



**UNIVERSITY
OF ICELAND**

Towards Unsettling the Auto-institution of Colonial Logics

Methodological Self-reflexivity and the Sociogenic
Reconfiguration of Social Structures and
Cognitive Regularities

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with a migratory mode of experiencing a modernised and globalised social environment, tracing a trajectory whose origin lies in the territories of the polity of Lebanon. It develops an understanding of the modern order that accounts for the systemic (re)emergence of social domination within it. Such an understanding is grounded in a decolonial philosophical framework informed by theories on epistemology and cognition, developed through a methodology in which auto-ethnography, systems studies, artistic practice, and casual conversations, intersect.

This dissertation studies collectively formed narratives and auto-instituting social systems; it is a formulation of experiences and experiments with and within social systems in relation to different levels of organisation, through a perspective informed by experiences of displacement due to crises—wars and economic crises. Specifically, it explores the situated relational expression of the processes through which the modern order is reproduced on different levels (scales) of organisation, to then think through the socio-political importance and urgency of the redefinition of organisational logics, systematically enacted patterns, and narratives within collectives held together by intersectional alignments, rather than by managerial structures. Accordingly, this dissertation investigates the colonial institution of a globalised modern mode of social organisation in order to argue that modern social structures limit the human experience to possibilities that reproduce the modern order and its colonial logic. By drawing from the work of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, it investigates the auto-institution of a modern/colonial logic within modes of being, knowing, and material provisioning, to then explore how the automatic reproduction of modern relational structures can be unsettled to make way for situated, communal, and emergent structures.

Ágrip

Doktorsritgerð þessi snýst um reynsluheim innflytjanda í félagslegu umhverfi sem í senn er nútímavætt og hnattvætt, og fylgir þræði sem á upptök sín á landsbyggðinni í ríkinu Líbanon. Mótaður er skilningur á skipan nútímans sem gerir grein fyrir kerfisbundinni upp- og endurkomu félagslegs yfirvalds innan þess. Skilningur þessi hvílir á hugtakagrunni af meiði heimspeki afnýlendunar með aðföngum frá þekkingarfræði og hugfræðum og er leiddur fram með aðferð þar sem sjálfs-etnógráfía, kerfisrannsóknir, listsköpun og hversdagslegar samræður kallast á.

Í ritgerðinni eru rannsakaðar frásagnir sem myndast innan hópa og sjálfsprottin félagsleg kerfi; í henni er reynslu komið í orð og gerðar tilraunir með og innan félagslegra kerfa á ólíkum skipulagsstigum. Beitt er sjónarhorni sem dregur dóm af upplifunum af flutningum vegna kreppuástands – stríðs og efnahagskreppu. Sér í lagi er beint sjónum að aðstæðubundinni og tengslabundinni tjáningu þeirra ferla sem viðhalda skipan nútímans á ólíkum stigum (eða mælikvörðum) skipulags, með það að markmiði að hugsa sig í gegnum félagslegt og pólitískt vægi brýnnar endurskilgreiningar á skipulagsrökvísi, mynstrum sem eru raungerð á kerfisbundinn hátt og frásögnum hópa sem loða saman vegna samstilltra mismunabreyta en ekki formgerða af toga stjórnunar. Í þessum anda er tekin til rannsóknar sú nýlenduvædda stofnsetning hins hnattræna félagslega skipulags sem einkennir nútímann í því augnamiði að halda því fram að félagslegar formgerðir nútímans takmarki mannlega reynslu við þá möguleika sem viðhalda skipan nútímans og nýlendurökvísi hans. Stuðst er við verk Sylvíu Wynter og Frantz Fanon í rannsókn á sjálfsköpun nútíma- og nýlenduvæddrar rökvísi innan afbrigða þess að vera, vita og afla sér viðurværis, og í framhaldinu er skoðað hvernig raska má sjálfvirku viðhaldi tengslaformgerða nútímans og skapa þar með rými fyrir aðstæðubundnar formgerðir af toga sameignar.

Acknowledgments

This project coincided with and marked a transitional period in my life; the transition from being an international student to being an immigrant. Having had moved to the Netherlands for my master's studies, my being outside of Lebanon during that period was tied to short term student visas, with that, my life in the Netherlands felt temporary, always having an expiry date printed on a residency permit. Getting the opportunity to pursue a PhD degree was the beginning of a process through which what felt like a temporary situation started to become a more permanent mode of being. In addition to the challenges of settling into a mode of being distributed between Lebanon, the Netherlands and Iceland, my experience of this period was shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, by the travel restrictions it engendered, and by the contemporary widespread resurgence of xenophobic rhetorics. The combination of these global phenomena with the consecutive crises manifested in Lebanon, made me feel that my natal environment (as I knew it) is gradually being lost, while I am busy securing a place for myself in an environment continuously pushing me and people like me away. In the midst of such an experience, the family, friends, and colleagues that surrounded me (physically, and digitally) became a lifeline that repeatedly pulled me out of systematically instituted despair; a line drawn out of intersections of struggle with and within bourgeois modes of being; a line that guided my philosophical wanderings towards imaginings grounded in socialities that transgress normative social structures.

With that in mind, I would like to thank Mijke van der Drift whose philosophy class during my master's education allowed me to experiment with philosophical and academic writing as way to find my bearings, and whose encouragement, support, and guidance made it possible for me to secure a PhD candidacy, and whose caring criticality made it possible to see it through; Björn Þorsteinsson for his patience that left me the space to get lost in the wanderings I felt I needed to be lost in, and for always being ready to advise and support in academic and practical matters alike; my parents and siblings who have always been a safety net despite the expanding geographical distance between us and the perseverant crises that drove us apart; Youssef Doumit for generous conversations and a relentless excitement to dig up his studies of my natal village; Jean Loutfallah for being a resource of local stories and for

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I would like to thank Basis voor Actuele Kunst (BAK) for being an oasis for people of different backgrounds to share and discuss knowledges that often disappear between the disciplinary enclosures of academic and artistic institutions, and Maria Hlavajova for the insight into the labour of maintaining and managing an institution that resisted the neoliberal de-politicisation enforced by funding bodies, for moving lectures, and for challenging yet exciting conversations.

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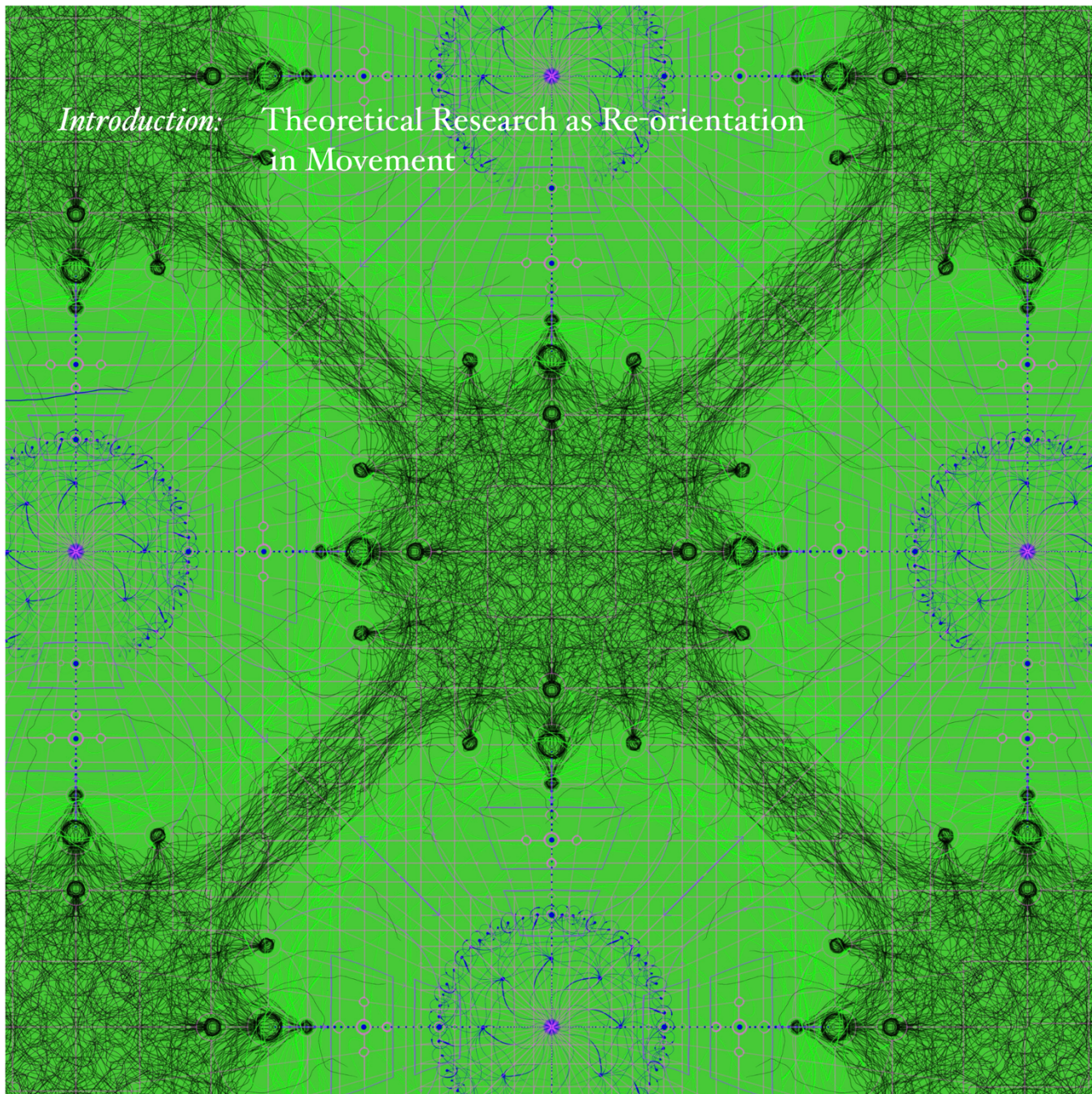
Last and not least, I would like to thank my partner Astrid Feringa for her relentless support throughout this journey, for her artistic and teaching practices that became an important source of inspiration for this project, and for her perseverance through unending rants, needless philosophising, and endless cycles of writing and re-writing.

In memory of Dr. Youssef Doumit, who passed away before he could read what became of our conversations.

Preface

The following dissertation was developed as part of the Future of European Independent Art Spaces in a Period of Socially Engaged Art (FEINART) research project. The FEINART project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 860306. As part of the FEINART project, this dissertation benefited from two academic secondments; at the University of Wolverhampton under the supervision of prof. John Roberts, and Basis voor Actuele Kunst (BAK) under the supervision of Maria Hlavajova. The completion of this dissertation was supported by the Iceland University School of Humanities Education Fund.

Introduction: Theoretical Research as Re-orientation
in Movement



In the context in which I grew up—a village in Lebanon—narratives, theories, philosophies, and political discussions emerge organically and sporadically within a tradition of regular and recurrent conversations. Every meal—and the hour that follows every meal—is always a possibility for a visit, that itself is a possibility of a prolonged conversation. As a practice people convene for no reason other than to converse, tell stories, and verbalise worries. These are not intellectual conversations, even though sometimes they might become so.

In my understanding, these open-ended conversations were (and to a certain extent still are) where philosophy lives. The conversations that I am referring to are ones that come after talking for a few hours, when it feels like there is nothing left to be said, only for the conversation to shift to liminal, absurd, philosophical, and sometimes intellectual matters. While my interest in philosophy is grounded in a tradition of conversing as a regularly and rhythmically repeated practice, the things that I am often drawn to think and talk about emerged from a desire to understand the recurrence of social, economic, and political crises in Lebanon. In a context marked by a recent civil war, by multiple wars with Israel, and by political and religious conflicts often materialised in the form of gun fights or bombings, to keep up with the news is a matter of life and death. In this context, discussing national, regional, and international political dynamics is a normal part of casual conversations. These practices and conversations around which my life in Lebanon was structured, and that I stumbled into without planning nor prior intention, were hard to come by after I moved to the Netherlands. Sitting together for no reason other than to articulate whatever comes to mind, was not a self-evident practice in the normal rhythms of a day of an international student in the Netherlands, which meant that every sitting needed to be intentional, planned, and often with a specific purpose: to have dinner, to try a restaurant, to discuss a book, to march in a protest, to plan a party, or to play a game.

It took me a while to understand that the habit of discussing political dynamics casually—which in Lebanon functioned to ease individuated anxieties that emerge from a feeling of being entangled with dynamics we heard or read in the news, only for them to suddenly be materialised in a bomb, a fight, or an economic crisis—is not as prominent within European societies. In my experience, bringing up such topics in conversations in a Dutch/European context is either met with resistance—“we are trying to relax and have fun, can we not talk about this now”—or, when events are significant enough to make an impression on Dutch sociality, these events and the political dynamics that surround them become the conversation itself; a conversation that becomes aimed at understanding rather than playing with the narratives surrounding affectively charged events and dynamics. In such a case, theory, philosophy, and the contexts in which they are normally discussed (that is often academic settings), became the medium through which this desire and need to play with political and philosophical narratives can be expressed; albeit not casually. Based on these interests and dynamics that informed the trajectory of which this dissertation is a continuation, my engagement, and by extension this dissertation’s engagement with the main authors I draw on, mirrors a mode of engagement with someone you meet with daily, to have a casual yet deeply significant/signifying conversation. Because of that, my survey of the theoretical fields I engage with, as well, begins as a story.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were the first authors with whose texts I felt drawn to engage in depth. They provided me with a framework to formulate an understanding of how meanings are formed in relation to specific territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 334), and how such formation is affected by models of governance and knowledge production. They provided a framework for me to understand the misunderstanding that emerged when reproducing conversational patterns that are self-evident in Lebanon, within other contexts. The framework that they developed and applied in their work, allowed me to understand that contexts play a fundamental and foundational role in the formation of meaning. However, while I enjoyed the feeling of being lost in the rhizomatic complexities of hypothetical territories, this feeling reinforced my being suspended in between systems of meanings (Lugones, 2003: 135), while simultaneously making it harder for me to discuss political dynamics and philosophical wanderings in casual conversations, as my vocabularies became more and more specific and abstract. Feeling even more isolated in my interests, the theories of Deleuze and Guattari became the substance of meta-analyses through which I further

alienated myself from social settings within which I already felt alienated, and of which I developed an understanding that felt like few around me were interested in.

From here, this dissertation can be considered a continuation of an adaptive trajectory towards a theoretical framework that could underlie the development of academic theses but is equally adept to break cycles of self-alienation and to leave behind academic vocabularies, to fit in conversations around a kitchen table (Harney & Moten, 2021: 44). The beginning of this phase of the trajectory was marked by a period during which I travelled two or three times per week from Arnhem to the Hague, and when the books of Frantz Fanon became my travel companions. The parting of ways with Deleuze and Guattari's methodologies starts from the specific morning when I started reading *The Wretched of the Earth* on the train; the closer I got to the Hague, and with every page I read, the angrier I became. This was not an anger expressed as a specific fixation; in that moment, after being in the Netherlands for a year, that was me feeling that I have the right (or that I must have the right) to feel whatever I need to feel; I felt angry because I realised that I am trying to regulate what I feel and how I behave in order to not feel out of place, while at the same time feeling that being angry on the train is inappropriate, which made me even angrier.

I read Fanon's books and moved on, often returning to Deleuze and Guattari's vocabularies to phrase my ideas in ways that felt fitting to academic and artistic contexts and the themes they are preoccupied with. The initial proposal for this dissertation was filled with these desires, tensions, and philosophical and cognitive contradictions, that then found a place within the research network convened under the title of the Future of European Independent Art Spaces in a Period of Socially Engaged Art (FEINART), and specifically, in the overlap of my contradictory interests with the work and methods of Björn Þorsteinsson who supervised this dissertation. Þorsteinsson's philosophical engagement with phenomenology, post-structuralism, and studies of embodiment, allowed a vast space of philosophical explorations and methodological experimentation, guided by biweekly conversations in which there was space to discuss tenacious philosophical notions, or just to complain about visa applications.

Having conversations with colleagues, supervisors, friends, and with people with whom I became complicit (Drift & Raha, 2024: 80-81), became the relational context in which art and theory gained different meanings, and in which the boundaries between theory and art became blurred; revealing the containment of the generative potential of both within the enclosure of fields of production. Exploring the aberration of disciplinary categories through

experimenting with artistic practices as modes of thinking, and of theoretical formulations as affective articulations, made of writing a process of orientation and reorientation, coupled to experimentation with orientations.

The methodology and central themes of this dissertation became (somewhat) clear after drafting each of its chapters twice. Returning to my drafts after an interruption of a few months, when I needed to manage my moving away from Iceland and had to move back to Lebanon for a month, I felt that I was still stuck reproducing variations of the ideas I developed during the beginning of my research trajectory; stuck articulating my frustration with social and political studies that take disciplinary categories as a reference. While waiting in Lebanon for my residency permit to the Netherlands to be processed, the comfort of my parent's house, and the rhythmic schedule of collective coffee breaks throughout those days, made me realise that what I am reproducing in my writing is the self-alienation I feel in artistic and academic contexts. However, realising as much while being in Lebanon made me realise that the self-alienation I experience in these disciplinary contexts is not a property of the particular contexts I dwell in, nor of the wider context of European societies. In the comfort of my family's house, I could feel that the normative order that informed my self-understanding as I was growing up required of me to leave parts of myself outside of its enclosure; to conform to its familiar, normal, and self-evident structure of social relations, and to the person I become within them (Lugones, 2003: 60).

This interruption of my writing process, and the realisations that issued from it, created a desire to find philosophical methods that allow me to explore the ways in which social systems and their systems of meanings are shaped by collectively and trans-generationally enacted patterns. Remembering the experience of reading Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* on the train from Arnhem to the Hague became that opening. Following Fanon's lineage led me to Sylvia Wynter's *Towards the Sociogenic Principle*, in which she reflects on Fanon's investigation of the sociogenic formation of systems of meanings through a sociodiagnostic method (Wynter, 2013: 54). In that text, and in *The Ceremony Found* (Wynter, 2015: 242), I found the basis of the methodology that the following dissertation adheres to; a methodology to think of, and through, casual conversations as a practice, and to study social and political dynamics from the perspective of the shared human ability to formulate and tell stories (Wynter, 2015: 222). Accordingly, the methodology outlined below is one in which writing becomes a framework for experimentation with narratives that articulate self-understanding

in relation to social systems on different levels of organisation within a globalised modern capitalist world. Since this dissertation is concerned with reflecting on epistemology and systems of meanings in relation to multiple levels of organisation within different social systems, the methods of inquiry applied in this dissertation vary and evolve throughout its chapters. In the following, I will expand on themes that guide the evolution of this context-dependent methodology.

Wanderings Through Philosophical Methodologies

In order to develop a philosophical and socio-political study to which conversing as a practice figures as a site of emergence of meanings, I draw from the Afro-Caribbean intellectual lineage and its grounding in oral knowledges (Wynter, 2013: 60). This intellectual tradition guides the approach and methods of this dissertation, through the work of Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter, towards thinking through an understanding of “the human” based on our shared ability to formulate and tell stories; the human as *Homo Narrans* (Wynter, 2015: 242). Thus, by following Wynter and Fanon in taking the self-evidence of consciousness to be a property of the terms in which subjects are socialised to enact a *specific mode of being human* (Wynter, 2013: 57), I investigate the conditions that underlie the emergence of social and psychic patterns in enacted collective regularities (Wynter, 2013: 32). Accordingly, the following chapters study narratives, collectively enacted patterns, and aesthetic articulations as terms of modes of being socialised to become self-evident for a normative subject of a specific social order.

The framework through which I study social relations as forming enclosed systems is inspired by Wynter’s application of the notion of *autopoiesis*—the auto-institution of complex living systems as self-referring entities (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii)—to the colonial structuring of social relations (Wynter, 2015: 243). In order to accommodate the aims of this dissertation, Wynter’s application of autopoiesis is expanded through Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela’s original formulation of the concept within the fields of biology and philosophy of science. I focus on Maturana’s approach to thinking of the autopoietic functioning of social systems (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxiv), and his theorisation of the structural reproduction of enclosed systems (Maturana, 2002: 15)—a process of automatic reproduction that conserves the organisation of a system—through

which he explores the non-causal interactions between different levels of organisation (Maturana, 2002: 13).

What follows is a study of the autopoiesis of social systems, done through an auto-ethnographic approach inspired by the work of Eduardo Kohn. Accordingly, I discuss the unity of a system as constituting a *form*; the understanding of form that runs through this dissertation is inspired by Kohn's application of the concept in his anthropological consideration of the parallels between ecology and economy in the lives of people in the Amazonian Àvila (Kohn, 2013: 157). Kohn writes of forms as regularities, habits, or patterns that emerge from constraints on possibility, effectuating a departure from the definition of forms in the Platonic tradition where the human realm is an imperfect mirror of a transcendental realm of pure forms (Kohn, 2013: 157). A form then, according to Kohn, emerges as regularities, and it is such regularities that can then be referred to by a cognitive category. Following Kohn, in the context of this dissertation, the notion of form is one of the tools implemented to discern how regularities, designated by human cognition as generalities—and referred to by Maturana and Varela as composite unities—are realised as constraints on phenomenological and abstract possibilities (Kohn, 2013: 159).

I consider the overarching form of social enclosures as being expressed within an intersubjective domain as psycho-affective closures that maintain them (Wynter, 2013: 57; van der Drift, 2021: 98). These enclosures are formed by continuous contact and recurrent patterns of relations; repeated patterns that form a specific mode of being and of social organisation whose terms are articulated in stories, narratives, and theories (Wynter, 2015: 196). Accordingly, and following Wynter's notion of the *sociogenic principle*—"the information-encoding organisational principle of each culture's criterion of being/non-being, that functions to *artificially* activate the neurochemistry of the reward and punishment pathway, doing so in the terms needed to institute the human subjects as a culture-specific and thereby verbally defined, if physiologically implemented, mode of being and *sense of self*" (Wynter, 2013: 54)—I study narratives (symbolic, scientific, academic, or otherwise) as expressions of situated, impermanent, and changing patterns of movements and social interactions that include the human but extend beyond the purely human social to include regularities that emerge in the interaction of land, plants, animals, weather, etc.

My operational understanding of enclosed social systems is inspired by Maria Lugones' notion of *worlds*. Worlds for Lugones are constituted by a self-coherent logic sufficiently in

contradiction with others to sustain an alternative construction of the social (Lugones, 2003: 20). Lugones stresses that such worlds are *not autonomous but intertwined, and permeable to travel between them* (Lugones, 2003: 92). Lugones' notion of worlds informs the consideration of social systems as only closed from a perspective that presupposes their unity and its reproduction. As such, the migratory perspective of this dissertation is grounded in this understanding of social systems as worlds; a perspective defined by a mode of being in between multiple intertwined worlds (Lugones, 2003: 89).

I draw from Aníbal Quijano's theorisation of the coloniality of power—a model of power premised on the reconfiguration of established models of control of labour and resources around the notion of race (Quijano, 2000: 534)—and I think of modernity and coloniality as coupled, and as sharing the same conditions that secure their reproduction. Accordingly, when I write of power in the context of this dissertation, I am implying these two aspects: first, a racial hierarchy established by violent European colonial expansion, and its refiguration of situated modalities of living around the centrality of the European context and in relation to a white bourgeois heteronormativity as an expression of its model *ethno-class* (Wynter, 2003: 260). Second, the making global of this hierarchy through the refiguration of the labour of colonized populations according to European logics expressed in individuated waged labour, mediated by the dynamics of a global market, and managed by colonially established institutional networks. Additionally, this coupling of modernity/coloniality is put in conversation with contemporary concerns. By drawing from Simone Browne's *Dark Matters*, I explore the continuation of strategies and technologies of control of labour and resources developed during the Transatlantic slave trade within the contemporary neoliberal/digital permutation of the modern order (Browne, 2015: 92). Further, I draw from Mijke van der Drift's trans-feminist analysis of the psycho-affective closure necessary for the maintenance of the normative functioning of social enclosures organised around a specific capitalist function (van der Drift, 2021: 100), to explore the emergence of such closures within non-functional intersubjective contexts.

On these grounds, I reflect on the ways in which the modern order structures social relations in formations organised around specific functions determined by the dynamics of a Euro/Western/Northern-centric capitalist market, and on the implications of such mode of organisation on the ability of situated collectives to redefine the ways in which their members relate to each other. I argue that the colonial institution of modes of material provisioning and

of subsistence dependent on colonial infrastructures underlies the emergence of a unified epistemology within which such dependence on colonial bureaucratic infrastructures is presupposed, thus reproducing its logic and structuring of social relations. Taking this argument as a premise, I then explore the horizons of possibility that become imaginable when social, political, and economic problems are not considered through formulations aligned with modes of organisation dependent on a global network of domination and mass exploitation.

On this basis, with the term “modernity” I refer to a specific mode of social organisation: the modern order. Accordingly, I unpack the notion of modernity throughout this dissertation by disentangling its organisational logic and the social conditions that secure its (re)emergence. Such a study is aligned with anti-colonial struggles and social movements that strive to decolonise structures of social relations, towards the formation of relationalities not dependent on the coloniality of power. I avoid the term “post-colonial,” since I argue that the modern mode of social organisation is a continuation of the colonial structuring of social relations. I study the ways this structuring of social relations is reproduced within intersubjective relations and social formations; making the “post-colonial” a phase in the reproduction of coloniality.

Within the framework outlined above, the concept of *affect* acts as a bridge between decolonial, queer, trans-feminist, and post-structuralist philosophies. My use of the concept of affect is inspired by its Spinozian definition— “the affections of the body whereby the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished [...] together with the ideas of these affections” (Spinoza, 1677/2018: 95)—as well as by the evolution of this definition through the work of Brian Massumi (1995: 88-89). While forms are constituted by regularities and patterns, affects are the dynamic movements that constitute forms and formulate patterns. While forms and patterns describe the macro-level of a system, affects proliferate on the local level of a system: the meso-level, between the social and molecular levels.

In order to refer to patterns internal to a system, I use the concept of rhythm, inspired by its application within Black Study. More specifically, developing an understanding of rhythm within an analysis of social systems is inspired by the application of the concept by Fred Moten. In his *In the Break*, ahead of his analysis of the “geographical history of the New York avant-garde,” Moten proposes to think “choreographically”, “by way of a rhythm analysis that would inject some choreographic play of encounter” into theoretical studies

(Moten, 2003: 225-226). Moten explores how the modern mode of production puts pressure on rhythm; namely, he explores “the imposition of certain specific and repressive temporal regimes of labour” (Moten, 2003: 225-226). Accordingly, through the notion of *rhythm* I explore the ways in which the temporal regime of labour relates to modes of understanding and self-understanding.

Besides this theoretical exploration of the notion of rhythm in the context of social relations, I understand rhythm to be expressed in the processes that underlie the development of this dissertation; specifically, non-academic or non-theoretical processes. The first of such processes is conversing as a practice. I understand conversations as facilitating the proliferation of affect between conversing bodies and the space in which they congregate. This proliferation of affect underlies the emergence of a space where concepts take on a temporary concreteness which is then transformed throughout the conversation. Defined as such, conversations play the role of undoing the formation of my concepts by allowing the conversations I have with the people with whom I become complicit, to make my concepts open to meanings of multiple worlds, shared in conversations as a collective generation of meanings. Thinking of conversations as a method of research enabled this dissertation and its methodology to remain tentative and open for radical change up until an advanced stage of its development. These changes and the shifts of perspective that underlie them enabled an exploration of the position of academic and philosophical narratives vis-à-vis social patterns of relation.

The second of these processes is the visual reformulation of philosophical concepts and complex systemic patterns in the form of diagrams. This method of overlaying theoretical compositions with visual ones acted as a mode of recording ideas without the need to formulate them in a linear linguistic arrangement; to keep them open until I was ready to formalise them into words and sentences. By doing so, and from the perspective of the moment of writing, these diagrams became markers of the patterns of relation that I felt a need or a desire to make sense of; which I then forgot for a while, only to realise that I had reproduced their lines in textual forms. These diagrams are distributed in between chapters, offering a window into discussions and interests whose evolution informed the development of this dissertation.

The third process is learning electronic sound synthesis and music composition. This process started with thinking of sound generation through modular synthesisers as a systemic process.

By creating systems of different sounding circuits—where the signals produced by such a system are used to modulate the parameters of the different circuits that constitute it—sound synthesis became a playground in which it is possible to experiment and interact with self-enclosed systems. Such models provided a surface to experiment with processes of projecting predefined meanings on indeterministic relational complexities; over time, the compositions that resulted from such experiments, and the meanings I projected onto them, became markers that made possible reflections on the transformation of self-evidence through time, as well as enabling the theorisation of the ways in which the modern structuring of social relations modulates such transformations. Samples from this iterative process can be heard in *Appendix A: Acoustic Appendix*. The compositions in this appendix are a different articulation of the discussions elaborated on in the following chapters; this alternative articulation could give a different dimension to some discussions in this dissertation. *Appendix B: Unpacking the Acoustic Appendix – The Ethico-temporal Potential of an Adisciplinary Engagement of Totalities* is a reflection on the process of producing the compositions of the Acoustic Appendix and an elaboration of their relevance in relation to the framework of this dissertation.

Theoretically, in different points throughout the following chapters, I make references to sound as a medium that facilitates thinking of collective rhythmic or aesthetic movements as a mode of articulation operating in between the domain of enacted patterns and that of narratives. As such, I think through relations that traverse different levels of organisation. In doing so, I use the terms of electronic sound synthesis—terms derived from mathematical concepts: frequency, amplitude, phase, etc.—which I define and apply in relation to the ways in which they can be phenomenologically perceived through their acoustic expression.

The framework outlined above is then applied to experiences that informed my migratory being in European contexts and my relation to my natal context in the East of the Mediterranean. By doing so, I draw connections between modern modes of understanding/self-understanding and the systemic structuring of situated social relations in ways that secure the re-emergence of a dynamics of domination. Namely, I reflect on my migratory experience as tied to histories of colonial displacement of populations to disentangle the ways in which my self-understanding is informed by the colonial processes through which my natal environment was “modernised.” In doing so, I turn to Wynter’s theorisation of the *sociogenic principle*: the synchronization of the biochemical system of the

brain as “the condition of the subjects of each societal order both reflexly subjectively experiencing, as well as performatively enacting, themselves/ourselves as being hybridly human in the *genre*-specific terms of each such sociogenic codes’ positive/negative system of meanings” (Wynter, 2015: 211). Building on Wynter’s sociogenic principle, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the brain as a form that emerges from a continuous “state of survey without distance” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 210), to theorise the transgenerational effect of the modern/colonial structuring of social relations.

Theoretical Relevance and Research Question

In summary, the following dissertation applies a decolonial philosophical framework developed by drawing from philosophical theories on epistemology and cognition, through a methodology in which auto-ethnography, systems studies, artistic practice, and casual conversations, intersect. This framework and methodology are applied to a migratory mode of experiencing a modernised and globalised social environment, tracing a trajectory whose origin lies in the territories of the polity of Lebanon. Thus, this dissertation aims to contribute, first, to the development of methods of studying composite social systems from a perspective embedded within them; second, to the development of meta-phenomenological and sociodiagnostics methods of psychosocial studies; third, to the development of transdisciplinary methods of migration studies; and, fourth, to the decolonial rewriting of the histories of territories that lie to the west of the Asian continent and on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

As such this dissertation is a philosophical study of collectively formed narratives and auto-instituting social systems; it is a formulation of experiences and experiments with and within social systems on different levels of organisation, through a perspective informed by experiences of displacement due to crises—wars and economic crises. Such a study is done through an exploration of theoretical frameworks that make possible a practical understanding of the logics and enacted patterns that reproduce systemic and systematised forms of social domination in the modern stratification of the social into categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class; while exploring ways in which such logics and patterns can be situatedly and collectively redefined.

I disentangle the colonial functioning of the modern mode of social organisation in relation to the epistemology it informs and to its structuring of social relations within social formations of different scales. I argue that coloniality is embedded within the modern mode of social organisation, its social categories, and its infrastructures; because of that, practices and social structures poised to address dynamics of domination within modern socialities often reinforce and reproduce the modern order's colonial logic rather than undermine it. Accordingly, this exploration is grounded in the following question: *what horizons of understanding and self-understanding open up when social and political problems are not formulated through logics that call for resolutions aligned to a mode of organisation dependent on a global network of domination and exploitation?* Guided by this question, I investigate the patterns and practices systematically instituted by the modern order and those erased by it, in order to explore ways in which the colonial logic of the modern order can be unsettled.

Outline of Movement Through Chapters

(Chapter 1) Methods of Studying the Autonomous Reproduction of Modes of Being

The first chapter begins with Sylvia Wynter's analysis of Fanon's approach to psychosocial studies (Wynter, 2013: 46). I explore Wynter's proposition that Fanon's sociogenic approach and call for a sociodiagnostic suggest an understanding of cognition grounded in the human experience (Wynter, 2013: 32) and in the collective re-enactment of social systems (Wynter, 2015: 196). Then, I explore how such an understanding of cognition informs Wynter's application of the concept of autopoiesis from the perspective of, and in relation to, the level of the human experience of culture-specific social systems. I outline the definition of the concept of autopoiesis as introduced by Maturana and Varela in the book *Autopoiesis and Cognition* to describe the autonomous molecular processes that constitute living systems and underlie the emergence of cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii, xviii). I focus on the introduction of the book, in which Maturana outlines his understanding of the relevance of the notion of autopoiesis to the study of social systems (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxiv), and his argument that a study of social systems from an externalised perspective is essential for the realisation of a just, anarchist and liberal society (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxix, xxx). I argue that the collective patterns that reproduce social systems can only be understood practically, by engaging with the self-coherent logic of relations within a specific social system/world. Accordingly, an externalised perspective cannot reveal the processes through

which a social system is reproduced, rather, it presupposes collectively enacted patterns as self-evident; while such self-evidence is itself configured by the organisation of the system, which is observed from a perspective that overlooks the irreducible embeddedness of the observer in the systems they observe.

Building on the above, and by drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of *the brain* as elucidated in the conclusion of *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 209), I develop the notion of *the brain-psyche*; as coupled forms that emerge from the same relational processes, expressed within both the biological and cognitive domains of the human experience. Then, I apply an auto-ethnographic and phenomenological methodology to explore the expression of autopoiesis within individuated patterns of action and signification. I develop a phenomenological analysis of the transformation of recurrent patterns to self-reproducing structures and move on to argue that self-reproducing systems imply a desynchronisation between the patterns that constitute the system and those of the environment from which it is differentiated. Finally, I explore how an externalised objective perspective underlies an individualised mode of making sense, realised in an objectifying mode of perception (Lugones, 2003: 157) and a self-alienated mode of experience (Wynter, 2015: 198).

(Chapter 2) The Eugenic Reproduction of the Modern Order

The second chapter focuses on the ways in which the functioning of social enclosures as autopoietic systems is expressed within trans-generational patterns of relations. I theorise the way social enclosures, and the psycho-affective closures that maintain them, are formed along multiple generations. I draw on Sylvia Wynter's argument that *origin stories* figure as the medium from which social autopoietic systems are formed, in order to reflect on the projection of the ethics of European post-enlightenment onto "nature" (Wynter, 2003: 271), and on how the projection of what is familiar and self-evident to its normative subject onto universal principles undoes the separation between epistemology and ethics (van der Drift, 2021: 100). Through an auto-ethnographic reflection on social dynamics within a shared house, I theorise the constitution of history within enclosed social contexts over generations, and how such a process is related to intersubjective dynamics of domination, and to the institution of a managerial subjectivity. I study the functioning of this process along multiple generations of an enclosed system through Maturana and Varela's understanding of the history and lineages of molecular autopoietic systems (Maturana, 2002: 18-19). I then draw

on Mijke van der Drift to study the role of managers (and managerial subjectivities) in the maintenance of the psycho-affective closures of enclosed social systems (van der Drift, 2021: 94). Finally, I explore how the modern mode of organisation of social relations according to economic function restructures the relations between social unities, determining the range of variability of the structures of relation between individuated subjects within limits that conserve the composite social unities they constitute; that is instead of composite unities adapting to emerging structures of relations.

I develop the notion of *the natal* to study the ways in which pre-established social formations inform what is considered to be familiar by their constituents. Then by analysing the historical narrative of the nation of Lebanon through the framework developed in the previous chapter, I investigate how the conditions of the emergence of social enclosures are modulated by processes of modernisation, and how their alignment with the reproduction of the modern mode of social organisation is conserved. This analysis is grounded in my natal village and aims to highlight the relation of situated localities to the narratives of the nation states that manage them. Accordingly, by employing a decolonial framework, I highlight the colonial historical processes that realised the formation of the nation of Lebanon, and the ways in which such colonial processes continue to inform contemporary formulations of Lebanese history, and the situated identities formed around them.

(Aesthetic Interlude) *Rhythm as a Property of the Internal Functioning of Social Systems*

I discuss collective aesthetic articulations through the example of *dabke*: a folkloric dance performed in various West-Asian and North-African communities. I make a distinction between the rhythmic and the structural functioning of relational systems; I think of rhythms as recurrent living interrelations that inform variations within recurrent patterns; I argue that structures are repetitions within a preset range of variation. Through this distinction I reflect on the significance of collective aesthetic articulations (or aesthesis (Mignolo & Vasquez, 2013: 11)) to the creation of openings in functional social enclosures that unsettle their autonomous reproduction, making possible different modes of being. I do so by considering how collectively generated affective intensity shapes the features and futures of a phenomenological domain (field of experience).

(Chapter 3) *The Conservative Development of the Modern Order*

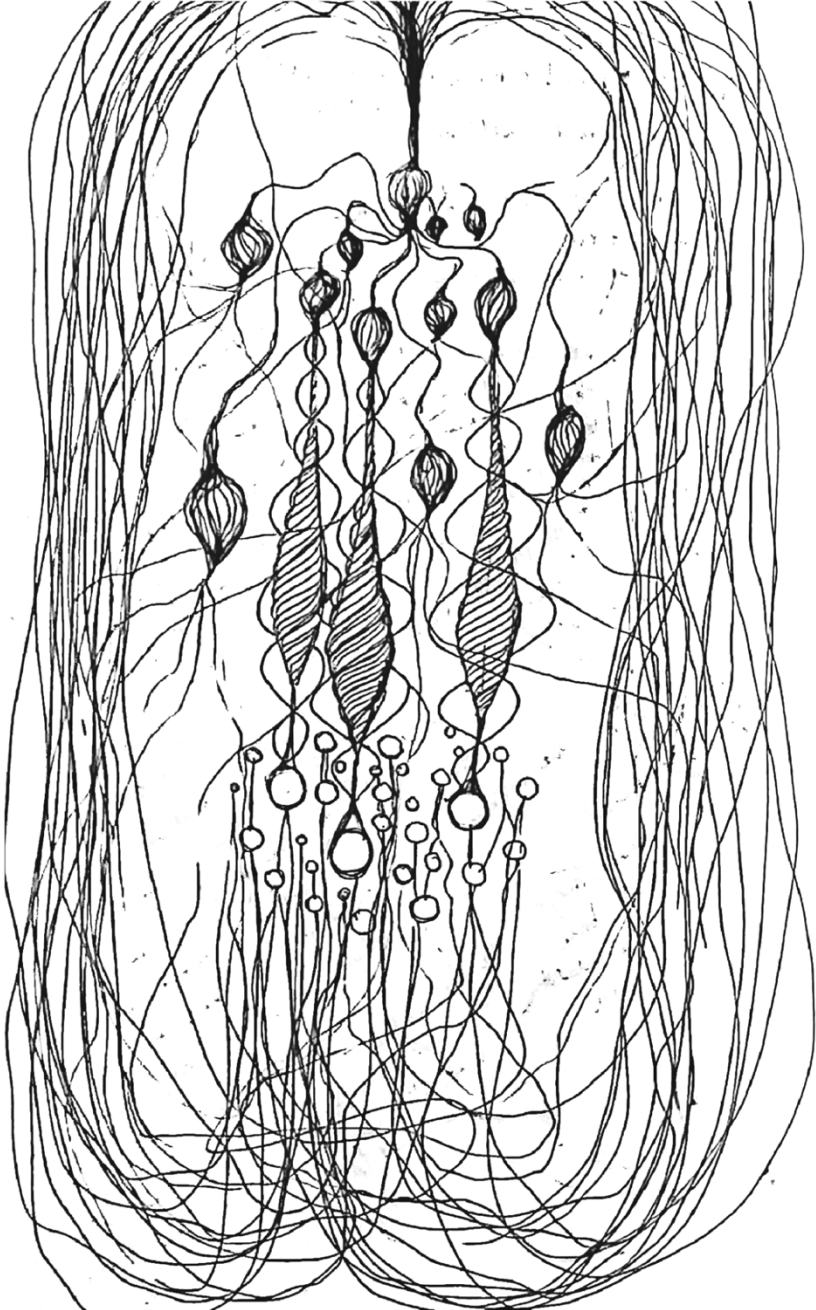
In the third chapter, I argue that the reproduction of the modern system of domination according to racist, sexist, and ableist categories is dependent on the alienation of collectives

from the possibility of situated subsistence. This alienation is the individuation of processes of production that ties the survival of individuals to colonial infrastructures and produces an understanding of individual agency and social interests (van der Drift, 2021: 100) as aligned with the systemic control of labour. I draw from Anibal Quijano and Simone Browne in order to theorise the conditions that secure the reproduction of the modern mode of organisation as defined in the previous chapters. Based on that, I think of modern development and technological advancement as bound by a racial model of control of labour and as dependant on a (self-)alienating mode of experience, realised in managerial subjectivities.

I argue that intersubjective dynamics within social contexts structured according to the modern mode of organisation are informed by an interaction between two modes of experience, socialised as the complementary binaries of the globalised modern normativity; one in which an environment is experienced as fragmented into functional objects, and another in which an environment is experienced as a space that harbours a collective. Through such systemic socialisation of binary modes of experience, the functional structuring of the social creates a binary split within its phenomenological domain. I theorise such striation of phenomenology as expressed in a temporal dissonance between experience and understanding, which underlies two modes of self-alienation: one characterised by pre-emptive qualification in anticipation of a future event, and another characterised by delayed qualification after the passing of events.

Accordingly, I develop an understanding of the reinforcement of affective and epistemological closures that secure the reproduction of social systems within the range of structural variation set by the modern order, as realised by unsettling the practices through which situated narratives and laws are formed and redefined, to make the production of narratives and laws a field of production in itself. Such structuring of social relations makes the redefinition of narratives only possible through the mediation of specific technologies and specific modes of inquiry; while the access to such technologies and the validation of modes of inquiry is mediated and moderated by institutions aligned with the functional logic of the modern order and its colonial proprieties.

Chapter 1: Methods of Studying the Autonomous
Reproduction of Social Systems



This first chapter explores philosophical methods of understanding self-reproducing systems as the basis of the analytical framework of the rest of the dissertation. Specifically, this chapter outlines an analytical framework based on the concept of autopoiesis. Autopoiesis refers to emergent and autonomous modes of organisation, defined by the same structure of relations that constitute a system being at the same time the realisation of its reproduction by maintaining conditions that enable the (re)emergence of that structure (Maturana, 2002: 7).

Autopoiesis was first introduced by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela within the fields of biology and philosophy of science. By theorising cognition as emergent from recurrent and systemic relations, Maturana and Varela outline a theory in which phenomenal experience is tied to the functioning of enclosed relational systems. While Maturana and Varela's theory focuses on interactions between a molecular domain and a cognitive domain, I lean on Sylvia Wynter's thinking of the autopoiesis of colonial systems and her exploration of Fanon's methods of psycho-social studies to investigate the relation of the functioning of social systems to the terms of phenomenological experience within them. Accordingly, I take an intersubjective social domain as an organisational level through and from which I study the interactions of enclosed systems on different levels of organisation with phenomenological experience.

