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Toward a relational politics of representation

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ABSTRACT

Rhetorical theories of representation, caught in the logics of transcendence/immanence, have struggled to reconcile the need to move beyond representation with the political importance of critiquing representational effects. I argue that this tension can—and must—be addressed through a *relational politics of representation* that draws from antiracist and decolonial theory. Tracing poststructural critiques of representational ontology, epistemology, and politics, I demonstrate their dependence on racializing and colonial processes. I then describe how rethinking our theories of representation relationally figures both ontology and epistemology as inherently political, and opens the possibility for theorizing the human beyond Man. I argue that *a relational politics of representation* is an impossible necessity that must be continually (re)attempted though it will never be fully achieved.

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When we think of the processes involved in theory production, we may first consider gathering sources of various types necessary to the creation of ideas: archives, texts, cultural imaginaries. A step further might involve conceptualizing the assorted objects within reach that allow bodies to extend themselves into the action of writing ideas: tables and chairs, pens and paper, computers and keyboards.[1] Rarely do we continue on to survey the bodies doing the writing, the bodies producing the theory. What do they look like? What do they feel like? How do they map onto our notions of who and what is involved in theorizing?

When we absent bodies from discussions of theory, we implicitly ground our theories in somatic norms and tacitly accept their conditions—whiteness and coloniality—which circumscribe who the theories represent.[2] As such, representational theories of rhetoric offer a particularly generative context for thinking through the erasure of bodily difference from theorizing, and how recentering bodies and difference creates new possibilities for theory. And representation, in particular, *needs* new possibilities for theoretical futures. Since the advent of Foucauldian approaches in rhetoric caused a crisis of representation in the 1980s, arguments concerning representation qua representation have evolved into two opposing camps: immanentist perspectives that seem to have overcome representation, and moved "beyond" it; or figurings of representation as not gone but implicit in contemporary immanentist scholarship.[3] In either case, the binary opposition of transcendence/immanence

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continues to structure our understanding of representational logics, leaving us at an impasse: scholars are often firmly positioned on one side or other of the divide.

But what happens to our theories of representation if, rather than starting from a position of presumed whiteness, comfort, and orientation, we start from a brown body that is freezing and disoriented, soaking wet and bitterly cold? A Sioux woman who is shivering and unable to feel her legs, yet standing. Standing in water that needs to be protected, water that is communal life. Part of a group of people fording the water in an attempt to reach and encircle the burial grounds of their ancestors, which are currently being trampled and degraded. Unable to run faster than the dogs whose teeth grasp and rip her flesh. Enveloped by a burning pain as her eyes are forced shut from the liquid sprayed in them. Heartbroken at the damage being done to her land, life, and people. Yet standing. How does this body, this experience—so different from that typically understood as the basis of theory—ask us to reconceptualize our theories of representation?

In this essay, I argue that centering difference requires us to rethink representational theory as a *relational politics*, and that doing so can move us past the binary of immanence/transcendence. When I speak from a position of we/us, I speak as one among the vast majority of rhetoricians who have upheld an implicit standard of whiteness and colonialism in our theorizing by starting from what Sylvia Wynter terms "Man": the Western, white, bourgeois "conception of the human … which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself."[4] A *relational politics of representation* instead works to parse out the assumptions underlying our theories of representation by attending to the racial and colonial relations that act to structure our processes of knowledge production. According to Alexander Weheliye, relationality figures a "constitutive potentiality … structured in dominance and composed of the particular processes of bringing-into-relation, which offer spheres of interconnected existences that are in constant motion."[5] Drawing from Weheliye, I use *relational politics* to describe the uneven production of connections and disconnections between subjects, objects, and environments that demonstrate *both* the ways that racializing and colonizing processes structure knowledge production and reinforce unjust material relations, *and* how refusing or failing to follow given relational "lines" that have been structured in dominance[6]—what Aimee Carrillo Rowe calls "power lines"[7]—holds potential for creating worlds and futures that do not succumb to racist and colonial logics. Relationality itself is politically ambivalent; however, by focusing on relational processes we can unpack what has been taken for granted or naturalized in our processes of theorizing, and thereby open possibility for as-yet-unthought relations that may lead to more just futures. That is, a focus on relationality reveals that *everything* is political.

From this perspective, a relational politics of representation can help us bridge poststructural theories that recognize how representation as a concept is ontologically and epistemologically problematic, and scholarship that examines how, even so, representations have meaningful effects on lives and material conditions—particularly those of marginalized people.[8] Rhetoric needs a theory of representation that attends to both the impossibility of transparent representations, and yet the necessity of representational critique. I argue that a *relational politics of representation* helps to bridge these two needs by demonstrating how both ontology and epistemology are politically produced through relation.

Throughout the essay, I will return to the Native American water protectors protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock as means of grounding why a relational

politics of representation is urgent and necessary.[9] I use this example in particular because Native Americans exemplify a population that is doubly erased in our representational theories. When bodies and difference are exempted from our theories of representation, when we theorize universally about representation as impossible because there are no essences to re-present, because there is no epistemically transmissible influence, we are ignoring how a politics of difference already shapes our ideas of ontology and epistemology. Native Americans, other indigenous peoples, people of color, those who are colonized—all of these populations are erased, as our theories extend from assumptions of whiteness and coloniality. Yet, in addition, Native Americans are relationally rendered as ghostly remnants of a dead past in the U.S. cultural imagination.[10] For Native American populations, then, a theoretical rendering of representational ontologies and epistemologies as apolitical serves as a double forgetting.

In this essay, I begin figuring a relational politics of representation by first tracing how an uneven distribution of connections and disconnections already underlie our current representational theories, and second demonstrating the potential of thinking relationally for answering both disciplinary quandaries and, more importantly, the relegation of difference to the margins of humanity. The argument thus unfolds in two main sections. The first section examines how poststructural rhetorical theorists have dealt with representational problems in relation to ontology, epistemology, and politics. I show how their critiques are necessary, yet still reliant on racial and colonial processes of knowledge production. The second section then draws from this work, using antiracist and decolonial theories to argue that conceptualizing representation *relationally* meaningfully refigures ontology and epistemology as inherently political, and orients us toward a relational politics of representation that is both impossible, and yet necessary.

