transparent (interior/temporal)—that is, self-determined—"I."

Perhaps we are (post)modern in more ways than we care to be. But does this give us license to be careless when specifying how this predicament guides our emancipatory projects? The pressir task, I believe, is to engage the racial as a modern political strategy rather than attempting, once again, to resuscitate the sociohistoric logic of exclusion. There are only so many ways we can recount the mechanisms and effects of exclusion. There are only so many ways to account for the failed emancipatory projects that use race, nation and culture precisely because we are not quite certain what happens when these notions are deployed separately or in conjunction with one another. Certainly, the writing of racism as a modifier of proper historical (cultural or ideological) strategies of power has been productive. Unfortunately, this formulation retains the sociologic exclusion, which transformed the exteriority the racial refigures a scientific device into a substantive (preconceptual, prehistoric:

marker of the outsidership of the others of Europe. More critical than this, however, as I argue elsewhere later, is how rendering the racial as a sociohistorical category reproduces the erasures that (trans)formed racial difference into a signifier of cultural difference: it (re)produces non-Europeans as others and (re)identifies the (instinctual, cultural, ideological) exclusionary strategies their presence evokes as extraneous to post-Enlightenment, modern, social (moral) configurations (Silva 2001).

For this reason, the necessary step for comprehending the present global configuration—necessary also for addressing the predicament of contemporary (“postmodern”) critics of modern thought and race theorists—is to unpack how the racial, the cultural, and the nation institute modern subjects: by charting their contexts of emergence, describing their conditions of production, and delimiting their signifying effects. We need to abandon constructions of the racial as an add-on, an unbecoming device that reinforces the constitutive effects of otherwise appropriate modern political strategies, as it appears in Balibar’s (1991) formulation of racism, which he defines as “a supplement internal to nationalism, *always in excess of it*, but always indispensable to its constitution and yet always insufficient to achieve its project” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 54; my emphasis). For Balibar, racism and nationalism are principles that institute political collectivities through the binary of inclusion-exclusion: his formulation of the “historical reciprocity” of these principles constructs racism as enabling the constitution of the internal and external boundaries of a collectivity unified by nationalist ideologies and practices. However, foreclosed in this formulation—to which my summary does not do justice—are questions such as: Why should nationalism be supplemented by racism? What is it about the nation and the racial that makes them suitable companions? Why have they worked together even in circumstances where racial difference does not exclude, where the racial “other” is a bona fide national “same”? Why does the cultural so easily cross the borders it shares with both?

The relevance of these questions cannot and should not be dismissed in hoping for that moment of moral bliss, before and beyond the missteps of racism, when transparency will describe a social configuration where the racial no longer operates. Despite its laudable sentiments, this hope prevents our understanding the conditions of

production of today’s global subjects, of how they come into being. For we already know that the concepts used to describe them—the racial, the nation, and the cultural—fill the same signifying task of producing collectivities as particular kinds of modern subjects. Each, however, has very distinct effects of signification: (a) the racial produces modern subjects as an effect of exterior determination, which institutes an irreducible and unslatable difference; (b) the nation produces modern subjects as an effect of historical (interior) determination, which assumes a difference that is resolved in an unfolding (temporal) transcendental essence; but (c) the cultural is more complex in its effects because it can signify either or both. In Bourdieu’s second sense, the descriptive, the cultural is almost indistinguishable from the nation because it assumes that a “collective consciousness” is represented in artistic, religious, and other products. In the first sense, however, the cultural restores the racial in that the distinction between “high culture” and “low culture” presupposes “civilization,” initially deployed by the sciences of man and society—the anthropology and sociology—to write the particularity of post-Enlightenment Europe (Elias 1982). The cultural, I repeat, is not a disguise of the nation, nor is it the racial under an assumed name, no matter how much moral relief may be found in replacing race with ethnicity; yet it reproduces the effects of signification of both. But this is something many of us ignore because we hope that the racial is politically relevant only because it operates as an added principle of exclusion in an otherwise thoroughly transparent social configuration governed by universality and historicity.

WHENCE THE RACIAL?

The Subject is dead! we have been told. So why is its most effective strategy of power still with us? The central task of this book is to map the analytics of raciality, to chart the contexts of emergence, to describe conditions of production, and to delimit the effects of signification of the arsenal that institutes self-consciousness as an effect of exterior (outer) determination. Although this road follows but one moment of the trajectory of the subject, the sole effect of interior (self-)determination, we will identify the most prolific modern strategies of power deployed to delimit its place, and this will show why its death, which has so many times been foretold, has not resulted in its complete annihilation. Hence, my first step is to elaborate my

argument about how transparency hinders our understanding of racial subjection as a prelude to charting the context of the emergence of the analytics of raciality, of excavating the modern philosophical grounds that generated the statements used to assemble the transparent “I,” the figure at the center of modern representation.

In Part I I introduce the idea of the *modern text* as an analytic strategy to describe modern representation as an ontoepistemological context composed of signifying strategies produced by two fields, namely, science and history. My excavation of the founding statements of modern thought identifies philosophical formulations that reproduce Descartes’s outline of self-consciousness as the only existing being to enjoy self-determination—the ability to alone decide on its essence or existence—which requires the bold articulation and disavowal of the ontoepistemological relevance of extended things, that is, bodies. I then identify how this formulation of self-determination is threatened when two framers of modern science deploy a version of reason, *universal nomos*, the constraining ruler of the “world of things,” that opens up the possibility of rewriting man as subjected to outer determination, namely, as an affectable thing. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century statements, I identify the universal *nomos* and the *universal poesis* that emerged in social ontologies, which describe reason as the regulative and productive force, respectively. These are evident in the efforts of Locke, Leibniz, Kant, and Herder to (re)present the “I” as a self-determined being, seeking to postpone the threat introduced by the scientific rendering of universality. In their writing I identify statements that produce two scenes of reason, two ontological accounts of how it plays its universal regulative or productive role in the “world of men”: the *scene of regulation*, which introduces universality as the juridical descriptor, and the *scene of representation*, which introduces historicity as a moral descriptor.