I begin by introducing Fanon's approach of a meta-study of ontogenetic and phylogenetic bio-scientific narratives as sociogenically formed (Wynter, 2013: 46). I do so through Sylvia Wynter's theorisation of the *sociogenic principle*, and of the epistemological break with Western/European modes of knowledge production it enables. Through Wynter's application of autopoiesis to the social domain, I reflect on the epistemological challenges that emerge when thinking of social systems in terms of autopoiesis. I do so by drawing from Maturana's introduction to his and Varela's book, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, in which he outlines his

understanding of the autonomic functioning of social systems, overlaid with Varela's articulation of his concerns surrounding the application of notions that describe biological processes to social relations. By doing so, I highlight the ethical importance and the philosophical necessity of the epistemological break initiated by Fanon's approach towards studying psychosocial patterns, in relation to developing an understanding of social systems as self-reproducing systems.

I then draw on Sylvia Wynter's theorisation of the social phenomena through which symbolic social and political unities—that extend beyond the perceptual field of situated collectives—are formed. Specifically, I explore how the sociogenic principle that Wynter elaborates transforms the notions and methodologies of social studies and social sciences. I do so by overlaying Wynter's study of sociogenically coded autopoietic systems (Wynter, 2015: 199) onto Varela's reluctance to apply autopoiesis to the social register (Protevi, 2009: 101), as a way to highlight the social, political, and epistemological problematics that emerge from the modern mode of knowing social, biological, and physical phenomenon veridically, by attempting to formulate theories that describe the total functioning of a system while observing it from the outside. These problematics, I argue, are unpacked and addressed by Fanon's sociodiagnostics (Fanon, 1952/2008: XV). Accordingly, the intention of the study of autopoietic processes and the applicability of the notion of autopoiesis to the social domain is to develop a framework that allows a study of systems of different scales and of systems made of different levels of organisation through a flat ontology; a framework where the effect and value of a system is not understood to be determined by its scale, but by the function and functioning of the relationalities that constitute it and enact its reproduction.

Further, I develop the notion of the *brain-psyche* in order to explore the ways in which social structures interact simultaneously with both the biological and cognitive domains of the human experience. Theoretically, the brain-psyche acts as nexus between an understanding of cognition based on post-structuralist theories of affect as grounded in situated territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 322, 323; Massumi, 1995: 90-91); Wynter's sociogenic principle through which cognition can be understood as formed in sociogenic relationalities and recurrent collective practices that inform a culture-specific coding of the brain (Wynter, 2013: 54); and Maturana and Varela's theory on the emergence of cognition within enclosed and complex composite systems (Wynter, 1980: 13). In doing so, the brain-psyche allows me

to make use of post-structuralist and bio-scientific concepts in ways compatible with the decolonial framework inspired by the work of Wynter and Fanon.

Finally, through the methods and tools above, I develop a phenomenological study of the institution of a specific relational logic within emergent generations as pre-conceptual self-evidence that ensures the conservation of a particular social order, thereby naturalising the dynamics of domination necessary to prevent relational structures from changing beyond a range set by the mode of organisation that gives a social system its identity.

The Epistemological Break Initiated by Black Study

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, while reflecting on the psychic effect of the imposition of race on black bodies, Frantz Fanon proposed the following:

Reacting against the constitutionalizing trend at the end of the nineteenth century, Freud demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis. He replaced the phylogenetic theory by an ontogenetic approach. We shall see that the alienation of the black man is not an individual question. Alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny. In a way, in answer to the wishes of Leconte and Damey, let us say that here it is a question of sociodiagnostics. (Fanon, 1952/2008: XV)

Here, Fanon introduces his work as following a logic of investigating psychic phenomena which differs from approaches that look for causality in determinate neurobiological processes at the level of the species (phylogenetic), as well as approaches that look for causes particular to an individuated organism (ontogenetic). For Wynter this brief declaration created and creates an epistemological break with the West's tradition of understanding the relation between knowledge and social life (Wynter, 2015: 198). As Wynter argues, Fanon's sociogenic approach and sociodiagnostics, which he applies in *Black Skin, White Masks*, refute "the purely biological answer to the question of *who-we-are*" (Wynter, 2015: 198). Instead, Fanon's sociogenic studies reveal the question of *who-we-are* to be answered through "origin stories" as "the prime locus for a society's notion of itself" or of "its identity[,] [...] worldview and social organisation" (Yaganisako and Delaney, 1995; quoted by Wynter, 2015: 214).

In *Towards the Sociogenic Principle*, Wynter explains this epistemological turn in the methodology of Fanon's investigation of the biologically absolute theories that institute racial

classification (as the basis of origin stories) and self-alienation within colonised populations, which he himself experienced, and which he saw in his peers/patients as a psychiatrist. She develops Fanon's approach into a principle that describes the emergence of psycho-affective closures specific to a particular social order; by doing so, she formulates an understanding of the psycho-affective closure created by the renaissance of the human as *Man* (Wynter, 2015: 203) that made possible the development of *natural sciences* grounded in the specific mode of being of a white heteronormative man. Wynter elaborates on this break in relation to David Chalmers' search for psychophysical laws that govern the human psyche:

I shall [...] propose that Fanon's new conception of the human, one generated from the ground of his own, as well as that of his fellow French Caribbean subjects' lived experience of what it is like to be black [...], also opens a frontier onto the solution to the problem defined by David Chalmers as that of the "puzzle of conscious experience." [...] Why, in effect, is there the imperative of experience, or the necessity of consciousness? (Wynter, 2013: 31)

According to Wynter, "Fanon's explanatory concept of sociogeny" (Wynter, 2013: 32) verifies Chalmer's postulation of psychosocial laws that function at the level of the human experience. Further, the application of Fanon's concept (which will be discussed later in this chapter) suggests that these "sociogenic or nature-culture laws" (Wynter, 2013: 32) are redefinable at the level of the human experience. Further, Wynter argues that while such laws are implemented by physical/neurobiological laws they are not the same as the laws of nature that govern physical and biological processes, nor can they be reduced to being laws of nature. Thus, Wynter positions the work of Fanon as putting forward a thesis on the emergence of cognition and the phenomenon of consciousness, formulated through, and in relation to, "the level of human experience"; a thesis she develops throughout multiple texts.

Wynter's thesis is developed within a critique of the biocentric scientific discourse made possible by the European renaissance, when intellectuals postulated the causes of physical and biological processes as laws of nature that lie outside of culture, in contrast to the precedent religiously grounded belief in that such processes are set in motion by a divine supernatural cause (Wynter, 2013: 55). Wynter argues that such a postulation of laws of nature set the ground for an onto-epistemology through which it is possible to know veridically by probing nature, rather than adaptively based on historicities formalised in

stories: to know things as true—as eternal facts—rather than to know things through narratives that adapt to social and environmental dynamics.¹

Transgressing such epistemological laws, Wynter outlines an understanding of narrations and fictions, and specifically narratives of origin (answers to the question of *who-we-are*), as tied to modes of social organisation, regulatory practices, and a biochemical regulation of comportment (Wynter, 2015: 213-214). By doing so, Wynter develops an understanding of narratives that are taken to be self-evident within a specific social order as the articulation and realisation of a psycho-affective closure that creates the conditions to “institute ourselves as symbolically made-kin” (Wynter, 2015: 199). From such a perspective, self-evidence marks narratives tied to psychosocial laws, which when enforced (or self-enforced) realise a mode of being regarded as normal within particular cultures, as if such mode of being are reproduced automatically; that is despite these laws being redefinable at the level of the human experience, hence their automatic reproduction (or auto-institution) requiring a curation of the human experience. This, for Wynter, is autopoiesis in a social domain: a process of organisational reproduction made automatic and self-evident through the coding of experiences as (biologically/scientifically) good/bad (Wynter, 2013: 57).

The Potential of Autopoiesis for Understanding Social Systems

Ahead of applying Wynter’s notion of sociogenic autopoiesis to specific contexts I will explore the significance of the epistemological break initiated by Fanon’s work as theorised by Wynter. I do so by returning to the original definition of autopoiesis as introduced by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela within the fields of biology and philosophy of science, in order to investigate the ways in which this concept is transformed by methods of study inspired by the work of Fanon and Wynter.

While reading *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, I was surprised by the different opinions of its authors on how to address the political and ethical problematics that emerge when developing a bio-social theory. These diverging views are signalled to in the introduction of the book, where Maturana explains that in previous iterations of one of the essays included as a chapter in their book, an appendix was meant to be added in which the two authors would discuss the

¹ I refer to this onto-epistemology in this dissertation as the modern/colonial onto-epistemology.

ethical and social implications of their thesis. The appendix was not included because the authors could not agree on its content (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xviv, xviii). As a result, Maturana articulated his views on the matter in the introduction to *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, which he wrote on his own.²

My engagement with the biological foundation of the concept of autopoiesis will be mainly based on Maturana's writing. More specifically, I reference the introduction of *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (which was written by Maturana) (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xviv, xviii) as well as a later text titled "Autopoiesis, Structural Coupling, and Cognition," which expands on relations between different enclosed systems and the position of an observer that perceives them as enclosed systems (Maturana, 2002: 15). I focus on Maturana's formulation of the parallels between the functioning of molecular systems and social ones, in order to highlight the problems that emerge when applying bioscientific theories to a social domain; a point that (as will be discussed) figure as one of the central points of disagreement between Maturana and Varela. Then, I consider how autopoiesis can be applied to a social domain through the alternative epistemological approach outlined earlier through the work of Fanon and Wynter.

I found an explanation of Varela's reservation on the application of autopoiesis (as a concept conceived to discuss the functioning of molecular systems) to a social domain in a book chapter written by John Protevi. The most direct articulation of Varela's attitude towards thinking the social register in terms of autopoiesis can be found in an interview where he was asked about the matter:

It's a question on which I have reflected for a long time and hesitated very much. But I have finally come to the conclusion that all extension of biological models to the social level is to be avoided. I am absolutely against all extensions of autopoiesis, and also against the move to think society according to models of emergence, even though, in a certain sense, you're not wrong in thinking things like that, but it is an extremely delicate passage. I refuse to apply autopoiesis to the social plane. That might surprise you, but I do so for political reasons. History has shown that biological holism is very interesting and has produced great things, but it has always had its dark side, a black side, each time it's allowed itself to be applied to a social model. There's always

² The introduction to *Autopoiesis and Cognition* was written by Humberto Maturana, while the essays that constitute the chapters of the book were written by Maturana and Francisco Varela. Even though I mostly draw from the introduction of the book, I chose to reference the book as a whole, because the theoretical basis of the arguments Maturana presents in the introduction are developed in the collaborative chapters that follow.

slippages toward fascism, toward authoritarian impositions, eugenics, and so on. (Varela, 2002; translated and quoted by Protevi, 2009: 101)

John Protevi explains Varela's philosophical problem with thinking the social in terms of autopoietic systems:

The end result is that autopoietic enactment, in Varela's sense, is solely concerned with synchronic emergence (homeostatic part-whole relations) and is thereby unable to foster the condition for diachronic emergence in social and political dynamics (the emergence of novel patterns from the undoing of former patterns). (Protevi, 2009: 95)

To reformulate Varela's objection in different terms: autopoiesis is concerned with systems that create unities; systemic interactions between different elements or parts that produce an enclosed whole, and where the parts are only concerned with the reproduction of dynamics in between them and have no awareness of the unity they create on another level of organisation (a synchronic mode of emergence). Varela understood social and political dynamics to follow a different form of emergence, where different elements interact to create forms on their own level by undoing the previous configurations they realised; new forms are generated from this undoing (a diachronic mode of emergence).³ While my engagement with the concept of autopoiesis is largely based on Maturana's theories, Varela's concern—and its re-articulation by Protevi in relation to different modes of emergence—will remain in the background of my analyses, guiding a reflection on how the unified bio-scientific epistemology imposes a logic that confines knowledges produced through it to parameters that secure its reproduction.

Maturana narrates how the concept of autopoiesis arose from a need to refer to the mode of circular organisation of living systems while highlighting their autonomy:

The second essay included in this book was written in 1972, as an expansion of the section on 'Living Systems' in the [essay] 'Biology of Cognition'. The writing of this essay was in fact triggered by a conversation that Francisco Varela and I had in which he said: "If indeed the circular organization is sufficient to characterize living systems as unities, then one should be able to put it in more formal terms". [...] Yet we were unhappy with the expression 'circular organization', and we wanted a word that would by itself convey the central feature of the organization of the living, which is autonomy. (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii)

Maturana continues to explain why he thought explaining autopoietic systems in terms of 'circular organisation' and 'self-referential systems' was "inadequate and misleading":

³ See (Sartenaer, 2015: 4) on synchronic emergence and diachronic emergence.

When I wrote this essay I did not yet have the word ‘autopoiesis’ [...] [I] talked about causal relations when speaking about the circular organization of living systems. To do this was both inadequate and misleading. It was inadequate because the notion of causality is a notion that pertains to the domain of descriptions, and as such it is relevant only in the metadomain in which the observer makes his commentaries and cannot be deemed to be operative in the phenomenal domain, the object of the description. [...] It was misleading because it obscured both the understanding of the phenomenal domains as determined by the properties of the unities that generate them, and the non-intersection of the phenomenal domains generated by the operation of a composite unity as a simple unity in a medium and by the operation of its components as components. (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii, xviii)

Maturana felt that his earlier essay was *inadequate* and *misleading* because describing self-enclosed and self-producing systems in terms of *circular organisation* and *self-referential systems* resulted in an analysis that considered causal relations between the components of a system and the unity they create. However, for Maturana, an important aspect of the systems he intended to describe was their autonomy, which could only be described by theorising a distinction between the phenomenal domain (field of experience/domain of interactions) of the components and that of the unity they create. That is because the autonomy of a living system implies a preconfiguration of structures of relations between its components if it is to continue living; meaning that understanding living systems as autonomous implies a specific configuration of relations between components that are living systems in their own right; they can be seen as autonomous entities within their own domain of interactions. Accordingly, for Maturana, living systems can be seen as autonomous unities within their own domain of interactions. Because of that studying a unity constituted of different components as an autonomous entity requires a distinction between the phenomenal domain of that unity and the domain of its components. In the paragraph above, Maturana outlines the defining theoretical aspects of autopoietic systems which he unpacks in the rest of the introduction. I will explore how Maturana understood the concept of autopoiesis as having overcome the shortcomings of his previous essays.

In a later text, Maturana stresses—while differentiating the notion of autopoiesis from Immanuel Kant’s notion of *self-organisation* and *the reciprocal determination between the parts and the whole of an organism* it implies (Kant, 1790/2001: 274, 374; see also Ingensiep, 2006: 67; Desmond & Huneman, 2020: 51)—that the components/elements that constitute a unity are not aware of the unity they produce, nor do they function to produce that unity; they operate “in relation to their immediate locality” (Maturana, 2002: 7). Accordingly, he argues that any discussion of a causal relation between a higher-level unity and the parts that

constitute it are the projections of an observer and have nothing to do with the functioning of the system itself. Maturana explains:

Biological phenomena take place in a dynamics that occurs in the present without any operational relation to what we call the past or the future. Past and future are explanatory notions introduced by the observer. The recognition that living systems are molecular autopoietic systems has been minimized by some biologists under the claim that the notion of autopoiesis has already been used by Kant as he thought of organisms as totalities in which each part existed both for and by means of the whole, while the whole existed for and by means of the parts [...]. I am speaking of how a living system is constituted operationally as discrete singular molecular system that arises as a dynamic architecture which is the spontaneous unintended result of the interactions of molecules that operate in relation to their immediate locality, without any reference to the totality that they compose. (Maturana, 2002: 9)

For Maturana the enclosure of autopoietic systems—what can be specified as a unity by an external observer—is an expression of self-referential patterns of interactions within a phenomenal domain made enclosed by recurrent and maintained contact between the components of a system (Maturana, 2002: 7). As such, the enclosure of self-reproducing systems (that make them appear to an external observer as an autonomous unity) is itself due to the observer being external to the relationalities that constitute the system. Because of this defining property of relational systems specified as enclosed unities, speaking of causal relations when studying an enclosed system from an external perspective is incompatible with the functioning of such system because the unity that appears to an external observer emerges spontaneously from the recurrent interactions of components, with no reference to the unity specified by the observer; in other words, the autonomy of a unity as observed from an external perspective is irrelevant to an understanding of the interactions of components that produce the system and to the processes through which they do so. In Maturana's words, a study of autopoietic systems in terms of causality obscures both “the understanding of the phenomenal domains as determined by the properties of the unities that generate them, and the non-intersection of the phenomenal domains generated by the operation of a composite unity as a simple unity in a medium and by the operation of its components as components” (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xviii).

He argues that, since the components of an autopoietic system operate without any notion of the totality generated by their interactions, and since causal relations are formulated from the perspective of an observer that can perceive the different levels of a system, causality is not relevant to describe the relation between the domain of components and that of the unity that

emerges from their interactions. The functioning of this non-causal relation between the components of a system and the unity they produce can be understood by returning to the introduction of *Autopoiesis and Cognition*. As Maturana puts it there, the domain of interactions of a composite unity and that of its components do not intersect; still, structural changes in the medium—the domain within which the unity of the system is specified—result in changes in the internal structure of the unity; they are structurally coupled to one another (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxi). This mode of reciprocal structural variation that conserves a system's identity—overarching organisation—is theorised by Maturana and Varela as a *structural coupling* between an organism and its medium; between a system and the environment from which it is made distinct as an enclosed system.

As a result of the necessity of a distinction of different phenomenal domains within an autopoietic system, Maturana argues that in a study of the functioning of an enclosed system as a unity, we can disentangle multiple “non-intersecting phenomenal domains” (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxii). The first of such domains of interaction emerges from the operational distinction of a unity from its “background” (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xx). The structure of the system is realized on another phenomenal domain: the domain of components. Maturana argues that the phenomenal domain of components is experientially independent from the domain within which the system can be specified as a unity; they “operate in relation to their immediate locality without any reference to the totality they compose” (Maturana, 2002: 9). Within this second domain, components interact according to specific structures of relation that realise the mode of organisation (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xx) specified as unity by an external observer. These non-intersecting domains of interaction constitute a composite system by being structurally coupled to one another; changes in the structure of relations within one domain results in changes in structural relations within the other, with no direct correlation between the experience of such changes within each domain by the components of each level (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xx). Accordingly, observing and developing an understanding of the structure of a system and the overall form that these structures produce creates yet another (third) domain of experience, in which an observer interacts with the system they study from an externalized perspective, on both the level of the system as a unity and on the level of its components, simultaneously (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxii). Maturana refers to the phenomenal domain that emerges from this interaction as a *metadomain of descriptions* (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxiii).

Maturana's Social Autopoiesis and the Problem of individuated Agency

As I will argue with reference to Wynter's application of autopoiesis through its resonances with Fanon's sociodiagnostic method of psychosocial studies, the problem that remains unsolved in Maturana's application of the lessons of molecular autopoiesis to the social domain is the irreducible distance between an observer and the social system they study that Maturana argued is needed in order to study a system as an autonomous unity. Accordingly, the argument here is that the scientific approach of the work of Maturana and Varela could not have allowed them to take into consideration the sociogenic dynamics that make their concept helpful to an understanding of tactics of social control and domination, and thus (as will be discussed later), to address a concern implicitly and explicitly present in their work (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxix).

Maturana theorised the relation between phenomenal domains and the different levels of a system as a way to account for the relative position of the observer. He is not satisfied with the external objective observer of scientific inquiry, as is demonstrated implicitly in his subjective narration of the contexts in which the concept was formed (Maturana & Varela, 1980, xi-xix), as well as explicitly in his reflection on his earlier studies of frog vision (Maturana & Varela, 1980, xii). He explained that an epistemology premised on an objective observer was not adequate to explain, as example, the relation of the "visible colourful world" to the activity of the nervous system (Maturana & Varela, 1980, xiv); hence another epistemological framework was needed. As such, as a concept, autopoiesis can be seen as issuing from Maturana and Varela's effort to re-orient their investigations from the trajectories of established bio-scientific traditions of investigating the biological emergence of cognition, towards new ones by carving out a place for the observer:

[...] the knowledge that an observer claims of the unities that he distinguishes consists in his handling of them in a metadomain of descriptions with respect to the domain in which he characterizes them. Or, in other words, an observer characterizes a unity by stating the conditions in which it exists as a distinguishable entity, but he cognizes it only to the extent that he defines a metadomain in which he can operate with the entity that he characterized. (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxiii)

Maturana argues that the unity constituted by an autopoietic system is only perceivable by an observer that distinguishes between the unity and its medium by creating a metadomain (a synthetic cognitive domain) where the observer interacts theoretically and experimentally with the unity they specify. He explains how such understanding demonstrates the inherent challenges of theorising the dynamics of social systems:

Conduct as observer by a human being implies that he stands operationally as if outside the various social systems that he otherwise integrates, and that he may undergo in this manner interactions that do not confirm them. An observer always is potentially antisocial. (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxviii)

For Maturana, this external perspective of the *metadomain of descriptions* underlies the ability of an individual to judge if the structure of relations within a society is desirable or not. He argues that by operating as if external to a situation, a subject of a social order can “contemplate the societies that he integrates,” which makes it possible to identify the defining structures of relations of a society (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxviii). This externalised perspective enables a subject of a social order to think (and possibly to act) in ways that does not reproduce the system he otherwise contributes to its reproduction. In other words, reflecting on social systems as an externalised observer makes possible the disobedience of the established structures of the systems the observer otherwise integrates. However, I argue that reflecting on social systems as unities from an external perspective (even when forgoing causal analyses) “denies independence to the seen” (Lugones, 2003: 156); an externalised perspective becomes an expression of an individuated notion of agency.

Maria Lugones writes of such an externalised mode of inquiry as underlying a *racist/colonialist perception*, which “constructs its object imaginatively as a reflection of the seer (Lugones, 2003: 157). She expands in relation to the agency of such externalised observer:

In this conception of agency, the successful agent reasons practically in a world of meaning and within social, political, and economic institutions that back him up and form the framework for his forming intentions that are not subservient to the plans of others and that he is able to carry into action unimpeded and as intended. (Lugones, 2003: 211)

By drawing a connection between an externalised perspective, its social expression in enacting a fictitious individuated agency, and the collective institutional backing hidden by this fiction (Lugones, 2003: 210, 211), the making operational of an externalised perspective within an intersubjective phenomenal domain is revealed to be dependent on oppressive management and a totalitarian structuring of social relations which make possible a transcendence of social relations and of the conditions of life in and as collectives. While the observer stands as if external to a system, the power that enable their externalised and individuated disobedience is still determined by the organisation of the system; social, political, economic, power (or counter-power) compatible with the functioning of the system

and its terms. Hence, disobedience that is not premised on effectuating changes in the collectively and systemically enacted social structures, requires power that counters the regulatory power of the system; enough power to enable the observer to evade systemically structured social relations and to conserve their externalised position.

Accordingly, in knowledges of social systems produced from a *metadomain of descriptions*, since a human observer is always part of the phenomenal domain within which the social systems they study are constituted, individuals and populations (including the social being that becomes the observer) are seen as components that relate to each other according to structures preconfigured by the organisation of a social unity posited by the observer. The result is knowledge that pertains to structures of intersubjective relations and not to a phenomenological experience of such relations. More concretely, studying a social system of which I am a part (a component)—and from which I cannot be totally distinct—from an externalized perspective prevents me from incorporating the patterns I enact—the functions I perform within the system, including my studying of the system’s functioning—within my understanding of the system as a unity. From such a perspective, the collective patterns I experience and enact with, and within, a society I integrate are seen either as being part of a mass (nation, religion, class, species, etc.), or as a component within a mass where my being is reduced to an autonomous configuration of biological components; my being is automatically reduced to a bio-scientifically determined definition of being human (Wynter, 2013: 37).

Thus, the epistemological problem that emerges here concerns methods of inquiry and communication of knowledge in which the multiple potential meanings that emerge within a lived experience of an *event* are filtered through a prefigured semantic structuring of experience (Massumi, 1995: 87). Accordingly, I argue that through an externalized knowledge of social structures, the situated conditions that result in the emergence and reproduction of those structures cannot be disentangled; rather, they are presupposed as self-evident (Wynter, 2013: 57).

The following section expands on the methodology through which I theorise why and how the *universal metadomain of descriptions* (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxii) is not formed by a distance from a social system but by self-alienation, and why this differentiation is important. I do so by considering how the sociogenic principle, theorised by Wynter and inspired by Fanon’s work, informs a different relation between a study of social systems and

the researcher/author. From this dilemma that emerges from an individuated notion of agency whose possibility and enaction is simultaneously the reproduction of established social structures and of the limits on possible relations within them, my focus turns to the following questions: how can I assess how a social system affects me when I do not have the affordance to stand as if outside of it, nor the power or desire to act as if not bound by intersections of social relations? More crucially, how can we think of disobedience of oppressive social systems that is not asocial?

The Fictional Objectivity of Self-alienation

In order to develop a methodology of social studies undertaken from a perspective internal to the social systems studied, I will reflect in the ways in which the work of Fanon and Wynter relate to my experience. In preparation for outlining the phenomenological functioning of the modern mode of organisation in the following chapters, the following part takes inspiration from Wynter's theorisation of the self-alienation of colonised subjects as they/we are subjected to a modern/colonial mode of organisation (Wynter, 2013: 42), in order to explore how the modern structuring of phenomenological experience underlies an individuated and self-alienated mode of making sense that results in the naturalisation and reinforcement of a Euro/Western-centric onto-epistemology

Specifically, the following reflection is grounded in the experience of travelling from place to place and in the differences between experiencing such a movement within my natal environment and within a context where I am an immigrant. This exploration starts from a memory of a feeling I had during the drive from my village to a nearby city to which I commuted daily; the feeling of driving on the same road and through the same villages every day without ever interacting with the environments that I only know through my transitory passage through them. I know these places well, I have memorised parts of them, and some parts still emerge in my psyche years after that trajectory stopped structuring my daily life. I know these places well, but only from the specific perspective of being in a car. Since this experiential enclosure figures as a passage from the enclosure of the village and its systems of meanings to the enclosure of the contexts I drive to, it does not create an enclosed system of meanings as much as it reveals the enclosure of the contexts I am entangled with and their systems of meanings.

This transitory enclosure between contexts in which my being is self-evident—contexts in which I did not feel the need to question the structure and dynamics of my relations with my family, neighbours, friends, and partners, and in which the identities, gender, and sexuality I enact are a given—becomes a domain that I experience through meanings pre-determined by the normative contexts between which this enclosure is a passage. These drives between contexts in which I embody and enact normative identities, were moments of relaxation; a break during which I had the time to transition from one subjectivity to another while this transition is animated by an environment made visual by my moving through it within the enclosure of the car; a perspective that flattens the environment I pass through into a surface onto which I project my wandering thoughts.

The transitory experiences that emerge while traveling between Lebanon and the Netherlands and between the Netherlands and Iceland by plane, or traveling in the Netherlands by train, are different from that of driving through familiar villages. To rest on an airplane or on a train is to rest while being in an unfamiliar space; a space that can only be familiar on a surface level, since airplanes, trains, airports, and international train stations have similar features: compartmentalised and enclosed spaces, filled with smooth-edged, plastic and metal furniture, designed as flat surfaces that only fulfil one specific function; spaces with which I become familiar without them ever becoming familiar with me. In such spaces when I am too tired to read, to write, or to play music in order to make the time pass, I gradually become more and more self-aware as self-perception becomes a pastime in itself. A pastime that has often led me to feel uncomfortable in the environment I am in, while feeling that I can do nothing but observe myself being observed.

I decode these recurrent affective and psychic patterns by remembering Fanon's account of epidermalization—the imposition of race on an objectified body (Fanon, 1952/2008: xv, 92; Quijano, 2000: 555)—as I was having a similar experience while traveling on a train in the Netherlands. To rest on the train, I need to take off my glasses so I can lean on the window or fold myself on the folding table in front of me, to take a nap. To take off my glasses is to look and not know what I am looking at; and to not know if the conductor is speaking to me or to someone else, and to not know if the person sitting next to me is speaking to me or if they are on their phone. While being awake one moment and awoken the next by my head losing its balance between my shoulders, I remembered that Fanon wrote about this: “I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics”

(Fanon, 1952/2008: 92; quoted by Wynter, 2013: 42). When I am afraid that if I say something in my sleep, my Arabic ramblings might cause a bigot to freak out, or worse, if I take up the empty space next to me by collapsing into it, I become a nuisance that confirms the predefinition of the ethnicity I become responsible for (Wynter, 2013: 42). I construct myself in the terms I am perceived by, “in order to ‘verify’ the ‘truth’ of the others’ glances, the ‘truth’ of their order of consciousness” (Wynter, 2013: 42), as I become a distorted imitation of a Western/white normativity: “the ‘same’ and monstrously different” (Lugones, 2003: 158). I become Arab and I become Brown, while simultaneously discovering that the things I was socialised to despise in a natal environment structured by collective trauma to suppress the patterns that enact a misalignment with European (more specifically, French) values, are the same things that define my being as I see myself through normative eyes (Wynter, 2013: 42); “gradually, putting out pseudopodia in all directions, I secreted a race” (Fanon, 1952/2008: 102).

Before continuing this trip, I will continue with Fanon in order to develop a brief philosophical grounding. Fanon explores the actualisation of the classification of populations according to race in his account of the experience of *epidermalization* as “the imposition of race on the body” (Browne, 2015: 7; Fanon: 2008: XV). Epidermalization in this sense is a point of contact between racialised bodies and an “epidermal racial schema” that understands, as Fanon argues, the black body as “an object among other objects” (Fanon: 2008: 89, 92; Browne, 2015: 91). Paul Gilroy explains that epidermalization is part of “a historically specific system for making bodies meaningful by endowing in them qualities of ‘colour’” (Gilroy, 2001: 46). This meaning given to the body as ‘colour,’ is the meaning that corresponds to the bio-scientific classification of cultures as races which structures intersubjective relations between white and *non-white* peoples through a visual phenomenology (Wynter, 2013: 42). Maria Lugones discusses such a visual phenomenology as a “racist/colonialist perception” (Lugones, 2003: 156). She draws from Edward Said’s writing on “the West’s creation of the Orient” (Lugones, 2003: 157; Said, 2000/2015: 198), and elaborates that “the exotic is created through what Said calls ‘imaginative geography,’ the setting of imaginary land boundaries in our minds between a familiar space –‘our land’–and an unfamiliar space–‘the land of barbarians.’ The exotic becomes an exciting threat controlled through mental operations that domesticates it” (Lugones, 2003: 157; Quoting Said, 2000/2015: 199).

It took this experience—repeated on different occasions, after reading Fanon and Wynter multiple times—to understand that an objective and critical self-perception, when itself left unquestioned, is part of the social coding of becoming a citizen of a nation state according to the colonial terms of the modern order. It took that experience, and others like it, to understand how I experience and enact these dynamics.

Driving with my partner through a Dutch village on a Sunday afternoon and seeing people walking to have an afternoon coffee at each other's places, from a similar distance to the one I saw the people that lived in the villages I passed through in Lebanon but never visited, made me understand that on an imaginary bus from my village to the coast, I might have had a similar experience to the one I had in airplanes and on trains in Europe. Perhaps, in a place where I embody a normative hegemonic ethnicity, I would have felt perceived by normative eyes that recognize my queerness. However, on this imaginary bus line, I could have met someone that I knew, or could have overheard a conversation in a language that I understand, about something that I recognise or relate to, which would have interrupted my chain of thought and broken up my self-perception through the eyes of others, to become again a normative subject. In the imaginary bus from my village to the coast, if I fell asleep without my glasses on, and was woken suddenly, I would be sure that I did not make a mistake by being where I am, that I would understand what others around me are saying, and that I do not have to think about what I say to be articulate enough to be understood. On this bus, I would have been another set of eyes that make visible the ethnicity of others or their difference as queer, poor, migrant workers, or refugees. Through these experiences I understood that the world did not change after I left Lebanon and after the normality that I knew there collapsed with its economy; but it is my alignment to the normative modes of being that surround me that changed.

The Sociogenic Coding of Autopoiesis

According to Wynter, Fanon's analysis of dynamics and processes of sociogenic *epidermalization* (Fanon, 1952/2008: xv) demonstrates that the mode of phenomenological perception structured according to the cosmogenic narratives of Western modernity is itself the institution of an autopoietic system that realises and enacts the reproduction of the social organisation that secures the (re)emergence of such cosmogonies.

Wynter explains the autopoietic reproduction of the modern order revealed in Fanon's analysis of the subjective self-alienation he and his peers/patients experience according to the terms of a "colour line," imposed by the replicator code of the modern order and its model mode of being—which she refers to as a "a mode of being bourgeois human Man(2)" (Wynter, 2015: 187)—where "Black" is symbolically coded as *bad*. She writes:

For he and his peers/patients had been instituted as subjects not (as is normally the case) in a self-valorizing mode of cosmogonically, mythically chartered, and thereby sociogenically encoded auto-institution, but in secular Western Man(2)'s genre-specific mode of sociogeny. (Wynter, 2015: 198)

As Wynter explains, "Man(1)-as-homo-politicus" (Wynter, 2015: 190)—*Man* as the primary political agent and a model of the "universal human species" (Wynter, 2015: 194)—is the European Renaissance's answer to the question of who-we-are (Wynter, 2015: 198); one specific to the European Latin-Christian context, realised in a worldly secular state, and differentiated from the other-worldly cosmogonies of the Church. Man(2) is the evolution of this culture-specific globalised narrative, where scientific theories formulate a notion of *Man* as biologically absolute; allowing the fragmentation and classification of humanity according to biological notions of race, gender, and sexuality (Wynter, 2015: 203).

Specifically, Fanon reveals how networks of bio-scientific narratives constitute a self-evidently normal modern subject as "white", from whose point of view the colour and physiognomy of a black/non-white body "must be seen negatively and reacted to aversively" (Wynter, 2013: 42). Wynter explains:

Hence the logic by which Fanon, confronted by eyes which see him through the mediation of these woven networks, finds that where he had thought that he merely had to "construct a physiological self, to balance space, to localize sensations," he was now called upon to do more. That is, to construct himself in the terms of those pre-determined elements, in order to "verify" the "truth" of the others' glances, the "truth" of their order of consciousness, and to do so in order to confirm both the purely biological identity of being human in its bourgeois conception, as well as its normative definition in "white" terms. (Wynter, 2013: 42)

Wynter argues that Fanon's account of such a moment demonstrates how he became unable to see himself as himself; he saw himself through the particular point of view, and the visual phenomenology—the "normal eyes" (Wynter, 2013: 42)—sociogenically trained to enact evasion and avoidance of non-white or non-normative folks (Wynter, 2013: 32). The perception of Fanon, and of non-white peoples through "predetermined elements", is possible when the observer is alienated from their own embodied experiences, involving, thus, a mode

of cognition that assigns pre-determined meanings to embodied experiences and perceptions. This is the mode of phenomenological experience that Wynter, by engaging with Thomas Nagel (Nagel, 1974: 443), refers to as a *visual phenomenology* (Wynter, 2013: 42), meaning thereby a mode of experiencing and making sense of the world through a particular point of view, pre-determined by “objective” theories that obscure the living objectivity of social interactions.

A further understanding of Wynter’s engagement with Nagel’s call for an *objective phenomenology* will shed light on the methods that she theorises and applies. In *Towards the Sociogenic Principle*, Wynter analyses Fanon’s sociogenic approach in relation to Nagel’s questioning of how objective processes give rise to subjective experience, and in relation to David Chalmers’ thesis on such emergence being determined by natural psychophysical laws that we are yet to discover (Wynter, 2013: 32, 49, 50). She argues that through his sociogenic approach to psychosocial studies, Fanon “posited his counter-manifesto of what it is to be human,” while “his call for a sociodiagnostic itself suggests the need for a new scientific order of knowledge, able to confront and deal with the hybridity of our modes of being human” (Wynter, 2013: 59). She continues, expanding on this *new scientific order of knowledge*:

Specifically, it must be able to deal with the fact that, as Nagel pointed out, the methodology called for, in the case of an objective phenomenology, would no longer be the natural-scientific methodology based on the setting aside of the way things subjectively appear to us. Instead, we need a methodology that would take both the way things appear regularly and consistently to us as normal subjects of our order, and are therefore *self-evidently* evident to our consciousness, and as well, as in the case of Fanon’s French Caribbean anti-Negro Negro, our reflex qualitative mental *states* and/or *sensory qualia*, as the objects of our inquiry. (Wynter, 2013: 59)

According to Wynter, Fanon’s sociogenic approach to a study of the “lived experience of the black” (Wynter, 2013: 38; Fanon, 2008: 89) through his experience of being on the receiving end of racializing gazes and slurs uncovers the impossibility of an objective phenomenology within an epistemology dependent on an externalised perspective and implying an objectifying gaze premised on the bio-scientific classification of cultures as races. More explicitly, Fanon uncovered the objectifying gaze of the particular point of view of the racializing natural-scientific methodology that imposes its significance on what it perceives in terms of universal truths. Wynter argues that ontogenic and phylogenic assumptions, formulated as scientific and philosophical theories that classify the world according to the

advantage of a normative white Man, are articulated intersubjectively through a visual phenomenology (Wynter, 2013: 43). As revealed by Fanon's experience and analysis, this creates a mode of phenomenological experience where the observed—as they are submitted to violent interactions and objectifying gazes—experience themselves through the gaze of an externalised objective observer. This is a phenomenology that makes whoever is perceived as “different” experience themselves through the predetermined meanings of the social order in, and to, which they are “different”.

Culture-Specific Autopoiesis

In *The Ceremony Found* Wynter argues that what Avram Goldstein theorised as a species-specific system of signalling what is good as a neurochemical reward and what is bad as punishment, is the institution of a sociogenic replicator code. Wynter understands the “sociogenic replicator code of symbolic life and death” (Wynter, 2015: 198) as the codification of *origin stories* (Wynter, 2015: 214). This is a coding of modes of knowledge and narrative production through regulatory practices that guide the production of cosmogonies—origin myths/stories/narratives—which enable the subjects of that society to “autopoietically institute a genre specific We” (Wynter, 2015: 213-214); an implied and self-evident “We,” experienced pre-conceptually and defined by the terms of being through which a subject of a social order performatively align themselves with that specific order's origin stories and its answer to the question of *who-we-are* (Wynter, 2015: 198).

She proposes that the externalised subjective experience of Fanon and his peers/patients through an objective perspective, as they encountered *the sociogenic replicator code of symbolic life and death* of Western Man(2), is due to a phenomenon applicable to social systems beyond those of Western/European modernity (Wynter, 2015: 198). More specifically, she proposes that an understanding of an externalised perspective as an “objective perspective” is due to a phenomenon applicable to enclosed social systems beyond that of European modernity. She argues that such an onto-epistemology is tied to our ability “to attain higher forms of cooperation and organisation” (Wynter, 2015: 198); an ability made possible by our capacity to formulate symbolic linguistic/narrative codes that inform, and are informed by, the enaction of specific modes of being human. She explains:

This phenomenon is that all human Skins can only become human by also performatively enacting them/ourselves as human in the always-already,

cosmogonically chartered terms of their/our symbolically encoded and fictively constructed genre-specific Masks, as themselves always-already programmed by their/our respective sociogenic replicator codes of symbolic life/death. This given that, unlike the Primate family to which we partly belong, humans are alone able to transcend the narrow, genetically determined limits of eusocial, inter-altruistic, kin-recognizing behaviors in order to instead attain to higher levels of cooperation and organization. While we are able to do so only by means of our ability – through the mutational co-evolution with the brain of the emergent properties of language and narrative/story-telling – autopoietically to institute ourselves as symbolically made-kin through the medium of our retroactively projected origin stories or cosmogonies. (Wynter, 2015: 198-199)

The excerpt above exemplifies Wynter’s understanding of the human as *Homo Narrans* (Wynter, 2015: 194). She argues that the ability to configure complex social systems is due to the defining capacity of the human to develop origin stories or cosmogonies, which then institute a code of normative comportment that outlines a “specific fictive mode of human kind” (Wynter, 2015: 199). Such an understanding corresponds to an argument presented by Wynter in the article “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom”. Here, she argues that mapping a society’s “governing master codes” (Wynter, 2003: 271)—what is good or bad for that society—onto stable and recurrent celestial movements enables these codes “to be experienced by each order’s subjects as if they had been supernaturally (and, as such, extrahumanly) determined”, and to “function as an ‘objective set of facts’ for the people of that society” (Wynter, 2003: 271).

Wynter argues that by projecting the moral/political laws of a particular society upon the physical cosmos, such laws become understood as “objective truths”. However, for Wynter, these truths must be understood as the terms that maintain the *adaptive advantage* of a particular mode of being within a specific society (Wynter, 2013: 49). Following this premise, Wynter returns to a focus on the roots of the particular mode of being human according to the terms of European normativity. She reflects on how Greek/Hellenistic astronomy follows the order of Greek society in its differentiation between citizens/barbarians and women/men:

[...] Greek astronomy was to remain an ethno-astronomy. One, that is, in which the moral/political laws of the Greek polis had been projected upon the physical cosmos, enabling them to serve as “objective truth” in Feyerabend’s (1987) sense of the term, and therefore as, in my own terms, adaptive truth-for the Greeks. With the consequence that their projected premise of a value distinction and principle of ontological distinction between heaven and earth had functioned to analogically replicate and absolutize the central order-organizing principle and genre-of-the-human distinction at the level of the sociopolitical order, between the non-dependent masters who were

Greek-born citizens and their totally dependent slaves classified as barbarian Others. With this value distinction (sociogenic principle or master code of symbolic life/death) then being replicated at the level of the intra-Greek society, in gendered terms (correlatedly), as between males, who were citizens, and women, who were their dependents. (Wynter, 2003: 272)

Accordingly, these truths—as culture-specific laws projected onto natural and cosmic phenomena—reflect the terms that determine the structure of intersubjective relations within a society and the structure of relations of normative subjects of that society with collectives outside the bounds of its normative behavioural, epistemological, and aesthetic norms. In other words, these adaptive truths—as articulations of culture-specific moral and political laws—determine the preset meanings through which a normative subject of a particular society experiences, perceives, and makes sense of their self, other, and world. Namely, these adaptive truths outline the predetermined “objective” presuppositions and self-evidence of consciousness as felt and experienced through a *visual phenomenology* by the normative subject of a specific social order.

Wynter argues that no matter how complex or sophisticated the scientific formulations that describe the physical cosmos might be, such knowledge remains contained within the limits set by the adaptive truths that conserve a particular social order. She refers to these knowledges as “ethno-astronomies and ethno-geographies” (Wynter, 2003: 271).

Accordingly, from such a perspective, cultural narratives are not mere articulations of the practices and traditions of a particular society nor are they universal objective knowledges. Rather, cultural narratives act as a sociogenic code of normative comportment that outlines a *kind* of people and a specific mode of being human, and therefore, narratives are an *indispensable condition* (Wynter, 2013: 31-32) of the emergence of societies. Consequently, Wynter argues that cognitive, epistemological, aesthetic, and psycho-affective closures are a necessary condition for the auto-institution of a societal order. She explains:

[...] each human societal order, as based on its cosmogonically chartered and genre-specific fictive mode of kind, [...] must necessarily be cognitively, epistemologically, aesthetically, and psycho-affectively closed. And they must remain so if the positively/negatively marked meanings of each fictive mode of kind’s sociogenic replicator code of symbolic life/death are to be stably and systemically synchronized with the neurological functioning of the biochemical or opiate reward/punishment system of the brain. (Wynter, 2015: 211)

In summary, Wynter argues that the formation of societies as advanced models of transgenerational social cooperation is due to the mutational emergence of language and

narrative/storytelling capacities; an emergence that results from the synchronisation of bodily systems to the positively/negatively marked meanings of a specific social order (Wynter, 2015: 199). In sum, a *specific genre (mask) of being human* (Wynter, 2015: 199) is formed and maintained as a psycho-affective closure.

Consistently, origin stories encoded by modern logics and enacted in social practices and patterns of interactions, institute a *genre-specific* mode of being—an enacted mode of differentiation of an *I/We*—made tangible in the ability of such narratives to “affect matter by means of [their] positively/negatively marked regulatory practices” (Wynter, 2015: 212) that maintain a genre’s coherence. This tangibility of genre-specific *epistemes* (modes of knowing, and of knowledge production) and *aesthetemes* (or modes of aesthetic articulation and representational arts) is dependent on being “stably and systematically synchronised with the neurological functioning of the biochemical or opiate reward/punishment system of the brain; a synchronisation that necessitates a cognitive, epistemological, aesthetic, and psycho-affective closure” (Wynter, 2015: 211). This closure is formed by recurrent patterns that become a physiological code as an individual must act in compliance with its positively marked terms of symbolic life and its negatively marked terms of symbolic death, in order to integrate modern social structures and to be (normally) human within the modern order (Wynter, 2015: 200).