Troubling representational rhetoric

From a humanist perspective, representation consists of ontological and epistemological components. Bradford Vivian explains that in humanist theories of rhetoric, speech "is doubly representative" in that it "allows human beings to represent, or lucidly communicate, transcendent phenomena—truths, laws, or values [and] also represents the definitively human capacity of human beings, the activity in which humans personify the truth of their being."[11] Ontologically, representation assumes that such phenomena do in fact exist, and have some sort of essence that can be re-presented. Epistemologically, the concept of representation assumes phenomena can be transparently communicated and understood. Thus, a rhetoric equated to representation is "predicated upon the expression of essential truths and, as such, the refinement of human being."[12]

In this section, I discuss how poststructural theorists challenge the ontological and epistemological assumptions of representational logic through critiques of essence and influence, and then struggle with the political implications.[13] These critiques lead to a posthuman terrain where representation no longer acts to refine human being, but instead interrogates the essence of the human as such. However, by excising difference from this theorizing, the "human" that is challenged is actually only a segment of humanity—Man. Lisa Lowe demonstrates how the liberal subjects of humanism are "possible only in relation to laboring lives in the colonized geographies or 'zones of exception'

with which they coexist, however disavowed."[14] By equating the liberal human subject with all of humanity, rather than thinking through what it means to be human as an uneven relational politic, poststructural theorizing, even when moving past the human, retained the racial and colonial processes central to its formation.[15]

Representation and ontology: reconsidering essence

In Western metaphysics, the question of humanity has focused primarily on defining its essence. For poststructural theories, on the other hand, "the fundamental issue … is not *how* the essence of human being is defined but *that* it is defined as the representation of an essence at all."[16] Defining a human essence requires "assuming an essential sameness among individuals, [which] can result in a denial of important cultural or ethnic differences."[17] In moving from "humans" to "subjects," however, we still often theorize in a way that reduces difference within a universalizing framework—even thinking subjects as unstable, incomplete, and contingently articulated assumes all subjects can be theorized as such. Therefore, the following representational critiques of essences are, simultaneously, vitally important to understanding difference, and yet act to foreclose relational understandings of differential distribution.

Barbara A. Biesecker argues that rhetoric's function is dependent on an understanding of subjectivity as unstable and asserts that the rhetorical situation relies on either the speaker or the context inhabiting a sovereign and essentialized role. She notes that "if any symbolic act is no more than an event that links distinct and already constituted subjects, then rhetorical discourse bumps up against the impenetrable and unalterable space of the subject."[18] For there to be any sort of change instituted by rhetoric, subjectivity must be alterable, unstable. In his work on rhetorical maneuvering, Kendall R. Phillips understands this instability as arising from the way the subject is both a product of "its fluidity and its positioning."[19] Thus, though the subject may occupy different subject positions, she does so only momentarily, as she is constantly moving between subject positions and the subject positions themselves are constantly shifted and reproduced through discursive arrangements. In this way, "subjectivity remains indeterminate,"[20] but in being so, opens possibility for using different, unexpected positionings to activate rhetorical change.

If the subject is inherently unstable, then it follows that subjectivity would also be incomplete. In his project of constructing a critical rhetoric, Raymie McKerrow addresses the assumption of a complete subject that can be re-presented. McKerrow draws from Michel Foucault to posit a critical rhetoric as a critique of both domination and freedom, but a critique that can never be completed as it must be continually reflexive and call its own stance—the stance of the critic—into question.[21] Joshua Gunn and David E. Beard read McKerrow's project as an apocalyptic sublime, in that it posits a necessary answer to a perceived crisis, but the crisis itself never ends. One facet of "the sublime experience [is that] the subject is revealed to be a fragile, incomplete construction rather than an integral whole."[22]

For this reason, some theorists take issue even with the idea of rhetoric instituting the subject as its effect: if rhetoric can discursively institute a particular identity, then the assumptions critiqued above are simply brought back in a different form. Ronald Walter Greene notes this problem with Maurice Charland's theory of constitutive

rhetoric.[23] Even though Charland refrains from instituting an essence at the heart of the subject, his theory still posits that rhetoric can present *an identity* for the audience to adopt. In this way, the problematic element is not that representation necessitates a pre-existing essence, but that rhetoric *as* representation is thought of as constituting essence itself. To avoid this move, Greene looks to Foucault and Gilles Deleuze to consider how the subject "should be approached less as an effect of a constitutive practice of a generalized rhetoricality and more from within a specific apparatus of production."[24] Rather than thinking of a subject as *constituted* through rhetoric like Charland, Greene examines how subjects are *articulated* within and through apparatuses. Constitutive rhetoric sees the subject as brought about through interpellation, an Althusserian call from a sovereign voice that cannot be refused.[25] Greene, on the other hand, moves to a process-oriented theory, wherein the subject is doubly articulated. This theory "includes how one is invited to partake in a hermeneutics of the self that orients a concrete individual toward an ideal of the rhetorical subject, and how this rhetorical subject finds itself linked to other productive apparatuses,"[26] avoiding a sovereign, instantiating essence.

Poststructural theorists recognize that representational theories of rhetoric harbor notions of essentialism. What we miss is that even these *critiques* of essentialism harbor differential relational politics—uneven distributions of subjective instability, incompleteness, and articulation that depend on processes of racialization and coloniality. All subjects may be inherently unstable and incomplete, but through the "power lines that connect us [and] stand as conduits of the unevenness of colonial modernity," racialized and colonized subjects are made to feel their instability and incompleteness more often and more forcefully.[27] For instance, Native Americans historically have been subjected not only to physical genocidal attacks, but also to psychological ones that force subjective instability. For over 100 years, a project of cultural assimilation forcibly removed Native American children from their homes and cultures and subjected them to educational processes meant to attune them to following the normative lines of Western modernity. But, as Sara Ahmed has noted, being forced to follow lines that one's body does not fit produces subjective disorientation.[28] Stripped of their homes, cultures, land, and networks of support, Native Americans have been forced to bear a weight of subjective instability that others are not.