I argue that these statements that articulate and disavow extended things protect the mind’s self-determination by designing two stages—interiority and exteriority—in which reason plays its sovereign role: in the *stage of exteriority* it operates as the exterior ruler of affectable things, and in the *stage of interiority* it is the force that guides the production of human knowledge and culture. Although these statements, most evident in Kant’s notion of the Transcendental and Herder’s formulation of the Historical, sought

to secure interiority, the private holding man has always occupied in Western thought, none resolved the threat introduced in Descartes’s founding statement that grounded the mind’s ontoepistemological privilege on universal reason. It was only with Hegel’s intervention, which consolidated modern representation, that the full delineation of self-consciousness resolved this threat. The key figure in this formulation is “Spirit,” the transcendental (interior or temporal) “I,” which guides his version of the play of reason, *transcendental poesis*, where I find the framing of the *transparency thesis*, the ontoepistemological assumption guiding modern representation. That is, Hegel refashioned the Subject as the transparent “I,” the one whose emergence he located in post-Enlightenment Europe, where Spirit completed its self-actualizing trajectory. It is this tracing of subsequent refashionings of self-consciousness, and each version of universal reason this entails, that allows me to delineate the field of modern representation, the stage of exteriority, the context of emergence of the analytics of raciality—in sum, the arsenal that, in the nineteenth century, would finally write self-consciousness as an effect of the tools of scientific knowledge.

In Part II I identify another version of universal reason, *productive nomos*, introduced by the science of life, the project of knowledge that becomes a central element of the regimen of production of the analytics of raciality. Specifically, I show how it inaugurates the possibility of refashioning self-consciousness in the stage of exteriority when it describes how universal reason plays its regulative and productive role in a particular domain of nature—namely, living nature—that man shares with other living things. My focus here is on early scientific projects—the science of man, anthropology, and race relations—that deploy the tools of science to uncover the truth of man. Following the lead of the science of life, each deploys an arsenal that produces two kinds of modern subjects by tying certain bodily and mental configurations to different global regions: the subject of transparency, for whom universal reason is an interior guide, and subjects of affectability, for whom universal reason remains an exterior ruler. From its initial deployment in the science of man to race relations’ rendering of the racial as a sociological concept, which introduces the sociologies of racial subjection, I trace the assemblage of the arsenal that describes the trajectory of the others of Europe as a movement toward obliteration. Put

differently, my reading indicates that raciality, as a tool of productive *nomos*, constitutes an effective tool precisely because of the way its main signifiers—the racial and the cultural—provide an account of human difference, an account in which particularity remains irreducible and unsublatable, that is, one that would not dissipate in the unfolding of “Spirit.” My reading also suggests that this arsenal, which belongs in the stage of exteriority, can no longer postpone the threat posed by universal reason, that it necessarily produces modern subjects as coexisting and relational beings. In doing so, the analytics of raciality institutes another ontological context, globality, in which the particularity of the mental and social configurations found in post-Enlightenment Europe can be sustained only in reference to those existing in other regions of the globe.

In Part III I turn to the analysis of the effects of signification of raciality, describing how it produces modern subjects. To do so I select those statements that sought to write early postcolonial politics—the United States and Brazil—as modern political subjects and identify strategies that belong to both ontological contexts, namely, historicity and globality. My reading of statements about the U.S. and Brazilian nations deployed between the 1890s and the 1930s indicates that the place of the national (interior/temporal) subject is established by the apparatus of the analytics of raciality to ensure that the affectable others of Europe inhabiting these politics do not determine their global position. In other words, I show how the racial subaltern subject is placed before (in front of) the ethical space inhabited by the proper national subject. In the United States, articulations of racial difference produce the particularity of the U.S. nation as a manifestation of a European (liberal) desire, and I trace how these articulations produce the logic of exclusion as a mode of racial subjection that places Indians, blacks, and Asians as subjects not encompassed by the principles that govern the U.S. social configuration, that is, universality and self-determination. In Brazil, miscegenation produces a national subject haunted by a desire for an always elusive object, namely, Europeaness (whiteness), and in my reading I indicate how the deployment of miscegenation as a historical signifier enables the writing of the Brazilian subject, the subject of democracy, against scientific statements of its inviability. From this solution emerges a mode of racial subjection governed by a logic of obliteration that cannot be apprehended using the prevail-

ing sociologic of exclusion precisely because the latter is predicated upon the annihilation of raciality for the (re)institution of a modern transparent social configuration. By showing how scientific and historical strategies are appropriated in texts that institute both the national subject and its subaltern others, I then indicate how the political subjects addressed in accounts of postmodernity and globalization are constituted by the same tools that instituted the deceased subject. In doing so, this mapping of the analytics of raciality refashions the figure of the modern subject as *homo modernus*, the effect of signifiers that refer to the two ontological contexts—namely, historicity (the one figured in the nation) and globality (the one instituted by the racial)—that constitute modern (post-Enlightenment) representation.