Accordingly, the origin stories of a society articulate the mode of organisation of social relations that outline a mode of comportment that gives a society its identity; regulatory practices realise a positive/negative code folded within such narratives and secure the conditions necessary for the (re)emergence of the same mode of organisation; the patterns of relations between subjects of that order enact the realisation of its organisation, shaping modes of knowledge production within that order, which in turn shape the structure of relations between its subjects and between them and what lies outside of such order. All the above constitute a mode of being (re)articulated as narratives of origins that inform a visual phenomenology. Thus, Wynter traces the autopoietic functioning of the modern mode of social organisation whose constitution is at the same time the initiation of a cyclical process of reproduction on multiple levels of organisation.

Consequently, since the autopoiesis of social systems is realised in experiencing and understanding the self, others, and the world through a visual phenomenology, a study of autopoietic processes within the social domain calls for a meta-phenomenological

methodology. This method of study departs from both the methodologies of Western/European phenomenology which aim for the bracketing of what is familiar to the author (Qutoshi, 2018: 218), and from scientific methodologies where the observer is outside of the systems they study, even if only operationally so (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxi). The meta-phenomenology that Fanon applies and through which Wynter theorises autopoietic social systems is one that puts into question aesthetic forms, social formations, and enacted patterns that are deemed as self-evidently normal, natural, or universal. For Wynter, and by extension for this dissertation, the self-evidence of consciousness marks and is marked by the sociogenic coding of physiological reactions that secure the reproduction of established structures of relations which maintain a specific social order and a culture-specific mode of being. Wynter explains:

[Yet] it is precisely this self-evident consciousness that Fanon has found himself not only compelled to call in question, but also to indict, as [itself being] the cause of the black's autophobia as well as the white's anti-black "aberration of affect." [...] Seeing such self-evidence can be recognized as a property in itself of the terms in which each subject has been socialized into a specific mode of being human; these terms then prescribe the adaptively advantageous parameters in which each such subject must necessarily know, as well as psycho-affectively respond to, Self, Other, and World as the conditions of the adaptively advantageous reproduction of each such mode of being human. The logical consequence is then that, in the case of our contemporary order of consciousness, modes of subjective experience expressed on the one hand by anti-black and anti-non-white racism, and on the other, by black autophobia, are, like all the other correlated isms, the expressions of a self-evident order of consciousness to its subjects. (Wynter, 2013: 56-57)

Wynter argues that an individual comes to understand their own experiences, narratives, and system of meanings as self-evident in terms that are specific to the mode of being human they have been socialised in. These terms prescribe behaviours that are socialised as bad, and others socialised as good. The regulation of behaviour as prescribed by self-evident terms institutes an understanding of "self, other, and world" grounded in a system of values set according to conditions that secure the reproduction of a culture-specific mode of being (Wynter, 2013: 57). Put in this way, Fanon called into question the self-evidence of consciousness—what is subjectively experienced as self-evident; treating self-evidence as a property of the terms through which different modes of being are socialised. Accordingly, Wynter argues that studying what is considered self-evident within a particular social system reveals the terms according to which a normative subject of such a system relates to its environment through predefined meanings. Specifically, a study of the self-evidence of consciousness reveals the properties of the particular mode of organisation of a specific social

system, by uncovering the terms according to which an order's subjects are socialised to re-enact its specific mode of being human (Wynter, 2013: 57) through a visual phenomenology. To do so, I begin by developing the notion of *brain-psyche* in order to study the interactions of social regularities and neuro-physiological ones.

The Situated, Collective, and Distributed Constitution of the Brain-Psyche

While outlining the analytical framework of this dissertation I referenced Wynter's formulation of the sociogenic principle—the sociogenic coding of normative modes of experience and comportment—as being dependent on the synchronisation of the “positively/negatively marked meanings” of particular social orders with “the neurological functioning of the biochemical or opiate reward/punishment system of the brain” (Wynter, 2015: 211). In the following, I formulate an understanding of the brain as the continuous emergence of points of view; a point of view being the complex experiential phenomenon that is qualified and fragmented into a biological body and subjective experience. I will do so by drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the brain, and more specifically from their thinking of psychic processes as spatially and socially distributed throughout a territory (Bonta & Protevi, 2006: 158). This venture into post-structuralism is still contained within the decolonial framework outlined and applied thus far. The distributed brain of Deleuze and Guattari will guide an exploration of the ways in which subjectively experienced self-evidence relates to the brain and the psyche. This will imply a reflection on the extent to which a social order informs what is experienced as self-evident, and through this reflection I will theorise how the meanings marked as positive/negative by a specific social system become part of the constitution of the brain-psyche as an expression of the same relational processes within different domains of interactions on different levels of organisation—the brain being the expression of these processes within the molecular (biological) domain, while the psyche is their expression within the intersubjective domain—informing the terms of phenomenological experience within that system.

Accordingly, I think through the brain-psyche as a conceptual nexus; a point of intersection of theories of significance that move beyond the mind/body dichotomy of the modern colonial onto-epistemology. Specifically, I think of brain-psyche as an intersection of an understanding of cognition based on post-structuralist theories of affect as grounded in

situated territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 322, 323; Massumi, 1995: 90-91); of Wynter's sociogenic principle through which cognition can be understood as formed in sociogenic relationalities and recurrent collective practices that inform a culture-specific coding of the brain (Wynter, 2013: 54); and of Maturana and Varela's theory on the emergence of cognition enclosed and complex composite systems (Wynter, 1980: 13). Based on such a notion, I theorise the institution of the singular point of view of a white heteronormative bourgeois Man as an "objective" point of view (Wynter, 2015: 42), and how this institutional process interacts with the formation of the brain as it is expressed phenomenologically in the emergence of multiple points of view. This notion of the brain-psyche informs an analysis of the reproduction of the modern order from the perspective of situated processes embedded within a specific territories/contexts. In turn, such an analysis will enable the theorisation of the expression of the effects of the modern order in transgenerational intersubjective dynamics.

In the conclusion of *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari critique the scientific objectification of the brain as purely "organic connections and integrations" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 209). They argue that an objective definition of the brain is a reductionist one, since such a definition is an attempt to make sense of the phenomena of sensation while overlooking that such a sense is contained within the relational field created by an author's sensations and their accumulation as the brain itself. Since they understand sensation to always already be the preservation of sensory excitation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 211), they argue that the brain is a feeling. In other words, the brain is constituted as part of the body, which, as Brian Massumi writes, "infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing if not situated" (Massumi, 1995: 90-91).

In the same vein, Deleuze and Guattari are not satisfied with the Western/European phenomenological tradition's critique of this objectification, or with the development of a purely experiential understanding of the brain. In order to voice their criticism of both, they evoke Erwin Straus' title of the third section of his book *The Primary World of Senses*, "man thinks, not the brain" (Straus, 1967: 105), to which they respond with the following:

"Man thinks, not the brain"; but this ascent of phenomenology beyond the brain toward a Being in the world, through a double criticism of mechanism and dynamism, hardly gets us out of the sphere of opinions. It leads us only to an Urdoxa posited as original opinion, or meaning of meanings. [...] It is the brain that thinks and not man—the latter being a cerebral crystallisation. We will speak of the brain as Cézanne spoke of the

landscape: man absent from, but completely within the brain. Philosophy, art, and science are not the mental objects of an objectified brain but the three aspects under which the brain becomes subject, thought-brain. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 210)

Deleuze and Guattari continue by explaining that the brain here is a “form in itself that does not refer to any external point of view” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 210). Thus, the brain as they understand it is a form that emerges from recurrent perceptual, sensual, associative, and interpretive surveys. The brain is the result of distinguishing regularities in embodied interactions. It is a set of regularities in relation to which recurrent interactions are experienced as regularities. This means that, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, the brain is not produced by processes that it understands as external to it, but by processes that come to be understood as issuing from it; or in Wynter’s terms, by processes understood as self-evident (Wynter, 2013: 56-57). Consequently, cognition as a function of the relationally formed brain is not limited to its semantic/conceptual articulations, rather, cognition is essentially the emergence of different points of view from which semantic meanings could be conceived. The brain, then, is not an idea, a concept, or point of view, rather, it is the recurrent relational formation of points of view, from which regularities of affect can be formed into cognitive categories; the brain is the lingering of these interactions and qualifications, materialised in neural pathways and enacted patterns.

The notion of the brain, as it will be applied in the following, refers to this continuous process of emergence of points of view. More specifically, I understand the brain to be an expression of this emergence of points of view within the organisational level of bodily organs as neural pathways. Since, from this perspective, the formation of the brain as a biological form and the cognitive capacities it gives rise to are expressions of the same relational process within different phenomenal domains. Accordingly, I will discuss the brain as coupled to the psyche: as brain-psyche. The brain-psyche, then, is the result of the relational process through which the affects I feel—within the phenomenal domain that I experience—become part of the internal systems that constitute the form of my body. In this sense, the psyche is the expression of the structural coupling (Maturana, 2002: 17) of autopoietic systems within my body to the social systems in which my body is a component. Accordingly, the notion of the brain-psyche issues from reading the constitution of the brain as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari, and the constitution of specific genres (masks) of being human as theorised by

Fanon and Wynter (Wynter, 2015: 201), as different facets of the same process; the brain-psyche as such, is an expression of collective patterns of relations.

Based on the above, the following section reflects on the implications of thinking of the brain as systematically coupled to the psyche, on understanding intersubjective patterns and subjective experiences.

The Phenomenology of the Emergence of Auto-instituting organisations

Ahead of unpacking the ways in which different modes of being within modernised environments are coded to reproduce the modern mode of social organisation and its self-evidence in the next chapter, I explore how the synchronisation of the opiate system of the brain is expressed within phenomenological experience as the constitution of the brain-psyche. Following Wynter, I understand “qualitative mental states, order of consciousness and mode of subjective experience” (Wynter, 2013: 54) to be the parameters of phenomenology. Accordingly, in order to think of the ways in which enacted regularities relate to cognitive patterns, I focus on the process of writing; specifically, when writing is performed as an individuated, continuous, and recurrent practice that informs the emergence of particular points of view. As such, the following is an exploration of the ways in which the embodied and biological processes that enable the institution of cultural identities are experienced within a situated intersubjective domain. Consequently, this turn towards a situated phenomenological and intersubjective perspective is reflected in a shift in the style of my writing; from surveying philosophical notions to their application and applicability to specific situations.

In this reflection I use smoking breaks as an example. As a smoker, I am drawn to reflecting on smoking due to the interaction of its ritualistic repeatability with the biochemical processes of my body. The recurrent stepping outside or to the side to smoke, and the enmeshment of this recurrent practice with the rhythms of my body, will allow me to explore patterns through which I theorise the phenomenological expression of the synchronisation of “the neurological functioning of the biochemical or opiate reward/punishment system of the brain” (Wynter, 2015: 211) to culture-specific codes of normative comportment. Accordingly, the following reflection is formulated through a phenomenological perspective, while aiming

to explore how an externalised perspective leads to the individuation of phenomenological experience.

Smoking Breaks and the Transformation of Rhythms into Structures

After a long day of trying to write, while being distracted by responding to emails, I roll a cigarette and step outside for a moment. Smoking leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth and with a slight guilt for compromising my future health. But despite that, what it facilitates is a stepping outside of a situation that is becoming stressful; a stepping aside; a break. Smoking becomes a bio-chemical reminder which, when triggered by associations (specific spaces, specific moments in the day, or levels of stress), pulls me out of the contexts from which, in the past, I wanted to be pulled out of.

On the balcony, I leave the stressful momentum dragging me through the day, and dragging the day into the night, to hide in the comfort of the duration of a cigarette. When the details of one idea become a context from which other ideas emerge, writing becomes the membrane of a psycho-affective closure. My self-awareness becomes an idea; as I try to stop my train of thought, my awareness of my self-awareness becomes the substance of a dilemma: 'to write down that insomnia is a rhizome, or to forget that I ever had this thought'. To sleep, or to stare into the light of the screen of my phone and to write: 'the rhizome of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 8), when isolated within an individuated enclosure, forms the psychic roots of the hierarchical tree of modern centralised management'. To write that down and stimulate my brain some more, or to stay awake thinking whether I should write it down or not; to then wander, only to remind myself that there was something that I needed to write down, but which I forgot, and which I must try to remember.

From the balcony, I can see my laptop through the window lying on a stack of paper, and I can see the continuation of this active world in the streets below me; people doing what they must do, going where they need to be. For as long as the cigarette burns, I am not part of them, nor of the world; I have nowhere to be, for in this moment, I am smoking on a balcony that becomes self-enclosed by the training of my body by my repeated stepping outside to smoke. I step away from the noise of my life into a space that I come to know; to trust that I can come back to; a mental space to the side of my life; a reason to take break, for a moment, from whatever is unfolding in my life. The chemicals I breathe, the smell of burning tobacco and even the bad smell of my breath establish cognitive and emotional connections with other

moments I put myself through the duration of a cigarette. It is hard to stop smoking because smoking is not an action; the act of sucking on a burning stick of dried herbs is only part of a cognitive strategy of producing order.

When writing leads me to dead ends, a break is what I need. However, I often keep postponing taking a break to not interrupt my focus, and when I do, my breaks continue to extend so I can avoid feeling stuck again. However, my body's anticipation of nicotine intensifies periodically, forcing me to stop writing and to take a break. A smoking break has a duration predefined by the length a cigarette and by the rate with which it burns. A smoking break becomes a self-contained duration in which I can feel external to the unfolding of my life; the recurrence of this limited moment of externalised perception and its embodied remembrance provides a scale according to which the unfolding of the rest of my life can be ordered; a cigarette becomes a sample of Hegel's notion of (world) history⁴ (Hegel, 1807/2018: 173; da Silva, 2007: 88) rolled into a stick. The smoking break is an accumulation of moments when my attention is not being pulled in all directions. From the balcony, and from the regularity of repeated stepping outside and sitting on the same chair for a number of minutes every day, for years, I can remember my life in relation to this rhythm organised by the interruption of my day by smoking breaks. Everything that I experience as life—working, cooking, eating, attending an exhibition, a class, marching in a protest, or dancing in a club—is echoed in a reflection whilst standing to the side and smoking. A cigarette, then, is a measure according to which my life can be ordered.

The ritual of smoking with its predefined duration, with its enmeshment within my body and the physiological dependency it creates, generates a cyclical rhythm. Smoking breaks the continuity of a day spent writing and divides it into self-enclosed durations. The variability of each break—the intensity of the rain, the thickness of the snow, the brightness of the sun, the passing-by of employees from the office across the street as they are leaving for the day, or the noise from the family next door dispersing to their jobs and schools—produce markers

⁴ A notion of world history where a self-conscious individual (the transparent "I" (da Silva, 2007: 88), or the universal individual) is both the product and the producer of *world history*. That is so because for Hegel "organic nature has no history" (Hegel, 1807/2018: 173), rather history is a product of individuals being conscious of the universality of their individuality as an expression of a universal spirit "ordering itself into a whole," and "which has its objective existence as world history (Hegel, 1807/2018: 173); the history of spirit (as expressed in individuals) becoming a whole.

according to which I can remember particular durations in relation to the breaks that segment them. While writing, smoking is a break that allows me to digest what I wrote: to avoid getting lost in developing an idea in ways that diverge from the flow of the rest of my text—a schema that allows me to realign stranded ideas in which I become lost, to the initial intention of thinking such ideas as a practical opening that makes it possible to get unstuck. By stepping out on the balcony to smoke, I can notice that my explanation of a notion is needlessly complicated, or that the notion that I am stuck developing contradicts what I would like to communicate. Smoking becomes the ritual that allows me to ground the compulsive continuity of my writing in what I am trying to communicate.

Smoke-breaks create a rhythm in a process of writing in relative isolation, through which I move further and further from the intention of exploring specific patterns of thought and relation; writing becomes a self-reinforcing cycle, becoming itself an aspect of enacting and reproducing the logic of the self-reproducing patterns I reflect on. Through these rhythmic breaks I take a distance from writing which enables the process to become open to other processes; to remember to read someone else's writing, to put some music on, to eat, or to call my mom. However, this rhythm itself becomes a structure when my body's expectation of a cigarette makes the repetition of smoke-breaks a priority. The rhythm becomes a structure that I repeat without variation. As the rhythm of smoke-breaks becomes a structure that recedes to the background of my awareness, smoke-breaks become a self-evident pattern that I enact without thinking, and which realises my being a smoker rather than being someone who smokes.

Smoking, or more accurately, the accelerated coding of my patterns by nicotine, creates a structure that helps me cope with the deadlines of universities and of visa applications. While I am pulled from one side by having to write or to fill out forms, and from the other side, by the desire to see a friend, to spend time with my partner, or by the need to eat or to clean the cat's litter box, smoking becomes a tool through which I allow the functional coding of my body by bureaucratic infrastructures—through deadlines, presentations, emails, etc.—to become coupled with a self-reproducing pattern that makes self-evident my prioritisation of my job and my bureaucratic duties; a pattern that structures my days and becomes part of my identity by creating a distance between me and the things that disrupt my writing, allowing me to systematise a psycho-affective closure created by an unhealthy writing habit. Smoke-breaks—due to the chemical reactions generated by smoking a cigarette—create a systemic

bio-chemical adaptation of the reward/punishment system of my brain. In its systemic form, this rhythmic process does not produce an experience of enclosure, rather, such an objective structuring of subjective experience (Wynter, 2015: 50) makes the rhythm of smoking part of the normal functioning of my brain-psyche. In other words, this systemic process reveals the emergence of a phenomenology in which the regularities that underlie its emergence are experienced as self-evident.

From a more general perspective, phrased through a distinction central to Hegel's philosophy (Hegel, 1807/2018: 256), a feedback loop is established between *substance* and *the consciousness of substance*, between the smoking habit I enact and my making sense of this habit. In this feedback loop a specific pattern that emerges in relation to a particular substance becomes the main environmental determinant of the parameters of qualitative mental states around which my consciousness is ordered. Put differently, with the systemic adaptation of my body to the recurrent intake of the chemicals that result from smoking a cigarette, my body is desynchronised from the rhythms of my environment to become synchronised to a self-enclosed rhythm.

To return to a phenomenological level, the feedback loop between substance and the awareness of substance, in its initiation of a desynchronisation of a phenomenological field of experience from environmental relations, marks a threshold of intensification. When seen from a sociogenic perspective, this threshold of intensification corresponds to the process through which the self-evidence of consciousness is formed. This is a threshold that marks a point of maintained and continuous contact; beyond this point, the interaction between my qualitative mental states and the rhythm of my smoke-breaks becomes the centre around which my making sense of myself and of the world revolves. Put differently, the desynchronisation of phenomenal experience from situated relationalities is a threshold that marks the institution of bio-chemical autopoiesis within the body. When this process initiates a desynchronisation from collective regularities, it is understood as becoming pathological (as neurosis, psychosis, addiction, obsession, compulsion, learning difficulties, etc.). However, when this process is entangled with situated collective rhythms, it generates a mode of comportment that becomes a collectively enacted normativity, specific to a situated sociality.

As discussed above—in prolonged and continuous sessions of writing—the details of an idea become a context from which the ideas that come after it emerge. The enclosure that emerges from the continuous and maintained recurrence of relational patterns—whether they are

expressed in enacted regularities and social interactions—is an expression of the adaptation of autopoietic systems within the body to the experiential field of the body as a unity; an emergent psycho-affective closure. The enclosure that emerges from the recurrence of smoking breaks is different by being the institution of a second order autopoiesis; a systemic psycho-affective closure. This is the institution of self-reinforcing patterns that reinforce a self-instituting process. In the case of smoking this is realised by the habit of smoking being a direct chemical intervention in internal bodily systems. Accordingly, with the institution of a second order autopoiesis, the *metadomain of descriptions* of an externalised observer becomes itself a context within which autopoiesis can emerge; recurrent smoking breaks as a stepping outside of patterns I repeat automatically, becomes a self-evident pattern, in relation to which I structure my daily life. These interactions between recurrently enacted patterns and an externalised objective perspective, can shed light on the philosophical problem I highlighted while introducing Maturana’s formulation of the potential of identifying autopoietic dynamics within a social system.

Maturana understands the externality of the observer and the metadomain from which they observe to be fundamental for “social freedom and mutual respect” (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx). I drew from Lugones’ notion of *racist/colonialist perception* (Lugones, 2003: 175) and argued that to think through externalised perspective, and to form “intentions not subservient to the plans of others,” depends on the backing of social, political, and economic institutions (Lugones, 2003: 211). Thus, an externalised objective perspective is necessarily compliant with the organisational logic of the social order to which an observer sees themselves as external. I will return to Maturana’s formulation to disentangle the operational and practical contradictions that result in an externalised objective perspective and a notion of individuated agency reproducing established (and often oppressive) social systems. Maturana writes:

A human society in which to see all human beings as equivalent to oneself, and to love them, is operationally legitimate without demanding from them a larger surrender of individuality and autonomy than the measure that one is willing to accept for oneself while integrating it as an observer, is a product of human art, that is, an artificial society that admits change and accepts every human being as not dispensable. Such a society is necessarily a non-hierarchical society for which all relations of order are constitutively transitory and circumstantial to the creation of relations that continuously negate the institutionalization of human abuse. Such a society is in its essence an anarchist society, a society made for and by observers that would not surrender their condition of observers as their only claim to social freedom and mutual respect. (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx).

I quote Maturana's formulation because I see his intention to think of a *non-hierarchical society* as aligned with the arguments I develop throughout this dissertation. However, to unpack the philosophical problem in his formulation of the ways in which such society can be realised it is, again, helpful to overlay Maria Lugones' notion of racist/colonialist perception that "constructs its object imaginatively as a reflection of the seer" (Lugones, 2003: 157). Lugones expands on this mode of perception through which *all beings are equivalent to oneself* by quoting Elizabeth Spelman:

In the United States white children like me got early training in boomerang perception when we were told by well-meaning white adults that Black people were just like us—never, however, that we were just like Blacks. (Spelman, 1988: 12; Quoted by Lugones, 2003: 157)

By grounding an externalised and self-referential mode of perception in anti-Black racism in the United States, Lugones argues that such mode of perception "lacks reciprocity in its logic," and thus, "robs the seen of a separate identity" (Lugones, 2003: 157). In this case, "the white person is the original, the Black person just an image not independent from the seer" (Lugones, 2003: 157).

Returning to Maturana's formulation of a just society *made for and by observers*, then, to "see all human beings as equivalent to oneself, and to love them" (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx) is conditioned by the familiarity of *human beings*, with myself as reference. Thus, to take my being an autonomous externalised observer as reference in relation to which I *accept every human being as not dispensable*, is to dismiss all contexts and conditions that might lead someone to *surrender their individuality and autonomy*—including the contexts and conditions that allow me to safeguard my (fictional) autonomy (Lugones, 2003: 210, 211). As such, an externalised perspective underlies a dismissal of changes that might enable more people to safeguard their boundaries if such changes overstep the boundaries I have set to myself according to a fiction of individuated agency; a fiction that conceals the structuring of collective relations according to a mode of organisation that makes such fictional agency liveable.

In sum, the tolerance of such an *anarchist society* of observers is not much higher than that of the established order from which observers distance themselves. Consequently, an externalised mode of knowing as a condition for an anarchist or liberal society becomes itself a term of a specific mode of organisation that needs to be conserved by the structuring of social relations; transforming anarchist and liberal intentions into conservative organisational

systems. Put differently, the *metadomain of descriptions* as the (abstract) site of objective assessment of social systems and structures becomes a medium within which autopoiesis can emerge. This, I argue, is the functioning of a second order autopoietic system as revealed by the phenomenological study of smoking breaks. That is a self-reproducing structure produced through the institution of a feedback loop between an externalised perspective and a situation to which an observer is fictionally external; a closed loop that makes self-evident already established patterns and meanings by isolating them from situated and embodied conditions based on the fictional premise of the autonomy of an externalised observer. Accordingly, in the following section I return to Wynter's argument on the externalised position of an objective observer not enabling an objective gaze, but rather, enabling an objectifying gaze that conceals the collective, relational, and enacted patterns that reproduce the logics of an overarching social order.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined an analytical framework inspired by Frantz Fanon's sociodiagnostics, by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's notion of autopoiesis, and by Sylvia Wynter's application of autopoiesis to the social domain. Through this outline, I highlighted the philosophical dilemma that arises when studying the autopoietic functioning of social systems, namely that the observation of autopoiesis necessitates a point of view external to the observed system, while at the same time, a human observer cannot be fully external to the social systems they observe. For Maturana, such an externalised perspective prevents an observer from formulating conclusions that pertain to the situated lived experience of a social system—the domain of interactions of a system's components—and its systems of meaning. However, this externalised mode of knowing allows an observer to “operate as external to the society [they] integrate” (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxix), which in turn creates the possibility to assess their alignment to their social environment.

By drawing from Wynter's notion of the sociogenic principle, I argued that while such an externalised mode of knowledge makes possible a study of the organisation and structures that realise a unified system, it cannot take into account the cognitive, epistemological, aesthetic, and psycho-affective closure that contains the variation of social structure within the limit set by a specific mode of organisation and to which an externalised observer

continues to be bound. Accordingly, following Wynter's theorisation of Fanon's methods of psychosocial studies, I proposed that in order to reveal the patterns that reproduce already established relational structures, a study of social systems must unfold through positionalities embedded within the human experience of such systems; specifically, an understanding of the systemic auto-institution of social formations is revealed by questioning the self-evident terms of being within a particular social order. Through such a framework, an externalised mode of knowing is one aspect of the constitution of narrative, enacted, and relational, patterns that reproduce the structuring of social interactions according to an already established mode of organisation.

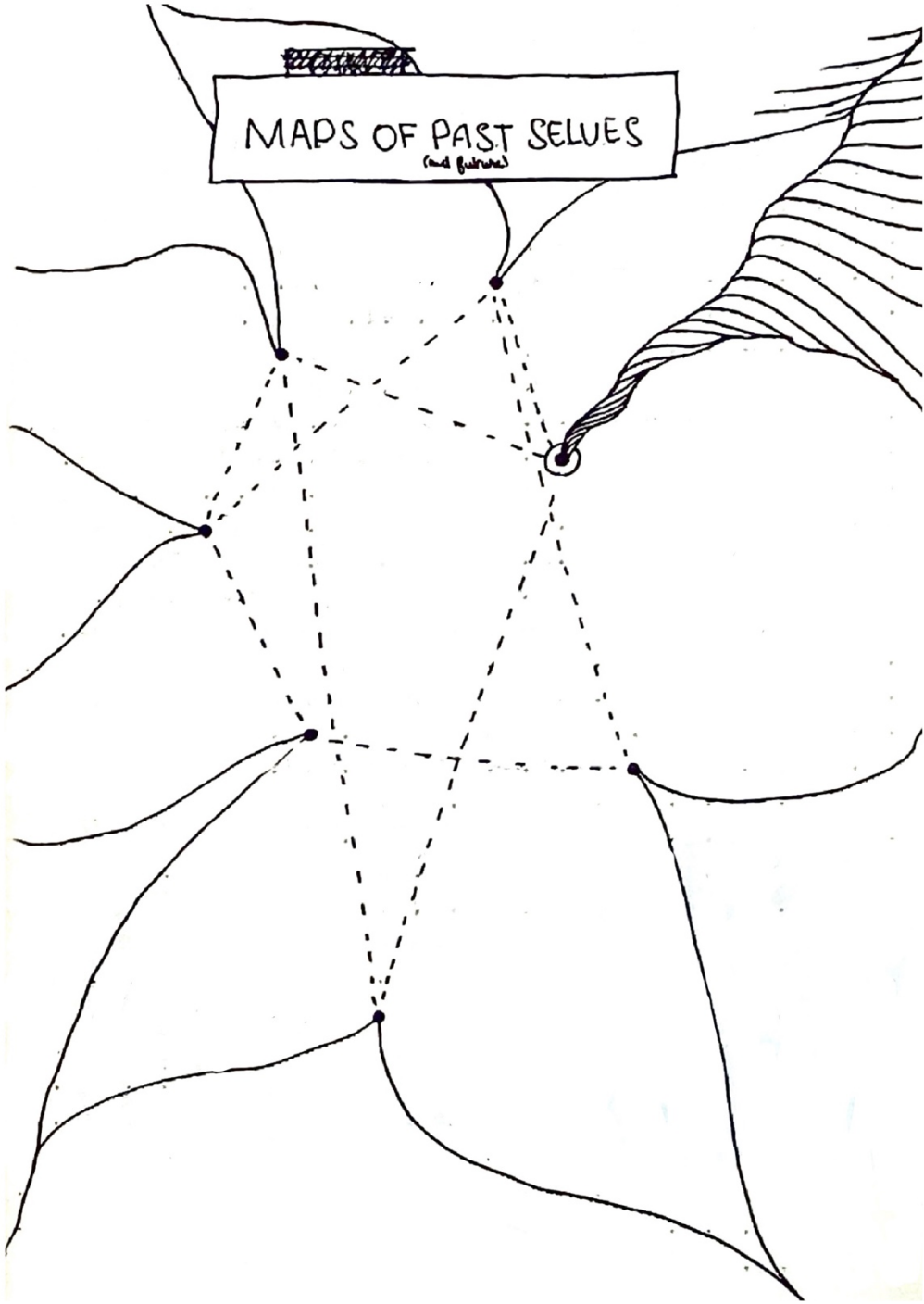
In summary, this chapter considered methods through which the functioning of enclosed social systems can be understood in terms of autopoiesis in relation to different epistemological approaches. I evoked Maturana's approach to understanding auto-instituting social systems and his guiding argument on the fundamental role of an externalised mode of knowing in the realisation of just social organisations (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx). I drew from Wynter's application of autopoiesis to a social domain in order to argue that an externalised mode of knowing does not secure social justice; rather, by taking the emergence of psycho-affective closures to be a condition of advanced forms of cooperation, an externalised perspective is revealed to be necessary for the imposition, enforcement, and reproduction of a normative episteme/aestheteme (Wynter, 2015: 211). Accordingly, following Wynter, I argued that modes of knowing and of knowledge production not grounded in the collective lived experience of the systemic functioning of a social order cannot reveal the collectively enacted patterns that realise the reproduction of that order and its organisational logic. Building on Fanon's approach to questioning self-evidence as a property of the terms according to which we are socialised to enact and experience a particular kind/genre of being human—as theorised by Wynter (Wynter, 2015: 211)—I argued that the psycho-affective closure that maintains a specific social order is revealed in a meta-analysis of narrative formulations. Specifically, I argued that processes through which a social order is automatically reproduced are revealed in an analysis of narrative formulations as tied to systematically enacted patterns that realise such order and the regulatory practices that limit the human experience to a range of possibility within which such order is self-evident.

Based on these arguments and on the sociogenic methodology elaborated thus far, I explored situations within which the psycho-affective closure around categories of race, gender, and sexuality that maintain a modern mode of organisation, become apparent. In doing so, I reiterated Wynter's argument on autopoiesis within a modernised social domain not conserving the adaptive advantage of a culture-specific sociality in relation to a situated context. Rather, Modern autopoiesis conserves the adaptive advantage of culture-specific socialities in relation to modernised context fragmented into bio-scientific categories of race and gender (Wynter, 2013: 59). The result is a psycho-affective closure that flattens difference and variability to predetermined meanings that contain relational possibilities within a range of variation set by the expression of the modern organisational logic in recurrent "normal" experiences. In the following chapters, I will refer to the mode of understanding defined by such a closure as an *objectifying subjectivity*. I do so in order to focus on the terms of intersubjective experience set by a modern visual phenomenology that allows a subject to interact with unfamiliar forms without becoming familiar with them, based on meanings already familiar to a subject as externalised observer.

Further, I developed the notion of the brain-psyche; a conceptual nexus of theories of significance that move beyond the mind/body dichotomy of the modern colonial onto-epistemology. From here, I elaborated a phenomenological analysis of smoking breaks to theories the ways in which self-evidence is coded by recurrently enacted patterns. I made a distinction between the adaptive auto-institution of psycho-affective closures—as in the case of recurrent sessions of writing—and a systematic institution of psycho-affective closures—as in the case of smoking breaks. I argued that the difference between these two processes lies in the recurrent act of smoking structuring relational patterns within different levels of organisation simultaneously. Namely, by operating on different levels simultaneously—relational adaptation on the level of the body as a unity, and bio-chemical adaptation on the level of the internal systems of the body—a causal relation between these different levels is established. My getting used to sucking on a burning stick of dried herbs—due to the recurrent and continuous exposure of the constituents of my body to a specific chemical, introduced through the repetition of the act of smoking—is simultaneously the getting used of some of my organs to the flow of nicotine through them. In this way, the process of becoming adapted to a specific enacted pattern is reinforced by my organs becoming adapted to the particular chemical stimulants introduced to the internal systems of my body through my repeated enaction of smoking breaks. Accordingly, the establishment of causal relations

between different systemic levels and social enclosures is realised in the institution of autopoiesis that operates simultaneously on multiple levels of organisation. The result is a double coding of the terms of my phenomenological experience on two levels: on the level of phenomenological experience as realised by the repetition of enacted patterns, and on the biochemical level that inform “qualitative mental states, order[s] of consciousness and mode[s] of subjective experience” (Wynter, 2013: 54). Put differently, the recurrent act of smoking becomes a filter to a certain set of virtual possibilities. Similarly, the modern order is instituted on the level of the unity of the body as an individuated component, and on the level of (symbolic) social unities constituted by bodies as components. Thus, the modern order creates the conditions for all levels of social systems to become structured (or structural) according to the modern logic of organisation. In this sense, I argued that the reproduction of the modern structuring of social relations is similar to the functioning of pathological subjective patterns; it is a process of reproduction through the desynchronisation of phenomenological experience from situated relational patterns. However, modernisation/colonisation is neither experienced nor understood as a pathology because its systemic transgenerational institution does not realise it as a phenomenal deviation from a culture-specific normality. Rather, it is realised through individuating bureaucratic rituals as a new normality; as will be discussed in the following chapter, a normality dependent on modern/colonial bureaucracies, existing alongside culture-specific norms, but understood as a “universal/objective normality”; as an overarching human order.

Chapter 2: The Eugenic Reproduction of the Modern Order



In the first chapter I developed a phenomenological analytical framework inspired by the sociogenic principle as theorised by Sylvia Wynter, then, I expanded on the functioning of this methodology by applying it to the difference between Maturana's and Wynter's notions of autopoiesis within a social domain. In this chapter, building on Fanon's theorisation of self-alienation in racialised and non-normative bodies, I focus on the processes through which an onto-epistemology informs modes of social organisation that realise particular modes of being. To that end, the following is an inquiry into the transgenerational coding of forms of intimacy, of practices of social regulation, and of systems of meaning, according to a racialised, heteronormative, and patriarchal social order, on the level of intersubjective relations. I study the ways in which modern infrastructures inform the terms of phenomenological experience within modernised social environments. In doing so, I explore how the contemporary and modern/capitalist mode of social organisation structures intersubjective relations, and how such structuring limit the possibility of imagining and realising modes of being not dependent on colonial infrastructures. In sum, the studies developed in this chapter explore the modern systemic coding of what is considered as familiar according to racial and gendered categories (Wynter, 2015: 198).

In this chapter I explore the autopoiesis (autonomous constitution-reproduction) of the modern order from the perspective of a situated collective, settled in a specific territory. I consider the processes through which modern organisation is instituted within colonised geographies, and its implications on situated relational patterns within colonised populations. That is, I reflect on the implications of a mode of social organisation within which the origin stories (Wynter, 2015: 199) of a community and its moral and political laws are (re)defined outside of situated collective dynamics. These studies of the functioning of the modern order pave the way towards outlining a definition of the modern organisational logic that draws connections between globalised modern infrastructures, situated intersubjective dynamics and

the systemic re-emergence of social violence and social domination. In other words, by exploring the structuring of social relations within collectives that maintain a transgenerational continuity within a specific territory in a modernised context, I analyse the connection between the modern mode of organisation and the (re)emergence of territorial projects of domination.

By questioning the formation of the nation of Lebanon and stories that narrate defining aspects of this history, I argue that the globalised network of colonially instituted national bureaucracies acts as an interface between the social domain of situated relationalities and a metadomain of symbolic social unities. Specifically, I argue that the systemic structuring of intersubjective relations through bureaucratic interventions creates the possibility for individuated lines of development and for imaginaries grounded in systematically maintained bureaucratic infrastructures, rather than in situated, collectively formed structures. In doing so, I argue that bureaucratic systems—as a fundamental technology to the modern mode of organisation—realise the organisational logic of the modern order and its functioning as a medium within which the autopoiesis of situated collectives can be configured. Thus, I theorise bureaucratic systems—alongside other technologies made possible by the systemic structuring of intersubjective relations—as enabling modern social formations organised around specific economic functions to act as both a metadomain of observation and a medium in relation to situated social environments.

In order to question the ways in which the modern mode of organisation structures local systems of meanings, I develop an auto-ethnographic analysis of the regularities of my natal village. Based on such an analysis, I argue that within a modernised social environment, local social dynamics and the origin stories that give them meaning are structured by a system of production that fragments modes of material provision into individuated professionalised jobs, which produce a mode of being articulated in epistemes and aesthetemes coupled with regulatory practices that contain the human experience within functional modern categories and their colonial infrastructures. Accordingly, I develop an understanding of the modern mode of social organisation as being dependent on a mode of phenomenological experience that excludes the possibility of history deviating from what was instructed by colonial bureaucracies, and from narratives of origin formulated in relation to national unities, thus creating a global order that excludes trajectories of development that do not uphold the adaptive advantage of Western/European colonial projects.

The Systemic Alienation of a Modernised Phenomenal Domain

In order to explore the ways in which a modernised social system institutes a second order autopoiesis within a social domain, I begin by applying the phenomenological tradition of discussing the surface on which writing unfolds (i.e. Husserl's table) (Husserl, 1969: 106; Ahmed, 2006: 35).; I will take my laptop as the object of study. However, here I won't think of the writing process, rather, I consider the possible ways my laptop can be transported from one geography to another, in this case from the Netherlands to Iceland. The following analysis is inspired by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's philosophical meditations on the modern science of logistics and its origin in the Transatlantic slave trade (Harney and Moten: 2013: 92); an inspiration that informs a focus on the possibilities through which the intention of moving my laptop from the Netherlands to Iceland can be realised. Through this focus, I reflect on the ways in which the modern mode of social organisation unsettles the causal correlation between situated and collective negotiations of living conditions and the structuring of social relations within a collective; making possible the configuration of situated intersubjective relations from a metadomain of ethnic/racial unities.

If I wanted to move my laptop from the living room to the kitchen, I would pick it up and carry it from the living room through the hallway to the kitchen; movement in physical space takes time. Equivalently, if I close my eyes and imagine the same laptop, I can imagine it in the living room, and the next moment I can imagine it cruising through the depth of space or in Iceland in the living room of the apartment where I used to live; all the while, I am still sitting in my living room in the Netherlands. The realisation of my imagination of my laptop in Iceland is tied to a temporality limited by physical movement: by my ability to travel to Iceland, or by that of a friend willing to take it with them. However, modern development makes it possible to employ a bureaucratic structure specialised in logistics which realises my imagination while I am still in the same place without moving myself and without negotiating with a friend that might be going there; that is, I can mail my laptop. If I do so, my laptop being in Iceland becomes part of the relational organisation that defines the identity of a bureaucratic structure as a mail carrier. Then, the movement of my laptop from the Netherlands to Iceland becomes part of the internal dynamics of the self-enclosed system of a mail carrier; a social formation instituted around the function of transporting objects; a fundamental function within the global bureaucratic networks of modernity (Harney & Moten, 2021: 57).

To reformulate this observation through the framework of a study of autopoietic systems, we need to return to Varela's reservation on thinking the social in terms of autopoiesis, which, as John Protevi argues, is premised on understanding autopoietic enactment as being concerned with *synchronic emergence* (Protevi, 2009: 95): a system whose phenomenal domain is preoccupied with the conservation and reproduction of the same relational structure, generating emergent forms on a different level and within a different phenomenal domain. Such a mode of emergence is contrasted with a *diachronic mode*, enacted as the production of forms within the same phenomenal domain by undoing present structures, this undoing being the formation of new structures (Sartenaer, 2015: 4).

This distinction can shed light on the dynamics of functional social enclosures managed by a bureaucratic system. More precisely, I argue that the structuring of social relations according to economic function decouples the phenomenal domain of the people that enact them from what their enactment realises. In the case of my imagination of my laptop in Iceland, the realisation of this imagination without engaging bureaucratic systems is dependent on me leaving what I am doing and making the plans necessary to get to Iceland, to leave my daily rhythms and to go through with these plans. In contrast, the people that realise this idea as part of the functioning of a functional social unit do not care about my idea, my laptop and my philosophical wanderings; they do so as part of their job. My laptop, just as thousands of other objects mailed from the Netherlands to Iceland, is irrelevant for the people delivering them, as the delivery of such objects is realised as the result of employees maintaining their employment as their means to provision their material needs. The sending of my laptop from the Netherlands to Iceland becomes a part of the power dynamics that maintain the organisation of a logistical institution and the enclosure of its phenomenal domain. For an employee of a logistical organisation, the sustenance of their livelihood is conditioned by a series of managers that maintain the functioning of an organisation by structuring the lives and relations of the people that effectuate the labour necessary to maintain the identity/organisation of an institution (or instituted unity); an identity—and structures of social relations—determined by the relation of the institution as unity with the other functional institutions that contribute to the realisation of the bureaucratic network of a globalised modern order.

In effect, for my laptop to be moved I pay money that I got for contributing to an academic organisation that structures my days; my laptop is then moved by people employed by the

various logistical organisations that are involved in delivering a package from the Netherlands to Iceland, and whose working days are structured by the bureaucratic order of an organisation that provide enfranchisement in exchange for working hours that could otherwise be invested in situated and collective modes of living. Put differently, from a systemic perspective, we get paid for work we do within enclosed organisations to pay other enclosed functional systems whose identity is defined by the realisation of specific needs and desires, making needs and desires extractable by compromising the possibility of their satisfaction through situated, collective, and relational means.

Seen in this way, networked bureaucratic systems act as interfaces that allow the institution of autopoiesis on multiple levels (an interface between individuated subjects and organisations) that allow a synchronisation of causality between the different levels of a system. This establishment of causal correlations between disparate systemic levels makes possible and is made possible by the definition of a specific range within which patterns of social relations can vary. From this perspective, bureaucratic systems are a technology that enables the configuration of the intersubjective domain of experience from a metadomain alienated from intersubjective dynamics; instituting a second order autopoietic system.

The organisation of a second order autopoiesis can be summarised as follows: social autopoiesis happens when recurrent patterns are formalised in narratives that inform regulatory practices. When this process unfolds within a collective situated in a particular territory, autopoiesis secures the adaptive advantage of such collective as it survives within a particular geography. However, when this process unfolds within individuated social structures, autopoiesis secures the conditions for the reproduction of established structures despite of changing situated conditions. The alienation from changing situated conditions and their embodied and collective experience necessary for such conservative order becomes possible through the mediation between experience and qualification from the perspective of an externalised objective meta-domain.

To expand the understanding of the implications of the functioning of the modern order as a second order autopoietic system, I will turn to Maturana's theorisation of the process through which an autopoietic system reproduces itself while conserving its organisation.