Articulation is also unevenly distributed. Weheliye argues that we must talk not only of assemblages, but also of *racializing* assemblages, which construe "race not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans."[29] Without attention to racialization and colonialism, we take on the humanistic equation of subject with Man, leaving out those who are racialized as less than the "universal" human.[30] We can see the effects of relational racial and colonial processes of production in the way Native American protestors at Standing Rock are treated by police and security forces. They are subject to excessive violence—hosed down with water in the middle of winter, attacked by dogs, and sprayed with pepperspray. Violence that would be socially unacceptable when aimed at differently racialized bodies is figured as necessary. In part, such violence trades in resonances with filmic depictions of "cowboys and Indians" and redeploys a racial script that posits Native Americans as savage and violent, and thus deserving of violence themselves.[31]

Representation and epistemology: reconsidering influence

The epistemological problem of influence is intricately tied to the ontological one of essence. Here, the critique is not leveled at essence per se, but at the process through which essence is thought to be re-presented. Poststructural theories question the possibility of influence as a transmission of transparent meaning. In doing so, they raise pertinent issues regarding the codification of influence and whether or not it can be intended. Yet, even when considering influence as discursively emergent and intent as dispersed, we ignore how racializing and colonizing discursive regimes act to structure influence and intent in dominance.

For Biesecker, assuming a "causal relationship between the constituent elements" of the rhetorical situation necessitates that "either speaker or situation is posited as logically and temporally prior." Focusing on rhetoric as *simply* influence, then, "blinds us to the discourse's radically historical character," and does not allow for more than merely success or failure.[32] Vivian explains that the problem with this formulation is how it regards rhetoric as "merely the instrument of human intention or judgment," rather than a situated and emergent phenomenon. It codifies an essential notion of the subject, as well as rhetoric itself.[33]

The question then becomes whether influence can be avoided. Scholars such as Michael Calvin McGee and Dana Cloud believe that influence, though problematic, has an important role: minds must be changed to struggle against social control, and this requires positing representations.[34] Articulation theorists, however, find the reliance on an idea of reality outside of discourse problematic, and instead look to avoid logics of influence totally. Instead of emerging from subjects, rhetoric here emerges from a governing apparatus.[35]

Additionally, in humanistic theories, influence often relies on the assumption of conscious intent.[36] Rhetoricians have struggled with critiques of intent, since "conventional notions of speech assume an identity between one's intentions, a speech act, and its reception in the minds of listeners."[37] Poststructural critiques of representation have called the field to wrestle with what rhetoric might look like if not a subject's intended action. For instance, Biesecker argues that there can be no self-determination for the subject that is not already constituted by discursive forces. Intentions, therefore, are discursive products rather than creations of the autonomous subject. Such views on intention require the abandonment of an emancipatory *telos*, something with which the field has difficulty coming to terms.[38]

However, some notion of intent is still important. Intent need not be dismissed, but rather recognized as having structural limitations.[39] Cloud focuses our attention on another aspect of intent: even if it is impossible for intent to be fully present, or fully achieved, there is still some possibility for partial presence, and partial achievement. For Cloud, even partial intent matters.[40] Whether or not one agrees with Cloud's understanding of material reality, most of us can agree that intentions do still have effects, even if they are not fully present or realized.

Whether influence is attenuated or articulated, whether intent is partial or discursively constituted, in extending these concepts without a relational perspective, we fail to notice how influence and intent have historically been legible only within the parlance of Man, or exceptionally attributed to others who are able to rearticulate themselves in relation to

racializing and colonizing apparatuses.[41] Consider the Standing Rock water protectors. For one, they ask us to consider intent beyond the individual, attending to how it arises through relational (dis)connections structured through dominance. The intent of Standing Rock protestors does not begin with individuals or the Dakota Access Pipeline, but rather gathers into itself histories of stolen land, genocidal attacks both obvious and discreet, and generations of untrustworthy interactions with the U.S. government. Moreover, to have influence, they must overcome processes of knowledge construction that have relegated Native Americans to the U.S. cultural past. Relational histories of racialization have made[42] indigeneity into erasure for U.S. Americans: "American nationalist subjectivity internalizes the colonial relation, but, since the nation was established by denying the validity of colonialism [i.e., by Europe in the American Revolution], American subjects repress this interiorized colonialism."[43] Unlike other racialized groups, to even begin to have influence, Native Americans must overcome the reluctance of other U.S. subjects to notice their continued existence in the first place—"it took nearly five months for mainstream outlets to recognise [*sic*] that a few thousand Native Americans physically resisting the construction of an oil pipeline was newsworthy."[44]

Representation and the political

Since its institution, critical rhetoric has been plagued by a representational problem of politics: without a locatable essence or transmissible influence, what does resistance look like? In this section, I trace how critiques of representation thus far have dealt with politics in order to demonstrate the need for a theory of representational politics based on a relational understanding of difference. Specifically, I argue that the political quandaries of poststructural representational theory stem from ignoring humanity outside of the boundaries of Man. To do so, I first examine the problematics of judgment within Foucauldian and Deleuzian conceptions of rhetoric. I then demonstrate how thinking relationally can help us construct bridges across two pairs of oppositional positionings constituted by the struggles over judgment within these traditions: transcendence vs. immanence, and the necessity of avoiding essentialism vs. the importance of representational critique.