The Structural Reproduction of Autopoietic Systems

Based on an understanding of autopoietic systems as characterised by a mode of organisation that constitutes a system while being at the same time the realisation of the reproduction of the system, Humberto Maturana argues that the history of an enclosed system starts with reproduction. He explains:

[...] the history of living systems begins with reproduction when relational conditions take place in the autopoietic systems and the molecular space such that the autopoietic system undergoes a spontaneous division which results in the conservation of autopoiesis in the resulting fragments, together with the conservation of the relation with the medium in which their autopoiesis can be conserved. I call this process of reproduction [...] systemic reproduction [...]. If systemic reproduction begins to be repeated in a succession of generations, a lineage arises as a reproductive succession of living systems defined by the reproductive conservation of autopoiesis, and the conditions of the medium in which autopoiesis can be realized, while the form of realization of autopoiesis and of the conditions of the medium are open to change. (Maturana, 2002: 18-19)

According to Maturana, “biological phenomena take place in a dynamics that occurs in the present without any operational relation to what we call the past or the future” (Maturana, 2002: 9). Meaning that interactions between components in the present have no history. The history of an enclosed system constituted by the recurrent interactions of components emerges when the system “undergoes a spontaneous division which results in the conservation of autopoiesis in the resulting fragments” (Maturana, 2002: 18-19), while simultaneously conserving the relation of the overarching system (as a unity) to its medium. Then, the sustenance of dynamics occurring in the present—*without any relation to the past or the future*—within such divisions of an enclosed system, become dependent on relational structures compatible with the organisation of the overarching system as “the past” that gave rise to these present divisions, and whose conservation inform a conceivable future. Thus, the history of an enclosed system emerges from its reproductive division as observed from a perspective external to the system, since “past and future are explanatory notions introduced by the observer” (Maturana, 2002: 9) that perceives the system as a unified entity. Accordingly, such a history is expressed within the phenomenal domain of (biological) components as limits on changes in structures of relations occurring in the present, determined by the relation of the overarching system to its medium as a past that must be sustained in order for autopoiesis to be conserved and for the identity of the system to be maintained. Thus, history emerges within an enclosed system constituted by relations occurring in the present (with no reference to the past or the future), when relational

conditions lead to the conservation of autopoiesis requiring the spontaneous division of the system, simply put, history starts when a mode of organisation is maintained along multiple systemic generations.

Inspired by Maturana's understanding of the history of living autopoietic systems as being the result of generational variations, I study the systemic alignment of situated intersubjective relations to a modern logic of production. I do so by examining an enclosed context that enables a focus on generational transformations. I isolate these trans-generational processes by studying their functioning within the enclosure of a shared house, a communal environment where the collective is not based on familial generational continuities nor on a productive function. The particular house in which I live, and whose dynamics I analyse, is a social housing establishment, rented out by a housing corporation. For the purposes of this analysis, I focus on relations within the house, and not on our (the tenants') relation to the housing corporation. This is possible because in this particular case, the house is managed by the community of tenants without the interference of the housing corporation.⁵ Because the predetermined internal organisation of this particular context does not automatically structure its collective according to a particular hierarchy (as in the case of a functional or a familial generational social formation), it enables a study of the emergence of hierarchical power dynamics within the generational variations of structures of relations of an enclosed social context. Such a study informs a critic of the modern mode of social organisation and the exclusory logic that maintains it as expressed on an intersubjective level. On this basis, I argue that liberal ideologies and fictions of individual autonomy, when expressed in modes of management understood as democratic, reproduce the exclusory colonial logic that justifies and normalises such mode of organisation.

This analysis begins with a reflection on the power dynamics that are at play in the process of applying to rent a room in a shared house and in the selection process that follows. I reflect on how such a process informs the organisation of a shared house as a unity and the structure of relations between the constituents of that unity. Following Maturana and Varela's understanding of the systemic reproduction of an autopoietic enclosure through generational

⁵ In Dutch, "woongroep" is a specific form of social housing where a collective of tenants is allowed to manage and maintain a house by taking on responsibilities such as maintaining shared spaces, gardens, etc., resulting in lower rents. This type of social housing is a legacy of the large-scale squatting movement that was active in the Netherlands from the 1970's and until the early 1990's.

structural variations within parameters set by the overarching organisation of its system, I take a generation within the enclosed social system of a shared house to be marked by the moving out of one of the tenants and the moving in of a new one: the adaptation of the structure of relations between tenants to the patterns of a new tenant marks a new generation of power dynamics and relational structures within the context of the house. Based on this premise, I argue that the maintenance of power and the social organisation that reproduced established power within a situated enclosure that emerges from recurrent and continuous interactions of a collective, creates the conditions for the reinforcement of power dynamics configured by the overarching organisational logic of the modern order. Further, I argue that within social systems in which the dynamics of a situated collective are structured by a modern logic of production and rhythms of functional social formations, political power, its conservation, and its accumulation are realised by the enactment of an alignment with a modern organisational logic.

The Automatic Emergence of Management Within Modern Social Enclosures

Before I left Lebanon, I had never lived in a shared house with people I do not already know from other contexts. While looking for a place to live when I first arrived in the Netherlands, I attended interviews with tenants of shared houses looking for roommates. As an applicant to share their living space, the tenants would show me around their place and explain how they organised communal spaces and what they expected from new roommates. This process felt strange to me, especially as I had just arrived in the Netherlands as a student, during the onset of a housing crisis. In such a context, I could never imagine showing up to these interviews as myself; with every rejected application I became trained to perform what is expected of me in order to not lose the rare opportunity of finding a place to live. In such a case, within the planned interaction of a room viewing, tenants narrate an (often theoretical) order in reaction to the ways they assume a potential tenant might disrupt their patterns, while applicants perform a reaction to such order informed by assumptions on what the implied concerns of tenants that could lead an applicant to not be selected might be.

Now that I have been living in a house shared with sixteen other people, on and off for a few years, I've had to take part in a similar selection process multiple times. After being on the other side of this selection process, I understood that the strange feeling I had about this process when I first arrived is not separate from the systemic normative violence that

maintaining modern social enclosures, and which I internalised as a performance/mask I felt I had to enact when being interviewed.

In a historical moment when there is not enough affordable housing for people that need it, maintaining the familiar dynamics of a shared house necessitates that the interviewers overlook the significance of a decision on who gets to rent a room and who does not, on the applicants' lives. On the side of interviewers, overlooking the significance of the decision we have to take is made easier by an organisational framework inspired by the political systems of the modern order: a democratic system of selecting tenants where each tenant has one vote on who is selected; the final decision is not the decision of any particular individual but the decision of the house as a unity. This framework through which tenants choose a housemate compatible with the dynamics of their shared house, and for the people searching to find a place compatible with their rhythms and patterns during a housing crisis, is revealed to be the site of intersections of complex power dynamics, experienced in the domain of interactions within a shared house during a housing crisis; power dynamics that reflect the disproportional effects of such a crisis on different people according to how they fit in the categories of a modernised social domain.

To get a better understanding of the ways in which the power dynamic configured by the racial, gendered, and colonial organisation of the modern order are reproduced in the “democratic” process of selecting new tenants, I will reflect on the ways the power dynamics established by the normal functioning of a collective are conserved along multiple generations. Within a shared house, when a housemate moves out, the collective regularities that were transformed to make space for their patterns can be transformed by the patterns of the others that remained. After living in a shared house for a few years, my daily rhythms and practices have transformed to align with the regularities that were established before I moved in. At the same time, I participated in shaping these regularities according to my rhythms by negotiating the systems that synchronise the rhythms of all housemates to accommodate my needs and desires. When not in conflict with the needs and desires of other housemates, my desires become part of the systems of the house. The tenants that remain along multiple generations shape this structuring of relations within the house; we become the managers of the continuity of the house as a unit.

The continuity of the house—its organisation—that my housemates and I maintain, is made of regularities shaped around each of our patterns and their interactions. For example, with

most people on our floor being busy with their jobs, we found it hard to maintain the cleanliness of our kitchen. To mediate this common problem, we created a cleaning schedule; in this way our personal patterns are structured by a system that aims to guarantee that the space we share is taken care of collectively. Thus, our collectively negotiated patterns are formalised in a pseudo-bureaucracy instituted in a WhatsApp group and monthly schedules hung on the fridge, presented to new tenants as the normal, normative, and perhaps moral functioning of the house as a unity; as ‘how we do things around here.’ Our patterns of behaviour, our beliefs, and the patterns of social relations we enact become a defining factor of the organisation of the house.

The emergence of the house as a unity forms a connection between the particular point of view generated from being part of the enclosed system of the house and of power within this enclosure; a connection realised in a managerial role enacted by the shaping of the structure of relations within the house in alignment with the desires/needs of the tenants as managers. This managerial subjectivity is one we enact while we interview potential tenants and while we show a new housemate around until they get a feel of the dynamics of the house and their place within them. Through the selection process, only tenants that fit within and/or submit to the established order of the house can be voted in, while others, that are judged by the tenants/managers as likely to disrupt or unsettle the established order, are excluded. This process of selection, then, is enacted through a visual phenomenology that reduces the people we interview to categories compatible with the already established dynamics within the enclosure of the house. This enclosed system of regularities formalised in a mode of organisation that privileges tenants that lived in the house the longest, constitutes the identity of the house as a social and political unity. It is this mode of organisation that needs to be reproduced in every generation: in every new tenant.

A new tenant is not a manager in this enclosed system because the system does not reproduce their rhythms as part of the order of the house, and because their own rhythms are not necessarily the same as the patterns that reproduce the established organisation of the house. From the position of being a new tenant, I negotiated a space for myself within the house and its order. What I negotiated are my rights within the established order of the house and within the boundaries set by its mode of organisation as it is shaped by the tenants that lived there already. As Mijke van der Drift argues, “rights open a space for some reshaping of relations; they do not lead to foundational change, because they retain the logic of the overarching

structure” (van der Drift, 2021: 103). When a new tenant moves in, the power dynamics that emerge from their interaction with the already established order within the house is then expressed in a process of synchronisation during which the new tenants’ practices, patterns, and regularities are transformed to accommodate the structure of relations within the house. Such synchronisation outlines a range of negotiable rights, determined by the established normative functioning of the house whose internalisation allows a new tenant to become part of the normative unity of the house; to become a manager of the continuity of “the house” as a unity. This synchronisation of the patterns enacted by tenants within the house to the pre-determined structures of relations that secure the continuity of “the house” as a unity is simultaneously a configuration of a limited range of structural variation that maintain that continuity. New tenants become managers when a few housemates have moved away and they have lived in the house long enough so that the variation in the order of the house they negotiated can be communicated to new tenants as a given, as part of the established order of the house: that is, when they can perceive others as simple unities in relation to the composite unity of the house which they now “know” in comparison to newer tenants.

Van der Drift theorises similar intersubjective dynamics in the wider context of social formations organised around a specific function within the capitalist market: a mode of organisation enabled and reproduced by undoing the separation between epistemology and ethics (van der Drift, 2021: 100). Functional enclosures create enclosed social domains in which the power of managers is presupposed within an enclosed generational unfolding (van der Drift, 2021: 109). The self-enclosure of social formations organised around a specific function is maintained by a “deliberate contraction of perception by means of [...] institutional alignment” (van der Drift, 2021: 100). Van Drift draws from Sylvia Wynter’s *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom* to reflect on the reformulation of the classical Greek polis to reward class aspiration:

Managerial functionality does not rest on discipline but on self-control. Sylvia Wynter points to the origin of this idea in emergent colonial states that used a reworked idea of the classical polis to reward class aspiration by linking individual and social “interests” and self-understanding. [...] By applying an Aristotelian logic that links the particular and the general the separation of ethics and epistemology was undone. The image of the Greek city was used to usher the ruling classes in Europe around the idea that one’s personal interest could only be realized as part of the interest of the state. (van der Drift, 2021: 100)

Van der Drift argues that the containment of the possibilities of life in self-enclosed socialities is realised through alignment and not discipline; that is, through the alignment of a self-disciplined managerial class that enacts a contraction of perception which enables the reproduction of a social enclosure and of its normative functioning. She argues that “the unidirectional knowledge that the institution produces, shields insight into counter-epistemologies. These are out of sight of the managerial classes, because they do not fit the geometry of power that upholds the idea of managerial superiority” (van der Drift, 2021: 99). From such a perspective, managers are observers of others through a visual phenomenology that creates in others an alienated mode of self-perception as they try to see themselves through the predetermined meanings they are seen through. In such a context, the reproduction of self-alienation in those perceived by a self-alienated subjectivity creates the condition for management to be interpreted as a need for self-discipline (van der Drift, 2021: 102), and as a need to become aligned to what is self-evident within a situated and enclosed social context.

Being a manager in this sense is about interacting with the world, sensing it, and making sense of it through pre-determined meanings that presuppose the established dynamics and structures of relations that conserve the adaptive advantage of a particular mode of being within a situated social enclosure. The psycho-affective closure that results from this contraction of perception enables a mode of management that allows a variation of the structure of social relations contained within a range of variation that conserves the enclosure of a functional social formation, its organisation, and the relation of its totality to a modernised social domain as a medium that sustains the conditions of its auto-institution.

From such a perspective, the accumulation and maintenance of a manager’s power throughout multiple generations of an enclosed social system is the result of the naturalisation of the rhythms, desires, and practices of manager/subjects within an enclosed social context as presuppositions that outline an ethical mode of comportment and understanding. Thus, collective negotiations and the situated redefinition of social structures are devalued in favour of the conservation of already established regularities.

In effect, in the context of a shared house, while we share a living space, the structure of relations within the house is not formed through collective negotiations: rather, this structure is formed in relation to the patterns of relation of tenants with other social enclosures. Specifically, the systematised preoccupation of tenants with the functional enclosures that

individuates them/us, minimises the possibility of the emergence of a situated structure of relations and a context-specific mode of management of that structure. The individuating order of functional enclosures extends individuation to the context of the house, as the collective is fragmented according to functional preoccupations and the patterns that each occupation entails. The result is an automatically determined mode of management of our shared house whose structure is not adaptively formed in relation to situated patterns and dynamics, but one adapted from preset modes of modern management; a pseudo-bureaucratic system that allows tenants/managers to modulate the structure of relations within the house without the commitment, complicity, and psycho-affective investment needed to develop situated structures of management. The vacuum of emergent situated significance that result from relations within the house being structured from outside of the relationalities that constitute its social unity, is filled with meanings predetermined by the overarching social environment within which the house sits.

Managerial power is not formed and maintained by an individual, nor within the enclosure of situated context; the subjectivity of a manager and their power is secured in an alignment with the normative functioning of a society and with the default collectivity of normative subjectivities as they encounter modes of being that unsettle normative patterns of relations and enact unfamiliar and non-self-evident modes of being. This is an enactment of ethicality coupled to a specific epistemology (van der Drift, 2021: 100); an ethicality determined by the needs and desires of subjects-managers that desire in alignment with modern structures of social relations. Within this system ethicality is a designation of a set of compartments that allow an individuated subject that has the power—who has accumulated value according to a particular social system’s system of values—to conserve their power.

For example, since “immigrant” does not imply a specific combination of normative organisations but only a difference with the established order of a particular locality, and “immigrant” does not imply a specific normative structure because an immigrant is always coupled to multiple normative organisations, then, for an immigrant moving into a shared house, the patterns of the house are a continuation of the systemic institution of self-discipline discussed in the earlier chapter through Fanon’s theory of epidermalization. This is an institution of an alienated self-perception in people whose being does not fit within the default mode of being of a society and is instead understood through the predetermined meanings of normative visual phenomenology of that society; a self-alienating ethicality.

Within such a context, racial differences become highlighted as individuals that act according to the predefined patterns of the overarching society enact a default mode of alignment to each other's patterns; self-evident patterns of relations that are not self-evident for people not socialised within the same society. This becomes a self-reinforcing system as such an (operationally) normative mode of being is enacted by the majority of tenants and applicants, and since an alignment to such a self-evident mode of being secures access to the enclosure of the house and to political power within the house. In this way, the process of selecting new tenants reflects the valuation of the self-evident patterns within a particular society; thus, normative structures of relations are reinforced within the house by new tenants aligned with the normative patterns already established in the house, which are themselves derived from the normative patterns of the overarching social context.

By applying preset managerial strategies to fill the relational gap created by the preoccupation with functional social environments, situated social enclosures become fragments of an overarching modern sociality, itself aligned with the overarching organisational logic of the modern order. Thus, I argue that such automatically and self-evidently emerging dynamics are the realisation of the reproduction of the modern order and its organisational logic. That the modern mode of social organisation—as structured by capitalist modes of production and representational politics—limits intersubjective possibilities to the reproduction of power dynamics that maintain the modern order throughout multiple generations of situated social enclosures. Such an argument suggests that understanding the functioning of an autopoietic system, and finding ways to undo the automatic reproduction of specific modes of social organisation necessitates an understanding of the overarching mode of organisation of the system as a medium that informs the organisation of its fragments. In addition, considering the modern order as second order autopoietic system necessitates an understanding of enclosed socialities as mediums fragmented into individuated subjectivities.

Through the understanding of the brain-psyche coupling, I think of mediums as expressed within the phenomenal domains within which they appear as self-evident as systematically enacted relational patterns and as origin stories. Based on such an approach I theorise the medium of a social autopoietic system as an experiential link to the past as a *natal*: histories recorded in bodies and collective patterns that underly organisational formations, which in turn inform the production of culture specific histories as origin stories.

The Natal: Overarching Organisation as Medium

In the following I draw from Deleuze and Guattari's musical notion of *the refrain* (chorus)—as the marking of a territory in recurrent movements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 312)—in order to study the pre-conceptual constitution of origin stories (Wynter, 2015: 199) as the generational formation of self-evidence. I do so by approaching the formation of situated and cultural narratives not as a purely cognitive phenomenon but as a feedback loop between modes of cognition, patterns of affective relations, and sets of practices.

In the chapter “Of the Refrain” from *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop an understanding of *the refrain* as a pattern of movement or a motif that can be repeated in aesthetic articulations—i.e. in songs and rhythms—while such aesthetic articulations being themselves repetitions of movements informed by the particularities of a specific landscape (context/domain) within which these movements are repeated. Hence, they argue that a refrain “carries earth with it; it has a land (sometimes a spiritual land) as its concomitant; it has an essential relation to a Natal, a Native” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 312).

Inspired by the above, I understand *the natal* as being the social forms, spatial mappings, and practices that have been part of a person's awareness, with which they engaged, and which they enact for the longest duration relative to their lifetime. The constitution of the natal begins when a child is able to know with absolute certainty—that is, to accept a particular ordering of the world as absolute, without considering that things might be different in different places and in different times—and when they are dependent on older generations to provide such order. This is a relational and affective formation of space into a map outlined by power dynamics (Lugones, 2003: 24) that informs the alignment of emergent generations to a particular mode of being within their particular surroundings as it is realised in the practices and narratives of older generations. Following Wynter, I understand this map, or this coding of relations, to be realised in the narratives, opinions, and practices of subsistence and regulation of a particular social order (Wynter, 2015: 195), informing an answer to the questions of who-I-am and who-we-are (Wynter, 2015: 198). In this context, the natal as such is the pre-conceptual creation of an answer to the question of who-I-am compatible with the answer to the question of who-we-are, enunciated by older generations in the environment in which a person is brought up. Similarly, I think of systems as having a natal: a set of conditions that inform an adaptively advantageous organisational logic maintained throughout the structural reproduction of the system.

The natal, with its etymological reference to birth, highlights the temporal dimension of the spatial distribution of patterns of cognition, allowing the consideration of subjectivities and systems as generationally constituted. However, the natal, here, does not refer to birth as the beginning of life. Rather the natal refers to the collective patterns repeated in the context of birth and around its time. In order to make clear the philosophical significance of the distinction between the natal and birth, it will be helpful to consider how it defers from Hannah Arendt's notion of natality. Arendt thinks through natality as "the beginning of something anew" (Arendt, 1958/2018: 9), echoing her understanding of birth as the beginning of someone "who is a beginner himself" (Arendt, 1958/2018: 177); that is the beginning of someone that begins things anew. Put as such, Arendt's notion of natality outlines an understanding of a fundamental human freedom, in which being born is itself a reminder of the human ability to "acquire" new paths according to one's own initiative (Arendt, 1958/2018: 177).

This formulation can be contrasted with Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of the notion of the natal. They explain that "the natal is the innate but decoded; and it is the acquired but territorialised" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2003: 332). The natal, in this sense, distributes both the innate and the acquired in space, breaching the boundaries of an individuated thinking subject in order to explore patterns of cognition and behaviour as social, spatial, and temporal interactions. Accordingly, the natal as collectively and systematically enacted patterns refers to the always already established psycho-affective closure of the contexts within which each of us are born, or to restrictions on possible relations that inform the adaptive emergence of a systems. This contrasts with natality, which could be understood as referring to the potential disruption of such enclosures by someone new and the beginnings ushered by the beginning of a beginner. In this sense the natal does not refer to the creation of something anew—a new line of development—but the continuation of (already) enacted patterns in emergent generations, enabling a study of the transgenerational coding of emergent lines of development. As such, the natal implies a de-individuation of the understanding of birth by forgoing the newness of beginnings, to take account of collective patterns and their coding of new paths of development, and the development of new generations; to take account of the transgenerational coding of self-evidence that informs expressions of *natality* as theorised by Ardent.

The combination of the brain-psyche nexus developed earlier with the above notion of the natal will guide a reflection on the ways in which individuated intersubjectivities are reproduced through recurrent local dynamics; a reproductive process often experienced as an automatic transmission of how things are and how things must be, from one generation to another. Studying the institution of the natal of the brain-psyche as situated processes embedded in the functioning of the specific system within which it is formed, is to study situated and collectively enacted patterns as mediums that inform the emergence of individuated subjectivities. I argue that within a modernised context, such a study necessitates an investigation of the overarching mode of organisation as a medium that informs the emergence of social structures, which in turn informs the emergence of individuated subjectivities. Accordingly, the following section aims to disentangle the proprieties of the modern mode of organisation as the natal of modernised socialities.

The Modernisation of the Natal: Bureaucratic Management and Institutionalised Production

Based on the premise that the formation of the brain-psyche is a situated process embedded in the functioning of the specific system within which it is formed, my exploration of the natal and its role in the transgenerational reproduction of the modern order is grounded in my own natal context; a village in Mount Lebanon. This return to the locality of the village is done through a story of field trips I took while researching for this thesis. However, the following is not a report of the trip; the trip structures a series of recollections phrased with a focus on the ways in which the alignment of local modes of organisation of labour and resources to a modern organisational logic affects local systems of meanings. Accordingly, what follows is a philosophically informed narrative that unfolds according to a non-linear timeline, structured by my visit and unsettled by histories, memories, and recollections evoked during that trip, taking the text from one generation into another, in no particular order. Thus, the following is a survey of a specific natal environment within a modernised social context, followed, in its turn, by an investigation of the processes of its modernisation.

The aim of this survey is twofold: first, to reveal the transgenerational regularities that constitute the mode of being within the specific territories on the eastern shores of the

Mediterranean Sea, focusing of the territories of the nation of Lebanon, as well as on the ways in which the narratives that articulate these regularities are transformed through processes of modernisation. Second, to bring to the forefront the things that I understand and experience as self-evident, in relation to national formations, national histories, and situated social formations. Doing so will serve to guide the philosophical exploration of the remainder of this dissertation towards thinking of ways in which the self-evident fragmentation of space, and classification of peoples according to race, gender, sexuality, and ability, is reproduced within modernised socialities.

Notes on the Analysis of the Historical Narrative of the Nation of Lebanon

Ahead of the following analysis of the history of the nation of Lebanon and its situated formation and reproduction, it is important to note the difference between my use of the expressions “the nation of Lebanon” and “the territories of Lebanon”. I study events that are mainly centred around Mount Lebanon. Historically, “Mount Lebanon” referred to the westernmost mountain range along the centre of the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. Throughout the period of Ottoman rule, this mountain range gradually became a polity governed independently from its surroundings, starting with the establishment of the emirate of Mount Lebanon in 1523 (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 3). This area then became the core of modern Lebanon, to which Beirut, Tripoli, Akkar, the Beqaa, and Tyre were appended by the French mandate in order to increase the area of cultivatable land within the polity while at the same time conserving the balance of power between different religious sects (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 75) that share the land as well as the status of religious minorities in the wider context of the East of the Mediterranean. Today, while this mountain range is only a part of the territories of the nation of Lebanon, the history of the state continues to be mainly concerned with the history of Mount Lebanon and Beirut as the capital, while other areas continue to be marginal to the state’s history and its infrastructures. When I refer to territories that constitute the nation of Lebanon before its formation, to avoid subsuming the histories of Beirut, Tripoli, Akkar, the Beqaa valley, and Tyre into that of Mount Lebanon, I use the term “territories of Lebanon;” referring to the multiple territories that constitute the geographical enclosure of the nation of Lebanon.

This study is based on Mount Lebanon because my natal village sits to the north of its western slope; this grounding will enable a consideration of Lebanese national narratives in

relation to a wider colonial context by returning to the situated generational narratives projected onto the nation of Lebanon as a unity extending beyond the perceptual field of the local collective. Accordingly, this outlook is not meant to diminish the importance and urgency of revisiting the histories of the territories of Lebanon, the east of the Mediterranean, and the wider Arab region, yet, the limited scope of the following study aims to provide an entry point into a philosophical approach to historical formulations that aims to contribute to the development of methodologies of social and historical studies not based on national unities.

The stories I narrate and with which I grew up are made particular in relation to Lebanese national history by the specific perspective of a Maronite village in Mount Lebanon, and by my family's particular history. Both of my parents have roots and family in Maad (my natal village) but grew up elsewhere. My father's family lived in Palestine before the Nakba, while my mother's family lived in a city to the north, which was the site of intense violence between Christian militias and the army of the Syrian regime during the civil war of 1975-1990.⁶ This historicity that underlies the specific outlook on the historical narratives I grew up with rarely makes its way into daily conversations.

The political complexities folded within the historicity outlined above, which informed the way my parents experience the context in which I grew up, and which in turn informed my experience and the experience of my siblings of that context, is largely omitted from the stories we were told about who we are. The narratives of *who-we-are* (Wynter, 2015: 203) that me and my siblings were socialised to enact are the result of such historicity being filtered by the coalescence of the histories of the two sides of the family in the relationship of my parents, and the psycho-affective toll of the civil war in which that relationship developed. It is also filtered by the sociality of the village where my parents met, during the temporary return of their parents to their natal environment from different places.

I got to know my family's side of history while researching for my master's graduation project, which I worked on during the beginning of the 2019 uprising in Lebanon. The aim of that work was similar to the aim of this section; namely, to develop an understanding of the

⁶ The Syrian army and intelligence apparatus, commanded by the Assad regime, gradually took direct control of parts of Lebanon and most aspects of the Lebanese state starting from 1976 and until 2005 (Traboulsi, 2012: 203, 252)

complex social dynamics I am accustomed to in Lebanon, and how they relate to the different histories that I was/am exposed to when studying and learning, with and from, people from different places around the world. In my master's project I approached this intention through the medium of film. The film was titled "Leaving, Returning", thus naming a pattern that has shaped my life over the past years since I first left Lebanon. During preparations for the film, I recorded a conversation with my parents in which I asked them about their experience of the civil war. My grandmother on my father's side of the family had just passed away, and they happened to have some of her photo albums along with them. We poured a cup of coffee and started talking about the war; by the time we were pouring the second cup, we were passing photos between each other while they tried to remember who the people in my grandmother's photos were, and while telling the stories of the people they remembered, from time to time the conversation returned to the war that we had moved away from but which lingered as the bitterness of the first cup of coffee. Eventually, only a small part of the conversation made it into the final film that I produced, but the curiosities it triggered underlie much of this dissertation's explorations.

The Village

In 2016, while driving to my first job from the village to the nearby coastal city, my schedule aligned with an older person from the village waiting for a lift to his job. Jean Lutfullah works as a hydrologist but is known in the village for his interest in local stories and the poetry recited during their unfolding. At that point, I was working as a graphic designer and had no particular interest in village traditions. Lutfullah did not care about my lack of interest; after a few minutes of silence, without a prompt, he started narrating some stories he remembered.

Ahead of writing this dissertation I became interested to hear more of Lutfullah's stories, so I arranged a meeting through the proper village channels: by asking my father who's closer in age to Lutfullah to call him, after which Lutfullah invited us over for coffee. When we arrived, we were greeted by Nadia, his wife, who was drinking coffee with a neighbour. While going through the necessary questions about all members of both families with Nadia outside, Jean emerged from the house and invited us inside to the living room.

Nadia came in with us; she explained that she recently underwent a surgery, so she will not be able to take care of her hosting duties and make coffee. This is important because coffee

structures social visitations in the village: for example, in the context of a formal visit the host traditionally waits until after the aim of the visit is discussed to serve the coffee. The visit ends briefly after the coffee is drunk. A casual sitting follows a different coffee-structure: the coffee is served as soon as it can be made after the guests arrive and is drunk along the journey from conversation to conversation, with some sittings, dense with stories, requiring more than one pot (*rakwe*). Nadia assured us that her eldest son will take care of everything and keep the rhythm of our visit. She then excused herself to give us the space to discuss the “serious” matters of a visit made formal by the appointment taken ahead of time.

I had prepared some questions on the role of poetry within the community of the village; on why and when it was used and other questions on Lutfullah’s particular interest in poetry. Soon after we started our conversation, it became clear that my questions were out of place. The textured walls of stone of the living room in a traditional village house older than the nation that structures life within it, is not the place for a panel discussion in cultural studies. Lutfullah has no interest in analysis, but he would not miss a chance to tell a story.

While ruffling through the pages of my notebook to find inspiration for a question that would break the silence, my father, who came along to make sure that I do not get too comfortable expressing my political views to unwilling listeners, started asking questions himself. His questions were structured as a chain of memories populated by local references and the names of people from older generations that I did not recognise. “I remember a few verses from a poem that I heard from [this person or that], they mentioned that it was recited in a party organised as a farewell to [this person] ahead of his travels. If I am not mistaken it was your uncle that wrote it. Do you remember how it goes? I would love to hear the rest of it.” Such an evocation was enough for Lutfullah to start reciting the poem, and to remember when it was recited, who came together to write it, in what house, and in what room. This memory was enough to trigger another; enough to fill three hours, only structured by the generative interruptions of coffee, a serving of sweets, some prompts from my father, and the voice of Nadia echoing from another room, through the house, reminding Jean: “don’t forget to tell them about [so and so]!”.

Through the conversation Lutfullah answered all the questions that I had prepared, only gently guided by my father’s evocations. While I went to the meeting with questions saturated with the generalised overview of academia that outlines a theme, a place, and a date, those parameters did not evoke Lutfullah’s desire to tell his stories. His stories did not

fit within such a framework, since from the perspective of the village, the poetry, the events, and the encounters remembered poetically are part of the unfolding of local life that gives meaning to all frameworks within the village; they are formed in local relationalities and are told to evoke new ones.

In the stories of Lutfullah, and in the enactment of a formal visit to his family's house, there is a return to the past that shaped the current form of the village, and the meanings shared between its people, homes, and its land. This is not a story of a return to, nor an analysis of, the past; it is a return possible by reliving the past in the extended and warm welcome of Nadia and her detailed questions about the family, and in the smell of coffee in front of the door that invites the neighbour. It is a return to the hierarchies that structured this past with the rituals of a formal visit; it is a return to a living room in which poetry was written, and to a village formed by the discursive trans-generational exchanges of its community; and in a conversation interrupted by breaks that echo the rhythms and practices of care and subsistence of past generations. This temporal turn and the necessity to speak of people from generations that I did not recognise and practices that I know as memories even though I never experienced them, signals to a certain void in the present.

Unlike the silence that emerged during the visit due to the incompatibility of the language of my question with the nature of the stories that they were intended to evoke, this is a generational void/silence I experienced a few years back in the beginning of the car ride when Lutfullah and I drove to a nearby city. This was a void between generations speaking the same language, widened and reinforced by the modern structuring of life where each age group of a situated collective is preoccupied in a different self-enclosed functional context independent from the situated context we share, while generational continuities are contained within the boundaries of the nuclear family and its immediate surroundings. It is a silence enacted in the patriarchal distribution of the labour necessary for a formal visit that survives modernisation to become formalised as an aspect of a collective yet static identity; a silence that emerges when traditions of exchanging stories over coffee within different families and groups that constitute the community of the village, before heading to the fields in the morning, are displaced over multiple generations to the institutional context where each member of the community labours.

In the car, after pleasantries were exchanged, the silence invited a common ground found in a return to a past that we both share as an antecedent to the present moment. The visit to

Lutfullah's house was a continuation of this return to a past shared between generations increasingly individuated by the modern order and socialised to reproduce capital and its functional categories (Althusser, 1971/2006: 86). In this return, there are traces of a local process of auto-institution of a local identity, as this identity is transformed by the systemic structuring of a bureaucratic system that unsettles the complex and relational processes of subsistence, and the generation of transgenerational systems of meanings embedded in situated conditions.

I argue that the patterns of relation narrated in the paragraphs above are an articulation of what I referred to earlier in this chapter as *the natal*—a pre-established psycho-affective closure or restrictions on possible relations. Such narratives do not necessarily take semantic forms; when they do, such (natal) semantic forms would be dependent on experiences and memories, shared and distributed within shared contexts and along multiple generations. Thus, in the recurrence of such patterns and in the recurrent telling of their stories, I argue, the brain-psyche is formed following the “shape” of the complexities of a specific environment. The following section expands on this understanding of a situated and transgenerational constitution of the brain-psyche by exploring its unfolding within the context introduced above to then theorise the ways in which it is transformed by processes of modernisation/colonisation.

Non-linguistic Questions/Answers and the Systemic Alignment of Emergent Generations

By stumbling in between members of the community that surrounds a child; by touching, licking, and destroying things, by stumbling upon invisible rules enacted as regulatory practices, and by accumulating memories of these experiences, the plurality and multiplicity of life is iteratively formed into discrete abstractions compatible with their environment. The encounter of a child with such abstractions is part of the iterative constitution of their brain-psyche as discussed through the intersection of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the notion of the brain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 210) with Wynter's and Fanon's understanding of self-evidence as a property of the terms of a particular mode of being (Wynter, 2013: 57). I consider these encounters as part of a non-individuated affective inquisitiveness, and of strategies of making sense of an environment constructed and governed by older generations. Put differently, in the following, I explore the emergence of the brain-psyche as a web of associations and neural pathways (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:

210) within a situated collective, within which contact is maintained along multiple generations.

If trying to eat dirt and paint is a survey of what is and what is not enjoyable to eat, without prior assumptions, and if wandering everywhere without any concern for adult conventions is a survey of possible movements in space, then asking questions and being inquisitive can be understood as a survey of cognitive movements, of narratives, categories, opinions, beliefs, and intersections between them. To theorise the ways in which these disobedient inquisitive processes contribute to the formation of self-understanding grounded in a situated system of meanings, I will explore the wanderings through which a child surveys and makes sense of the world around them in relation to two sets of questions that illicit non-linguistic answers; first, questions that are answered without answers and sometimes without being asked; second, questions that are deemed as unanswerable or not worth answering.

The first set of these non-linguistic questions/answers—questions without answers and answers without questions—are felt in a living room where generations had gathered, in the affective undercurrent that orchestrates a common language through which a collective past is evoked, and in the memories imprinted on and within the bodies of a collective that reverberate between the walls that were witness to those memories or to their stories being told over generations; these are collective practices, rituals of telling stories, and the spaces that shaped, and are shaped, by those practices. These are answers without answers nor questions—ways of acting, ways of eating, dressing, looking and relating to others—expressed in the affect generated by the recurrent interactions of a collective, in memories that linger in stories from generation to another, and in the transformation of the environment by the recurrent patterns enacted within it. These answers are articulations of modes of being realised and sustained by situated practices; these are situated practices whose recurrence in the same space in between the same people and the same lineages make them significant in and by themselves.

In the locality of a village in Mount Lebanon, these answers are the remnants of the communal strategies of subsistence necessary for the production of silk: harvesting cocoons and processing threads; the labour of preserving and preparing food, baking bread, the provision of water from nearby sources; the labour of maintaining the infrastructure of the village—houses, passages, water ducts, etc.—that required significant effort without modern technologies, and which had to be done in self-organised communal actions; and the

traditions of resting on the side of a field while drinking coffee and of gathering while recovering from work around a meal while telling the stories of members of the community and their ancestors. These are practices, most of which were carried out, or made possible, by the collective labour of women and children that did not join the work in the fields to instead prepare food, drinking water, and coffee for those who do.

These enacted questions/answers generate a relational sense articulated in enacted patterns that regulate the behaviours of children according to the terms of local encounters and interconnections. This relational generative sense is articulated through a system of meanings specific to the autopoietic enclosure of a situated social system. This is a system of meanings whose scope is informed by the perceptual field of the members of the community that are entangled in the spaces of the locality and with them. This set of non-linguistic questions/answers touches on the defining aspects of the particularity of a collective; the practices and narratives that differentiate a collective from others, articulated in a situated historicity nestled in assemblies and spaces of assembly, within and around which a local system of meanings is developed. Through this affective instruction, the interactions of a child with spaces and practices are submitted to the moral and political laws that govern the patterns of older generations as pre-linguistic answers to questions enacted in inquisitive and transgressive wanderings in different domains. By doing so, and through their pre-conceptual articulation, these laws become a constitutive and self-evident aspect of younger generations. As such, the self-understanding of a child is submitted to the normative order of the social enclosure within which they develop their awareness of the world and themselves. These answers establish a continuity between the self-understanding of a child and the generations that surround them and their ancestors, instituting the terms of being a member of their natal environment as self-evident.

The second set of non-linguistic questions/answers—questions that are deemed unanswerable or not worth answering—mark psycho-affective territories that are either unmapped, forgotten, or erased: stories of struggle during wars, ways of living outside of the enclosures of religiously segregated communities, or the stories of queer members of a village community. These collective (historical) lapses conceal modes of being that are adaptively deemed as not aligned with the advantage of a local social enclosure. I argue that such unmapped psycho-affective territories are expressions of laws and narratives defined outside of the relational patterns of situated collectives. Within a modernised social environment and

from the organisational level of social unities, unmapped psycho-affective territories create breaks in a situated system of meanings, allowing the world of subjects individuated by an overarching social order to expand; they create openings within a system of meaning, within which members of the community can differentiate themselves as a self, distinct from other members. Within modernised contexts, at the level of the situated collective as a simple unity—or from the systemic level of a nation state— unmapped psycho-affective territories create breaks that crack open an environment made enclosed by recurrent situated relations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988: 314); an opening towards a mode of subjectification aligned with the normative mode of being that realises the abstract unity of a nation state. These are openings in the form of knowledge that cannot be redefined by and within the local collective.

Breaks in situated systems of meanings—unmapped psycho-affective territories (occupied) with pre-determined meanings, generated from outside the experiential domain of the local collective—reveal the structuring of local autopoietic enclosures by national bureaucracies. These non-linguistic answers are non-articulations—silence as an answer—create the conditions that align the individuated disobedience of situated norms to an overarching normativity. In doing so, these systematically configured breaks in a situated system of meanings prepare younger generations for bureaucratic interventions (institutional ceremonies and religious rites); they are systemic interventions that realise the coupling of the self-understanding of emergent generations with the structure of bureaucratic systems that govern the possibilities of their lives as constituents of a collective, itself a constituent of a mass, or “a people” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257).

By providing younger generations with a framework to make sense of their surroundings and to imagine a future in relation to functional bureaucratic enclosures, according to their structuring of social relations and to their systems of classification, this coupling enables a mode of self-understanding where the self is independent from the situated dynamics of a collective natal context to instead be defined in relation to bureaucratic rhythms, ceremonies, and systems of meanings as an individuated subject. Thus, a person individuated by functional social formations and subjected to a modern organisational logic is socialised to imagine an individuated future made possible by the functional compression of the complexities of collective social relations.

In order to illustrate the significance of this coupling of younger generations to bureaucratic systems, and the way its unfolding within a modernised social context align situated narratives and systems of meanings to colonial logics, I will, again, return to the particular context of my natal village. However, this is not a return to the village itself but to the context in which the patterns of relations discussed earlier unfold; namely, to Lebanon as a modern nation state and the processes through which it was established. I study the relation of national history to local narratives through the particular historical perspective of a village in Mount Lebanon. Such a study guides a reflection on the erasure of situated narratives through the production of unified national histories, working towards a formulation that reveals the psycho-affective territories left unmapped in the natal environment described earlier.

The Colonial Formation of the Nation of Lebanon

While reading texts by Hegel the first few times, I was surprised by the extent to which his theories describe contemporary social dynamics despite being written two centuries ago. More particularly, I was surprised by the resonances between the principles in which Hegel grounds his theorisation of the modern state and the narratives that described the ideal citizen in post-war Lebanon. As Fawwaz Traboulsi narrates, the *Taef agreement* that formalised the end of the war in 1990 included a plan (or at least, declared an agreed upon intention) to put an end to political sectarianism (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 250). Additionally, the end of the war stimulated an attempt to reactivate the functions of the state (policing, military control, market regulation, management of infrastructures, etc.) that were disrupted or taken over by religious militias in the last decade of the war (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 238). In an environment shaped by collective trauma perpetrated in the name of religious identities, tying ethicality and individual agency to the state became the self-evident way to imagine a future different from the past.

This surprise with the alignment of the narratives of a post-war Lebanon with Hegel's ethics and metaphysics, in combination with spending time questioning this resonance, created a break in the stories that I tell myself about who I/We are/am. This break can be articulated as follows: if the stories that I grew up with—and that were repeated in the village, in schools, in universities, and in the streets—are structured by logics intended to create a dependency between the local social systems of the territories of Lebanon and colonial infrastructures, then who am I beyond identities validated through variations of Hegel's theories? And what

horizons of understanding and self-understanding open up when political problems in the east of the Mediterranean are not formulated through logics aligned to a mode of organisation dependent on an extractive colonial market? Guided by this question, the following considers the functioning of the differentiation between labour of subsistence and professionalised order within a contemporary, modernised context.

Even before European colonial globalisation, by way of Lebanese coastal cities providing important hubs of relation between major inland cities, within and beyond the borders of contemporary Lebanon, infrastructural development of the territories of Lebanon has followed interests distributed along much larger territories. Imperial rule over extended periods of time and across territories as vast as the Ottoman Empire⁷ was distributed along regional nodes, interconnected cities that are in regular direct contact with central imperial authorities. Coastal cities and towns in Lebanon have held a central role in the history of the Mediterranean and the Arab region and their imperial governance. The coherence of the political identity of those cities and their ports starts with the scarcely documented settlement of the sea-faring Phoenicians, whose date of settlement varies a few thousand years depending on the source.⁸ However, it is well documented that their rule ended with the Persian conquest of the sixth century B.C., which, in turn, was ended by the conquest of Alexander the Great, whose rule was transferred to his generals after his death. History then takes us from these generals to the Hellenistic Seleucid kingdom, to the Roman Empire, to the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, to the Umayyad caliphate, the Fatimid caliphate, the Seljuk caliphate, interrupted by crusader rule for a couple of hundreds of years, to the Ayyubid sultanate, to the Mameluke sultanate, to the Ottoman Empire, and finally, to European colonisation and the fragmentation of the territory into independent nation states (Salibi, 1988/2005: 5-10).

The first encounter of the territories of Lebanon with a modernist logic of production—where labour is systematised, specialised, and managed by a central authority on a scale that spans a large portion of these territories—could be traced back to the rule of Fakhr al-Din Ma'n

⁷ The Ottoman Empire being the overarching polity that governed the territories of the east of the Mediterranean before the end of World War I.

⁸ It is worth mentioning that nationalist Maronite Christian projects in Lebanon assert ancestral ties to the Phoenicians, refusing any ties to the cultures that inhabited and occupied the territories of Lebanon for centuries after them.

(1593–1633) under the Ottoman Empire. Fakhr al-Din II's governance was informed by a complex positionality he inherited from his forefathers (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 6): a position of authority in relation to the farmers of Mount Lebanon, a proximity to the Ottoman Empire as an imperial official and tax farmer, and a co-conspirator with European polities against the Ottoman Empire. This last positionality adds a level of complexity to the previous two. In superposition to his position of authority in relation to labourers and to his subservience in relation to the empire, Fakhr al-Din also embodied the positionality of a political dissident in relation to that very same empire, and even that of a revolutionary in relation to the communities oppressed by the empire.

These intersections enabled Fakhr al-Din to transform life in the territories he collected taxes from. Traboulsi notes that during his exile—following an attempted coup against the Ottoman ruler in the region that he organised with Florence's support—Fakhr al-Din studied the socio-economic structuring of relations within Italian city-states, particularly appreciating the banks, the central treasury, and the local judicial system (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 7). As Traboulsi notes, "Fakhr al-Din's main achievement was the introduction of silk production to Mount-Lebanon as a cash product for export to the Italian city-states" (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 8).

During the period of imperial Ottoman rule, religious institutions—the institution of the Druze, Maronite, Shia, and Sunni sects, in addition to a varying number of smaller religious sects—managed the rhythms of local life and the rhythms of labour imposed by the collectors of imperial tax. Religious institutions acted as regulators of imperial governance, which during the Ottoman era reached rural contexts through local leaders as tax collectors. While religious institutions acted as moderators between imperial rule and local communities, the tension between different religious institutions and the communities that followed their teachings provided a point of manipulation, whereas divergent religious cosmogonies in some cases provided the means for the Ottoman empire to bid communities against each other, preventing them from unifying their struggle against imperial authority (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 3), and, thereby, furthering the divergence of the cosmogonies of communities, despite their sharing of neighbouring (or even the same) territories. As will be discussed in the following, this entanglement of religious identities with the negotiations of a community's conditions of life with an occupying power—which was a part of strategies of governance employed by the Ottoman empire in the east of the Mediterranean—became the basis of a

nation state that formalised the adaptation of this governmental strategy to a strategy of control compatible with the capitalist market.

The role of Fakhr al-Din as an individual in this dynamic establishes a particular connection between the territories of Lebanon and the individuating principles that underlie the social formations in which labour is performed within a globalised market; a connection that allowed economic labour and the social order in which it is performed to become a fundamental aspect of Lebanese national identity. The particularity of the way economic labour was introduced to the territories of Lebanon contributed to the production of a national narrative where individuated modes of being, a patriarchal authority, private property, and economic labour are tied to resisting the oppressive rule of the Ottoman empire. Specifically, Fakhr al-Din's story marks a historical intersection that enabled the transformation of a narrative tied to the Seventh Crusade (Gul, 2015: 8) and in which the French state/colonial project figures as the protector of Maronite communities ("the Christians of the Levant"), into a secular narrative, compatible with a modern nation state, and shared/divided between multiple religions (Seale, 2008: XI). This transformation becomes apparent in the nineteenth century.

The *mutasarifate of Mount Lebanon* is the first polity that unified the territories of Lebanon under a single governmental structure. The mutasarifate, or mutasarifiya as it is colloquially referred to in Lebanon, is the product of the Ottoman reform of 9 June 1861, dubbed "Règlement Organique" (which could be translated as *organic regulation*). The mutasarifiya extended the polity of Mount Lebanon to span most of the territories of modern Lebanon, with the exception of the cities of Tripoli, Beirut, and Saida, as well as the Beqaa plain, which remained under the direct authority of the Ottoman governor of Damascus (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 45). This form was the result of the pressure of European powers (France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Italy) on the Ottoman Empire to address the violence and massacres that erupted during the war of 1858-1860 between the Druze and the Christian population (Salibi, 1965/2004: 110). The result was a social formation endowed with a monetary economy (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 46) and private ownership of land (Sayigh, 2007: 27).

In a study of the agrarian changes in Lebanon between 1860 and 1914, Kais Firro remarks that "after 1860, silk had become a monoculture in Mount Lebanon. Close to 80 percent of the cultivable land of Mount Lebanon was covered with mulberry trees, as was a large part of

the Bekaa and the coastal area” (Firro, 1990: 151). According to Traboulsi, the generalisation of the monetary economy and the persistence of large landed holdings⁹ led to multiple waves of migration (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 46). He continues: “between 1860 and World War I, roughly a third of the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon left the country” (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 47). Firro puts this transformation in a wider context:

The most significant development in Middle Eastern agriculture in the 19th century was the transformation of certain areas from subsistence to cash-crop. To meet the European demand for raw materials, areas of the Middle East were integrated into the Western economy by shifting from traditional agricultural products such as cereals, to such export crops as cotton (in Egypt, northern Syria, and Anatolia), opium (in central and southern Persia), silk (in Anatolia, Persia, and Syria), tobacco, rice, dates, and citrus fruit. (Firro, 1990: 151-152)

In order to think of the effect of this line of development—in its chronicled beginnings with Fakhr al-Din—in terms of the relational patterns of situated collectives, I will refer to Rosemary Sayigh’s analysis of the causes of peasant poverty in the neighbouring territories of Palestine. Due to the instrumentalization and mobilisation of the monetary economy, private property, and bureaucratic management of land and resources as the ground of the Zionist claim to land under British colonial policy (Sayigh, 2007: 28), the Ottoman reforms of the 1860’s figure as an important point in the history of the dispossession of the Palestinian population. Sayigh quotes from a “Resistance Movement organiser familiar with conditions in Upper Egypt” (Sayigh 2007: 213) speaking of the strategic importance of situated self-sufficiency. The following quote, and the dynamic it makes clear, will outline the outlook from which I reflect on the reforms of 1860 beyond nationalist narratives of emancipation from empire.

⁹ Firro remarks that land ownership in Mount Lebanon after 1860 transformed from large scale holdings to smaller scale ones held by peasants (Firro, 1990: 151). When taking Sayigh’s analysis of the reasons why private ownership of land deepened the dispossession of Palestinian peasant populations—from being largely illiterate (and not accustomed to the role language plays within European bureaucracies), to the common decision to leave intangible legal matters (such as official ownership) to be addressed by local leaders or religious institutions (Sayigh, 2007: 27-29), to distrusting imperial and colonial institutions—as applying to the majority of the population of Lebanon’s villages at the time, then Traboulsi’s note on the persistence of the of large landed holdings after 1860 (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 46) is relevant for a deeper understanding of the transformation of labour and the distribution of resources in Mount Lebanon; even if, as Firro notes, more peasants owned small pieces of land after 1860 than before.

The Egyptian village is not self-sufficient, it cannot live independently of the city, whereas the Palestinian village produced grain, fruits, vegetables and had certain artisan skills as well. The Egyptian village produces one crop, and depends on other areas to supply its basic needs. For instance, Upper Egypt, where they produce mainly sugarcane, has to get its rice from other areas. This means that a Palestinian village could go on strike for six months, whereas an Egyptian village can't last more than one or two weeks. This deepened the sense of belonging in the Palestinian village, and its opposite in the Egyptian village. In Palestine, two neighbouring villages could quarrel and cut their links. But an Egyptian village has to calculate, before quarrelling with a neighbouring village, whether it will be able to reach the town or not, because the town is indispensable to it. (Quoted by Sayigh, 2007: 23-24)

As the quote above states, the self-sufficiency of villages was an important leverage for situated communities to negotiate between each other, but also to pressure imperial or colonial forces. From such a perspective, the Ottoman reforms of the 1860's under European pressure, are a restriction of the possibility of local self-sufficiency of situated collectives in the east of the Mediterranean and beyond. By engaging populations in labour that does not allow them to provision their needs without trading through the infrastructures of the European market, the subsistence of a collective starts to become less and less dependent on the situated conditions of the context in which they live, to become more and more dependent on the infrastructures of European colonial projects even before direct colonisation. The maintenance of a situated environment in ways that conserve the conditions that allow a collective to live from the land they settle in becomes less and less of a concern, and the knowledges that allow these practices to be maintained from one generation to another, become less and less relevant.

The restructuring and management of modes of material provisioning (and the social relations through which they are performed) according to market dynamics effectuates a decoupling of situated modes of social organisation from the environment within which they are maintained. From this perspective, the professionalisation of labour and the institution of private property are the realisation of this decoupling by compromising the possibility and the ability of collectives to organise themselves in a self-sufficient way, making them vulnerable to the dynamics of the global market. From this wider spatio-temporal perspective, what was addressed in the monetisation of life and the privatisation of land ownership is revealed to be the artificial problem created by the need to create or maintain concentrations of power necessary for the conservation of centralised governance. That is, the problems that initiated the commoners' revolt and which resulted in the war of 1860 in Mount Lebanon were only

reinforced and formalised as the normative functioning of a new polity that corresponds to an emergent world order.

From this perspective, the formation and maintenance of a modern mode of organisation necessitates a decoupling of situated collectives from the situated environment within which they are formed, to institute a coupling of their members as individuated subjects to a globalised market within a mode of social organisation around a colonial notion of function. This is a mode of organisation that compromises the possibility of situated subsistence and establishes and reinforces a dependence on the infrastructures of the global market.

The Institution of an Individuating Process of Subjectification within Situated Socialities

A deeper consideration of the effects of the generalisation of a monetary economy on situated collectives within the east of the Mediterranean necessitates an investigation of formal education as the instruction of bureaucratic literacy. Such a premise is grounded in a remark by Sayigh given in the context of her study of the roots of peasant poverty in Palestine:

What the ottoman Land Reforms of 1856 and 1858 did was to lay the legal basis for fully private, disposable ownership of land. This was followed by the beginning of registration of land in the name of individuals. The significance of these measures from the point of view of the peasants can only be fully grasped if their class powerlessness is understood. Unlike large landholders and tribal leaders, they lacked the power needed to convert customary land use into legal land tenure. Indeed they did not grasp the meaning of the new laws, nor the concept ‘ownership’, so foreign was it to their own concept of ‘rights’. In Palestine, fearing that the tax collector and army recruiter would make effective use of the new registers, and hardly understanding the enormous importance of the new records and deeds to their own future, when the implementing regulations of the code began to be applied, they evaded massively and stubbornly. Evasion took the form of registering land in the name of dead or fictitious persons; or, more dangerously, ‘in the name of any important or influential man who could seem to offer some protection’—shuyookh, notables, city merchants, even tax farmers. (Sayigh, 2007: 28)

Formal education in socialities structured by a bureaucratic system—here, taken in relation to a bureaucratic strategy that continues to be instrumentalised in the disenfranchisement of Palestinian communities by a settler colonial project—is a necessity for subsistence. In the territories of Lebanon after the Ottoman reforms that began in 1860, formal education gradually became the domain of French and American missionaries. For the villages of Mount Lebanon (at least Christian villages) formal education was centred around the church, where monks would be educated in religious texts and would sometimes teach basic reading

and writing to younger generations, or further their own education through the trans-national networks of the Catholic Church. During that time, some young people from my village, often family members of the clergy, were provided the opportunity to study in France, Belgium, and in French schools in Palestine. With the establishment of systematised education under French and American curricula, new lines of subjective differentiation and lines of production became possible, and thus a framework that enables a new line of understanding and self-understanding was being instituted.

The gradual generalisation of access to formal education, starting with French and American missions (Gul, 2015: 79) and later continuing through national infrastructures, created the conditions for the emergence of a mode of self-understanding that was at odds with the social structures necessary for agricultural production and with the intersection of the authorities of the Maronite Church and of local leaderships. Thus emerges a mode of self-understanding at odds with both the system of meanings maintained by local feudal authorities and with the one maintained by religious institutions. Consequently, with the gradual generalisation of access to institutionalised services, the dependence on communal and local traditions began to decline. Added to that, the generalisation of the market economy and an increased dependence on imported goods that filled the gap created by the monoculture of a cash crop, resulted in a decreased need for larger collectives, and consequently, reinforced the role of patriarchs as providers. Previously, traditions of communal subsistence and the networked sociality that sustained them positioned women as the moderators of the structuring of local dynamics by social, economic, and systematic (imperial) power. But within modernised socialities, the systemisation and commercialisation of healthcare, education, and access to essential resources, as well as the nuclearization of the family, diminished the political weight of women within communities, both in relation to their members and in the wider context of the east of Mediterranean and its colonially established nation states.

The communal network of care sustained by the women of the community survives these transformations, but it submits to the management of the patriarch and the enclosed categories that he manages as reproductive labour with no economic value (Federici, 2004/2014: 74). With the decrease of the importance of communal networks, the ability of the collective to mediate the concentration of power is compromised, which creates the environment for the reinforcement of a patriarchal hierarchy where the patriarch of a nuclear family becomes the manager of production, consumption, and morality. Through this process,

the logics of the modern/colonial order are articulated on a local scale as making communal strategies of subsistence a performative heritage through the fragmentation of local collectives into nuclear families managed by patriarchal providers; a structure that became part of the local system of meanings of villages in Lebanon. As such, new lines of subjectification became possible; ones that inform a new mode of self-understanding which corresponds to the universal logic of modernity and its national governance, paving the way for the transformation of already established lines of social segregation into class differentiation (Sayigh, 2007: 31). Effectively, the colonisation/modernisation of the east of the Mediterranean during the 19th century reproduced the dispossession of women that accompanied the commercialisation of life in Europe during the 17th century (Federici, 2004/2014: 73-74).

In Mount Lebanon, the most spectacular effect of this decoupling of modes of material provisioning from the conditions of surviving as a collective in a specific context is found in the famine of Beirut and Mount Lebanon during World War I, as they lived through the confrontation between European powers and the Ottoman empire, actualised in a blockade of the east of Mediterranean by the allied forces (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 71-72). What is of interest here is not directly the colonial and imperial strategies adopted at the time, but the situated conditions that made such strategies as effective in killing a major part of the population as they were. Such conditions can be discerned in the notes of the Ottoman scholar Hüseyin Kazım:

Recent events which give so much pause, have shown us that a people is sometimes forced to make a living on its own, and from its own land... Whatever one sees in Lebanon of sights of luxury, comfort, civilization, and abundance does not have the slightest relationship with Lebanon's soil or mountains... but was gathered by the son of Lebanon in the mahjar.¹⁰ (Kazım, 1918/1993: 5-6; quoted by Pitts, 2018: 106)

This simple observation outlines the conditions that made such a disaster inevitable—specifically, a dependence on market dynamics that are more informed by imperial and colonial dynamics than by situated ones (Fanon, 1963/2004: 99)—a few years before they were formalised in the modern state of Lebanon. From here, and returning to the questions that are unanswerable within a situated natal context, the psycho-affective territories left unmapped in villages of Mount Lebanon in the contemporary modernised world are the

¹⁰ In this context, “Mahjar” can be translated to diaspora.

communal practices of subsistence and the knowledges that maintained them along generations, which become a hurdle to the adaptive advantage of the individuated subjects of a globalised modern/colonial order. These knowledges are erased as they become tied to what is collectively desired to be forgotten: the wars and the famine.

In the territories of Lebanon, what is unmapped are knowledges pertaining to communal strategies of surviving within a specific environment and are shared between the collectives that constitute the unity of a religious identity. These are knowledges on living as collectives that apply to communities regardless of identities by virtue of such communities sharing a territory that inform similar conditions for survival. What is communal and common between different communities is erased because what is forgotten and what is enacted in each community is informed by identities defined by being historical rivals; identities formed in relation to a strategy of tying political organisation to religious identities defined by their conflict with each other applied along centuries of Ottoman governance, while self-understanding is individuated to correspond to modernised institutions.

Modernisation erases the lineages of practices, knowledges, and modes of being that could not be adapted to the modern/colonial structuring of social relations are gradually erased. From this perspective, wars are an intensification of modern strategies of governance; a governmental defence mechanism, activated to reproduce the conditions for bureaucratic governance in moments where the authority of a bureaucratic system is threatened. This can be seen in Traboulsi's reflection on the civil war of 1975-1990 as a "demographic purge":

It has been estimated that the bloody fifteen-year purge in Lebanon resulted in 71,328 killed and 97,184 injured. The expulsion of the human surplus in Lebanon took three basic forms. The first, sectarian 'cleansing' of the community's territory of 'strangers' (mainly Shi'i Muslims in the 'Christian' enclave and Christians in the 'Druze' Mountain) led to some 670,000 displaced among the Christians and 157,500 among the Muslims. This sectarian 'cleansing' was coupled with a political one, the expulsion of political 'strangers' and those members of the community who did not comply with the policies or dictates of the dominant militia. Second, there was the expulsion of 'foreigners' or 'intruders', which in this case refers mainly to the Palestinians. Bashir Jumayil had a famous phrase for the Palestinians as 'a people too many in the Middle East'. The massacres of Sabra-Shatila and the wars of Amal against the Palestinian camps, not to speak of Israeli military operations and the two outright invasions of 1978 and 1982, can be seen as military procedures to get rid of that 'people too many'. Third was migration: nearly a third of Lebanon's population (estimated by Labaki and Abou Rjeili at 894,717 people) was driven out of the country. (Traboulsi 2012: 244-245)

From this perspective, a war is an intensification of the homogenisation of societies. As one of their results, transgenerational trauma becomes a condition of the generational maintenance of social enclosures. More accurately, the forgetfulness and self-alienation created by trauma or by coping with trauma, prevents a local collective from recognising that the patterns that maintain an ethnic, political, or national identity within a modern order are the same patterns that reproduce collective trauma. Thus, the stories of Lebanese wars and crises mentioned in this section constitute the history of the modernisation of the territories of Lebanon, in which local social structures are realigned to the colonial logics of the European market.

From this perspective, the recent civil war of 1975-1990 was the violent failure of the national bourgeoisie and the narrative of “religious minorities of the east of the Mediterranean” that laid the foundation for the alignment of local leaders and colonial powers. This is a failure of governance, again translated into religious conflicts, but instead of serving to keep the empire out of the focus of local populations, the war of 1975-1990 marked the formation of a managerial class that represents the religious identities of different communities in the state, while maintaining the imperial and colonial strategies of counterinsurgency that informed the constitution of those identities. Under such a managerial strategy, a collective’s conditions of living became entangled with their religious beliefs and practices; as a result, over multiple generations, each religious group experienced living under imperial rule (and as a neighbour to other groups) in different and often opposed or oppositional ways, determined by their/our religious identities. This strategy of transforming popular discontent into religious conflicts that was used by the Ottoman Empire to sustain the imperial scheme of tax farming in the territories of Lebanon along the duration of its 400 years rule became the basis of the social, political, and economic, organisation of the nation of Greater Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 80).

Thus, with the end of the most recent civil war in 1990, in time for neo-liberal processes of modernisation, the nation of Lebanon was reborn into a form predefined by the strategy of mass control that had secured the authority of governing bodies within the east of the Mediterranean for centuries. Accordingly, the (formally) unified national history that we are taught in Lebanese schools is a feature of this specific mode of modern social organisation; a mode of organisation structured according to a predetermined narrative that omits, excludes, and erases the relational patterns that contradict the singularity of the hegemonic narrative

and undermine the modernised capitalist functioning it prescribes. In the specific context of the territories of Lebanon, such a unified narrative was initially made possible by the institution of a nation state by the colonial power of France (Traboulsi, 2007/2012: 94). The colonial processes through which the nation was formed and the military power that secured them enabled the creation of a polity that unifies communities socialised along generations under Ottoman rule to understand each of their advantage to be in conflict with the others’.

From this perspective, the modernised organisational form of the territories of Lebanon as a nation today and throughout history, does not aim to contain or pacify religious tensions that still torment local political discourse. Rather, the opposite is the case: Lebanon as a nation state is premised on a political domain constituted by political leaders that fulfil the role of providers and protectors to a religious social fragment interlocked in conflicts with other social units that surround it within Lebanon and outside of it. From this perspective, since 1860 until today, no (major) religion in Lebanon can claim to be oppressed. The *mutasarifiya* and later modern Lebanon are the expression of imperial interests in natural Syria. Religious and sectarian violence, in this case, is the condition of the social mode of organisation that results from the economic fragmentation of the territories of the east of the Mediterranean.

A Lebanese politician, regardless of their ideological views, needs to occupy a central position between a colonial power and a fragment of the Lebanese population, acquiring their legitimacy from both while deriving their power from the former and exercising it on the latter. In this sense, Lebanon as a nation is the splinter of rock that holds the composite wall of nationalised *natural Syria* in place. Not because of some innate exceptionality of the land or the people, but because of the illusionary exceptionality of the identities constructed around its minoritarian sects and the privileges bestowed on them by imperial and colonial powers that seek to control more significant masses of labour, cultivable land, resources, and lines of transit. From this perspective, the transformation of collective practices and communal modes of distribution of resources—that made space for private property and capitalist modes of production—compromise the possibility of collectives being able to organise themselves in self-sufficient and adaptive ways.

Within such a social configuration (when not being bombed), the needs and desires of a subject individuated by modern institutions are coded by meanings and actions that presuppose the continuity of modern modes of production. The continuity of institutions allows an individuated subject to outline a linear (systemic) trajectory towards the

actualisation of individuated desires. As such, the survival of an individuated subject becomes mediated by, and dependent on, centralised governance and the extractive imperial and colonial models of production that individuate them. The complex, plural, and layered timelines of situated collectives become a distraction from the linear and efficient institutional trajectory that promises the actualisation of individuated desires, enabling an individual to understand themselves as an individuated subject of the global modern order through projections onto linear and simplified national narratives. This dependency on colonial infrastructures, then, can be weaponised at the will of the coloniser, whether in the instance of the blockade of World War I that resulted in the death of a quarter of the population living in Mount Lebanon at the time, or in the current instance of the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza.

Modern Nation States, the Fiction of Individual Freedom, and the Co-option of Generational Continuity

Drawing a connection between defining points in the history of the nation of Lebanon and the coloniality of processes of modernisation makes it possible to formulate an understanding of the colonial functioning of nation states within the contemporary globalised modern world. This functioning is configured by formalising the dependence of situated collectives on the colonial infrastructures of the modern market, a dependence that allowed British and French colonial projects to use the populations of the east of the Mediterranean as leverage against the Ottoman empire during World War I. As I will argue in the following chapter, this strategy continues to underlie international relations between colonial centres—that act as fulcra for major flows of capital—and colonially formed nation states; colonial centres continue to manage the managers of colonially formed nation states, and nation states that lie at the periphery of global flows of capital, by controlling the material flows that sustain their populations.

From the perspective of Mount Lebanon, and more particularly, from the perspective of religious groups in the territories of Lebanon that differentiate themselves by special relations to colonial centres, the modernisation of labour that institutes a mode of production open for the bureaucratic extraction of value is experienced as a becoming free from the governance of the Ottoman empire and the traumatic events that marked the relation of the locality of Mount Lebanon with that empire. In the systems of meanings of villages in Mount Lebanon, modern labour represents a potential freedom from labour-intensive agriculture and from the risk of

famine associated with depending on agriculture as the primary mode of material provisioning and its susceptibility to environmental factors—like the locust attack of 1915 (Foster, 2015: 371; Tanielian, 2012: 19) that amplified the effect of the colonial/imperial siege of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

However, the freedom at stake here is not a socially negotiated freedom, but a freedom guaranteed by the central authority of the state. This is an individuated freedom that can only be acquired by acting within the limits of possibility instituted within modern categories and by enacting subjectivities aligned with the normative functioning of modern social fragments. This is a notion of individuated freedom whose functioning is dependent on national narratives and their continuity. Such a freedom, in its expression in individuated desires, is made possible through transgenerational colonial trainings carried out by the erasure of situated histories (Cervenak, 2014: 145) limiting the possibilities of life to ones that uphold the projected continuity of modern mode of social organisation and its colonial mode of power. By highlighting an individuated independence while concealing the operational dependence that makes it possible, modern notions of individuated freedom underlie a contradictory subjective experience. From one side, modernisation can be understood as a historical emancipation from the imperial control of labour and local systems of oppression. From the other side, it can be understood as the individuation of a modern subject that allows them to understand themselves as independent from their situated environment, realising the dependence of the individual on colonial infrastructures.

It could be said, then, that the process of modernisation of the east of Mediterranean in the 20th century is a mature form of colonial criminality; one that understood that creating trans-generational dependence on a globalised Euro-centric market is a more profitable venture than enslaving and working people to death; a strategy, thus, that would only reach its full maturity in the last decade of the 20th century as systems of control (Deleuze, 1990/1992: 4). As a result, when coloniality encountered empire, it did not do so using its genocidal strategies, rather, it created the conditions to enact a mode of being aligned with modern logics and modes of organisation, ordered according to the coloniality of power. From this perspective, the process of becoming modern by becoming a labouring individual that unfolded throughout the 20th century in the east of the Mediterranean is an adaptive continuation of the same process of reorganisation of labour around the centrality of the

European market and a colonial mode of power (Quijano, 2000: 533-534); revealing the *slave plantation* as the natal of modern social formations and modern polities (Wynter, 2003: 297).

Seen in this way, functional social formations provide a framework for the fragmentation of a situated identity—a shifting identity formed in relation to situated negotiations—into functional subjectivities enacted as predefined social roles set by the modern mode of organisation. Thus, through the fragmentation of a natal identity into functional subjectivities, the modern order creates the conditions for the production of individuated histories. These are histories that compress embodied, situated, and relational meanings into a visual phenomenology that reads the world through pre-determined meanings compatible with bureaucratic management and the narratives that secure the reproduction of bureaucratic control. As such, modern bureaucratic systems are the technology that allows the modern/colonial mode of organisation to become decoupled from the particular situated context from which it emerges and within which it is realised. The structuring of social formations becomes mediated by an externalised objective outlook, not tied to a particular situated cultural context (Lugones, 2003: 130), and through which culture-specific modes of being can be observed through bio-racial categories as masses. Within such a mode of organisation, a maintained contact with territorial generational continuities becomes a leverage employed by colonial powers in the fragmentation of a population and the distribution of rights according to the degree of alignment of a social fragment to colonial and racial modern logics and to the advantage of a colonising project. Thus, maintained contact with a natal environment and its systems of meaning within a modernised context, becomes a lens through which the modern structuring of the social can be seen as an emancipatory transformation, despite such territorial continuity becoming coupled to colonial infrastructures, giving rise to hierarchies of native/foreigner/migrant/refugee.

This aberration of the effect of processes of modernisation on situated and territorial social systems is due to the opposed and superposed roles a situated sociality plays in relation to its collective within a modernised context: from a certain perspective, modernisation liberates situated localities from previous forms of systemic oppression, but at the same time, this same locality becomes an oppressive context from which individuals become independent by provisioning their needs through professionalised labour. In both cases, modernisation is realised in the decoupling of situated social organisation from environmental requirements of survival and from collective strategies of coping with such requirements; a decoupling

realised by the individuation of situated collectives and by coupling individuated subjects to functional social formations on which they become dependent. Within a modernised colonial mode of social organisation, a normative subject becomes able to understand themselves as free from situated and collective desires, needs, and aspirations; and this self-understanding creates the conditions for the reinforcement of local social hierarchies and their becoming enclosed and systematically reproduced through their adaptation to a colonial mode of power (Quijano, 2000: 534) and to modern categories of race/ethnicity and gender.

Wynter theorises the auto-institution of social unities through symbolic narratives that articulate a culture-specific coding of normative comportment; narratives inform regulatory practices that realise the coding of relational patterns which secure the coherence and reproduction of a culture-specific *genre of being hybridly human* (Wynter, 2015: 239). Such a process functions within the terms of autopoiesis as theorised by Maturana and Varela: relational patterns within a specific domain (here, the social domain of intersubjective experience) give rise to regularities; and these relational regularities can be seen as constituting a unity from the perspective of a metadomain of descriptions (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxii). Culture-specific narratives and identities emerge and are reproduced autopoietically; a bureaucratic system is the realisation of the abstract unity produced by such autopoietic emergence, which creates a higher domain of socio-political unities structurally coupled to an intersubjective domain of interactions. From this perspective, bureaucratic management (in its Western/modern or non-modern forms), is the institution of a systemic conservation of the auto-instituted narratives of cultural unities and the normative functioning that underlies the emergence of such unities.

The above can help expand the arguments presented earlier in this chapter on the reproduction of the modern order being dependent on the institution of individuated professionalised labour as the default mode of material provisioning, while this professionalisation renders situated and emergent relational patterns static as ethnic identities and national traditions. The result is a schism between subjectivities enacted within contexts defined by generational continuities with a specific territoriality and a mode of self-understanding in relation to a nation state whose continuity is the undoing of the plurality of situated and generational systems of meanings. This schism creates intersubjective conditions that ensures the emergence of exclusory territorial patterns and conservative attitudes while such political stances become the making of situated socialities governable and exploitable by

unsettling the communal practices of subsistence formed by the continuous interaction of a collective with the conditions of life within a particular environment.

From this perspective, within the modern order, a sustained contact with a situated transgenerational continuity loses its function as a mode of conservation of situated knowledges accumulated from multiple generations learning from the environment within which they survive. Rather, in this context the conditions of life of a territorial collective prepare it to be individuated by modern institutions, creating a reserve labour force not yet adapted to bourgeois standards of life, nor to the strategies of organisation of the labouring class. The result is a reinforcement of the enclosure of situated social systems realised through a conservative attitude that reproduces the normative functioning instituted by colonial processes of modernisation. As such, the comforts of a trans-generational familiarity with, and in, a specific locality, and the incompatibility of trans-generational modes of living with the individuated subjectivities instituted by functional social formations, create a social environment suitable for the regeneration and intensification of a conservative logic, realised in social enclosures conducive to the emergence of fascist dynamics, either in the name of modernity, or in the name of its resistance. Such reproductive functioning is a property of a mode of being within modernity characterised by access to ancestral land, defined by a tension between generational systems of meanings and the systems of meanings of *functional social formations* (van der Drift, 2021: 97), making generational continuities serve the function of an efficient mode of reproducing a *bourgeois reserve*.

Conclusion

This chapter started from an exploration of the ways in which the modern structuring of social relations within bureaucratically managed functional social enclosures informs intersubjective dynamics. Specifically, I argued that bureaucratic management unsettles the possibility of a diachronic emergence of social formations: new forms emerging from undoing past ones. Rather, the modern structuring of social relations within functional enclosures institutes a synchronic mode of emergence; in this case, established intersubjective relational structures must be conserved to maintain the economic value created at the level of functional enclosures as social unities.

From here, based on Maturana's theorisation of the structural reproduction of autopoietic systems as realised in the emergence of sub-systems configured according to the organisation of the overarching system (Maturana, 2002: 18-19), I developed the notion of the natal; a pre-established psycho-affective closure or preconfigured restrictions on possible relations. I applied the notion of the natal to a study of the ways in which the overarching modern organisational logic is reproduced within situated socialities and is maintained along multiple generations. I argued that the colonial enforcement of an overarching organisational logic on colonised populations creates a psycho-affective closure that maintains the form of that sociality as it is structured by the colonial logic of organisation. As such, the modern/colonial organisational logic informs regulatory practices and systematically enacted patterns that determine a range of acceptable (normative) desires and aspirations. Thus, colonially established modern national governance configures a phenomenal domain within the modern mode of organisation is self-evident.

Further, through the analysis of the modernisation of the territories of Lebanon from the perspective of a village community in Mount Lebanon, and based on the understanding of the functioning of the modern mode of organisation elucidated above, I argued that national narratives are a formalisation of the sociogenic reproduction of the modern order. I theorised nation states as an epistemologically and structurally closed forms that maintain the creation of narratives that follow the projection of normative European social structures onto universal principles. Thus, national infrastructures enable an individuated subject to understand themselves as being a subject of a globalised social system. By doing so, a nation as an idea establishes a line of flight away from situated socialities; it transforms the constitutive emotional entanglements of the natal—entanglements of recurrence and proximity, before prior accumulation—to economically productive energy, by shifting self-understanding from situated systems of meanings to systems premised on an individuated notion of agency whose realisation is dependent on the infrastructures of a nation state. Thus, the alignment of situated systems of meanings to a psycho-affective closure set by a normative functioning attached to national identities creates the conditions for the formulation of narratives that presuppose the continuity of national infrastructures as a necessary condition for the continuity of the situated identities they manage and of the collectives they extract value from.

Within national formations, situated collectives—with their complex intersubjective and territorial dynamics—become inefficient forms, unable to keep up with the requirements of survival within a modernised world while maintaining communal structures of relations. Instead, the individual as an efficiently exploitable singularity is integrated into functional institutional formations; collectives organised around a specific functioning. This, I argued, is the modern individuation of situated collectives.

The modern individuation, institutionalisation, and professionalisation of labour initiates a schism between meanings generated through processes of local subjectification and the self-understanding of members of the community individuated by a “new” model of control of labour and resources (Quijano, 2000: 533-534). This is a schism between two systemic processes that reproduce two different modes of being: on the one hand, a situated process of subjectification that functions by restricting the patterns of a subject of a situated social order to possibilities aligned with the historical narrative of their lineage, preventing an individual from straying away from a line of development, imagined by the rest of the collective. And on the other hand, a modern process of subjectification within functional social formations (van der Drift, 2021: 97) which enable its subjects to formulate an individuated self-understanding decoupled from situated systems of meanings and the desires, concerns, and aspirations of a situated collective.

From this perspective, national histories are the narrative form that emerges from the conditioning of situated systems of meaning according to colonially instituted infrastructures; they are an aspect of the realisation of a structuring of social relations based on the normative functioning of European colonial projects. On this basis, the next chapter will explore the ways in which the European colonial logic comes to underlie the modern model of a global ethics; an ethicality that prescribes the normative functioning and the scope of structural variation of a social domain made into a unity by the colonial processes of the modern mode of organisation.

Aesthetic Interlude: Rhythm as a Property of the Internal
Functioning of Social Systems



As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, Maturana and Varela make a distinction between the structure and the organisation of a system. Maturana explains that the organisation of a system specifies its “class identity” by defining a specific range within which its structure (the structure of relations in between its constituents) can vary (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xx). These properties can be observed in a system from a perspective external to it; through *a universal phenomenalism of distinctions* (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxii). Thus, since according to Maturana “the notion of autopoiesis only characterizes living systems as autonomous entities that can be distinguished as composite unities realized through neighbourhood relations” (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xxiii), a study of social autopoiesis necessitates the addition of another property; one that corresponds to the internal functioning of social systems, or to an intersubjective “neighbourhood.” Accordingly, I propose studying the relation of the autopoietic functioning of social systems to intersubjective phenomenal experiences within them in terms of rhythm (Fanon, 1952/2008: 102) as a property of intersubjective relations. Specifically, the following section explores rhythm as a property that reveals the expression of the organisation and structure of a system within the phenomenal domain of its components, from the perspective of a component-observer. To that end, the following section theorises the relative position of a metadomain of descriptions within an overarching social order. I do so through a reflection on the interaction of a musician/composer with generative musical systems.

My experimentation with composing electronic music will serve as a framing for the theorisation of rhythm as a property of enclosed systems alongside structure and organisation. Accordingly, in the following, I reflect on a musical composition as a complex relational system. By doing so, I argue that when aesthetic forms are understood as always resulting from collective modes of enunciation, aesthetics then reveal the transgenerational regularities (relational rhythms) formalised in systemic structures. I propose that a method of questioning self-evidence as explored earlier through the work of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon presents a framework of theoretical inquiry which, when applied to processes of artistic production, makes possible the disentanglement of self-evident relational rhythms from aesthetic articulations. Thus, the following theoretical exploration is grounded in a continuous process of producing musical compositions and listening back to them in different moments throughout the period of researching for this dissertation.

Learning about sound and music while simultaneously being engaged in philosophical research on epistemology and cognition made of music an applied context within which I can make sense of how I learn outside of predetermined structures set by formal educational frameworks. Consequently, these musical explorations became a space of experimentation at the intersections of theory, practice, and the context within which they are produced. One of the ways in which this nexus of situated contexts, theory, and practice becomes apparent is in the habit of listening and reviewing tracks I was working on over periods that extended to months.

By paying attention to my emotional reactions to particular pieces of music I listen to recurrently over longer periods of time, patterns start to emerge. Drawing from Massumi's distinction between *intensity/affect* and *qualification* (Massumi, 1995: 88), two superposed patterns can be disentangled from patterns of changing emotional states: one at the level of qualification, constituted by transformations of emotional states as qualification of intensity, and one at the level of embodied experience, constituted by embodied reactions evoked by rhythmic and melodic motifs that recur (unintentionally) in different pieces. I begin by focusing on the first of these patterns.

While attempting to learn a set of skills without a specific intention beyond learning itself and without a specific predefined structure of learning, my emotional reactions to my recordings became a means to orientate myself in an unknown field of possibilities: a field of which my limited knowledge meant that I did not know what was possible to achieve, or which methods can be applied to realize a specific musical intention. In this case, the qualification of an emotional state in relation to a track—which reduces all the ways that I have felt about it before or what I felt while producing it to a singular emotional state—creates a drive towards changing what I felt was the state of my compositions and skills with which I am not satisfied. This urgency, operationally, is expressed as a pull towards future possibilities, oriented by what I enjoyed in my music in contrast to what my enjoyment was disturbed by. Practically, I analysed the recordings, defined motifs that I like or dislike, looked for different articulations of similar patterns in the music of others, and planned adjustments to my tracks and to my approach to production. As such, this mode of analysis often led me to resources that would further the specific skills that would allow me to realize a goal I had set myself based on a set of “objective” parameters, defined in relation to specific emotional states as static qualifications of affects generated in different situations and different contexts. These

resources, in this context, are found on the video sharing platform of YouTube, where my intention can be projected onto videos unpacking musical concepts and showcasing equipment and digital programs that apply them.

This “normal” trajectory of development, which I enact along many electronic music enthusiasts that congregate on digital platforms and in the comment sections of YouTube videos, must be questioned. Specifically, what must be questioned is the accessibility and normativity of European/Western systems of value—here, in relation to music—and the technical/functional methods of teaching and learning validated by a scientific understanding of sound and rhythm. I argue that such a functional mode of understanding informs individuated trajectories of development, outlined by systems of values determined by the economic functioning of a globalized music industry; trajectories made tangible by technologies that facilitate production informed by such values. Accordingly, within such a line of development, possible openings of individuated processes to collective environments are always mediated by functional logics and functional social formations (institutions that operate within the cultural field or the field of entertainment, social media platforms, instrument manufacturers, etc.). Phrased in relation to a wider context, the default lines of development made accessible by the modern structuring of social relations and modern technologies are ones that presuppose the reproduction of social structures that enable the conservation of the aesthetic and psycho-affective closure that maintains the enactment of a Western bourgeois mode of being as “normal” (Wynter, 2015: 197).

I propose that a method of questioning self-evidence as theorized by Wynter presents a framework to explore and realize openings within modern aesthetic and psycho-affective closures. Consequently, in this example, I explore how such a method inspired a shift in the trajectories along which my learning about sound and rhythm developed; from ones determined by an externalized assessment of my musical pieces and skills to ones informed by an interest in exploring the musical motifs that recur in my music without planning, through associations evoked by these motifs in different moments and different contexts.

At some point of recurrently listening to my own tracks, I took notice of a rhythmic pattern that I often program whenever I feel that I cannot settle on any particular motif. I found that I

tend to repeat approximative rearticulations of the rhythm of *dabke*:¹¹ a rhythm played in traditional celebrations in Lebanon. It is the pattern that as kids we played whenever there is anything around that can be used as a drum.

Dabke is known as a folkloric dance, where rhythmic variations are tied to situated cultural identities. Different iterations of dabke are performed throughout West Asia and North Africa, all unified by the fact that their origin is a matter of speculation and local myths (Rowe, 2010: 120-121). The structure of music/movement in dabke is marked by one variation: a hit in the centre of the *derbakeh* (a traditional drum) and a hit on its edge; the sequence does not change, but the time between its beats morphs in relation to contextual modulations. To dance dabke, a group of people hold hands to form a chain, while performing synchronised steps. These steps are just steps: exaggerated rhythmic stamping of feet while moving laterally. The *derbakeh* player varies the structure in conversation with the dancers. The timing of each hit is informed by the temporal relations of the hits that preceded it, while the overall timing of the pattern is informed by the temporal relations between different repetitions of that pattern; chains of patterns are interrupted with variations of the recurrent rhythms and different articulations of the main bi-tonal pattern. The dance is structured by the music but varies according to the movements of each dancer which are informed by the rhythm of the drum and by the people that surround them in the chain; by the changes in the way they squeeze each other's hands and lean on each other's shoulders as one tries to moderate between the person on one's left going faster from excitement, and the person on the one's right getting tired. The movement of the overall chain is in conversation with the *derbakeh* player; sometimes, the rhythm of the *derbakeh* is accentuated by a *tabl* (another larger traditional drum, worn on strap, and played while dancing in the middle of the *dabke* chain). The *tabl* accents the main rhythm of the *derbakeh* with bassy thumps that can be felt as much as heard, and which frees the *derbakeh* for more radical improvisations.

During celebrations, the structure of musical phrases is enacted by musicians and is itself modulated by the interaction of the musicians with the dancing collective. The rhythm of the dance is negotiated in between the dancers, and between the dancers and the players through

¹¹ Dabke is a traditional dance performed in different Arab cultures. Dabke dances play a significant role in maintaining a sense of cultural identity within Arab diasporic communities. Beyond being an articulation of a national culture, dabke is a tradition of embodied interactions and a mode of collective articulation, practiced in local celebrations (Rowe, 2010; Karkabi, 2018; Silverstein, 2023; Silverstein, 2012).

the temporal interactions of different steps of different people and the different steps of an individual. Here, the difference between rhythm and structure becomes apparent: rhythms are enacted relationalities that simultaneously determine and modulate the proximity of the elements of a system to each other; a living mode of relation. Structure, then, is a predetermined property that refers to the systemic containment of rhythms throughout recurrent re-articulations. Through this analysis, the properties of social autopoiesis can be reiterated: the organisation determines the range of variability of structures; the structures determine the range of variability of relational rhythms; and the circle is completed by rhythms (as relational regularities) underlying the creation of narratives which effectuate a coding of relationalities (structures) that realises a specific mode of organisation. This self-reinforcing system is what Wynter theorises as the *sociogenic principle*; a phenomenon through which specific modes of being are configured (Wynter, 2013: 54).

Accordingly, in order to develop an understanding of the musical organisation of the theme of dabke in relation to a sociogenic perspective, and to theorise the relation of the situated emergence of rhythmic formations in moments of celebration (in the example of dabke) to the particular mode of being within the particular context of a village in the east of the Mediterranean, we need to consider the origin of the practice of dabke. As mentioned earlier, the historical origins of dabke are not clear. Among others, some narratives tie it to Canaanite fertility rites, and others to daily practices of the peasantry of the region (Rowe, 2010: 121). This history is further concealed by nationalist narratives that adapt a formulation of the history of dabke that tie it to a particular geography or a particular ethnicity (Rowe, 2010: 120).

The narrative told in Mount Lebanon (or at least, the one I remember being told) and that integrates dabke within the identity of that region says that dabke has its roots in the soil roofs of traditional serf houses in Mount Lebanon; roofs that needed to be compacted ahead of every winter in order to prevent rain from leaking into the houses. Dabke (which can be translated to stamping of feet, derived from the verb 'دبك' [dabaka]), in this narrative, emerged from the tradition of rural collectives coming together to compress the roofs of the communities' buildings. According to this narrative, dabke is the result of a collective need turned into a celebration, where the rhythm facilitates a coordinated collective stamping of the soil of a roof. In this (to a certain extent, mythical) narrative, dabke is the result of addressing a collective concern by making a labour-intensive process a reason for a

celebration, which in its proceedings within different contexts trains a collective skill necessary for the subsistence of the community. The dance is a ritual that outlines a framework according to which a recurrent collective need can be attended to; the need becomes a reason to celebrate while systematically reproducing an adequate compaction of the roofs of different houses within a community.

Regardless of the historical accuracy of such a formulation, thinking of dabke as such makes it easier to imagine how this tradition is shared in geographies that have similar features, such as similar naturally occurring building materials and a similar climate. Such formulation also makes it easier to imagine how this shared organisational form can be articulated in celebrations through different structures in different communities or in different localities; and how these re-articulations become attached to cultural identities. From this perspective, and through Fanon and Wynter's understanding of self-evidence as a propriety of the terms of modes of being, the restructuring of rhythms and their formalisation through a particular story within such a context functions to make a practice self-evident for the members of a community. The formalisation of stamping roofs in the structured practice of dabke ensures that every first rain of every year, the members of the collective know, self-evidently, what they are doing that day.

From an externalized perspective, the trajectory above is functionally useless to the musical explorations from which I departed: it produces no veridical knowledge, as such it cannot be applied within a framework of systematic and quantifiable improvement of my musical production; it does not generate a momentum towards a predefined line of future development.