For Foucault, domination and resistance are inseparable. From this perspective, resistant practices must capitalize on discursive contradictions, acting in such a way as to "short-circuit the system through which sense is made."[45] Opponents such as Cloud see Foucauldian approaches as abandoning materialism proper as his theory makes demystification structurally impossible. On this basis, Cloud claims that McKerrow's critical rhetoric institutes a system in which "emancipation is seemingly possible in 'mere talk.'"[46] Other theorists, however, see the project as swinging to an opposite extreme: there is never any possibility of emancipation or progress, for one cannot know if the claims one makes institute a *positive* social change.

Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop find themselves caught in this conundrum, for they argue that "a commitment toward a contingent *telos* must exist as a sustained critical *praxis* for those engaging in critical rhetoric."[47] By asking that the critic sometimes "[relinquish] skepticism," Ono and Sloop foster a means of guiding criticism, while keeping in mind the contingency of directions and goals.[48] They thus temper Foucauldian theory for critical work, positing a (temporary) transcendence on which one can place a foothold.

However, in doing so, they maintain some problematic representational logics. By arguing that rhetorical critics must ask, "'How do we shape our message?' … in order to influence this audience," Ono and Sloop assume an intent that is consciously shaped by the critic, and unproblematically delivered to its audience.[49]

Immanent, and especially Deleuzian, formulations understand "the rhetorical subject as immanent to the articulation of regimes of production and government,"[50] with no possibility of being without such apparatuses. Matthew Bost and Ronald Walter Greene explain:

> An immanent politics does not critique these organizations of power through a dialectical negation, nor attempt to find a position, however fleeting, outside of these systems. Rather, it asks which systemic components are most strategically susceptible to intervention and attempts to ask how systems might be other than they are.[51]

In this explanation, there is no way to judge whether an intervention is positive or negative. Unless the political understanding in this model is that *all intervention is positive*, there is no determining the import of one's actions. Political possibility is articulated more clearly in another Deleuzian model, that of Matthew S. May's orator-machine: "The orator-machine is attached to a communist politics insofar as it breaks down or interrupts the circuitry of machines through which labor power is converted into capital."[52] Here, the interruption of the capitalist system is the desire of the orator-machine. However, without a theory of representation, how can one tell if an act is an interruption or not? Thus, although Greene claims that a "new materialism will continue analyzing how a host of structures deny particular classes of people access to the modes of representation,"[53] it is difficult to surmise how this can be done within such a framework.

We struggle to find and make coherent a political basis within immanent theories of power/resistance because current conceptualizations of immanence lack a relational understanding of difference that can facilitate the work of critical judgment. By claiming a total field of immanence, even if it is conceptualized as radically open and contingent, immanent perspectives hold only by foreclosing the notion of totality upon which they are dependent.[54] Within this plane of immanence, we are unable to locate radical political will or agency, as it by definition "wills the subversion of the very principle that structures the existent regime,"[55] and when the existent regime is everything, there is no room for radical political will. Yet it exists. We can understand how if we consider immanence relationally. If, as I have been arguing in this essay, our current theories of representation are constructed only in relation to an equation of humanity with Man, then our understanding of totality constructs "the whole" in a way that does not take into account asymmetrical distributions of humanity and what it means to be human.[56] That is, this totality is only a totality of Man, and thus no totality at all. Under relationality, the binary of transcendence/immanence is undone, as the conceptualization of immanence depends on those exiled outside totality: the "limits cases by which Man can demarcate himself as the universal human."[57]

The problem of judgment in representational theory also speaks to the political need to reconcile the inescapability of representation with the necessity of recognizing fractured essences and the systemic impossibility of achieving intended effects. In other words, there is an important political function in decrying certain representations, and there is an important political function to rhetoric beyond representation. On one hand, critiquing

representations is imperative to securing bodily and material safety for marginalized populations.[58] As Rachel A. Griffin powerfully argues, representation matters.[59] Even if there is no essentialist truth upon which to base an "accurate" representation, it is still politically important to challenge certain representations of others.[60] As Natalia Molina reminds us, "when the average person thinks about race, he or she usually thinks only about the cultural representations, not the structures that help give rise to them,"[61] which leads to a naturalization of such structures and material effects on people's lives. Yet, on the other hand, Vivian shows the important political function of rhetoric beyond representation. Rhetorical scholars must push past the "essential meaning or transcendental subjectivity" often assumed in representational theories "in order to evaluate the social, political, and ethical relations that engender multiple forms of agency and subject positions."[62] In this way, moving beyond representation is necessary to understanding the relational processes productive of differential distributions of agency through racializing and colonizing apparatuses. Merging a need for representation with a need to move beyond it, we need to create a way to locate a place for judgment without proclaiming or supporting problematic universals. We can and must bring these two rhetorical functions together through a relational politics of representation.

Toward a relational politics of representation

The case for an Other perspective

A relational politics of representation begins with a theory of difference. To think representation outside of the binary of transcendence/immanence, and to have a politics of representation that does not require essentialism to make clear judgments, theories of representation need to be rethought from what Bernadette Marie Calafell terms "an Other perspective"[63]: one that centers the uneven, yet mutual, processes of (dis)connection that produce subjects, objects, and environments in relation to racialization and colonial dynamics. We will not have theories of representation that "play well with others" until our theorizing centers difference.

And our theorizing *needs* to center difference. Lisa A. Flores argues that we "must canonize racial rhetorical criticism" and that the only way to do so is "through an intentional politics of inclusion."[64] Darrel Allan Wanzer makes a strong case that we must all become decolonial rhetoricians in order to address the Westerncentrism of our field, and that this requires rhetoricians to "begin *hearing* those voices excluded from our theorizing and the discourse communities we study, *internalizing* their thought, and *seeking* ways to delink from modern/coloniality."[65] As I have tried to make clear throughout this essay, our disciplinary theory is haunted by racialization and colonialism.[66] Facing our ghosts requires fundamentally rethinking subjectivity, as "western humanity necessitates recalibration once black folks and other nonwhite subjects become part of its conceptual protectorate."[67] Critical rhetorical scholars must be willing to reckon with our own disciplinary history and erasure of difference if we are to undertake a project of rethinking representational politics. Thinking from an Other perspective does not mean ignoring the theoretical strides that poststructural scholars have taken,[68] but rather bringing forth their reliance on and implications of race and nation, in order to situate them in embodied relations.

Many immanentist theories, for all their positing of radical alterity as central, do not handle difference well. Without focusing on the singular way a particular subject is articulated within apparatuses, one can say little that is substantive about the subject or their relations. Instead, post-Marxist immanentist theories seem to focus so much on the multitude that attention to differences within is lost. We must rethink these theories relationally. Some rhetorical scholars attempted to do so by incorporating physics theories of particle entanglement, moved into the social realm by Karen Barad, into rhetorical theories.[69] Such work challenges rhetorical theorists to rethink what would be analogous to Newtonian thought in the field, and provides ways of thinking relations outside of linear time and cause/effect ties. Yet this version of relationality, while disturbing some assumptions, leaves the naturalization of difference intact. The concept of entanglement is still drawn from a field that does not have to pay attention to difference beyond identifiable variables that relate to each other in calculable ways. Quantum mechanics as a metaphor asks us to rethink a number of our assumptions about the relationships between time and matter, but theoretically particles are still interchangeable: there is nothing discernibly different between one electron and another, and its behavior, although unpredictable in specificity, still will, in aggregate, act in line with the probabilities described by a wavefunction.[70] This is not to say the project is unnecessary; on the contrary, it opens important and innovative possibilities for theorizing in rhetorical studies. However, a relational politics of representation must center bodies and difference, or it risks reinscribing the totality of Man. Wanzer reminds us that "cultural homogeneity is a rhetorical fiction and technology of power."[71] In order to have an understanding of representation that deals with the concept's inherent politics, rhetorical theorists must base their theoretical construction in the heterogeneity, rather than the homogeneity, of interchangeable particles. To echo Flores, I cannot imagine why we would not.[72]

In the previous sections of this essay, I outlined poststructural critiques of representation and how they are implicitly constituted through the processes of racialization and colonialism central to white, Western modernity. Now that I have articulated the problematic relational processes that undergird our current theories, I turn to how conceptualizing representation as a relational politics opens possibility for emergent theorizing that takes seriously bodies and their material conditions—that is, the radical potential of relationality. In the following sections, I argue that rethinking ontology and epistemology relationally requires seeing how they are always already political. To the first, as we continually reconstitute our subjectivities through (dis)connections to racialized others, we need to be thinking of affect and love politically.[73] To the second, only by meeting the limits of our understanding of others can we learn how to think difference *differently*. Through these reworkings, we can move toward a relational politics of representation: toward, because we can never fully reach it. A relational politics of representation is an impossible necessity.

Reframing representational ontology

In order to frame representational ontologies relationally, we need to move beyond recognition of fractured essences to examine how these constructions on which our subjectivities rely are inherently political. Earlier, I demonstrated how our current theories of representation unwittingly accept and extend the equation of humanity with Man

through a universalization of subjectivity. Here, I work toward an understanding of the potential of thinking relationally. That is, when attuned to processes of racialization and colonialism that produce (dis)connections between subjects, objects, and environments that differentially distribute the weight of subjective instability and incompleteness, "what different modalities of the human come to light"?[74] How might we work toward a theory of representation that attends to its indebtedness to racialized others as well as its own relational effects?

Poststructural theories help us to see subjects as founded in/as relation to alterity, before alterity becomes Other. Diane Davis argues that subjectivity relies on an originary—and yet repeated—identification, a state of "affectability or persuadability that precedes and exceeds symbolic intervention."[75] Yet, our structural subjective vulnerability to Otherness is not apolitical, nor is it evenly distributed. As we are constituted and reconstituted as subjects, the affect and persuasion that "takes place behind the back and beyond the reach of critical faculties"[76] is conditioned by the relations of which we are currently a part, both structural and subjective. Particularly because of this subjective vulnerability, "where we place our bodies and with whom we build our affective ties" matters: because we continually reconstitute our subjectivities through relations to Otherness—and others—affect and love have political subjective potential.[77]

A relational politics of representation can be used to witness (to) the politics of affect and love in order to shift subjective relations.[78] Chela Sandoval's theorization of differential subjectivities provides a means of thinking representation in this way. Sandoval argues that what poststructural theorists have recently "discovered" has always been the condition of life for the marginalized, and as such has provided them with "survival skills and oppositional practices" from which first world citizen-subjects can learn.[79] Citing Toni Morrison, Sandoval explains:

> The scapegoated, marginalized, enslaved, and colonized of every community have also experienced and theorized this shattering, this splitting of signifieds from their signifiers [and] those who survive the discovery … develop modes of perceiving, making sense of, and acting upon reality that are the basis for effective forms of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world.[80]

The burdens of racialization and colonialism have forced marginalized populations to enact differential modes of understanding and acting because for them representation has always already been shattered—signifieds not aligned with signifiers, consciousness not aligned with being. Instead, they have had to develop a differential theory of representation, keen to perceiving misalignment and fragments as well as their political relation to one another.

As noted earlier, a primary problem with representations that posit a human essence is that cultural differences are thus overridden in a manner that can lead to physical and epistemic violence.[81] Sandoval draws this a step further by demonstrating that positing human essence *is itself* physical and epistemic violence: positing the essence of first world citizen-subjects relies on imposing fragmentation on others.[82] Yet herein lies potential. Differential subjectivities provide the tools to rethink representation—and by proxy, subjectivity—in decolonial ways. A relational view of representation draws from Sandoval's understanding of differential subjectivities to move toward an oppositional consciousness of decolonial love.