To my experience of exploring an unknown field of possibilities, this self-reflective trajectory guided my experiments towards explorations in motifs that play with the resonance between my articulation of dabke rhythms and the context within which I reproduce them. Becoming aware of the situated origins of the rhythms I repeat without an intention to do so—and of how such rhythms and their collective movements are related to specific situated needs and aspirations—made of musical production a method to explore the intersections between the relational patterns of my native environment with those of genres of electronic dance music formed within communities of Black and Brown folks; and to explore the impressions left by the body's encounter with the structures of a functional modernity on these rhythms.

This trajectory of development created a domain of interactions where the self-defining movements performed by racialized and gendered communities as they encountered the normative structures of a Western-centric modernity interact through machines that facilitate musical expression within parameters informed by normative patterns of consumption. In this domain, patterns cannot be contained within a unity whose totality can be known. Rather, this is an interactive domain within which the intersections that I embody in the specific contexts I integrate can be uncovered; and within which they can be formed into sequences of movements that articulate resonances between multiple situated lineages that inform my self-understanding, joined by the misuse of a modern technology.

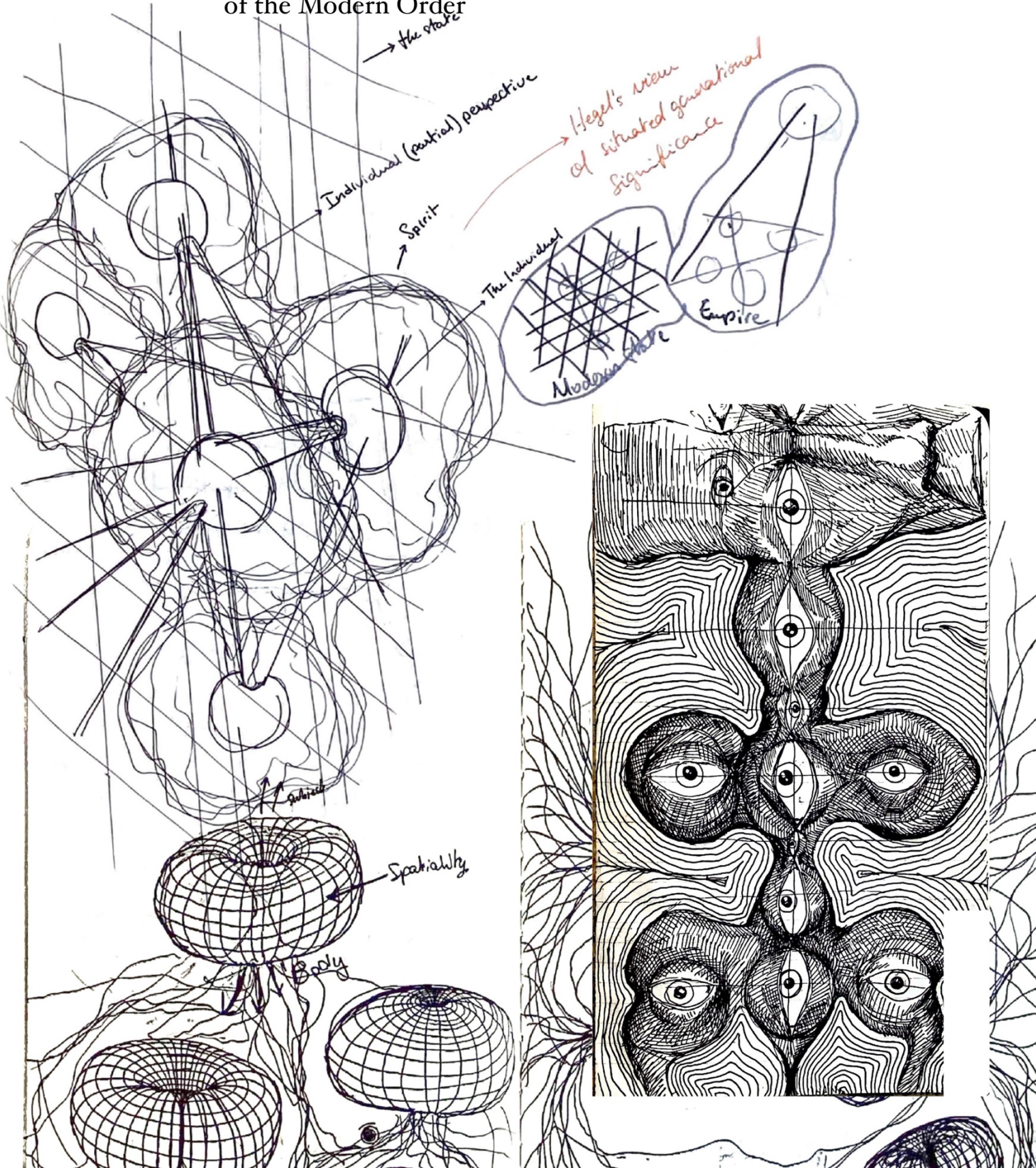
Within such a framework, stories—like the one narrating the origin of dabke—guide us towards uncovering the ways in which a situated context informs the emergence and reproduction of the system of meanings through which its normative subjects understand themselves as different from others. Dabke is an example of how, in different modes of social organisation, aesthetic articulations reflect patterns of production, and this entanglement of processes of production with aesthetic articulations is itself a reflection of the situated redefinition of relational structures embedded in situated social relations—hence, the redefinition of social structures—and of aesthetic articulations embedded in collective expressions of self-conception (origin stories (Wynter, 2015: 199))—hence, the redefinition of a retroactively projected unity that determines the mode of organisation that conserves its separation from its background.

Collective aesthetic articulations transgress the enclosures of modern polities to reveal a situated, collective, and enacted mode of alignment: a mode of alignment within situated communities, articulated as variations on a rhythm that emerges from the adaptation of collective patterns to the conditions of survival shared within a particular geography. Accordingly, when thinking of dabkeh as aesthesis (Mignolo & Vasquez, 2013: 11), the dance and its rhythms become a playful enunciation of movements trained in practices of subsistence: the synchronised movement of feet stamping the wet soil of traditional roofs. Such an understanding transforms the notions of art and aesthetics from an expression of an individuated talent to an articulation of patterns repeated in different contexts over generations, and which communicate the particularities of a situated environment and the collective strategies of surviving within such an environment. Thus, collective experiments in modes of aesthetic articulations create a framework within which new relationalities can be

formed, and in which the training of patterns within modernised socialities can be removed from its functional institutional context to be re-situated within collective negotiations between a human collective and their extra-human environment. The laws and narratives of such a social order, as well as its self-evidence, are grounded in enacted regularities that emerge from the adaptation of collective rhythms and structures of relations to the conditions of surviving with and within a particular environment. For example, in the case of the speculative narrative of origin of dabke, the rhythm/dance itself is formed from an urgency created by the changing of seasons: the compression of soil roofs. The dance as a rhythmically repeated pattern creates a structure or a framework for the simultaneous transference and application of knowledge in the form of a collective ritual. Today, this speculative history creates an association between the dance and a romantic idea of situated relations within the village, of which the dance becomes an articulation. This romantic idea is continuously undone by the conditions of individuated labour within a modernised world, to then be reconstituted, temporarily, during a celebration in the village.

Thus, aesthetic expressions are articulations of enacted regularities trained in modes of subsistence—repeated, coordinated, and synchronised, communal movements necessary for the survival of a situated collective. From this perspective, intersections of stories of different social systems uncover how this sociogenic process of self-reproduction is made to be aligned with modern logics; and how this alignment is realized through the modern structuring of social relations according to systems of values and meaning organised around a colonial notion of function. Within such a framework, aesthetic articulations communicate situated knowledges, which, when understood beyond their flattening to static ethnic, cultural, and national identities—as different *genres* of enacting a normative mode of being a modern human (Wynter, 2013: 42)—articulate different methods through which social structures are collectively shaped within situated contexts; and the intersection of different modes of collective artistic articulation uncovers social and political alignments concealed by the aesthetic and psycho-affective closures created by a mode of social organisation around function.

Chapter 3: The Conservative Development of the Modern Order



In the previous chapters, by drawing from Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, I argued that the modern structuring of social relations is expressed in the systemic institution of a self-alienated mode of experience and a mode of understanding based on an externalised perspective (a metadomain of descriptions). Building on this argument, I reflected on how such a mode of experience and understanding is reproduced as self-evident in and along different generations and within socialities of different scales.

In this chapter, I theorise the modern sociogenic coding of collective significance by studying the ways in which meanings are structured by the bureaucratic configuration of situated social relations. I study the constitution of autopoietic systems according to a spectrum of phenomenological familiarity, where from one side, the properties of the organisation of a social system are obscured by being understood as self-evident while from the other side, what is not familiar is objectified (van der Drift, 2021: 99), understood, and interacted with through a visual phenomenology. In other words, by questioning the processes through which recurrent, continuous, and collectively enacted patterns become familiar to the point of receding to the background of awareness, I explore the ways in which what is phenomenologically experienced as self-evident within a specific social order is formed by maintaining what is familiar over generations. By formulating an understanding of the terms of phenomenal experience that inform objectifying intersubjective dynamics, I argue that objectifying subjectivities emerge when subsistence is not understood as relational processes negotiated between human systems and their cultural-natural environment, but as dependent on the systemic control of the human experience.

I argue that the unification of modes of material provisioning of colonised communities around the world according to Euro/Western-centric modes of production, gave rise to a mode of social organisation in which bureaucratic management, technological advancement,

and the commodification of racialised, gendered, and sexualised bodies, are fundamentally interconnected. I draw from Simone Browne's theorisation of *branding* in the context of racial slavery, as the systemic objectification and massification of racialised bodies (Browne, 2015: 118), and from Aníbal Quijano's theorisation of the historical processes that established a modern model of (colonial) power (Quijano, 2000: 533), to reflect on the systemic dynamics that institutes a Euro-centric mode of organisation as a global order. Then, through the decolonial framework applied thus far, I draw from Hegel's theory of the state in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 253), in order to explore how the gendering of labour becomes the basis of a global order premised on the institution of intersubjective structures of domination according to categories of gender and race.

I question the social function of national bureaucracies in relation to the redefinition of culture-specific narratives, to explore the effect of making culture-specific truths, narratives, and laws only redefinable outside of the intersubjective dynamics of situated collectives. I develop an understanding of bureaucratic systems as a fundamental and foundational technology to the modern order, realising and maintaining the coupling of individuals to a domain of racial/ethnic unities. I theorise the systemic functioning of modern technologies within an intersubjective phenomenal domain by drawing from Brian Massumi's distinction between affect and intensity (Massumi, 1995: 85, 86), in order to argue that what is considered as technology within modernised contexts are tools and processes that further the systematic institution of dependence on colonial infrastructures.

Race and the Translation of Physical Labour and Intersubjective Patterns to Information and of Information to Political Power

As signalled in the first chapter, following Wynter I understand the history of the modern mode of organisation to be the history of the "invention of the concept of Man(1)-as-homopoliticus" (Wynter, 2015: 190). This history starts with the conditions for globalised autopoiesis becoming available as material wealth extracted from colonised populations and lands. The resulting autopoietic enclosure of Man(1) is one whose organisation enacts the reproduction of the structures of social relations and modes of being that created the conditions of its emergence: the relation of European society to its racialised "Human Other" (Wynter, 2015: 266). Man(2) is another phase in the structural reproduction of the European model of being human; a phase in which the European cosmogony's notion of a human

species is made biologically absolute, allowing the fragmentation and classification of the species into genres of being hybridly human (Wynter, 2015: 203). This is a global mode of social organisation, maintained through pseudo-speciation (Erikson, 1985: 214), informing the systematisation of autopoiesis in a bio-scientific system of classification and in a bureaucratic system of management of labour and resources.

In *Dark Matters*, Simone Browne analyses the understanding of populations as objectified masses that serve specific functions within the racial mode of modern production and traces this understanding to “branding, particularly within racial slavery” (Browne, 2015: 118) during a period that extends from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Branding served “as a means to population management that rendered whiteness prototypical through its making, marking, and marketing of blackness as visible and as commodity” (Browne, 2015: 118). Browne argues that the production of racial difference is dependent on the transference of value from physical labour to the body as commodity, and then from commodity to information; or, in other words, on a coupling of value and information through the objectification of the body which allows the imposition of “certain meanings” on “certain bodies” (Browne, 2015: 91). She explains:

Branding was a practice through which enslaved people were signified as commodities to be bought, sold, and traded. At the scale of skin, the captive body was made the site of social and economic maneuver through the use of iron type. [...] In this way, branding before embarkation, on the slave vessel, and at the point of disembarkation must be understood alongside its implication in the formation of the “racial state.” [...] [David Theo] Goldberg further points out that in the “naturalistic extreme, racially identified groups are treated much like the natural resources found in the environment, no different than the objects of the landscape available for the extraction of surplus value, convenient value added to raw material.” [...] By making blackness visible as commodity and therefore sellable, branding was a dehumanizing process of classifying people into groupings, producing new racial identities that were tied to a system of exploitation. (Browne, 2015: 93-94; quoting Goldberg, 2011: 110)

The process of imposition of race on the colonised population of the Americas and on the kidnapped African populations outlines the framework of a modern order where bureaucratic systems structure modes of being according to a racial system of production and distribution of resources. This is a modern order sustained by a system of labour and production premised and dependent on the objectification of racialised bodies and on the attribution of value to massed and objectified bodies as commodities.

The implications of the translation of the body as commodity to information as value can be understood through Browne's reflection on the relation between slave branding and current *biometric technologies*:

Current biometric technologies and slave branding, of course, are not one and the same; however, when we think of our contemporary moment when “suspect” citizens, trusted travelers, prisoners, welfare recipients, and others are having their bodies informationalized by way of biometric surveillance, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes without consent or awareness, and then stored in large-scale, automated databases, some managed by the state and some owned by private interests, we can find histories of these accountings of the body in, for example, the inventory that is the Book of Negroes, slave ship manifests that served maritime insurance purposes, banks that issued insurance policies to slave owners against the loss of enslaved laborers, and branding as a technology of tracking blackness that sought to make certain bodies legible as property. (Browne, 2015: 128)

In the context of racial slavery, the separation of value from physical labour allowed slave owners to take out insurance policies against the loss of enslaved labourers, thus guaranteeing the conservation of their investments even in the event of the death of an enslaved individual. Operationally, the separation of value from physical labour created the conditions for the management of labouring populations as commodities/objects. This mode of management allowed the extraction of value to be decoupled from the phenomenal level of the body. By means of systemic surveillance and bureaucratic management, economic value becomes the medium of macro-level unities constituted by populations as masses.

In *Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America*, Aníbal Quijano argues that the constitution of *America*—referring to the exclusive “time/space under Iberian (Hispanic Portuguese) colonial domination” from 1492 until 1610 (Quijano, 2000: 574)—was dependent on two historical processes: “the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’” (Quijano, 2000: 574) and “the constitution of a new structure of control of labour and its resources and products” (Quijano, 2000: 534). As such, the colonial constitution of *America* is premised on a mode of being Man(2) as the global model of being human, where being is informed by and mediated through absolute scientific theories rather than situated and embodied negotiations. The following section will expand on this history of the modern mode of organisation. I argue that the combination of the histories of what Browns terms “accountings” of the body (Browne, 2015: 128) and the material conditions of the European context afforded by the accumulation of value extracted from colonised populations and lands constitutes the identity of the modern order and the

properties of its organisation. Quijano argues that the notion of race in its modern meaning did not exist as such before the colonisation of America. He explains:

Insofar as the social relations that were being configured were relations of domination, such identities were considered constitutive of the hierarchies, places, and corresponding social roles, and consequently of the model of colonial domination that was being imposed. In other words, race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification. As time went by, the colonizers codified the phenotypic trait of the colonized as color, and they assumed it as the emblematic characteristic of racial category. (Quijano, 2000: 534)

This first historical process as discussed by Quijano establishes the first property of the globally hegemonic modern order as an autopoietic system that allows the production of a phenomenal domain from which the lives of racialised and colonised populations are structured, configuring situated dynamics to reproduce the advantage of the European colonisers. This classification of populations according to race emblematised as colour, according to Quijano, was made possible by the control of global trade by European colonial projects. Quijano explains:

The privileged positions conquered by the dominant whites for the control of gold, silver, and other commodities produced by the unpaid labor of Indians, blacks, and mestizos (coupled with an advantageous location in the slope of the Atlantic through which, necessarily, the traffic of these commodities for the world market had to pass) granted whites a decisive advantage to compete for the control of worldwide commercial traffic. The progressive monetization of the world market that the precious metals from America stimulated and allowed, as well as the control of such large resources, made possible the control of the vast pre-existing web of commercial exchange that included, above all, China, India, Ceylon, Egypt, Syria—the future Far and Middle East. (Quijano, 2000: 537)

The control of global trade positioned European colonial projects as managers of capital and capitalist modes of production, which through colonisation became a globally adopted mode of material provisioning. This is the second historical process through which the modern order is established based on the model of social organisation developed during the colonisation of the American and African continents. This historical process continues to inform a system of control of labour and resources based on racial classification in the so-called “post-colonial era.” Specifically, the capital accumulated by colonial project through the control of global trade and the employment of the unpaid labour of colonised populations, combined with the systematically instituted dependence on colonial infrastructures as a means to subsistence, creates an environment where colonial racial domination is automatically reproduced as international economic dependency. Seen from this perspective,

the modern mode of organisation formalises the mode of material provisioning of European colonial projects as one dependent on the control of other societies' labour and resources. Simultaneously, within colonised societies, this system institutes a mode of material provisioning dependent on modern/colonial infrastructures.

In summary, an exploitative system of managing labour and resources is established through the classification of populations according to race; this extractive system becomes a colonial project's means to subsist in a global economic system instituted through genocides, the kidnapping of populations, and the theft of resources. Thus, the movements and relations of an individuated subject of the modern order become directly determined by the systemic interactions of a racial/ethnic unity—to which belonging is biologically determined—with the colonially established bureaucratic network that realise the systemic unity of the modern world.

According to this outlook, the organisation of the colonially established modern order is one that creates the conditions for the emergence of racial geopolitical identities, reproducing structures of relations that reinforce the European control of global trade. As such, the modern/colonial categories of classification of massed populations become the grounds for cultural identities that correspond to the hierarchy actualised in market relations. Thus, “the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race,’” and “the constitution of a new structure of control of labour and its resources and products [...] around and upon the basis of capital and the world market” (Quijano, 2000: 533-534) establish the colonality of power as the modern logic of social relations, professionalised labour as the standard model of subsistence (Quijano, 2000: 533-534), and their combination as the realisation of being a *modern human* (Wynter, 2015: 203).

In sum, from a systemic perspective, the modern mode of organisation boils down to the institution of a globalised mode of social organisation dependent on a global market managed by the institutions of colonial projects as the basis of a global mode of social organisation; resulting in the livelihood of a society being managed from the outside of situated relationalities within the collectives that constitute it. In sum, from a systemic perspective, the modern order is characterised by the institution of causal relations between interactions within an intersubjective domain and interactions within a metadomain of racial/ethnic unities. Within such order, the relational patterns that sustain situated collectives are

configured in colonially formed functional institutions; institutions organised around a specific function within a Eurocentric market, made global through colonisation.

Earlier, I argued that processes of colonisation institute racial/ethnic unities as divisions of the bio-scientific definition of the human as Man (Wynter, 2015: 203). In the above I explored the ways in which the modern order configures relations according to a colonial mode of power (Quijano, 2000: 534) and racial control of labour. Based on this, and in order to understand the effect of a globalised mode of organisation on the unfolding of life within situated collectives, I think of modernisation—the systematisation of material provisioning, the commercialisation of life, and the bureaucratisation of social relations and communal processes—as being the continuation of coloniality in the configuration of social relations by unsettling the essential interactions between formed structures of intersubjective relations and situated, emergent, and collective practices of subsistence that transform those structures. As such, a modern mode of social organisation is necessarily at odds with communal practices of living as a collective within a specific environment that underly the emergence of collective identities that adapt to changes in collective dynamics and situated conditions. Instead, by translating individuated movements to information that can be aggregated to describe a population as a unified mass, the modern organisational logic makes emergent cultural differences *visible/visual* as race and ethnicity, and by doing so, establish a culture-specific normality defined in relation to the globalised model subject of a rich white heteronormative man.

The modern organisation of social relations, seen through the above, enables a Eurocentric systematisation of already established situated functional regularities (collective modes of subsistence) and infrastructures of control of labour and extraction of value (Quijano, 2000: 533-534). Accordingly, racial classification and a systemic control of labour (converted to information) secure the decoupling of situated collectives from their environments, while simultaneously instituting their coupling with functional bureaucratic environments. The modern mode of organisation, then, is a structuring of social relations initiated through the institution of an epistemology alienated from embodied and situated dynamics, based on the displacement of the concern of material provisioning of European localities to colonised lands and populations, and the reproduction of this managerial logic within colonised societies. Such an epistemology devalues embodied social negotiations, local urgencies, and the collectives formed around a communal labour of subsistence, in favour of a linear

unfolding towards a static ideation of phylogenic theories; thus, the phenomenological experience of an individual becomes tied to universal categories. Accordingly, such a social order underlies a mode of understanding that distances the individual from local social dynamics; filtering the understanding of particular events and patterns unfolding within the local through universal categories whose universality and self-evidence is configured by the modern organisational logic, and by the colonality of power through which this logic is actualised in social structures and bureaucratic infrastructures.

In summary, the history/reproduction of the modern order as an autopoietic system starts with the colonisation of the Americas and with the Transatlantic slave trade which created the conditions for enclosures of European localities to understand and interact with the world as submitted to their mode of organisation (Quijano, 2000: 537). I argue that the colonisation of the Americas and with the Transatlantic slave figure as a natal/medium whose organisational logic is maintained and reproduced in modern socialities. The conditions that enable this global autopoietic system to multiply through the division of the unity of the human into specific modes of *being hybridly human* (Wynter, 2015: 203) are secured in the institution of bureaucratic systems that allow the structuring of the social relations of colonised populations; or, in other words, these systems allow European colonial projects (including the governmental apparatuses of previously colonised territories) to create the environmental conditions from which sub-enclosures can emerge; sub-enclosures pre-configured to reproduce the systemic control of labour and resources according to universal categories that outline a racialised and globalised bourgeois normativity. On these grounds, the following section focuses on the ways in which such mode of social organisation makes possible the systemic individuation of collective patterns formed in situated contexts.

The Transformation of Labour from Contribution to Communal Subsistence to Ethical Duty

In order to theorise the structuring of intersubjective relations that enables a systematisation of the auto-institution of the modern order, I will draw from Hegel's theory of the state in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 253). Based on Wynter's theorisation of the widely applicable phenomenon of projecting the moral and political laws of a particular social order onto steady and recurrent cosmic and natural phenomena (Wynter, 2003: 272), I will reflect on how this process is articulated through Hegel's metaphysics in "the individual who is a world" realised in being a citizen of a nation state, which itself is the realisation of

the “ethical life of a people” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 255). Accordingly, I approach Hegel’s theory as a narrative through which I reflect on the normative functioning of the modern order and its realisation in bureaucratically managed nation states.

Hegel defines *spirit* as “the self-supporting, absolute, real essence” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 254). He argues that spirit is fragmented into a “realm of cultural formation” and a “world of faith” or “the realm of essence” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 255). He explains that the division of spirit (consciousness as a unified totality) into an objective realm and a spiritual one is effectuated in *action*. For Hegel, to act is to create a division between “substance” and “the consciousness of substance” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 256); in other words, action creates a division between the object (that is acted upon) and the abstraction of an object by a willing subject.

In the chapter on *reason* that precedes the chapter on *spirit*, Hegel explains that the universality of ethics is realised in the universality of self-consciousness. He explains that self-consciousness as the inner spirit (here, in the vocabulary of this dissertation: the psyche) *grows into existence* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 204) by recognising its substance (here, the body). Put another way, Hegel argues that the inner spirit of the domain of religion becomes real when it recognises its entanglement with the materiality of the body (the domain of natural sciences). The universality of ethics as such is not due to an abstract unity, but rather, due to an individual recognising themselves to be a complete self-sufficient unity that becomes aware of the wholeness of others and their self-sufficiency.

Hegel maintains the Enlightenment presupposition of reason as an unchanging universal substance (Hegel, 1807/2018: 205); however, he argues that reason by itself is substantial only from the perspective of an abstraction of universality: it is “the law as it has been thought” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 204). Accordingly, for Hegel, spirit as absolute and real essence is the undoing of the distribution of the “ethical world” into “the this-worldly present and the other-worldly beyond” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 255); as such, spirit is conceived as the unification of the moral laws of the state and those of the church. In this way, absolute spirit as a universal ethics becomes real by “passing through a series of shapes” until it attains a “knowing of itself” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 254).

Hegel argues that *self-consciousness* is the middle between *substance* and *the consciousness of substance*: the unity of consciousness and substance (as the actual work of consciousness)

(Hegel, 1807/2018: 256), as one becomes conscious of their substance; or, in other words, as a subject becomes aware of their materiality and the material effect of actions as the realisation of abstractions. Accordingly, he proposes that in becoming real, the abstract universality of reason “shatters into completely self-sufficient beings” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 204); accordingly, a real substantial universality is the self-consciousness of self-sufficient individuals, which from a universal perspective is *spirit* as the unity of essence and of substance. As such, in Hegel’s formulation, self-consciousness is the becoming real of absolute spirit as ethical substance (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257); or in the vocabulary of this dissertation, a universal ethics is realised in an objective self-understanding. For Hegel, self-consciousness is not a particular consciousness or a particular subjectivity of an individual, but rather, it is the consciousness of individuals in general (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257). Hegel’s ideas on the universality of ethics are developed in conversation with both the Enlightenment notions of reason and morality, and with the spiritual universal unity found in the Christian religion. Unpacking how Hegel’s self-consciousness operates as the middle ground between a rational view of the world and the spiritual preoccupation with pure essence (Hegel, 1807/2018: 256) will provide an entry point to a study of the proprieties of the phenomenological field of experience created by a social order organised around a polity that structures and manages situated social dynamics from an externalised perspective.

Based on the above, Hegel argues that within the family (here, in the terms of this dissertation, within a situated context) the individual is an “unreal shadow without a core” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 258-259). That is because within the family (in the chapter on “spirit,” Hegel is only concerned with the *situated enclosure* of a nuclear family), an individual is defined by the predetermined natural (here, self-evident) relationalities that constitute the family. Because of that, he explains that thinking in universal terms through an individuality defined by situated relationalities is to think while isolated from situated sensations (Hegel, 1807/2018: 259); put differently, when self-knowledge is informed by situated affects, thinking in universal terms results in thinking of universality as a pure abstraction, or as a shadow, since what is real from the perspective of such situated self-understanding are only the immediate relationalities of a situated context. He explains:

[...] the action, which embraces the entire existence of blood relations, has as its object and content the singular individual – not the citizen, [...] but rather, it has as the object the individual who as this singular individual belongs to the family, and who as a universal being, is exempted from his sensuous, i.e., singular actuality. The action no longer concerns the living but rather the dead; it concerns he who, out of the long

progression of his dispersed existence, is condensed into one completed shape and who has been elevated out of the unrest of contingent life into the motionlessness of simple universality. – Because he is only actual and substantial as a citizen, the singular individual, taken not as a citizen but as belonging to the family, is only the unreal shadow without any core. (Hegel, 1807/2018: 259)

Accordingly, since an individual within a family cannot be independent, Hegel argues that ethics is not a property of relations within the family; ethicality applies to the family as a unity which becomes ethical by creating the conditions for a patriarch and/or a brother to become autonomous, whole, ethical, and self-conscious individuals (Hegel, 1807/2018: 263). A universal ethics is realised within the family by a mother and a sister that serves to enable the father and the brother to act as citizens, and in doing so, enact the “doing” of a family (Hegel, 1807/2018: 258).

Accordingly, because Hegel understands ethics as necessarily universal, what he develops is a metaphysics that underlies a mode of self-understanding related to “the whole individual, or, to the individual as universal” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 259), and not the singular (particular) individual defined by the particular patterns and dynamics of a situated sociality. The *individual as universal* is realised in the “citizens of the nation” which creates the framework for action to be aligned with “a people” as the actualisation of universal ethics in a “cultural formation” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 255, 257), rather than action being aligned with the needs and desires of a particular community in a situated context. As such, the nation state becomes the site of ethical action, since it is the context that makes real and substantial the universal in “a people” and in “citizens” (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257).

Hegel theorised the bureaucratic systems that managed the extraction of value from colonised populations and lands as a device that serves to institute a coupling of the self-understanding of European citizens to an epistemology that transcends natural and cosmic phenomena to contain them within a veridical understanding. Accordingly, Hegel’s universal principle (spirit) is not a purely rational understanding of tangible phenomena nor a spiritual and eternal abstract domain, but the actual realisation of the unity of both, which outlines a mode of ethical being defined by creating a universal self-understanding—or a definition of the self as autonomous and individuated—formulated in relation to the presupposition of the universal autonomy of an externalised observer as a universal individual. This is an understanding of ethics realised as the mode of being a white, wealthy, and Christian *Man* (Wynter, 2003: 291; 2015: 196), whose autonomy is secured by the extraction of value from

colonised populations and lands, and the simultaneous subjugation of gendered and non-normative bodies (non-white, and/or non-Christian, and/or poor) within colonial centres and colonised localities.

Accordingly, I argue that the differentiation between labour of subsistence and professionalised labour informs the socialisation of younger generations according to two different trajectories of adaptation. One trajectory creates the conditions to become adapted to care for oneself as an individuated subject, and to experience, perceive, and interact with an environment as fragmented into objects that can be managed, and that serve or interrupt a function. The other trajectory creates the conditions to become adapted to care for a collective (within Hegel's theory of the state this collective is a family), and with that, to experience, perceive, and interact with an environment as a space; to create and maintain a collective context within which subjects and objects are formed. In short, I argue that the gendered division of labour is not a result of differences between genders but is in itself the institution of gender differences as different modes of experience, realised in social structures premised on the qualification of individuated labour done within bureaucratically managed social enclosures as ethical labour, and on assigning such labour to *Man* as the embodiment of the definition of the human as independent individual.

In Hegel's formulation we disentangle the two of the properties that informs intersubjective dynamics within modernised social structures as explored earlier through the work of Browne and Quijano: first, an unsettling of situated processes of subsistence, and of the knowledges and practices that maintain them over generations; an unsettling realised through the gendering of ethicality according to predetermined gender roles that enable the subjugation of situated social dynamics to the structuring of social relations by a centralised polity. Second, the making hyper-visible of modes of being not aligned to the normative functioning of European states by the linking of the organisation of European nation states to the realisation of *a universal individual* and *an ethical people* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257). I argue that the marking of cultural differences in relation to a universal normativity and to the gendering of ethicality are not proprieties particular to the time during which Hegel formulated his theories, nor and articulation of a universal truth, rather, they are fundamental proprieties of the modern mode of social organisation that enable a phenomenology through which a social system can be seen as a unity by the subjects that realise and enact the patterns that can be

specified as a unity from a universal metadomain of descriptions (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xviii).

In his formulation of the metaphysics that underlie the structuring of societies within nation states, Hegel projects the terms of normative being according to the mode of organisation of European societies—in the wake of a European Enlightenment brought by the theft of the resources from colonised lands and populations, and as a European bourgeoisie about to be born fed on the umbilical cord of a global empire in the making—onto universal abstractions.

Through her reflection on Fanon's analysis of the *racial gaze*, Wynter (2013: 42) explains that intersubjective relations structured by this mode of organisation institute autopoiesis, “not (as is normally the case) in a self-valorising mode of cosmogonically, mythically chartered, and thereby sociogenically encoded auto-institution, but in secular Western Man(2)'s genre-specific mode of sociogeny” (Wynter, 2015: 198). This is the institution of a subjectivity coded to enact the reproduction of the adaptive advantage of being a heteronormative Western/European subject. As such, a professionalised ethical domain—a domain that engages individuated subjects, and whose terms of being are pre-determined—is created by undoing the situated structures that follow living rhythms and conserve their adaptive significance. In this context, origin stories of colonised societies are not formed through situated negotiations and generational continuities but within institutional enclosures whose generation and continuity are maintained by networked bureaucratic systems of control of labour. Within such relational structures, the reproduction of the terms of a specific mode of being is not enacted in collective rituals but in the individuated rituals of bureaucrats, managers, citizens, and employees.

Accordingly, I argue that from the phenomenal level of the social within the modern order, bureaucratic systems secure the realisation of such an organisation—a foundational technology—by determining the possible paths of development of the structure of the system. Modern bureaucracies realise the decoupling of subjective understanding and self-understanding from situated relationalities through the institution of a unified mode of material provisioning; this unification of modes of labour is itself the decoupling of situated collectives from their situated environment and the conditions of surviving within these environments. Bureaucracy as a technology of structuring social relations aligns the interests of subjects of hegemonic orders around the world in order to render the development of technologies that make the formation and maintenance of enclosed social systems more

efficient while maintaining the identity of the globalised modern order as set by its Euro/white-centric colonial properties.

Consequently, the phenomenal domain created by the unified epistemology and mode of production of modernised societies is formed by the functioning of a globalised bureaucratic network; from such a domain, culture-specific socialities can be seen as interacting unities, themselves formed by the interactions of components. I argued earlier that the translation of physical labour to information (to abstracted categories) and the creation of infrastructures that make possible the control of labour (and the lives of people that perform it) as information, figure as properties that define the identity of modernity as an organism while at the same time reproducing its (fictional/synthetic) unity. As such, these are proprieties of the autopoietic functioning of the modern order. According to such a mode of social organisation, labour is transformed from an existential contribution to the communality of life into an ethical duty through which the conditions for the reproduction of predetermined meanings are secured.

The Gendering of Ethics in a Spirit that Highlights Cultural Differences

In order to reflect on the contemporary expression of Hegel's formulation of a modern mode of organisation, I will return to an intersubjective domain. Specifically, I will unpack the expression of the organisational logic explored through Hegel's theory of the state by returning to the context of the shared house that I live in—a context that is not structured in relation to a specific function, nor to a familial lineage. I will do so to reflect on the ways in which the gendered differentiation between economic labour (as ethical labour) and labour of subsistence continues to inform social dynamics today, and to reflect on the role of such a differentiation in the reproduction of interlocked gendered and racist oppressions (Lugones, 2003: 223). Reflecting on the reproduction of a normative modern functioning within the context of a shared house provides an opportunity to better understand the auto-institution of the modern mode of social organisation according to its foundational categories of race and gender. Namely, the autopoiesis of the modern order becomes more apparent when taking into consideration the (non-normative) particularities of the shared house I discuss.

The community of tenants within our house is constituted by artists, students, and teachers; many of us are queer, some of us do not conform to our socialised genders, and a few of us are immigrants. The constitution of our house stands in stark contrast to those of the upper-

middle class houses that surround ours. In the following I will reflect on how—despite our efforts—the modern epistemological closure and its realisation in the making visible social differences according to categories of race and gender continues to structure the internal patterns of the house. I argue that when not coupled to situated collective practices through which structures of relations are reconfigured, progressive narratives and modes of self-understanding risk concealing the systemic re-enactment of modern/colonial patterns of domination of subjugation. Such a dynamic is not particular to the context I analyse, nor to shared houses in general. Rather, this concealment of systemic modern violence is a property of liberal and progressive narratives premised on a notion of societal change realised as a negotiation of rights within limits set by the modern mode of organisation (van der Drift, 2021: 108).

Developing the argument above requires a consideration of how progressive narratives that conform to the limits on the social change set by the modern mode of organisation relate to the properties of the modern order outlined through the analysis of Hegel's theory of the state. Earlier, I noted that the distinction between situated labour of subsistence and professionalised (ethical) labour is itself the institution of a relational dynamics through which younger generations can be socialised to enact two different modes of experience assigned to a gender binary. The premise of this note lies in that this distinction informs two different modes of experience: a mode of experience of an environment as a space (as a commons), historically tied to caring for a collective (Federici, 2004/2014: 75; Hegel, 1807/2018: 258), and the maintenance of (situated) environmental conditions that secure the subsistence of that collective; this mode of experience is assigned to the gender identity of *woman*. Another mode of experience revolves around experiencing and interacting with an environment as fragmented into objects that serve or disrupt specific functions in relation to an individuated subjectivity. This second mode of experience is tied to (a self-proclaimed) caring for oneself as an individuated subject of a functional domain and is assigned the gender identity of *man* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 263). In the following, I explore how these two different modes of experience are expressed within a contemporary intersubjective domain, with or without their assigned gender identities. By doing so, I highlight the fundamental role that the institution of gender differences plays in the functioning of a managerial epistemological closure as theorised by Mijke van der Drift (2021: 94), and as discussed in the earlier study of management within a shared house. Accordingly, I argue that the

gendered mode of socialising younger generations plays a fundamental role in creating the conditions for the (re)emergence of colonial modes of domination and racial differences.

The shared house is constituted by a combination of private spaces (studios and rooms) and communal spaces (hallways, kitchen, toilets, showers). Communal spaces are managed according to the pseudo-bureaucracy of cleaning schedules. Every tenant that uses a communal space is assigned a day in the week and a specific cleaning task for which they are responsible. These schedules work for certain amount of time, until, during specific moments in the year (end of the year, end of the academic year, the beginning of holidays, etc.), most of us become swamped by institutional commitments (deadlines, stressful projects, exams, etc.), or personal pre-occupations (travel plans, holidays, etc.). In such moments, one or many of us are too busy to keep up with our cleaning tasks; theoretically, these tasks would be left until they become the responsibility of someone else the week after. In practice, the result is dishes becoming stacked on the kitchen counter, the hallways get dusty, and the toilets become dirty. The socialisation of different modes of experience as the institution of a gender binary becomes apparent in situations like this.

The cup on the kitchen counter that no one remembers who drank from, stays there. It stays there because in moments when most of us enact a subjectivity individuated by a functional formation, the used cup becomes invisible; it is invisible because it does not serve a function in its current state, and it does not interrupt any functioning since there are other clean cups around. The dirty cup remains dirty and on the kitchen counter until there are no other clean cups left, until dirty dishes make it impossible to cook, or until one of us is able to break out of the institutional urgencies we are entangled with; then, communal spaces become spaces rather than a set of functional objects. To experience an environment as a space is to care for the space as an extension of the collective, and not as a set of objects serving specific functions. Then, the random used cup is cleaned not because it interrupts a certain functioning, but because it (and other things that become invisible to individuated subjectivities) maintains a space in which the members of the collective relate to each other according to function rather than maintaining a common space in which we can (re)become a collective.

In a collective (that, presumably, is) critical about gender roles, these dynamics are sometimes enacted regardless of self-identification. However, members of the collective who are socialised to experience an environment as fragmented into functional objects are more

likely to not see objects that melt into the background of their/our awareness by standing in between being functional and interrupting function; while members of the collective who are socialised to care for a space as a commons are more likely to break out of an individuated mode of experience and wash the cup that has been there for weeks; as if the cup magically reappears as a functional object within individuated fields of experience.

The result of this dynamic is that the gendered binary socialised to be enacted as different modes of experience realigns the patterns of the house to a predetermined modern mode of organisation, despite our progressive self-identifications. In modernised social contexts, the re-enactment of gendered hierarchies guide situated social relations towards the reconstitution gendered and racial classification. From this perspective, van der Drift's note on rights being the negotiation of social changes within a range of structural variation that conserves a predetermined mode of organisation (van der Drift, 2021: 103) sheds light onto the functioning of gender rights within the contemporary (neo-liberal) phase of modern history. A model of gender equality realised by a continuation of the process of generalising professionalised labour is one that furthers the unsettling of situated process of subsistence and the possibility of communal modes of being. As such, this functional articulation of gender rights as rights acquired in enacting an alignment with the logic of functional enclosures moves patterns of gendered domination from the context of a nuclear family within which it is justified as "natural" to a functional context in which gender differences are translated—through the devaluation of labour of subsistence as a subset of reproduction labour—to a notion of value defined by parameters that favour the socialised mode of experience tied to the identity of *man*. Within such mode of organisation, patriarchal privileges (in other contexts) regarded as "natural" or "biological," become formalised and institutionalised as properties of the functional configuration of social relations.

In the context of the house I discussed, I argued that the socialisation of the binary genders as two distinct modes of experience secures the conditions that make convenient and self-evident a mode of material provisioning independent from situated dynamics. Despite the members of a collective enacting subjectivities that do not conform to the gender binary, the relational vacuum created by the functional individuation and professionalisation of labour is automatically filled with the default, predetermined meanings of the modern order; here, expressed in gender roles socialised as different modes of experience. The result is a "formalization of knowledge [...] predicated upon withdrawing from a shared space, which

removes the knower from the known” (van der Drift, 2021: 96). Van der Drift argues that this distancing operation leads to a contraction of perception. This contraction of perception prevents social conditions conducive to alternative modes of organisation from emerging, making at the same time people that dwell in between different enclosures with different systems of meanings hyper-visible; as such, reinforcing racial differences.

Within a social system structured by the modern mode of organisation, knowledge production functions as a mechanism of instituting a self-alienated mode of knowing and understanding through which meanings are pre-configured to maintain the identity, unity, and continuity of an established social order. The combination of this mode of phenomenological experience, the linking of “social interests and self-understanding”, and the undoing of the separation between ethics and epistemology (van der Drift, 2021: 100), outline the epistemological and social dynamics through which social enclosures are conditioned to reproduce the properties of the modern mode of organisation.

By being social enclosures structured not by local interactions but by the interactions of the components of their unities with the functional bureaucratic rhythms that structure living patterns, the auto-institution of local social formations becomes a subset of the modern/colonial mode of social organisation; put differently, the modern order is reproduced in situated social enclosures as fragments of a unified modern sociality. The realisation of this fragmentary order is effectuated through an always already established normal functioning within local enclosures determined by the racial, gendered, sexual, and economic class of subjects individuated by functional modern bureaucracies, and by the position of such classified subjectivities within an enclosed non-functional context. In other words, the auto-institution of social enclosures unfolding in relation to the medium of situatedly and relationally formed narratives become the realisation of the generational fragmentation of the human as species; of the “biologically absolute answer to the question of *who-we-are*” (Wynter, 2015: 198).

The structuring of situated socialities according to a modern mode of social organisation, and independently from situated dynamics, enables people aligned with the normative functioning of a particular society to interact with their surroundings as the constituents of a composite unity (here, the house as a unity); it enables them to see their peers in terms of what they contribute to the unit and to relate to their environment as fragmented into functional objects. Accordingly, it is this alignment between a normative self-understanding and the social

interest of an enclosed social context that realises the development and diversification of social structures while conserving the mode of organisation that maintains the adaptive advantage of a Euro/Western-centric ethno-class (Wynter, 2015: 216). Bureaucratic systems create the conditions for, and maintain, an externalised outlook while allowing the management of social patterns from the fictional distance between an observer of masses through a visual phenomenology and the socialities they observe. According to Wynter, the visual phenomenology informed by the modern mode of social organisation is premised on the projection of the moral and political laws of colonial modernity onto biological phenomena (Wynter, 2003: 309, 310) which enables the creation of ontogenetic and phylogenetic narratives. These narratives provide a framework for understanding (all) social patterns through bio-scientific knowledges, regardless of the particular context in which they unfold.

According to Wynter, the reworking of the classical polis during the European enlightenment was the realignment of the organisation of European societies from the other-worldly framework of the church to the worldly framework of the state (Wynter, 2003: 277). This culture-specific worldly mode of organisation becomes tied to class aspirations through the refiguration of the structure of relations within the European locality to tie “social interests and self-understanding” (van der Drift, 2021: 100). This refiguration was made possible by the material wealth extracted from colonies and by the contact with other cultures through trade and colonisation which created the conditions for a mode of material provisioning dependent on the management of the energies and resources of massed populations. This mode of being becomes the global model of normative comportment through the restructuring of relations within other cultures by instituting a default mode of material provisioning premised on a colonial model of power (Quijano, 2000: 533-534) and on the bio-racial classification of massed populations (Wynter, 2003: 296).