Decolonial love moves beyond simply *recognizing* fractured essences to *using* them as tools that can witness to our current affective relations and reconstitute our subjectivities as part of relations that are new and more just. Wanzer explains that decolonial love

> requires those who benefit most from the epistemic violence of the West to renounce their privilege, give the gift of hearing, and engage in forms of praxis that can more productively negotiate the borderlands between inside and outside, in thought and in being.[83]

Decolonial love asks us to listen to Native American protestors, hear their challenges to constructions of white, Western modernity, and think differently. It requires witnessing to our lack, to what is missing, to misalignment. What happens when we theorize from a position that, instead of moving easily through land such that it fades into the background, takes seriously the Native American protestors who force us to remember that the land we move through so easily was stolen? We must necessarily configure our relations differently. Decolonial love "ruptures everyday being"[84] in order to challenge colonial modernity and move toward decolonial relations.

Reframing representational epistemology

However, part of the problem of representation is that the achievement of influence is structurally limited. Much as critical rhetoricians must attempt to rethink our affective relations and subjectivities under the auspices of decolonial love, we will never be able to do so fully. In this section, I attend to what happens when we fail. How can we rethink representational epistemologies as incorporative of, and even dependent on, failure?

A relational politics of representation acts as a sort of "epistemic disobedience."[85] As I have shown, even the concepts of influence and intent that have been destabilized and used to rethink representation in rhetorical theories come from Western modernity. Representational epistemology as failure allows rhetorical scholars to delink from Western modernity by demonstrating the limits of consumption through the indigestible excess of difference, and by considering influence and intent as collective relations.

Poststructural theorists recognize that there is an excess to interpretive logics—an excess that upends influence, an excess beyond intent. However, to work toward a politics of representation based in difference, we need to not only recognize such excess, but also examine how it is raced and encultured. Representational logics of influence and intent are produced in and through relations of white, Western modernity. As such, the concepts of influence and intent are already based in assumptions of whiteness and coloniality, and interpret symbols—subjects, bodies, discourses—under these auspices. Thus,

> to the degree that raced bodies circulate rhetorically … their bodies do so in ways that signal them as excessive and chaotic—bodies to be disciplined, or excessive and exotic—bodies to be consumed, made spectacle, or decried, particularly in ways that relieve whiteness of its responsibility.[86]

Bodies that are read as raced or colonized under the logics of whiteness are marked as excessive since they defy normative representational epistemic logics. Thinking representation relationally requires attending to how epistemological excess is conditioned by race and nation.

Excess signifies what is normatively indigestible in a particular epistemic system. By focusing on epistemological failure—the excess that passes by, escapes, and subverts

influence and intent—rhetorical scholars meet the limits of representational schemas. Failure is thus productive. Rather than figuring a lack of information, failure "signals a project that may no longer be attempted, or at least, not on the same terms."[87] Failure brings attention to contradictions.[88] Thinking of epistemology as failure asks us to consider what is left out of, or left over from, a given representational system—what cannot be figured, cannot be understood, cannot be intended. In doing so, rhetorical scholars will necessarily engage in relational understandings of representation; failure requires us to consider how one representational system relates to others, as well as to what extends beyond its own limits, that we might productively think how raced and nationalized bodies ask us to reconfigure our systems of understanding and knowledge production.

However, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes, there are "limits of the desire to self the other" that cannot be overcome.[89] Epistemic systems still govern how we understand otherness; for those steeped in logics of white, Western-colonial modernity, failure is inevitable. The task of a relational theory of representation, then, is to attend to how such failure signals a political necessity to attempt epistemology on different terms.[90] One way of thinking epistemological terms differently is through a collective rather than individualistic lens.

In a relational theory of representation, influence and intent are not things that one *does* and *has*, respectfully, but are contingent, collective attributes arising from situated contexts and the uneven processes of (dis)connection that produce them. Third World theorists have long thought of consciousness as a collective rather than individual attribute;[91] it follows that influence and intent may be rethought on such terms as well. And again, epistemic failure provides the means to do so—by perceiving how failures of influence and intent are relational constructions. When Kamala Visweswaran attempts to interview a woman who refuses to accept the positioning of interview subject, when Radha Hegde runs into the limits of her feminist politics and ability to interpret, we can begin to see how influences and intents are not simply constituted and levied by an individual, but constructed in relation to methodological trainings, political commitments, intimate relations, and racializing and colonial systems.[92] The problem is failing to recognize their contingency; research methods may not work as expected in spaces for which they were not designed, and feminist politics must be circumstantially inscribed. In some ways, the presence of Native American protestors at Standing Rock signals an epistemological failure that ruptures our interpretive logics. That they are alive, coeval with Western modernity, signals an interruption in normative logics of Western thought. Additionally, when joined by others in a physical show of support, the resultant relational collectivity destabilizes normative epistemological lines. Consider how a contingent of military veterans used bodily proximity and support to create new epistemic—and thus, political—relations. By connecting military service and patriotism to indigeneity and environmental activism, the resulting differential collective produced ways of interpreting the Dakota Access Pipeline protests as a form of national protection, rather than a national threat. Thinking influence and intent as collective attributes moves us toward a relational politics of representation—not to recuperate failures as successes,[93] but to recognize how failure signals an opening to heretofore unthought knowledges and relations—toward new ways to be human.

A relational politics of representation: impossible, but necessary

In *Power Lines*, Carrillo Rowe makes the case for a *politics of relation*. Such a politics

> seeks to move beyond the individualistic foundations of location to provide a point of entry to theorize experience and agency as *collective processes*. If experience is something that a subject undergoes, she always comes to know the meaning of that experience within the modes of interpretation she cultivates within the collective.[94]

Rather than thinking of *a representation* as a vehicle for intent, transparently meaningful, and encoding essence, we need to consider *representations-in-relation*—to each other, to difference, to subjects and groups of subjects, to objects, to feelings, and to economic and structural processes.