Accordingly, within a modernised social context, situated relationalities figure as a function among other functions determined by the modern/colonial market. This is realised, from one side, by the structuring of situated social dynamics through the commodification of essential material and relational necessities (shelter, food, entertainment, etc), and from the other side, the institution of a fragmented mode of subsistence where professionalised labour within functional social formations provides a framework for the production of such commodified necessities, while access to these necessities is predicated on the accumulation of capital

within functional institutional networks. Thus, the significance of situated social relationalities and the meanings produced within them are subordinated to the systemic function that a situated enclosure fulfils in relation to a capitalist and globally unified mode of production and material provisioning. Consequently, within such delocalised mode of organisation, the meanings through which we experience our self, other, and world are not defined within situated relationalities, but in functional social unities, pre-configured according to the organisational logic of the modern order and modulated in relation to delocalised market dynamics.

In this way, the processes and technologies through which European colonial projects instituted a mode of organisation specific to the colonial order that define and maintain the organisation/identity of Western/European societies as composite unities within which other cultures are components, becomes the organisational logic that structures social relations within different levels of social organisation. The histories of social enclosures structured by modern bureaucratic systems unfold through the fragmentation of an enclosure into smaller unities. This fragmentation of autopoietic systems into smaller auto-instituting enclosures involves the move from the universal human to racialised kinds of being hybridly human (Wynter, 2015: 216), to national kinds of being, to being a follower of a religion, to being a member of a political party, to being an employee of a functional institution, to being a member of a nuclear family, and to a mode of being an individuated subject enacted through a visual phenomenology that retroactively projects the auto-instituting logic of modern order onto the social contexts it structures and which constituted it. The mode of social organisation that results from the fragmentation of collectives into individuals managed by functional social formations ordered by global network of bureaucratic systems is one in which the self-evidence of a white heteronormative bourgeois Man becomes the expression of a universal ethics.

Over generations, this limit on possible social relations—the containment of the generational variation of social structures within limits set by the modern mode of organisation—becomes a self-evident range of socially acceptable desires and intentions. In such a case, progressive narratives become a hurdle to an understanding of problematic social dynamics. That is, when progressive narratives are not coupled with experiments in collective redefinitions of social structures through the enactment of different patterns of relations, or with the collective formulation of situated narratives, they become the constitution of a self-enclosure, or a mode

of self-alienation. Within a modernised context, this self-alienation is systematically instituted in professionalised and fragmented modes of subsistence that underlies the reproduction of alienated and alienating structures of social relations, preconfigured by the modern mode of organisation.

In sum, the combination of this conservative transgenerational process, and the reflexive enactment of socialised gendered modes of experience, enable the modern structuring of social relations to be reproduced. This is a reproduction made possible by the systematic facilitation of “retraction of interests in others” as a means of domination (van der Drift, 2021: 99). Van der Drift, together with Nat Raha, reflects on this reproduction of social domination despite modes of being that challenge modern norms:

We acknowledge that resisting the norm also gives space for power grabs, which require their own careful engagements. In breaking out of servitude, one ends up in a context where servitude is no longer service industry, but similar acts and work might be transformed into a form of care. Caring for other dispossessed people other queer and trans folks, other marginalized people, the people that we build friendship and life without outside of the norm—is hopefully a more agential position, although it may also be in the form of undervalued, waged labor. Care is about supporting each other’s survival, potentially toward flourishing. Defiance of the norm can take the highly pleasurable form of having worked through a lot of one’s complicities because giving up was not on the table. We didn’t want to give up care, even though care showed itself first as servitude. (Drift & Raha, 2024: 78)

The analyses of dynamics within a shared house, echoes van der Drift and Raha’s opposition of care and servitude by arguing that racial and gendered hierarchies are automatically reproduced in the enactment of relational structures preconfigured through the systemic individuation of professionalised labour. However, it is here that it becomes important to “acknowledge that resisting the norm also gives space for power grabs” (Drift & Raha, 2024: 78). To acknowledge as much is also to acknowledge that an anarchist society is not “a society made for and by observers that would not surrender their condition of observers as their only claim to social freedom and mutual respect” (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx). Rather, it is the opposite, “a non-hierarchical society for which all relations of order are constitutively transitory and circumstantial to the creation of relations that continuously negate the institutionalization of human abuse” (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxix-xxx). Thus, this society is an anarcho-communist one, in which the members of collectives redefine the organisation that structures their relations; not in specialised and exclusive contexts but in shared and common contexts where significance is enmeshed in collective practices of

subsistence, and where meanings emerge from complex interactions of desires and needs that inform collective aspirations and situated modes of self-governance.

The Infrastructural and Technological Filtering of Virtual Possibilities

In the beginning of this chapter, I drew from Aníbal Quijano and Simone Browne in order to highlight the fundamental properties of the modern order: racial classification and a colonial mode of control of labour and resources. I argued that culture-specific autopoiesis is synchronised to the functioning and reproduction of the modern order through the alignment of culture-specific narratives and modes of material provisioning to modern/colonial logics. I argued that the range of variation of social structures is set by the institution of a unified mode of material provisioning, by the transgenerational maintenance of social formations organised around specific functions, and by the intersubjective dynamics necessary to maintain such functional formations. In this section, I reflect on the multi-level functioning of the modern order in relation to phenomenal experiences within a modernised context; that is, I theorise modern technologies—technologies whose functioning is dependent on bureaucratic infrastructures—as technologies of phenomenal mediation.

Accordingly, based on the argument above—to the effect that the variation of social structures within the modern order is contained within boundaries set by the conditions of maintaining the racial classification of populations, and a delocalised bureaucratic management of labour and resources—in this section I argue that modern development is limited to furthering the effectiveness of systemic interventions in situated narratives and in situated modes of material provisioning. More explicitly, I argue that within social environments structured according to the organisational logic of the modern order, any technological improvement of living conditions is necessarily the reproduction and reinforcement of the alignment of situated collective patterns to the normal functioning of the Euro/Western-centric modern/colonial order. Based on this argument, I theorise modern technologies as facilitating systemic interventions in culture-specific narratives and in situated and collective practices of subsistence. This is carried out through a phenomenological study of the interaction between modern technologies and the phenomenological domains of different social enclosures. Accordingly, the following study is grounded in experiments with generative electronic sound synthesis systems.

To develop the argument that modern technologies realise and further the alienation of subjects individuated by functional social formations from their situated environment, I will explore the affective functioning of modern technologies. Specifically, I will consider the ways in which modern technologies—technologies whose functioning is dependent on bureaucratic systems as foundational technology to the modern order—operate on an affective register, and their effect of on subjective awareness and phenomenological experience. To do so, I will draw from the distinction between affect as intensity and emotions as static qualifications of intensity, as theorised by Brian Massumi in his essay “The Autonomy of Affect” (Massumi, 1995: 85, 86).

Massumi explores the distinction between affects and emotions while discussing image reception by arguing for an underlying distinction between content and intensity (Massumi, 1995: 84). He elaborates:

For present purposes, intensity will be equated with affect. [...] Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But [...] emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders. An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (Massumi, 1995: 88)

For Massumi, intensity/affect is “qualifiable as an emotional state” (Massumi, 1995: 86). He argues that when we conceive and narrativize affect, we suspend the resonances between movement and awareness, or between pre-conceptual affective interactions and linguistic forms. This suspension enables the generation of narratives and action-reaction couplings (or circuits).

Massumi develops his argument by exploring different ways in which image and language are experienced. He explains that when language operates exclusively on a semantic and semiotic level, it loses the “event”—its interactive and redefinable facets—“in favour of structure” (Massumi, 1995: 87). Based on this premise, he expands on the logic that underlies the difference between affect as intensity and emotional states as qualifications:

[...] structure is the place where nothing ever happens, that explanatory heaven in which all eventual permutations are prefigured in a self-consistent set of invariant generative rules. Nothing is prefigured in the event. It is the collapse of structured distinction into intensity, of rules into paradox. It is the suspension of the invariance

that makes happy happy, sad sad, function function, and meaning mean. (Massumi, 1995: 87)

Within the logic of affect/intensity, following Massumi's application of the concept, action-reaction circuits are suspended in *the event* (Massumi, 1995: 89). Expectations and the action-reaction circuits that make them possible are constituted within the semantic and semiotic functioning of language. It follows that, within the event there is a suspension of expectation (Massumi, 1995: 87).

Unlike the suspension of affect in static linguistic forms, he argues, the suspension of the semiotic functioning of language in affect is not static. Put differently, even though a singular semiotic narrative collapses in affect, affect is not devoid of significance (Massumi, 1995: 90). Rather, it is the opposite: affect is excessively full of significance; the *event* emanates or resonates multiplicities of superposed meanings that cannot be organised as action-reaction circuits. These disordered and superposed (potential) meanings are experienced as intensity rather than in linguistic forms. These are *potential meanings* that resonate with events that happen too "quickly to have happened" (Massumi, 1995: 91). For Massumi, this affective suspension of language and causality (action-reaction circuits) is the virtual or "the realm of potential" (Massumi, 1995: 91). He continues:

The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained. For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression will emerge and be registered consciously. One "wills" it to emerge, to be qualified, to take on socio-linguistic meaning, to enter linear action-reaction circuits, to become a content of one's life—by dint of inhibition. (Massumi, 1995: 91)

In this formulation, the qualification of a possibility as "content of one's life" (Massumi, 1995: 91) is realised through the inhibition (compression/reduction) of other possibilities. The field of possibilities reduced to socio-linguistic meaning is affect, the generative suspension of *action-reaction circuits*.

In "A Matter of Affect", Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova draw from Massumi's reflections on affect while discussing the cognitive effects of digital media as affective images (Parisi & Terranova, 2001: 122). Since, as Massumi argues, affect is the realm of potential (Massumi, 1995: 91), Parisi and Terranova note that despite affect being a zone of suspension of semantics and of *action-reaction circuits*, "affect is not outside of power, because it expresses relations of forces between bodies that can increase or decrease the

power of a body” (Parisi & Terranova, 2001: 125). From this note that echoes Spinoza’s formulation of the concept of affect (Spinoza, 1677/2018: 95), and by drawing from Deleuze’s reinterpretation of Henri Bergson’s understanding of “image” as movement rather than a purely visual surface (Deleuze, 1986/2017: 58), Parisi and Terranova argue that in order to develop an understanding of affects and socio-political power, “the body must be seen as image among other images” (Parisi & Terranova, 2001: 122).

When thinking of “image” as affects and movements, the body as image stands in contrast to the body as qualification, implying a pre-conceptual notion of the body that does not distinguish between body, quality, and action (Deleuze, 1986/2017: 59). In contrast, the body as qualification is the static content of reductive qualifications in relation to which wills and desires are aligned to a singular line of development performed by a particular subject, integrated within action-reaction circuits. The body as image is the site of movement and the generator of and participator in events that are suspended, compressed, and reduced to linguistic qualifications and singular wills and desires.

In the following, I turn towards thinking of musical systems in order to highlight operational parallels in the functioning of social and acoustic systems. I explore how such similarities become generative when different systems are considered in relation to their phenomenological experience, to then reflect on how the containment of possibility theorised earlier can be understood in relation to the emergence of psycho-affective closures within feedback loops between enacted patterns, relational (affective) patterns, patterns of signification, and the physiological constitution of the body.

Rhythm, Feedback Loops, and the Filtering of Possibility

As discussed in the *Aesthetic Interlude*, in parallel to the beginning of my research for this dissertation I started experimenting with sound synthesis and music composition. My initial intention was to develop a practice concomitant to my writing process; a practice of creating generative musical systems with which I interact while writing. With this intention in mind, and with online platforms and fora being the source of my knowledge of sound and music production, I was led by search engine algorithms to an instrument that facilitates experiments in generative systems. Ciat-Lonbarde Plumbutter is an experimental drum machine made by Peter Blasser; a machine whose appeal was increased by the maker’s

Deleuzian approach to designing, describing, and explaining sounding electronic circuits.

Blasser writes a textual articulation of Plumbutter's voice and logic:

My name is Plumbutter. My face is a psycho-geographical map of the cities of Baltimore and Cleveland. I am a drum-machine, but let me tell you I am more than that, for I also am a "drama machine". Thus there exists in me, a dialectic between drum and drama, like cops and gangsters, male versus female, or rural versus urban. You can see my wild spaces are represented by a deer-horn, and my downtown by a factory, and in between, a vast swath of suburban developments. It is a gradient of these three areas—urban, suburban, and rural—that informs my electronic synthesis. I am a psycho-geographical map of a utopian city, or perhaps shall we say, a "70s dystopia". For there are flaws everywhere—heavy metals downtown, suburbs which cannot use power sustainably, and prior exploitations in the wilderness. But in general, all is good, as in my "republican" days. And by republican, I mean to say that I once was a republic, like old Rome—a formal grouping of various apparatus onto one "circuit board". (Blasser, n.d.)

Plumbutter's heart is made of four circuits: two of them generate regular rhythms of electrical pulses, while the other two generate irregular ones. These beating circuits can be interconnected to produce complex rhythms that vary between chaotic bursts and steady regularities (Blasser, 2015: 69). These rhythms can act as exciters of six sounding circuits, creating a living and variable composition generated by a complex interconnected system. They can also be processed by "the man with the red steam," a circuit situated in the urban area of Plumbutter. This circuit is a *shift register* that takes chaotic fluctuations in voltage and transforms them into steps of predetermined voltages; these steps can either drive sounding circuits, or the voltages of multiple steps can be combined to create basic variations in the pitch of sounding circuits.¹²

To produce a piece of music using Plumbutter, one must patch complex systems where interconnections of different modules generate emergent rhythmic and tonal patterns. The generative proprieties of complex sounding systems are created in feedback loops of information (here in the form of variations in electric currents) between different modules: a module informing the functioning of a second module, which in turn informs the functioning of the first. The result is a self-enclosed and autonomous system; in other words, the result is a domain of interactions to which the musician/composer is external. In this case, the generation of sound and rhythm is not the result of interactions within the phenomenal

¹² The second track of the EP appended to the dissertation, titled "le Grand Récit de Spivak" is a recording of a Plumbutter patch, edited into a composition.

domain I experience; when patching such systems, I do not produce musical compositions as much as I manage the functioning of an enclosed system to which I am external and that produces sonic variations; variations that become a composition when they are recorded or performed in particular contexts. This distance between the musician and the sonic composition, and the label-less knobs and connection points, make possible a process of synthesising sounds and producing musical compositions not dependent on a musician's knowledge in Western music theory and its instruments.¹³ Further, this distance, together with the generative nature of feedback systems, often led me into sonic environments that I would have never heard otherwise, let alone intentionally synthesised or composed.

However, returning to the initial intention of creating interactive musical systems—ones with which I can interact while writing, and possibly guide them towards reflecting the tone and rhythm of the paragraphs I am developing—the internal coherence of Plumbutter's systems, to which I am external, made it hard to establish a connection between my intention and the sounds that Plumbutter makes; this is consistent with Maturana's thesis on causality being a property of relations within a particular domain of interactions. Here, when patching Plumbutter's modules in such a way that a module informs the functioning of others, while its functioning is informed by those same modules, the emergent sonic unity is determined by the relation of Plumbutter's modules; thus, my interaction with the system, and the interaction of the system with the environment (the temperature, the humidity in the air, etc.), could be understood as being structurally coupled with the domain of interactions of Plumbutter's components, as its medium; that is the domain within which I interact with Plumbutter as a unified object figures as a medium to the domain of components that generate the acoustic unity I perceive. Consequently, changes in this medium (including my own actions) result in changes within Plumbutter's systems, without the changes in the medium resulting in predictable effects on the interactions of modules; that is unless I re-patch or un-patch the modules, creating an organisation of a different kind.

Here, my relation to the system I patch using Plumbutter—as an external observer that interacts with its components and with the sonic unity they create—is similar to the position of an externalised observer to a system they study as theorised by Maturana (Maturana &

¹³ Unlike most other electronic instruments that might conform to Western tuning systems and/or input interfaces derived from traditional Western instruments.

Varela, 1980: xxi, xxii); namely, I interact with a generative musical system in a metadomain of descriptions; I interact with the system as a unity, and a specific configuration of components, by projecting causality and meanings onto interactions of components of an enclosed system and the unity they create. The novelty of the emergent sounds and compositions produced by Plumbutter's components to my ears is due to the system not being dependent on me to trigger a sound or modulate its timbres. The musical unities/compositions that emerge from Plumbutter's generative systems sound like songs of a culture of electronic components and traditions of electronic movements to which I am external. By my becoming external to this system, the causal correlation between the music I produce and the self-evident aesthetic decisions I make while programming a melody in more conventional electronic music instruments, or while playing acoustic instruments, is unsettled. Interacting with such generative musical system can be gratifying when approaching Plumbutter as if having a conversation; affecting it while being open to my musical intentions being transformed by the rhythms and tones it generates. However, interacting with the instrument can also be frustrating when trying to control its tones and rhythms in relation to an intentionality defined outside of its systems and outside of my interactions with them—like intentions formed in my process of writing of social patterns—since my actions cannot *cause* changes in the system's functioning that conform to my predefined intentions.

The failure to create satisfying generative musical systems that follow the rhythms of my writing process led me to rethink the ways I am imagining sound and musical composition as resonating with thinking of signification through intersubjective patterns. Specifically, understanding this failure through Maturana's thesis on the self-coherence of meanings within domains of interactions informed the understanding of what interactions with self-enclosed systems—with which we can tangibly interact as both unities and components—can teach us of the functioning of the systems whose auto-institution we systematically enact within the intersubjective domain we interact within. Specifically, I argue that interactions with such systems can be a means to understand the effect of the structuring of intersubjective relations within social unities that enables the management of collectives as masses and of bodies as objects; or in other words, such interactions can be a means to understand the effect of the multi-level autopoiesis of the modern social order on phenomenological experience.

I found that the resonances between electronic musical systems and social unities is not at the level of systems and unities, but rather at the level of the flows that constitute what is perceived as a musical system. That is, such resonances are found on the level on which a system is constituted by recurrence and intensity; on this level of organisation, what I perceive as a musical system is constituted by interactions of recurrent oscillations (frequencies) and amplitudes (the intensity of a frequency, its volume or loudness). When understood as such, and when taking into consideration Wynter's theorisation of the sociogenic principle as recurrent interrelations between enacted patterns (including those expressed in physical movements), relational (affective) patterns, patterns of signification, and the physiological constitution of the body (Wynter, 2015: 211), sound and music can be thought of as perceived physical movements (oscillations) that interact with affective patterns and patterns of signification, including the stories I told myself about the relevance of my musical compositions to my philosophical research. From such a perspective, a musical system and a social system are studied through their intersection in rhythm; in other words, by taking rhythm as a property of experiencing and enacting (collective) movement and relations within a specific phenomenal domain, which can interact with the rhythms of another domain, I explore what musical systems can teach us of the systemic structuring of collective movements within an intersubjective phenomenal domain.

I will return to the earlier argument that within a modernised social environment, technological advancement is limited to technologies that reinforce the overarching organisational logic of the modern order. Specifically, I explore how a study of the functioning of self-enclosed systems at the level of the flows that constitute the system can bring into awareness the pre-conscious institution of self-evidence in recurrent interactions with technologies dependent on the recording of information. In particular, I consider the functioning of audio filters on the level of electric oscillations in comparison to their perceived auditory effect, in order to theorise the effect of feedback loops of information on narrative formulations.

A filter, on the register of perception, changes a composite sound by reducing the amplitude of some of the frequencies that constitute it, making a sound more simple, on a spectrum between levels of complexity between a pure tone (a sinusoidal wave of a specific frequency) and white noise (a sound with random frequencies distributed along the audible frequency spectrum). On the register of circuitry, a filter can be understood as feeding a past state of a

signal into its current state (Wakefield & Taylor, 2022: 163), or as a feedback loop within which the signal is fed into the original one is manipulated in such a way that creates a filtering effect after the feedback loop. The manipulation of the feedback signal happens in two ways: the specification of a frequency range defined by a *cutoff frequency*, and the amplification or attenuation of those frequencies (Wakefield & Taylor, 2022: 165). However, within this register, the distinction between amplitude and frequency does not apply. Rather, amplification and attenuation of a signal must be understood in terms of frequency and phase (the alignment of different oscillating signals). Within the auditory domain, the effect of the alignment in phase of multiple oscillating movements of the same frequency is pronounced; the amplitude (intensity) of two superposed signals of the same frequency whose phase is aligned is multiplied, whereas if the phase of one of these signals is inverted, they cancel each other out.

In a simple lowpass filter¹⁴ the feedback signal passes through a component (a resistor, or its digital equivalent) that determines which vibrations within the signal are slow enough to pass through unaffected. Following this specification, both amplification and attenuation are realised by increasing the amount of feedback introduced to the original signal (Wakefield & Taylor, 2022: 165); amplification is the result of the phase of the feedback signal (or parts of it) being aligned with the phase of the original signal, while attenuation is the result of a feedback signal (or parts of it) having an inverted phase in relation to the original signal. Accordingly, what on the level of perception is expressed as “filtering”, on the level of circuitry is an interaction between a signal and a past (delayed) version of itself (Wakefield & Taylor, 2022: 174).

Translated to the language of the Bergsonian/Deleuzian framework of studying image as movement, filtering an audio signal is to set a threshold beyond which *things happen too quickly to have happened* (Massumi, 1995: 91). Thus, a filter can be understood as a tool that manipulates what remains virtual (remains within the sonically imperceivable domain of electronic or digital circuits) and what becomes actual (hearable in the auditory domain). Equivalently, within a social domain, based on Massumi’s understanding of the semiotic and semantic functioning of language as the reduction of possibility to action-reaction circuits (Massumi, 1995: 87), semantic and conceptual formations can then be understood as a filter

¹⁴ A filter that allows frequencies lower than the cutoff frequency to pass while cutting higher frequencies.

of affective intensity and movement which renders one part of the affective spectrum actual while the other parts remain virtual. This filtering of possibility happens within the feedback loop of image-language, whereas semantics informs what intensities are amplified and which ones are attenuated based on the alignment of relational patterns to the structures that realise the modern mode of organisation, thereby limiting the range of what is possible and what can become actual to a range pre-configured by the organisational logic of the modern order.

Such a mode of organisation regulates or filters what is realisable according to already familiar qualifications; a filter that lets what is familiar pass as legitimate wills and desires, while difference is attenuated. Thus, I argue that the configuration of social structures through centralised bureaucratic governance prevents the reciprocal suspension of affect and qualification—affect suspending qualification and qualification suspending affect.

Specifically, as a result of social structures being configured by means of infrastructures that depend on the translation of collective patterns to information, and on the structuring of social relations according to semantic configurations as policies and laws, linguistic qualifications become a finality; a suspension of the collective and experiential interplay between affect and qualification. In other words, the systemic prevention of affect and qualification from acting as contingencies in relation to each other, results in qualification becoming a filter that allows certain relations to pass, towards becoming self-evident.

Accordingly, the systemic bureaucratic filtering of certain connections and desires is realised in the suspension of the continuous situated and collective reciprocal suspension of affect and qualification.

Within such a formulation, the bureaucratic extraction of information from intersubjective patterns acts as a filtering feedback loop: a redundant replication of intersubjective patterns in self-contained form that can be curated to then be reintegrated within present intersubjective patterns as their antecedents. In this sense, bureaucratic systems do not make use of recording and surveillance technologies, they are themselves, fundamentally, a technology of surveillance, recording, and accumulation of information extracted from anything that moves through them. In a social system structured by bureaucratic management, movement and dynamics within an intersubjective phenomenal domain are directly the recording of information; any interaction with the system necessitates or is reflected by the generation of information. Seen in this way, the technological containment of possibilities or the coding of patterns is not realised through a chemical stimulus as in the case of smoking, but it still

functions as a cigarette does: conditioning the “neurological functioning of the biochemical or opiate reward/punishment system of the brain” (Wynter, 2015: 211).

Here, the synchronisation of the brain to particular patterns is not made systematic by specific chemical reactions, but by technologies dependent on social environments organised around a specific function and managed bureaucratically. This is a filtering of possible modes of being, patterns of relation, collectively enacted patterns, and emergent social structures, through the retention and curation of information that realises the massification of populations, while simultaneously determining what type of experiences an individual might encounter in the future; reinforcing the restriction of possibilities of life to the reproduction of past patterns and already established modes of organisation. Thus, within such a phenomenological domain, there is a desynchronisation or a temporal misalignment between the *event* and its qualification; qualification becomes an individuated process done before or after the event. I argue that this *temporal displacement of qualification to before or after the event* is itself a marker of the alignment between phenomenological experience and the normative mode of being of the domain of interactions within which it unfolds in a modernised social environment.

When phrased in this way, a normative bourgeois mode of being necessitates a *delay of qualification* to make space/time for the continuation of the normative functioning of the modern order in the enaction of predefined structures of relations by suppressing the feelings that might interrupt the (re)enaction of a structured and static mode of relation. The result is a social domain within which qualification is an individuated process, done outside of the collective unfolding of an event. However, this prioritising of predetermined significance over adaptability depends on some people taking on the adaptive labour of subsistence that becomes “menial.” Thus, the people that do not fit a modern bourgeois mode of being, and the people on whom falls the responsibility of maintaining the social structures that support functional formations, are forced to experience a modernised context through *pre-emptively formulated qualifications* that contain their/our experience within the range of what can be articulated through normative functional logics and to normative systems of meanings (to counteract the amplified visibility (Browne, 2015: 93, 94) of patterns that do not conform to a modern normative self-evidence).

Consequently, from one side of the cutoff point of modern normativity, by enacting a self-evidence aligned with the functional logic of modernity and the normative range of

familiarity it outlines, I also enact a mode of experience alienated from an event I experience by predefined meanings. On this side of the cutoff point of the bureaucratic filter, since meaning is predetermined and self-evident, my actions and movements are pre-legitimised as an enaction of an educated bourgeois normativity (Wynter, 2013: 44), experience is freed of qualification by qualification becoming a separate process done after the fact, by reflecting and synthesising knowledge from past events. That is, within such a structuring of the social, I am unable to relate what I feel to what I qualify as the significance of my experience, and unable to sense what others are feeling. Instead, what I feel and qualify must be articulated through systems of meanings adapted to the reproduction of the structures of functional social formations, while I approximate what others are feeling through meanings always already aligned with the reproduction of the modern/colonial mode of social organisation.

From the other side, when and where I am unable to enact the pre-determined self-evidence of my social environment, I become alienated from the unfolding of an event by experiencing my self-evident ways of acting, speaking, and being as virtual (possibilities). On this side of the bureaucratic cutoff, events are qualified before their happening; here, qualification is concomitant with the experience of normative environments as the necessary regulation of non-normative or non-compliant virtual possibilities; within such a mode of experience, the event happens only after qualification. It is within such a phenomenological domain that virtual potentialities continue to be *reflexly* (Wynter, 2015: 211) formulated through modern/colonial logics and realised through modern/colonial bureaucratic infrastructures, while self-alignment—i.e. to not do things that I know I will regret later, or to do the things that I would regret not doing—remains a mode of being confined to exceptional moments and self-contained spaces.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that modern development is defined by the reinforcement of the structuring of situated social systems in a way that local modes of relation enact the reproduction of the modern order, its mode of being, its classification of cultures and peoples according to race, and its objectification of racialised and gendered peoples. I reflected, through the work of Aníbal Quijano and Simone Browne, on the ways in which the classification of populations into racial categories creates social unities that effectuates the

translation of intersubjective patterns and physical labour to information compatible with Western/Eurocentric capitalist market; making possible the management of, and the extraction of value from, populations as masses. Then through a decolonial study of Hegel's theory of the state, I argued that the professionalisation and institutionalisation of labour is dependent on the institution of gendered dynamics of domination, actualised in the socialisation of two distinct and codependent modes of experience; these two socialised modes of experience constitute the properties of the bio-scientific definition of a gender binary. By returning to the situated enclosure of a shared house, I explored how the socialised gender binary is expressed within contemporary intersubjective dynamics, and the ways such expressions highlight modes of being that do not conform to a heteronormative, bourgeois, and Western/Euro-centric normality.

I argued that both the narratives and the mode of provisioning of a society ordered by the modern bureaucratic infrastructures of nation states are decoupled from situated relational rhythms. Through such decoupling, the properties of the modern order—the gendered unsettling of situated practices of subsistence and the rendering of other modes of being as unethical—are projected onto universal principles, only grounded in the colonially established bureaucratic systems of nation states. Thus, from one side the professionalisation of labour alienates modern subjects from collective modes of living within particular environments; effectively individuating them/us. From the other side, national bureaucratic governance enforces already established narratives; effectively, limiting the human experience to possibilities that maintain the overarching modern order.

By thinking of modern bureaucratic infrastructures as a foundational technology to the modern order, I theorised modern technologies as having the fundamental function of making embodied movements and intersubjective dynamics functional in relation to the global economic system of the modern order. I argued that national bureaucratic systems are a technology that facilitates systemic interventions in situated collective dynamics through the contact points of bureaucracies with situated social dynamics: narratives and modes of material provisioning. In relation to narratives, modern nation states must reinforce the individuation of modern subjects while simultaneously furthering the decoupling of situated narratives and meanings from the redefinition of social structures. In relation to material provisioning, nation states must provide *individuated lines of development* that reinforce the fiction of individuated agency and autonomy, while simultaneously reinforcing the

dependence on modern/colonial bureaucracies concealed by this fiction. As such, I theorised modern development as the systemic individuation of collectives and the institution of dependence of individuated subjects on modern infrastructures, and I argued that thereby, modern technologies maintain social environments conducive to the (re)emergence of social formations structured according to a modern/colonial organisational logic, thus limiting what is possible—what can be qualified as possible and what can be actualised—to a range preconfigured by the colonial properties of the modern mode of organisation.

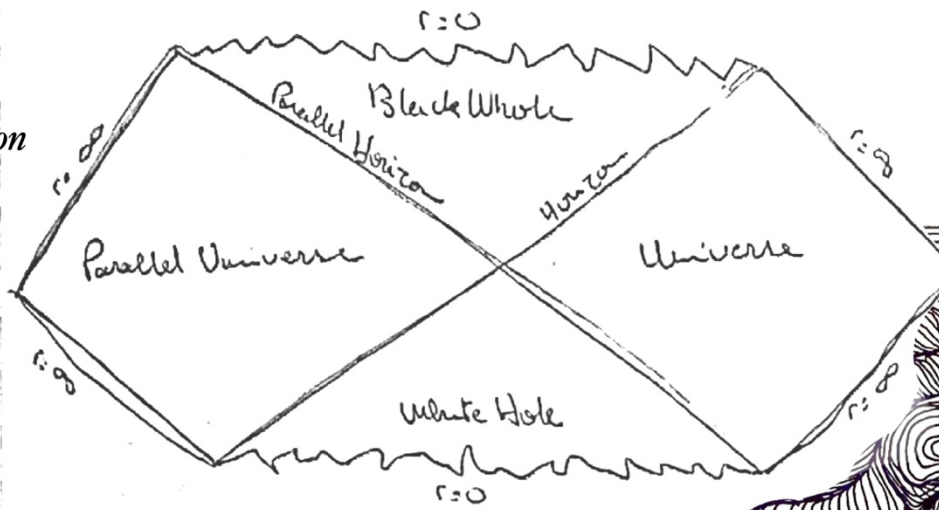
Accordingly, I argued that technological development within the modern order is guided by the fundamental cause of establishing and reinforcing causal correlations between a managerial domain of interactions (van der Drift, 2021: 109)—the domain of categories, unities, and masses—and the domain of living social relations. National bureaucracies actualise the functioning of the bio-scientific notion of the human as medium, through, from, and within which culture-specific modes of being human can be systematically configured to maintain the adaptive advantage of Western/European colonial projects (or other colonial and imperial projects) and ensure the reproduction of social, economic, and environmental conditions that secure their re-emergence, thus forming an auto-instituting system. Under such organisation, the bio-scientific concept of the human as species becomes the membrane of a social autopoietic system actualised through bureaucratic management, formed out of the medium of origin stories, and articulated as aesthetic (visual) differences.

Thus, I proposed that a modern phenomenal domain is one that emerges from, and reproduces, the alienation of subjectivities from embodied relationalities that do not fit within the modern/colonial categories of race, gender, and sexuality, enabling the conservation of the (always) predetermined normative functioning of the modern order; and that within such a phenomenological domain, subjectivities are defined by meanings centred around the production and maintenance of a social unity whose normative functioning they enact; a unity itself defined by the colonial properties of the modern order.

Modern technologies and the development in social structures they realise, necessarily alienates modern subjects from their situated environments, further unsettling the possibility of the (re)emergence of communal modes of being. However, it is from here, from a formulation through which the psycho-affective closure of the modern order seems to be total, that alterity starts to show itself beyond modern logics. Namely, it is by understanding how the use of modern infrastructures, technologies, and knowledges in self-evident ways

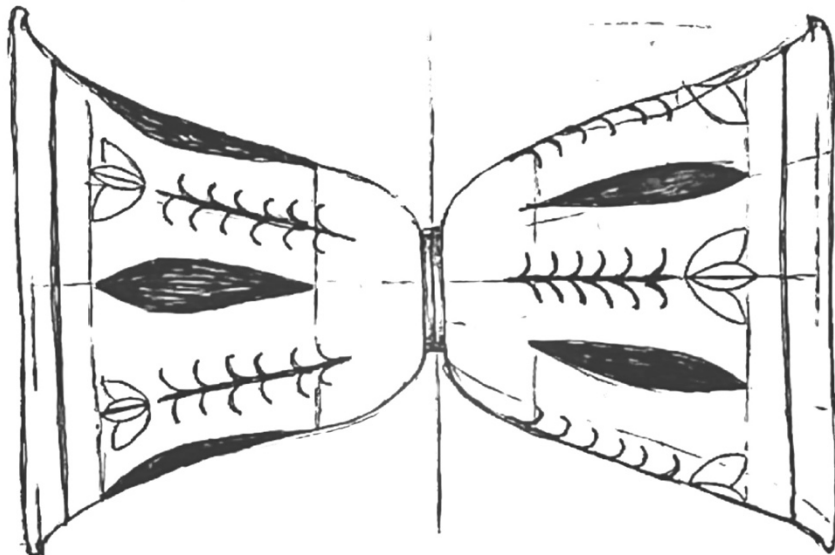
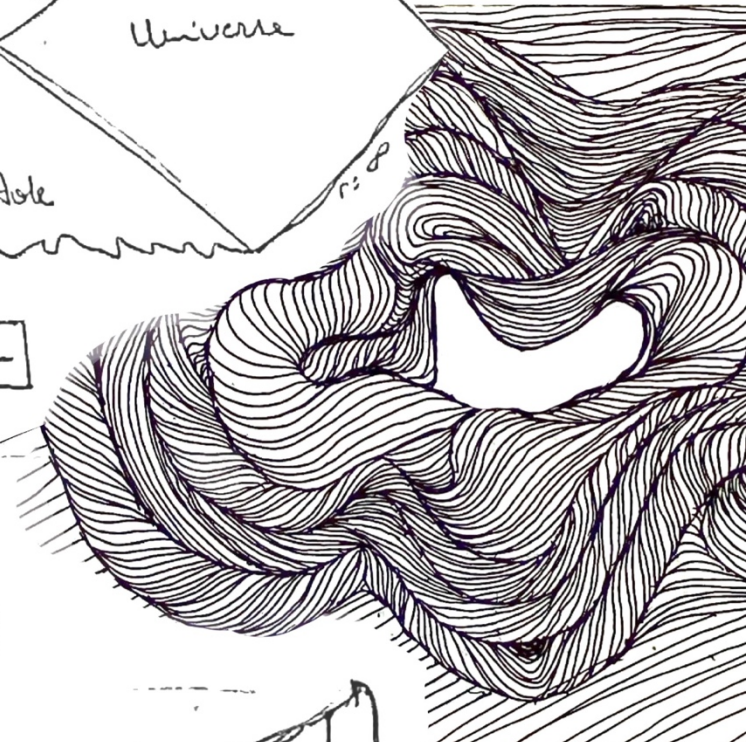
reproduce a colonial logic and dynamics of domination, that we become able to imagine how modern infrastructures, technologies, and knowledges can be hacked and recontextualized to serve situated communities and collective aspirations that transgress colonial categories. Such a recontextualization unsettles the automatic development of the colonial organisation that defined the European Enlightenment and the “global advancement” it brought about; making development and advancement qualifiers of different modes of being together, and different modes of forming societies, rather than being qualifications of the flattening and homogenisation of societies.

Conclusion



Penrose Diagram

فکون اور پوز



This dissertation began with unpacking Sylvia Wynter's formulation of the epistemological break initiated by Frantz Fanon's method of sociodiagnostics (Wynter, 2015: 198). Then, I introduced the notion of autopoiesis through Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's formulation and its origin within the fields of biology and philosophy of science (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii). From there I considered Maturana's application of autopoiesis to social systems, to then argue that Wynter's application of autopoiesis to a colonial mode of being allows it to uncover the transgenerational functioning of modern strategies of control and domination. I explored how this reworking of the concept of autopoiesis is made possible by Wynter's formulation of the *sociogenic principle* based on Fanon's approach to psychosocial studies (Wynter, 2013: 54). Inspired by intersections of Wynter, Fanon, and Maturana's work, I outlined an auto-ethnographic and meta-phenomenological methodology that puts in question the self-evidence implied within culture-specific origin stories, thus enabling a study of the ways in which the modern order refigures the self-evidence—as a property of the terms of specific modes of being (Wynter, 2013: 31-32)—of different localities and cultures to become aligned with bio-scientific principles that maintain the adaptive advantage of Western/European colonial projects.

Later, I drew from Simone Browne to argue that a globalised modern order is dependent on the translation of physical labour to information, which effectuates the translating of economic value from the phenomenal domain of situated social relations to an abstract domain of massed populations; and that a mode of social organisation dependent on such a translation is to the adaptive advantage of Western/European colonial projects. By referencing the work of Aníbal Quijano, I argued that the modern order is dependent on unsettling situated processes of subsistence, and with the institution of a mode of material provisioning dependent on the colonial infrastructures of the global market, and on the classification of populations according to race and the restructuring of all previous forms of

control of labour and resources around the concept of race and the centrality of the European continent as set by the colonial institution of a globalised market (Quijano, 2000: 534).

By reading Hegel's theory of the state through a decolonial framework, I theorised bureaucratic systems as a foundational technology to the modern mode of social organisation. I argued that the bureaucratic management of massed populations and the organisation of the social into functional formations facilitates an externalised (self-alienated) mode of experience, from which situated enclosures can be seen in terms of unities and components. By drawing parallels between this mode of experience and understanding, and the functioning of a *metadomain of descriptions* as theorised by Maturana (Maturana & Varela, 1980: xvii, xviii), I argued that a modern phenomenal domain is not a phenomenal domain independent from situated social enclosure: not external to situated collective patterns, and thus, not objective, nor transcendent. Rather, such a phenomenal domain is realised as the contraction of perception (van der Drift, 2021: 96) and as a self-alienated mode of experience (Wynter, 2015: 197).

Within an intersubjective domain, this containment of the variability of social structures is expressed in the disruption of the sociality necessary for undoing established individuated patterns to make way for new ones. From a systemic perspective, this disruption is realised through the mediation of situated affective dynamics by a sustained and recurrent engagement of a subject—individuated by traditional bureaucratic structures—with social structures systematically preconfigured as components of a capitalist market. Accordingly, I argued that under a modern mode of social organisation, the margin within which social structures can vary is set by the foundational proprieties of the modern order: racial classification and the bureaucratic control of labour and resources. This systemic moderation and mediation of situated social patterns informs a phenomenal domain of experience in which possible experiences are limited to infinite rearticulations of the bio-scientific racial classification of populations and a colonial mode of management of labour and resources (Quijano, 2000: 534).

In sum, I argued for an understanding of the modern order as creating the framework for narratives and laws to become decoupled from situated conditions of collective living. Specifically, through the institution of modes of material provisioning dependent on the colonially established global market, the survival of situated collectives becomes dependent on market dynamics and with that situated systems of meanings become decoupled from

environmentally informed collective rhythms. Within such a system, the practical and symbolic collective rituals that secured the reproduction of a particular mode of being become contained within the boundaries of exceptional circumstances (i.e. village celebrations, graduations, etc.); bureaucratic rituals (job interviews, filling out forms, applying for residency permits, etc.) occupy the space left by this containment. Within such a context, the conditions of the re-emergence of particular social unities are not recreated by practical and symbolic interactions with natural and cosmic regularities. In this context, the conditions of the re-emergence of social unities are secured by the alignment of situated relational patterns to the principles that establish bureaucratic governance as universally self-evident. Such conditions are secured through the institution of a mode of material provisioning independent from environmental conditions, but dependent on the colonially instituted global market and the national bureaucracies that manage it.

Accordingly, within the modern mode of social organisation, the relational patterns that realise the autopoietic functioning of culture-specific social systems simultaneously become the realisation of an autopoietic system where national unities figure as the racialised components of the unity of a modernised biologically absolute notion of humanity (Wynter, 2015: 225). This reduction of variability and difference is realised by making structured bureaucratic systems the medium from which the narratives of situated socialities are formed. Structured systems become the medium of situated systems when they become an environment with which individuated subjects interact continuously and recurrently—in contrast to interacting with adaptable and adaptive living systems whose possibilities vary beyond the human ability to formulate deterministic models of their functioning.

As such the redefinition of narratives within the modern order is removed from situated collective negotiations to become the concern of experts trained to interact with the world through a *metadomain of observation* maintained by the structuring of the social around a colonial notion of function; a fictional phenomenal domain whose operation is dependent on the continuation of modern categories, infrastructures, and modes of production. Thus, the mode of phenomenological experience that realises the modern order within the intersubjective domain is one that enables the maintenance and reproduction of psycho-affective closures that allow for the understanding of, and interaction with, social systems as unities (massed populations) constituted by individuated subjects as components. A normative subject interacts with things that do not fit with their predefined normativity as

masses, generalised categories, objects, and commodities, creating the conditions for management from a distance: the possibility to manage what is not familiar according to what is already familiar.

The Temporal Offsetting of Experience and Qualification

Based on the above understanding of the modern mode of social organisation, I explored the relational structures that secure its reproduction. Specifically, I theorised the reproduction of the modern mode of social organisation as dependent on technologies that create affordances for the realisation of individuated desires; maintained contact with such technologies creates a psycho-affective closure whereas what can be qualified and actualised is informed by what modern technologies make possible in relation to individuated subjectivities. From this perspective, the professionalisation of labour and the development of technologies dependent on modern bureaucracies serves the function of making structures of social relations only redefinable through institutional interventions and formal knowledges, as every aspect of life is made to require some form of specialised technical knowledge.

Seen as such, the modern order is dependent on a unified epistemology that creates a framework of understanding social beings in phylogenetic and ontogenetic terms, beyond the domain within which they are a particular individual; a framework for a veridical understanding of social beings as *universal individuals* (Hegel, 1807/2018: 257) that flattens the meanings that emerge from situated collective experiences and their significance for reshaping systems of meanings. Such a limit on collective possibility underlies a static mode of organisation within which a unified world can be known through a biologically absolute epistemology that flattens the multiplicity and plurality of affective intensity to veridical knowledges—to a singular “objective” truth. I argued that this organisational logic, its expression in a unified epistemology, and the externalised mode of management that maintain it, underly the stratification of phenomenological experience in two interlocked ways; one intergenerational, socialised within communities, and another, transgenerational, socialised in relation to a community as a unity.

First, on an intergenerational level, ontogenetic narratives concerned with the development of an understanding of individuals as biological organisms operate within intergenerational interactions to inform the socialisation of a binary of modes of experience, each tied to a

different pole of a biologically determined gender binary. Thus, emergent generations are socialised to enact two distinct and codependent modes of experience: one in which an environment is experienced and understood as a space or a domain of interactions, and tied to the identity of “woman;” and another in which an environment is experienced and understood as fragmented into objects or as components of unities, and ties to the identity of *Man*.

Second, on a transgenerational level, phylogenetic narratives concerned with the development of understanding on the level of the human species and its racial pseudo-speciation, operate within transgenerational dynamics to institute biological configured social enclosures that underly a normative/non-normative binary. I argued that the normative/non-normative binary emerges when the (re)definition of narratives, laws, and norms are disconnected from situated and collective patterns of relations and communal labour of subsistence, which, within the modern order are structured according to a notion of function determined by a globalised (Western/Euro-centric) market. Within such a configuration and over generations, culture-specific narratives inform static identities enacted as a mode of experience and understanding of “self, other, and world” (Wynter, 2013: 57) through predefined meanings; a visual phenomenology. This refiguration of situated structures to become dependent on colonial infrastructures functions as a redefinition of the scope of possible human experiences and the range of variation of social structures, realised by the establishment of a unified mode of provisioning and a unified system of knowledge.