Radically contextualizing representation within a field of relations is easier said than done. Relations are ever shifting, mutually implicative, and not always recognizable. As I have written elsewhere, reflexivity "can never be complete."[95] We can never fully know all the ways that a given representation is enmeshed within relations, and the ways we come to such knowing are always already political. How, then, do we even begin to feel out the political relations that constitute representations and provide a context for them? A first step might be to think, theorize, write, and represent collectively: not as part of a "natural" collectivity, but one that is consciously and unconsciously, thoughtfully and affectively, constructed and defended.[96] However, such a collectivity can never totally be achieved. In this sense, fully understanding and communing with others, with those outside of Man's version of humanity, is impossible. Finding all of the ways representations act in relation is impossible. But still these things must be done.[97]

Representations are problematic, but unavoidable. As Carrillo Rowe reflects, "for all of these efforts to displace essentialist logics, to avoid the pitfalls of truth claims, to reflexively unravel identity categories and my own positionality—I fail as I encounter, at every turn, the limits of language."[98] There is no way to represent something or someone perfectly, and to even frame the failure in such a way serves to reinforce essentialist logics.[99] Rather, it is better to ask what our representations are doing in and with others, and to reflect—to the extent we can—on the political implications they hold. Visweswaran tackles this question with her interviewee who keeps refusing to "be [her] subject."[100] By thinking through the consequences of representing this act of refusal in her writings, Visweswaran concludes that such a failure (to secure a participant) ultimately reveals "how baldly what we come to know is engendered by relations of power."[101] Our representations are the (momentarily) solidified products of a network of political relations, and the epistemologies for which they allow. Visweswaran takes the disruption of her ethnographic expectations as an opportunity to reflect on the relations that constitute her representation—that is, what are the political implications of representing this woman as either *a research subject* or *not a research subject*? Ultimately, her answer is inconclusive, because the woman's refusal is also a refusal to allow Visweswaran *to know*.

To center difference in our theorizing, we cannot be dismayed by our inability to ever fully know the relational politics of our representations. For what would difference be if we could know it, internalize it, consume it? And yet, to center difference in our theorizing in a way that is just, we still must try to understand as much as possible about the politics of our representations-in-relation. We must move toward *a relational politics of representation* as an impossible necessity—knowing we will never fully arrive, and yet pushing

onward. Only by thinking relationally can representation hope to be more just.[102] We can hope precisely because a relational politics of representation *is* an impossible necessity. The liminal space between the impossible and the necessary is where difference exists, where it is neither totally consumable nor excessive of symbolicity. Because difference resides in the space of the impossible necessity, so must we.

Conclusion: footnote on a relational metatheory

This essay makes the case for a relational theory of representation grounded in relational processes of racialization and colonialism. Drawing from antiracist and decolonial theory, I explore how conceptualizing representation through a lens that centers difference allows us to rethink representational ontologies and epistemologies, and to move beyond a binary of transcendence/immanence in representational politics. As I conclude, I ask what thinking relationally might have to offer our relations *between* theories, in addition to our relations *in* theories.

Throughout this essay, I have attempted to center difference in my theorizing while building on the work of other theorists in the field. Rather than considering others' theories as things to be challenged, disproved, or derided,[103] I place myself in a politics of relation, recognizing that the ways I offer here to understand the relationship between rhetoric and representation are by no means my own, but constituted through (dis)connections with many different theorists and beliefs. This work is indebted to and contingent upon the past work and present contexts of others: upon relationality.

Theorizing is itself an act of positing representations. As such, theory about theorizing provides another area in which to think representation relationally. In rhetorical work, a relational metatheory may pause before accusing anyone of "willful misrepresentation,"[104] instead recognizing our profound dependence upon one another and that our constitution occurs only through one another. Following Carrillo Rowe, rhetorical theorizing might then center belonging, a longing for and radical inclination toward theoretically marginalized others.[105] In this way, we can act as allies for scholars writing from the margins—of the field, of Western modernity's conceptualization of the human—in their attempts "to navigate a field openly hostile to studies of the margins."[106] Doing theory through the lens of relationality gives rhetoricians an opportunity to make rhetoric more just, to reconstitute the field by recognizing our current relational politics, and to shift relational ties toward theorizing that centers antiracism and decolonization. We must search for the common ground from which we can build these theoretical ties.[107] Carrillo Rowe claims that "deep connections along lines of difference are a transformative source" for subjects and subjectivity;[108] I expect the same could be said of theory.

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Notes

1. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

2. Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender, and Bodies Out of Place* (New York: Berg, 2004); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.
3. Bradford Vivian, *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Dana L. Cloud and Joshua Gunn, "Introduction: W(h)ither Ideology?" *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 407–20; Jamie Merchant, "Immanence, Governmentality, Critique: Toward a Recovery of Totality in Rhetorical Theory," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 47, no. 3 (2014): 227–50.
4. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth," 260.
5. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 12–13.
6. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.
7. Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
8. Rachel A. Griffin, "I AM an Angry Black Woman: Black Feminist Autoethnography, Voice, and Resistance," *Women's Studies in Communication* 35, no. 3 (2012): 148; Lisa A. Flores, "Between Abundance and Marginalization: The Imperative of Racial Rhetorical Criticism," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 13–14.
9. I reference the water protectors at Standing Rock as a conceptual example to support the theoretical argument being made. As this is not a rhetorical criticism, but a theory piece, I have chosen to make general references to the situation and context of the protests rather than to particular Native American rhetors or rhetorics.
10. Renée L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).
11. Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, x.
12. Ibid., 9.
13. Although these are not the only poststructural critiques of representation, for reasons of space I use them as primary examples. We could also consider origins, linearity, and interpretation, among others.
14. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 16.
15. Lowe demonstrates this in liberal humanism; Weheliye shows how this passes into poststructural theorizing, particularly in the work of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.
16. Vivan, *Being Made Strange*, 13 emphasis added.
17. Ibid., xi.
18. Barbara A. Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 22, no. 2 (1989): 110.
19. Kendall R. Phillips, "Rhetorical Maneuvers: Subjectivity, Power, and Resistance," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 39, no. 4 (2006): 310.
20. Ibid., 313.
21. Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56, no. 2 (1989): 91.
22. Joshua Gunn and David E. Beard, "On the Apocalyptic Sublime," *Southern Communication Journal* 65, no. 4 (2000): 275.
23. Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 15, no. 1 (1998): 21–41. See also Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133–50.
24. Ronald Walter Greene, "Rhetorical Materialism: The Rhetorical Subject and the General Intellect," in *Rhetoric, Materiality & Politics*, ed. Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 44.