These two binary modes of experience—the gender binary and the normative/non-normative binary—inform an interlocked stratification of modernised domains of intersubjective relations, realised as a disjointment between experience and the qualification of experience. Specifically, the gender binary and the normative/non-normative binary—defined from a perspective where white, bourgeois, patriarchal and heteronormative norms appear as self-evident—inform the direction of a temporal offsetting of qualification from the collective unfolding of experience. From one side, by acting in alignment with lines of development predefined according to a colonial notion of function, I suspend my making sense of my experience of an event which I experience in relation to an already established normative functioning. This is a mode of experience and cognition marked by *delayed qualification*. Second, by being unable to embody a bourgeois heteronormativity within a context where my being is, in itself, a disturbance of normativity, my experience becomes mediated by preemptive specifications formulated from an externalised “objective” perspective through

which I regulate my being to fit the self-evident meanings and aesthetics of a universally normative mode of being (Wynter, 2015: 225). This is a mode of experience marked by *pre-emptive qualification*. In both cases—delayed qualification or pre-emptive qualification—the temporal distance between qualification and experience is filled with structures preconfigured according to the normative functioning of the modern order, and with meanings predefined according to bourgeois heteronormative self-evidence.

In sum, I outlined the multi-level functioning of the modern order as one realised in the construction of social unities whose reproduction is dependent on the continuous control and management of its constituents, while securing the continuation of control and management by making those who are managed dependent on the unity that control them.

Psycho-affective Openings in Collective Redefinitions of Narratives

At the end of a dissertation preoccupied with social and psycho-affective closures and their autonomous reproduction, I will return to the question posed in the introduction: *what horizons of possibility open up when we think through social and political problems beyond methods informed by the modern/colonial logic?* In other words, how can we come to think through social and political formations that emerge out of embodied interactions as if peaking from behind a horizon drawn by the modern/colonial psycho-affective closure?

In this conclusion, I focus on how such a closure can be undone, and on how their conservative/reproductive momentum can be made to dissipate in the adaptive refiguration of social systems in relation to situated urgencies and collective desires and aspirations. Specifically, I will argue that any undoing of the psycho-affective closures that secure the reproduction of the modern mode of organisation and its structuring of the social according to categories of race, gender, and sexuality, must address the filtering of possible experiences and lines of development through preconfigured relational structures and predefined meanings. Namely, psycho-affective openings are found in unsettling the continuous pre-definition of what is possible according to a range of possibility that maintains the dependence of situated collectives on colonial infrastructures, and in undoing the continuous preconfiguration of the range within which social structures can vary according to modern categories of race, gender, sexuality, and ability.

As Wynter argues, within a modernised context, theorising social processes and phenomena must be done by turning the focus of studies towards self-evidence as a propriety of the terms in which we are socialised to enact specific kinds of being (Wynter, 2015: 196). Wynter proposes that social relations must be theorised from a “meta-systemic” and “meta-cosmogenic” perspective (Wynter, 2015: 243); a perspective that does not overlook the systemic structures created by the process of study itself; and a perspective that does not overlook the conservation of established structures necessary to generalize and maintain the validity of de-localised knowledges. Theorising social processes from such a perspective, as Wynter continues, “[...] reveal[s] our present projected “*Color Line*”/Divide to be one whose unbreachability is itself only a function of the systemic-enacting of (neo)Liberal-humanist secular Man(2)’s sociogenic replicator code of symbolic life/death as that of *naturally selected/eugenic* versus *naturally dysselected/dysgenic* humanity” (Wynter, 2015: 243).

I argue that by uncovering the unbreachability of the modern structuring of social relations to be dependent on collective *systemic-enaction* (Wynter, 2015: 243), we are able to rediscover the implications of decoupling the rhetorics that define our human identities (Wynter, 2013: 60) from the contexts in which they might be redefined. By doing so, theorising can guide us towards re-establishing the link between culture-specific identities, the cognitive and aesthetic self-evidence outlined by them, and the collectively enacted patterns that realise and reproduce them (including modes of material provisioning). As such, theory guides us towards rediscovering the link between our enactment of culture-specific relational patterns and the specific conditions of surviving within the contexts of their emergence; thus, revealing the rendering static of culture-specific particularities through their separation from the collective contexts within which they are formed and redefined. In turn, revealing the possibility and necessity of reconfiguring modes of being, knowing, and labouring, by enacting collective patterns grounded in situated and communal urgencies and aspirations, rather than ones grounded in bureaucratic, individuated, and massified, lines of development.

In such a case, I argue that theory does not function as Maturana imagined it: to diagnose a dysfunctional social system (Maturana and Varela, 1980: xxx). Within such a framework, theory is important for creating modes of understanding in which the re-grounding of the formation of situated narratives in collective negotiations does not turn into another static mode of organisation whose conservation becomes a self-evident presupposition around which an exclusory mode of being is developed. Undoing the systemic reproduction of

already auto-instituting psycho-affective closures is dependent on closing the distance between qualification and experience (and between an observer and the system they observe) created by an organisational logic that fragments collective life into specialised professionalised fields. In other words, loopholing the auto-institution of modern/functional social formations is dependent on social formations and modes of social cooperation that do not systematise a self-alienated mode of experience as normal. Namely, the redefinition of self-evidence beyond white bourgeois norms, and of social structures beyond a modern/colonial organisational logic, is dependent on the alignment of systems of meanings and collectively enacted patterns to collective aspirations, needs, concerns, and desires.

To put it more poetically, theory makes possible different futures by relating the present to the past. This past and present are not those of a unified bureaucratic temporality. The past is not a generalised past of a massed population and of nation states, and the present is not a universal undifferentiated field of experience; the past and the present in question are situated and grounded in the collective and generational historicities that constitute the self-evidence of a particular mode of being. The past is my past and the past of the communities of which I am a part, and whose narratives and patterns coalesce in my body to constitute the selves that I embody and enact; this is the past that informs the fields of possibilities that I can form into subjective meanings, and which inform my place within the map of power (Lugones, 2013: 8) drawn by the colonial networks of the modern order. As such, in contexts structured according to the modern mode of organisation, undoing the psycho-affective closure that maintains the adaptive advantage of a colonial/managerial mode of being is actualised by realising a different reciprocal relationship between qualification and experience—between theory and practice—that unsettle the systemic primacy of individuated modern subjectivities over collective modes of being, and the stratification of the human experience into professional fields.

While exploring the intersubjective dynamics that emerge in non-functional social formations within a modern context organised around specific economic functions, I quoted Mijke van der Drift's argument to the effect that negotiations of rights cannot realise changes in the overarching organisation that structures a social context; "rights can thus simultaneously be understood as protection against the violence of discipline while reinforcing managerial control" (van der Drift, 2021: 108). Rather, Drift argues that *plural worldings* create conditions for modes of organisation not dependent on the structure of management (van der

Drift, 2021: 109). Similarly, I argue that the redefinition of the overarching organisational logic that configures the structuring of social contexts begins with creating spaces within which collective experiences unfolding outside of functional social formations inform social structures not determined by functional logics, formed and redefined in situated negotiations that acknowledge the particularities of living within specific localities. The possibility of such redefinition today lies in creating and maintaining collective frameworks for material provisioning, narrative formations and aesthetic articulations not dependent (and that do not reproduce a dependence on) colonial infrastructures and on resource-hungry modes of production and consumption. This is a redefinition of the ways in which we can be together, by creating and maintaining spaces in which we can celebrate each other, grief those who were killed by the exhaustive rhythms of modern production and the eugenic maintenance of the modern order; spaces where we might care for one another by sharing the caring knowledges that we carry in our bodies; spaces in which we continuously redefine who “we” are, and why we are a “we.”

When subsistence and material provisioning (re)become collective concerns, addressed through negotiations with and within situated environments rather than being fragmented into individuated professionalised functions, then what is actual expands beyond what is functional within a social domain structured according to the functioning of the modern/colonial capitalist order. When narratives are formed and redefined within situated collectives rather than in social formations organised around the function of producing laws and narratives, then the present is left to be lived, and self-understanding is realigned with the historicities imprinted on our bodies. When the study of words conditions the study of nature (Wynter, 2013: 60), and when the practices that realise our “varied cultural modes of being/experiencing ourselves as human” (Wynter, 2013: 60) are aligned with situated collective aspirations and with the self-sufficiency of collectives through an interdependence on cultural/natural environments, then we are able to reconfigure our social formations by collectively developing models of trans-local cooperation not dependant on centralised management and concentrations of power. Then, to theorise becomes not about the specification of meanings, but about finding ways to be together without the alienation of externalised managerial subjectivities, inspiring social formations that do not require of people dwelling within them that they embody individuated subjectivities that contain their/our phenomenological experience within predetermined meanings, identities, and ideologies. Theory becomes a practice where the self-evidence of enacted, aesthetic, and

cognitive regularities can be put into question, and with that the psycho-affective closure that underlies the emergence of self-instituting social systems. It is through writing, theorising, and telling our stories while we interact with each other that the (social, political, economic, environmental) crises to which bureaucratic management figures as a self-evident means to their resolution, are revealed to only be necessary for the maintenance of the over-representation of “our Western-bourgeois, ethno-class referent We” as a definition of what it is to be human, and for the professionalised saturation of all domains of life, that does not leave space for doing things differently, for using resources differently, or for just being different in relation to normative hegemonies.

In brief, based on the philosophical explorations of this dissertation, I argue that it is through the reconfiguration of the relation between narratives and the collective contexts of their production/enactment that we become able to imagine and realise social structures not dependent on colonial infrastructures and on the management of massed populations through the categories of race, gender, and sexuality. It is by telling stories to each other that we come to understand that the crises caused by a globalised social order can only be addressed through an anarcho-communist social model premised on collective complicity rather than on the management of collectives; a mode of social organisation within which communities regenerate by leaving space for, and becoming open to, other communities and other living systems. By doing so, modernised contexts stop being the climax of human evolution or a total universal crisis. In doing so, the interconnections of different contexts created by colonial and imperial projects—specifically in the form of cultural, academic, and educational networks whose medium is social relations—can be leveraged to put situated collective trainings of artful subsistence in conversation with one another.

Within such a framework, the temporal alignment of experience and the generation of sense is not only possible but necessary for the redefinition of social structures that stimulate the emergence of self-alienated modes of experience. Such alignment is not a future possibility; this is the actuality of our experiences in their situated significance, from which we are distanced by the alignment of meaning to a modernised normality; it is a present that we live outside of functional institutions, in socialities that harbour intersecting and interlocking futures suspended in virtuality by the functional individuation of a biologically absolute notion of “human”. Within such a context-dependent framework, collectively enacted patterns and collective aesthetic articulations are trainings of collective skills and modes of

knowing where knowledge is in stories whose narration is itself the training of skills that secure the subsistence of a collective in (negotiation) with its cultural/natural environment.

When we think of the narratives we produce and the collective patterns we (re)enact as inseparable from complex situated dynamics, then, technologies can be developed in relation to situated capabilities and regenerative resources; technologies that can be used and reproduced without expert knowledge, institutional mediation, accumulated power, and heaps of capital and resources. And it is through such a context-dependent framework that colonial institutional networks can be leveraged in order to uncover intersections of situated needs, and that modern technologies can be hacked in order to be submitted to collective aspirations and desires, rather than serving the reinforcement of individuated aspirations dependent on colonial infrastructures. Within such a model of organisation, specialisation of interests and knowledge is not determined by an extractive market, flows of capital and information, and the violent apparatus that maintain them. Rather, the orientation of knowledge and development becomes informed by collective needs, desires, and aspirations that emerge in collective negotiations, informed by what is possible through trans-local relations.

To finish, it is important to note that I am writing this conclusion after more than a year of an Israeli siege on Gaza, and of a continuous indiscriminate bombing campaign of the besieged enclave and of Lebanon's south, and during continuous Israeli attempts to invade the south of Lebanon. As discussed, it has already been difficult to write of the highly affective events unfolding in Lebanon over the past few years, but this situation is different. It is different because the criminality that sustains the modern order and its global flows of capital are on full display, in the east of the Mediterranean as well as in multiple places around the world. Such a situation is different from previous crises in Lebanon, because today, the eugenic strategies that fragmented the east of the Mediterranean into colonially manageable nation states, and which I discuss in this dissertation—including the manipulation of sectarian tensions in Lebanon and the region—are being employed to the benefit of a settler colonial project. And because all the communities of the east of the Mediterranean will have to deal with the effects of the criminality of this ongoing war for generations to come; a criminality that is systematically reproducing the collective trauma that led us to where we are today.

Today, the aging generations whose horizons of possibility were flattened by systemic and mass violence are reproducing the trauma that they experienced; laying the ground for new trans-generational trauma, perpetrated along the lines of division plotted by the

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Appendix A: Acoustic Appendix

The acoustic appendix is attached to this dissertation as a digital package, but could also be streamed through one of the following links:

- <https://on.soundcloud.com/paoatJwRu4mjvK16A>
- <https://semiosisinthesun.bandcamp.com/album/appendix-a-acoustic-appendix>

Headphones or a stereo speaker setup are recommended.

Track List:

1. Falling to no Ground - Zu Performance - Extract - September 2022
2. Understimulation Anthem - May 2023
3. Le Grand Recit - PlumButter - November 2023
4. Urban Thesis - May 2024
5. Fastine - April 2024
6. Diachronic Synconcrity - August 2024

Appendix B: Unpacking the Acoustic Appendix – The Ethico-temporal Potential of an Adisciplinary Engagement of Totalities

In the Aesthetic Interlude I theorised “rhythm” as a property of relations internal to enclosed systems; a property of relations between the components that constitute a system. Based on this premise and on the methods of psycho-social study developed throughout this dissertation by drawing from the work of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, I reflected on the process of music production and writing musical compositions as a complex relational system grounded in transgenerational cognitive and relational regularities. In this sense, the aesthetic interlude considered musical motifs and compositions as part of the constitution of enclosed social systems, which have the potential to reveal the self-evidence that characterises normative modes of being within specific social orders, and how such self-evidence is transformed by processes of modernisation and colonisation. Similarly, the acoustic appendix expands the application of the epistemological framework that this dissertation follows to artistic production and specifically to music production.

However, while the aesthetic interlude explored aesthetic compositions from a perspective internal to the social unities within which they are produced, the acoustic appendix is an experiment in modes of organisation through a practical exploration of musical compositions as unities. As such, this appendix articulates the philosophical considerations that guided the production of the acoustic appendix, while exploring possible implications of an onto-epistemological framework inspired by the work of Fanon and Wynter on artistic production. In the first part of this appendix, I will reflect on the process of producing the compositions included in the acoustic appendix and theorise their relevance to this research project. In the second part, I reflect on the ways in which the black radical tradition inspired an epistemological approach through which my theoretical and musical methodologies become complementary to one another. Specifically, the second part reflects on how a sociogenic and adisciplinary understanding of music informed my approach to music production, and how such an approach to music production maintains an intimate interconnection between collectively enacted relational rhythms and music, thus making music—producing music,

listening to music, and dancing to music—a method of social study and a training in improvisational organisation.

Music Production as a Training in the Improvisation of Totalities and Compositional Totalities as Markers of epistemological and Methodological Shifts

My music production practice and by extension the playlist appended to this dissertation, are grounded in a desire to explore artistic production beyond the idiomatic boundaries of art as a formal discipline. I made the choice to do these explorations through the medium of sound because of my formal training in graphic design. More specifically, because my approach to visual art and design has been dependent on laws and principles I internalised throughout my bachelor education, sound and music seemed like a novel domain within which I can explore aesthetic forms without the mediation of trained laws. In the following, I reflect on the ways in which musicality—resonances between tonal frequencies, rhythms, and moving bodies—can be achieved through experiments grounded in an *anachronization of events* (Moten, 1994: 57)—a continuous unsettling of the temporal boundaries of events—rather than through sets of formal behaviours structured by the disciplinary laws of music making.

During the beginning of this project, when I first moved from the Netherlands to Iceland, I started experimenting with droning sounds. What characterises these early experiments is a lack of, or even an aversion to structure. At that point, I did not treat sound as a medium of expression, but as a source of sensory stimulation and excitation. I associated the intensity of these continuous sounds with the intensity I felt while immigrating during a global pandemic; an intensity created by feeling disconnected from the context of Lebanon—my family and friends—and from the Netherlands and the newfound relationships that developed during my master’s education.

“Falling to No Ground” marks the end of this phase of my approach to music production. The track is an extract from a 45-minute composition performed during the FEINART summer school at Zeppelin University, under the same title. The title of the performance refers to the feeling of isolation in migration—an untetheredness that felt like being in free fall—while emphasising the lack of a ground to break the fall speaks to the intention of the performance to explore this emotional and psychological weightlessness rather than attempting to counter it with orderly or comforting sonic structures.

While performing the sounds I usually explore by myself but in the midst of a crowd, the logic of improvisation seemed self-evident. Namely, what seemed self-evident is that to improvise is not to avoid structures as I had been doing, but to create a domain within which structures can emerge and be transformed by unfolding relationalities. While playing drones in a dome for a crowd exhausted by three days of lectures, workshops, and discussions, the performance became automatically structured by the space, the crowd, and our shared experiences. A structure emerged as I manipulated the drones while people were settling in on the ground around me; a cough, a sigh, and someone dosing off, become an element of the performance by informing transformations of a continuous wall of sound.

“Under-stimulation Anthem” marks the beginning of my attempt to apply what I learned from my first performance to my compositions. Upon visiting Lebanon for the first time after about two years, and during an economic crisis that upended people’s everyday life, I was struck by the energy and joy of the people I met, despite living in an exceptionally unpredictable period. This track is tied to my making sense of this experience while also noticing how I am affected by ambient sounds in the different places in between which I lived.

In Reykjavik, the hum of the sea and the often raging combination of wind and rain made the nights feel loud. Similarly in Arnhem, the night settles in with the white noise of the highway a few kilometres away and the hissing of a train passing through the city, that are interrupted by the sound of a roommate stumbling to the kitchen in the middle of the night. I always remembered nights in the village in Lebanon as being calmer. On that trip, after being away from Lebanon for a longer period, I noticed the cacophony of animals—the dogs, chickens, goats, donkeys, and foxes—that rarely sleep through the night, the neighbours that spend their extended summer evenings in the garden, and the mosquito that keeps me listening. The night was far from silent, but I was the calmest I had been in a long time. Realising that it is not the amplitude of the ambient noise that often disturbed my nights, but it is missing the disturbances that make me recognise myself as part of the landscape that does, made me understand (in a new way) how my family and friends find comfort in the unpredictability of life in Lebanon, and why I am comforted by being among them.

The track, “Understimulation Anthem,” comes from a desire to articulate these feelings and realisations while experiencing them in Lebanon. I edited together a composition from improvised performances I had recorded in Iceland and the Netherlands. However, here I

avoided droning sounds, instead looking for moments of transformation; moments of uncertainty while transitioning from one drone to another. The result is a composition of different rhythms not related to a common underlying rhythm, creating a totality that is rhythmically incoherent, joined together by the rhythm of the variation of rhythms rather than by their consistency. A rhythm made of rhythms, or a flow of flows that simulates the plurality of affective currents that pull at you and drag you along while being in Lebanon in the midst of a crisis, interrupted by a sample of a poem. The title emphasises the normality of this flow of flows, which instead of being overwhelming, its absence becomes overwhelming.

“Le Grand Récit de Spivak” is the result of experiments with generative electronic sounding circuits using Plumbutter, as discussed in the Aesthetic Interlude and the last section of chapter 3 of the dissertation. Plumbutter being a system designed to facilitate the generative emergence of rhythms, felt like a good machine to explore the integration of rhythmical motifs that relate to my surroundings into my musical compositions. However, after spending around a year playing the instrument, I felt disconnected from the rhythms it produces. Due to its complex and generative design, the rhythms of Plumbutter felt more related to the interactions of its internal components rather than to my intentional interactions with the machine. This track is an experiment in breaching this distance between the worlds I inhabit and the sonic world that Plumbutter creates by processing recorded sounds through its systems. In this case, I chose to integrate an old, televised panel discussion (I found on Youtube) that includes Gayatri Spivak discussing the relevance of post-modernism to Western thought, a philosophical tradition I am interested in and which inspired some of the decisions in the instrument’s design (Blasser, 2015: 66, 72).

This composition and the experiments it is based on, mark yet another shift in my approach to music production. While until this point I was becoming more open to structuring my compositions, “Le Grand Récit de Spivak” inspired a shift in what I considered to be the starting point of such structures; their initial state. Namely, this track inspired a shift from the initial state of my compositions being a silence broken by synthesised waveforms to starting from sampled sounds. To unpack the significance of this shift, it will be helpful to consider it in relation to a simultaneous shift in my writing process.

During this time, I was developing the first full draft of my thesis, and until this point my research and writing processes were mostly separate. I would write for two or three weeks after which I would review what I wrote, take note of points that need further development,

read relevant literature, to then go back to another writing period without direct engagement with any references. The results were philosophical explorations with some allusions to existing literature but without any engagement with the authors on whose theories I lean on. Because of that, I felt that my writing is reproducing the isolation that I felt while moving from one place to another. The texts I wrote were isolated from the intellectual traditions by which I am inspired, and from the discussions that my readers were familiar with and to which I aspired to contribute. Effectively, the drafts I was producing at that point asked a lot of my readers; a reader would have to go along with my approach, vocabulary, and the perspective from which I write, while at the same time, they needed to do the work of positioning my writing within wider intellectual discussions, or of applying my theories to relevant political dynamics.

Becoming interested in sampling in music production, I tried to apply a similar approach to my writing. I started to write while working closely with specific texts as if having a conversation with a thinker that inspires me. Instead of starting from my own notes or a blank page on which I reproduce the dynamics I enact, starting from a text written by someone else allowed me to view the dynamics I enact in new ways. Since I am writing within an academic context, this shift in my writing was not a purely creative choice, as it was partly required by the laws of academia. However, writing in conversation with the writing of other authors proved to be a source of inspiration that became openings in the self-enclosure and the self-reference of my writing in isolation. This simultaneous shift in my music and writing practice towards which I was guided by the advice of Björn Þorsteinsson and Mijke van der Drift in relation to my thesis drafts, allowed me to experience writing and producing music as relational processes even when my circumstances made me feel like I was working in isolation.

Within my music practice, because electronic music production is largely dependent on workflows determined by specific technological objects, upon becoming interested in using samples as a starting point for my compositions, I also became interested in samplers and the workflows they make possible. “Urban Thesis” is programmed using a tracker. A tracker is a sequencer used in early computer music to program sound chips or samples, usually heard in early video games and figures as an important tool within the demoscene/chiptune music and programming sub-culture (Ferreira, 2014: 33). Unlike modular synthesisers, the use of which gives rise to a composition as a result of complex patches between modules that produce tone

and rhythm, trackers sequence a predefined system of modules (here, a combination of sampling modules, and frequency modulation (FM) synthesis modules).

The flow of time is segmented into patterns, patterns into phrases, phrases into steps, and steps into tics; tics being the fundamental unit of time. A tracker allows the sequencing of musical events on both the level of steps and tics, which themselves can be sequenced as phrases and patterns. Thus, trackers allow the creation of a different type of complexity than the modular synthesisers I had been using thus far. Instead of exploring the complexity of a modular synthesiser patch, a tracker allows the creation of complexity on a step-by-step (or tic by tic) basis.

At first glance, (and the reason why I had been reluctant to engage with such methods of producing musical compositions), trackers seem to be a strictly deterministic mode of composing music. In terms of complexity, the result is similar to compositions I made using modular systems, however, the complexity of a tracker composition (from the perspective of a musician) does not emerge from a complex relational system of discrete electronic circuits. Rather, the complexity of a tracker composition is due to a system distributed in time and which emerges in different sessions of programming. Because a tracker composition does not need to be reproduced otherwise than by the instrument itself, I can write motifs by making changes on different levels of the tracker system (synthesis, pattern, phrase, step, tic) without needing to keep track of all my decisions, or even to read or reproduce them again in the future. Instead composing using a tracker becomes similar to recording an improvised performance, which itself becomes the ground of another improvisation (or here another programming session), even though improvisation here is at the level of organisation not at the level of performance. This temporal distribution of a process of production with no predetermined plan allows the social relationalities I embody, perform, and experience to infiltrate and alter my compositions, either through samples and field recordings or by the events I experience and the conversations I have with people around me that inspire decisions I take while programming a composition. In this sense, the complexity that I produce using determinate methods of sequencing is due to the process of programming sequences being interrupted, structured, and transformed by my interactions with my surroundings over an extended period of time.

The combination of this mode of composing music, with taking a sample as the initial state of organisational improvisation, provided a framework within which I can approach music

without a preconceived idea of the totality to be produced, while incrementally working towards a structured totality where structures can be adjusted as needed, within the overarching architecture of the tracker. In “Urban Thesis” I experimented with producing a track starting from a sample of traffic noises in Beirut while working on the track between the Netherlands and Iceland. Over time, the composition evolved to remind me of the calming chaos of Beirut, the brutal calmness of the Icelandic landscape, and the incessant and almost transcendental rhythm of work in the Netherlands and its aesthetic articulation in the beating of Gabber kick drum patterns (4/4 distorted kick drum patterns at 170-200 bpm (Rietveld & Monroe, 2021: 1)).

Producing “Urban Thesis” was the beginning of my becoming aware of how the instruments I use and the overarching structures they impose on my composition allow me to think of my compositions as being in conversation with compositions that are produced with similar instruments. It made me more aware of the influence of the technology that I am using on the music that I am making and of the ways in which my music relates to musical traditions. “Fastine” is the result of allowing this realisation to guide my choice of instruments. It is an experiment with a sequencer that draws inspiration from the combination of trackers and from step sequencers (sequencers found in Roland drum machines that were popularised by early house music). In this case the structure of a tracker is simplified; a pattern is divided into steps and each sound can be sequenced according to a division of the main tempo. However, the ability of trackers to transform sounds on a step-by-step basis is retained and expanded by allowing a total transformation of any sound into another on any step of the sequencer. Specifically, “Fastine” is the result of trying to produce irregular rhythms (similar to the ones in “Understimulation Anthem”) despite the seaming rigidity of the overarching structure of a step sequencer sequencing purely synthesised sounds.

“Diachronic Synconcrity” is composed using a similar sequencer, but one that only sequences audio samples. The composition started from a sample of a performance on the mizmar I found on YouTube. The mizmar is a wind instrument that resembles a flute but is made of two tubes that produce two distinct pitches at the same time. I felt drawn to experiment with this sample for two reasons. First, due to the way the mizmar is played—producing a continuous sound of drifting frequencies that go in and out of phase—felt like an expression of drone music that is tied to Arab traditions and that evokes a set of memories emotions and associations different from the ones evoked by drones I synthesised using my modular

synthesiser. The second reason is the phasing effect produced by two distinct, but related frequencies played simultaneously, which resonated with the sounds I synthesise based on a fascination with the tonal characters that emerge from waves of different frequencies modulating each other. The sample of a mizmar performance made possible experimentation with combinations of sounds from different sources, each bringing their own set of associations and thus altering and informing the composition and the process of its production.

“Diachronic Synconcrity” marks a point in my music production practice where I feel that I have found an approach that excites me and allows me to produce compositions that I am excited to listen to, while complementing and being complemented by my theoretical practice. Specifically, the approach that developed through different experiments, and which I applied in the production of this composition, allowed me to think of my music as itself being experiments in the organisation of unities rather than a representation of unities established within different domains. The most important aspect of this approach is its distribution in time. I work on one track at a time over an extended period (weeks or sometimes months). Within this extended period of time, the track-in-progress becomes a domain, a medium within which I construct unities, only to be interrupted by something else for a few days, to then return to the track-in-progress as medium in order to add to the unities and forms I had created, or to deconstruct, fragment, or merge them into different singularities. In this way, a track becomes an iterative experiment that is continuously anachronized, placed outside of the temporal domain within which it made sense. This approach allowed my music production practice to draw from the generative potential of a self-enclosed feedback system, while allowing the system itself (here my method of production music) to be transformed in relation to different temporal domains.

The totality that is the finished composition takes its form when I feel that I am becoming interested in rhythms, patterns, and structures that do not fit within what I am working on currently without erasing aspects of the lineage of iterative transformations I had been cultivating, and which became significant to me. When that happens, a composition takes its form, I move on to different experiments, and the iterations that resulted from this process of production become samples to be used in future compositions.

This approach, for me, is tied to thinking of my musical practice as interconnected with my philosophy and social theory practice. More practically, this approach is tied to my interest in

deepening my understanding of the theory of social organisation developed by Sylvia Wynter’s reworking of Maturana and Varela’s notion of autopoiesis through an onto-epistemological approach grounded in the black radical tradition (Moten, 2003: 94). This interest—which grew after leaning on the work of Frantz Fanon to make sense of my surroundings in migration—was reinforced by the desire to develop a methodology that can be applied to further both my theoretical and artistic practices. I have come to make sense of the alignment of my work with this intellectual tradition as linked to the improvisational approach to organisation that permeates the living tradition of black study (Moten, 1994: 53; Harney & Moten, 2021: 80); an approach that applies to social, musical, linguistic, or political domains, while informing transformations in others, or the improvisation of new composite domains. In the second section of this appendix, I will discuss the socio-political potential of such improvisational approach through Fred Moten’s theorisation of the ethico-temporal choice made possible by the *anachronization* of the event.

The Disciplinary Individuation and Temporisation of the Event

In “Music Against the Law of Reading the Future and Rodney King,” Moten writes of the 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers, its documentation by a passerby, the ensuing trials of the police officers involved (the first of which acquitted four accused police officers), and the uprising that followed (Moten, 1994: 58). He writes against reading and interpretation as “the deferral of freedom or of justice, a deferral enacted in singularized and differentiated reading and legitimated by the law which structures the production of readings (Moten, 1994: 53). Specifically, Moten reflects on the ways in which the (frame by frame) reading of the film depicting the beating of Rodney King—the individuation of the moments of the unfolding of the event (Moten, 1994: 56)—within the trial that acquitted the police officers, isolates (and individuates) the event—the beating of King—from the wider context of racism in the United States and the then neoliberal restructuring of Los Angeles (Moten, 1994: 58). Moten elaborates that “the effect of this individuation is that what occurs in their aftermath and as their surroundings, the uprising, is given over to either the realm of the inexplicable, the arbitrary, the savage, the non-intentional or apolitical, or to a range of explanations (the social scientific, the aesthetic, the philosophical) which are all impoverished precisely because of their idiomatic isolation each from the other” (Moten, 1994: 58). He explains that what he is after is “an improvisation or anachronization of the syntax of history and of the event” (Moten, 1994: 57). He rejects reading and the production of readings to, instead, analyse Rodney King not as a person or an

event, but as a totality; as a training in the “improvisation of the laws of singularity, idiom, and reading” (Moten, 1994: 57) that unsettle “the idiomatic boundaries separating social science and the humanities” (Moten, 1994: 57).

In this text Moten highlights the individuation at play in producing readings that conform to disciplinary idioms. He unpacks the way in which disciplinary readings within the justice system serve to define the temporal frame of observation relevant to particular events, dislodging the event from its anachronic unfolding (Moten, 1994: 56). He argues that this temporization of the event, in turn, serves to suspend and defer justice in legal trials and theoretical discussions within isolated disciplines. At the same time, such readings render emergent popular anger in response to the suspension of justice unjustified and unprovoked.

Moten explains that “the improvisation of the law of singularity, idiom, and reading” (Moten, 1994: 57) he calls for, necessitates a questioning and a going beyond disciplinary methodologies. He proposes the following:

This means not another inter- or multi-disciplinarity, but rather a real adisciplinarity within which totality might actually be engaged; this also means staying in the sound of what we read a little longer and in a different way: to inhabit the anachrony of the improvisational ensemble rather than the time of the caesura. This ethico-temporal choice is given us whenever we hear-The Music. (Moten, 1994: 59)

In order to further unpack Moten’s call, I will examine the functioning of the notion of anachronisation in his analysis and proposition. By doing so, I theorise improvisation and the improvisational ensemble, not in relation to music as an artistic discipline, but in relation to collectively and recurrently enacted relational rhythms and cognitive regularities that inform the self-evidence which in turn structures aesthetic preferences. Specifically, by examining Moten’s use of the notion of *anachronisation* through an analytic framework informed by Wynter’s application of the concept of autopoiesis to the systematic reproduction of the modern order, I reflect on what Moten refers to as “The Music” in the quotation above and on the nature of the ethico-temporal choice that we are given “whenever we hear–The Music” (Moten, 1994: 59).

Anachronic Music

The anachronisation of the event—placing an event outside of its temporal domain—for Moten, is “an antidote for reading and a radical refiguring of interdisciplinarity” (Moten, 1994: 52). It is an antidote for reading because when an event is placed outside of the

temporal domain within which the event unfolds and when the temporal boundaries of an event are unsettled, totalities become improvised. The totality of the event of the beating of Rodney King as it is segmented by a film shot by a passerby must become open to what came before and after it. When that event is placed in the wider temporal domain of racism in the United States and the reconfiguration of Los Angeles in the 1990s (Moten, 1994: 58), the individuated totality of Rodney King becomes open to a mode of being Black and racialised in the United States. Outside of the totality of the film that depicts the blows that fall on King's body, the event of police brutality becomes open to the brutal abuse and/or murder of countless others before and after King. The totality of police violence in the United States becomes open to the systemic marginalisation, alienation, and exploitation of Black and racialised communities as an integral aspect of the maintenance of the United States' economy and social order before and after the event. Then, the totality of the organisation of the United States based on systemic racial discrimination cannot be disentangled from the functioning and development of the colonially established capitalist market. Thus, when the event is deindividuated and anachronized, and when totalities are improvised, what is revealed are the systematically and recurrently enacted patterns that reproduce the modern order on different levels of organisation; patterns concealed by striated disciplinary readings of segmented events, and by laws, policies, and reforms structured by the disciplines that constitute, maintain, and reproduce the modern/colonial mode of social organisation and its racial, gendered, sexualised, ableist, and religious fragmentation of populations.

To place an event outside of its temporal domain is to place an event outside of disciplinary domains; outside of enclosed domains of knowledge, to which the unfolding of events is external, and within which an event is a predefined totality that can be read and dissected according to developments within a specific disciplinary domain (or intersections of domains) rather than in relation to situated histories of communities and the ways in which they are affected disciplinary developments. Because of that, to place an event outside of its temporal domain both requires and is itself, "a radical refiguration of interdisciplinarity" (Moten, 1994: 52).

Despite being written over thirty years ago, Moten's analysis seems to be acutely pertinent to current events that lie at the core of the contemporary restructuring of the globalised neoliberal order by the intersection of right wing and corporate agendas. Specifically, Moten's analysis of the disciplinary temporization of the event can shed light on the inability

of international organisations and justice systems to be effective in addressing the systemic extermination of the population of Ghaza by the Israeli Defence Forces.

Over the past couple of years, we have seen the events of October 7th, 2023, that sparked the ongoing genocidal campaign dissected and read through a proliferation of disciplinary idioms. Every footage and every freeze frame is shared and reshared to overwhelm the controlled flow of information from the besieged enclave; an event, individuated, becomes evidence of unprovoked violence that justifies the long-awaited colonial dream of the annihilation of the Palestinian people in order to make space for ethnocentric projects compatible with the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000: 539).

We have witnessed a systemic effort to individuate the events of October 7th to remove them from the extended context of 75 years of occupation, of 20 years of the siege on Ghaza, of the apartheid practices of the state of Isreal, and of the intergenerational trauma that has been engineered to dismantle the anti-colonial struggle of the Palestinian people and their claim to land. We have seen cities levelled, families vaporised whole, and a generation of children orphaned, maimed, and traumatised. We have seen a siege that restrict the flow of people and essential materials to and from the enclave, and yet the disciplinary idioms of media coverage still question whether we are witnessing the systemic extermination of a population or the self-defence of a nation whose bloody peace was unjustifiably disturbed. We have seen the killing of civilians seeking aid, we have witnessed the recurrent targeting of aid workers, journalist, and first responders, and yet the international justice system is stalled in technical discussions on whether what we are living through is a genocide, while the growing popular anger around the world is framed by complicit governments as non-sensical and driven by ignorance and social media trends. The access to information facilitated by digital technologies becomes itself a domain of discussion, and meanwhile, an occupation army continues its assault on a besieged population, controlling their food and water supplies, and killing them using technologies against which they have no means to resist.

Living through such events and through the weaponisation of the idiomatic boundaries of discipline forced me to consider the ways in which disciplinary idioms structure the work I do. From this perspective, the dissertation is an effort to unpack the functioning of such boundaries in my thinking, writing, and relating to others. However, such an effort highlighted the disciplinary idioms I employ in my artistic work as a result of my formal training in design. Thus, my theoretical research left me with a question that I could not

answer theoretically. Namely, what would a process of artistic production that does not conform to the idiomatic boundaries of discipline look like? And how could artistic production contribute to an adisciplinaryity that allows us to deindividuate events and engage totalities?

As discussed in the first part of this appendix, music production as a medium of expression that I practice out of interest without formal training became the experimental and exploratory domain within which I unpack these questions. Considering such a theoretical approach in relation to improvised music can shed more light on its ethico-temporal potential.

Musical Improvisation and the Distributed Ensemble

In “the Gift of Silence,” Martin E. Rosenberg theorises improvisation in jazz through the intersection of anthropology, philosophy, neuroscience, and music theory. Rosenberg argues that “for jazz musicians, embodied silence becomes the initial condition for processes of embodied cognitive bifurcation” (Rosenberg, 2021: 146). He explains that “bifurcation refers specifically to conditions in the physical sciences where instability in the behaviour of an open system will give rise to a range of possible alternative futures for that system” (Rosenberg, 2021: 146).

Unlike non-improvised forms of musical performance, jazz musicians do not follow a predetermined plan that details the unfolding of the performance. An improvised jazz performance starts from silence. The silence is broken by a rhythmic gesture (often a cymbal rhythm) which sets “in motion the flow of time from within that silence” (Rosenberg, 2021: 150). Rosenberg goes on to explore the emergence of complexity within jazz improvisation as bifurcation within a field of possibility informed by “a range of formal behaviours” that correspond to the idioms of Western music (Rosenberg, 2021: 147); where a plurality of rhythms and harmonic modes coexist as future possibilities issuing from the ongoing improvisation, breaking with conventional uses of the idioms of Western music.

If we think of jazz improvisation as Moten does—as inhabiting “the anachrony of the improvisational ensemble” (Moten, 1994: 59)—then we can find an equivalence between Rosenberg’s silence as an initial condition from which a performance emerges as bifurcation (Rosenberg, 2021: 146) and Moten’s *The Music* from which ensues the ethico-temporal choice of inhabiting the anachrony of the improvisational ensemble (Moten, 1994: 59). However, I argue that the contrasting ways Moten and Rosenberg refer to the initial state

from which improvisation can emerge (silence/The Music) signals to distinct onto-epistemological approaches that can be disentangled by examining the functioning of the notion of “improvisational ensemble” in each of these texts.

Rosenberg studies improvisation within a strictly musical context. His interest is in uncovering the distributed and embodied cognitive processes that underlie the improvisation of a musical performance (Rosenberg, 2021: 145). Within that context, the improvisational ensemble is the ensemble of jazz musicians. He thinks of the performing jazz ensemble as a system held together by the emergent rhythm of a flow of time (Rosenberg, 2021: 150) and structured by a range of formal behaviours (Rosenberg, 2021: 147).

If we apply Moten’s theorisation of improvisation as evoked earlier to a performing jazz ensemble, then we must think of the ensemble beyond the idioms of music as a discipline, and beyond the temporality of the performance. In this case improvisation is not only what emerges from the interactions of the members of a musical ensemble, rather, the performing jazz ensemble is itself an improvised totality. The emergent rhythm of a flow—a shared visceral experience of the passage of time, intimately tied to those who share that time and the space within which they do—is not a product of the jazz ensemble, but the other way around. It is the emergent flow that constitutes a contingent ensemble that articulates that flow musically as rhythmic acoustic markers of the passage of time. In other words, sharing the experience of the flow of time precedes the abstraction of a rhythmically organised flow of time that defines the singularity of an ensemble that articulates it musically.

The ensemble, as such, transforms and morphs throughout the performance and beyond it, making of multiple musicians a sonic singularity, leaving out some musicians, centring others, inviting in the swaying audience or the resonating space within which the performance is taking place. More importantly, the improvised ensemble is not limited by the walls of a performance hall, by the individuated bodies of the musicians, nor by the temporality of the performance. When we think of the performing jazz ensemble as itself an improvised and emergent system, then every element of the system becomes open to be affected by what they are entangled with, even beyond the enclosure of the system, as everything outside of system/ensemble can potentially become a part of it. Every musician and every listener, becomes saturated with possibilities aggregated from the relational intersections they embody, which can alter a shared experience of the flow of time and its musical articulation by an emergent improvisational ensemble.

A Musical Ethico-temporal Choice

When we think of the improvisational ensemble as itself an improvisation not limited to the temporal domain of the performance, then the silence at the beginning of a jazz performance cannot be silent. The silence before musicians start to play is the loudest part of the performance; a silence saturated with superposed possibilities that tie the to come to distant times, places, people, and communities whose movements musicians rearticulate as sonic motifs they internalised through recurrent re-enactment, whether internalised by enacting communal patterns as part of transgenerational patterns, or by studying what becomes the musical representation of such patterns within the disciplinary domain of music. The rhythmic gesture that sets in motion the flow of time (Rosenberg, 2021: 150) does not signal a beginning that follows emptiness. The rhythmic gesture that sets time in motion structures superposed and always already flowing rhythms. These superposed and always already flowing rhythms in the silence that precedes an improvised jazz performance is “The Music.” The Music is not a form of expression or of cognition nor a marker of their absence; it is collectively enacted movements whose oscillations can be heard when totalities and ensembles are not predefined by the idiomatic boundaries of disciplines and their predetermined ranges of formal behaviours.

When phrased as such, The Music that Moten refers to is the embodied rhythm of collectively and recurrently enacted movements as they are structured by the laws of modern disciplines. These rhythms are not distinct from the systematically performed practices that Wynter theorises as constituting different modes of being (Wynter, 2015: 211). Thus, the silence that Rosenberg refers to is not only the beginning of the self-enclosed temporality of a musical performance; the silence at the beginning of a jazz improvisation is an extension of the embodied relationalities that constitute modes of being within modernised contexts; relationalities and enacted patterns contained within modern disciplinary enclosures, as well as those that escape their capture. The rhythmic hits of a cymbal at the onset of a performance (Rosenberg, 2021: 150) are the structuring of this already flowing flow; an improvised structuring that realises improvised acoustic and social singularities/unities. In this case, the set of formal behaviours prescribed by music as a discipline does not determine nor contain the range of improvised possibility, but it is one set out of many systematically trained relationalities and movements that inform the musical realisation of a flow. From such a perspective jazz improvisation is not only a particular musical and cognitive practice that can be replicated in other domains, but a training in a radically different mode of organisation

(Moten, 1994: 52) that goes beyond the enclosure of disciplinary domains within the modern mode of organisation; a practical training in the transgression of disciplinary domains and in the improvisation of tentative yet actionable domains.

To hear The Music, then, is to become aware of the systematically enacted practices that give a shared meaning to aesthetic articulations and narrative formulations; an awareness that allows us to engage totalities as not separate from the recurrently enacted practices that constitute them. To inhabit the anachrony of the improvisational ensemble is to improvise the laws of reading; to explore idioms by going beyond them towards the collectively and systematically enacted patterns that institute them. In this sense, it is when we hear The Music that the unstable behaviour of an improvised improvisational ensemble gives rise to bifurcation that leads us towards emergent possibilities, rather than back towards what is trained to be familiar to a modern mode of being. This is the theoretical extension of the acoustic appendix; an extension that aims to emphasise an unsettling of the separation of process and product, and to reveal the modern Western/Eurocentric self-evidence implied in modern modes of disciplinary production.