25. To note, Greene also draws from Louis Althusser in his conceptualization of articulation, but a version of Althusserian theory coming from Judith Butler, who contests the sovereignty of the interpellating voice. Here, interpellation can be spoken back to.
26. Greene, "Rhetorical Materialism," 56.
27. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 2.
28. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 157–79.
29. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 4.
30. Ibid., 24.
31. Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Molina defines racial scripts as "the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths" (6).
32. Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation," 114, 110.
33. Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, 13.
34. Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 4 (1990): 274–89; Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as an Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 141–63.
35. Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric."
36. For a notable exception, see Kenneth Burke on motion.
37. Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, 62.
38. Barbara Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 4 (1992): 351.
39. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehiman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 56; Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, 93.
40. Dana L. Cloud, "The Materialist Dialectic as a Site of *Kairos*: Theorizing Rhetorical Intervention in Material Social relations," in *Rhetoric, Materiality & Politics*, ed. Barbara A. Biesecker and John Lucaites (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 299.
41. See the discussion of Olaudah Equiano in Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 43–71.
42. Here I use "made" as does Molina, referencing the mutual relational construction of racialized groups (*How Race Is Made in America*).
43. Bergland, *The National Uncanny*, 13.
44. Tristan Ahtone, "How Media Did and Did Not Report on Standing Rock," *Al Jazeera*, December 14, 2016. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/12/media-report-standing-rock-161214101627199.html.
45. Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," 357.
46. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse," 153–54.
47. Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "Commitment to *Telos*—A Sustained Critical Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 59, no. 1 (1992): 48.
48. Ibid., 50, 52.
49. Ibid., 56.
50. Greene, "Rhetorical Materialism," 45.
51. Matthew Bost and Ronald Walter Greene, "Affirming Rhetorical Materialism: Enfolding the Virtual and the Actual," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 443.
52. Matthew S. May, "Orator-Machine: Autonomist Marxism and William D. 'Big Bill' Haywood's Cooper Union Address," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 45, no. 4 (2012): 431.
53. Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," 36.
54. Barbara A. Biesecker, "Whither Ideology? Toward a Different Take on Enjoyment as a Political Factor," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 446.
55. Ibid., 446–47.
56. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 3, 7, 8.
57. Ibid., 24.
58. John M. Sloop and Kent A. Ono, "Out-law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 30, no. 1 (1997): 54.

59. Griffin, "I AM an Angry Black Woman," 148.
60. Edward Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).
61. Molina, *How Race Is Made*, 8.
62. Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, 169.
63. Bernadette Marie Calafell, "The Future of Feminist Scholarship: Beyond the Politics of Inclusion," *Women's Studies in Communication* 37, no. 3 (2014): 268.
64. Flores, "Between Abundance and Marginalization," 10.
65. Darrell Allan Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric, or Revisiting McGee's Fragmentation Thesis through Decoloniality," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 15, no. 4 (2012): 654 original emphases.
66. Flores, "Between Abundance and Marginalization," 5.
67. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 21.
68. Darrel Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015), 14.
69. See Christopher N. Gamble and Joshua S. Hanan, eds., "Figures of Entanglement," Special Issue, *Review of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2016).
70. I appreciate this work for encouraging me to pull out my old quantum mechanics textbook and leaf through it. Richard L. Liboff, *Introductory Quantum Mechanics*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Addison Wesley, 2003).
71. Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric, or Revisiting McGee's Fragmentation Thesis through Decoloniality," 650.
72. Flores asks that both scholars of color and white scholars begin centering race in our work, and states, "I cannot imagine why we would not" ("Between Abundance and Marginalization," 17–18).
73. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*.
74. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 8.
75. Diane Davis, *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 26.
76. Ibid., 32.
77. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 3.
78. Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
79. Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 32.
80. Ibid., 35.
81. Vivian, *Being Made Strange*, xi.
82. Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 32–33.
83. Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric, or Revisiting McGee's Fragmentation Thesis through Decoloniality," 654.
84. Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 142.
85. Walter Mignolo, cited in Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric, or Revisiting McGee's Fragmentation Thesis through Decoloniality," 648.
86. Flores, "Between Abundance and Marginalization," 13.
87. Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994), 99–100.
88. Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 65.
89. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 132.
90. Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 99–100.
91. Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 14–15.

92. Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 60–72; Radha Hedge, "Fragments and Interruptions: Sensory Regimes of Violence and the Limits of Feminist Ethnography," *Qualitative Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (2009): 276–96.
93. Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 98.
94. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 10.
95. Jenna N. Hanchey, "All of Us Phantasmic Saviors," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2018): 144–60.
96. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 2, 5.
97. Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 100.
98. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 19.
99. Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness*.
100. Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 60.
101. Ibid., 77.
102. Calafell takes Carrillo Rowe's relational politics a step further to argue that "points of relationality could allow us to [link] across affects of Otherness, regardless of our various positionalities." Bernadette Marie Calafell, "(I)dentities: Considering Accountability, Reflexivity, and Intersectionality in the I and the We," *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013): 7.
103. Jennifer Daryl Slack, "Duel to the Death?" *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (2007): 336–42.
104. Ibid., 340.
105. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 26.
106. Lisa M. Corrigan, "On Rhetorical Criticism, Performativity, and White Fragility," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 87–88.
107. For example, see Dana L. Cloud, "On Dialectics and '*Duel*ism': A Reply to Jennifer Daryl Slack," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 102.
108. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 4.