legacy and the articulation of the fragmentary effects of its r uptures on the “wretched of the earth” (Fanon 1963):

My name is Bordeaux and Nates and Liverpool and New York and San Francisco
not a corner of this world but carries my thumb-print
and my heel-mark on the backs of skyscrapers and my dirt (Césaire [1956]
1969, 29–30)

Césaire continues, naming the geologies of racialized earth, concluding,

Red earth, blood earth, blood brother earth (29–30)

The Inhumanities

To produce Blackness is to produce a social link of subjection
and a body of extraction, that is, a body entirely exposed to the
will of the master, a body from which great effort is made to
extract maximum profit. An exploitable object . . .

—ACHILLE MBEMBE, A Critique of Black Reason

If we plumb the depths, then what we will find is fundamentally
black . . . [it is] a process of disalienation . . . I felt that beneath
the social being would be found a profound being, over whom all
sorts of ancestral layers and alluviums had been deposited.

—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, Discourse on Colonialism

Questions of origin are never too far away from questions of dif ference and belonging and the various bifurcations of the human
into its subcategories of fully human, subhuman, and inhuman. Origins also nurture; they grow an armature for narratives; they
root a set of emplacements or belongings into place. Origins are
like the importation of flora and fauna that settlers brought with
them to remake their home. The unsettled had to negotiate or igns, too (the voiding of origins that the Middle Passage initi ated), making home in no home, taking root, a “replantation”
(Wynter, n.d.) in a slave plot, where growing things is both a nar rative and biophysical act. The natal alienation that is established
through the inscription of the inhuman as a subject position with in slavery and the dispossession of land that renders the indige nous as subhuman has consequences for how lineage is inscribed
in territory and legitimating rights are established over that territory. The inheritance of ideal subjecthood that is tied to material accumulation vis-à-vis the white patriarchal family continues in the present (Sharpe 2016b). As Hartman (2003) comments, “family values support a eugenics agenda—the reconstitution of the white bourgeois family” (196) where “racial domination and racial abjection are produced across generations” (198). The genealogical arrangements that are used to understand the architecture of Anthropocene origin stories have consequences for the contemporary politics of place. As Brand (2001, 64) argues, “country, nation, these concepts are of course deeply indebted to origins, family, tradition, home. Nation-states are configurations of origins as exclusionary power structures which have legitimacy based solely on conquest and acquisition.” The manufacturing of origins is a need and tyranny of the nation, which is predicated on extraction and exploitation. Black and brown death is the precondition of every Anthropocene origin story, and the grammar and graphia of this geology compose a regime for producing contemporary subjects and subtending settler colonialism. Thus Anthropocene origin stories are broadly concerned not just with geological markers but with a genealogy that inscribes a historicity onto the planet and thereby constitutes the filiation of what and who gets to constitute the historical event.

Origins are not solely about geography. They pertain to the question of how matter is understood and organized, as both extractable resource and energy, mobilized through dehumanizing modes of subjection and conjoining the property and properties of matter in such a way that it collapses the body politic of Blackness into the inhuman—wherein a codification in law and labor becomes an epidemiological signature, as Blackness is marked as property and Whiteness is marked as freedom (political and geographical). This transaction is executed in geologic codes of materiality. As Hartman (1997, 115) argues, “the longstanding and ultimate affiliation of liberty and bondage made it impossible to envision freedom independent of constraint or personhood and autonomy separate from the society of property and proprietal notions of self.” Destabilizing the origin (and originality in general) counters the social reproduction of the relation of race that is established through this geologic ordering of property and proprietal subjectivity. Slavery provided a “natural” ordering principle in the techné of race (Hartman 1997, 121), and Geology’s discriminatory classificatory system of property and properties no less participated in the transformation of land relations and extractive economies—a geometry of power that executed dispossession and displacement under the rubric of extraction. The metamorphosis is of geology into slavery or “chattel into man” (Hartman 1997, 111).

While the roles of “natural categories” of race, blood, racial taxonomies of eugenics, and environmental determinism have been critically denaturalized, geology remains stubbornly resilient in maintaining its inhuman categories of metal, gold, mud, slave, earth, Carib. The inscription of geologic principles in the founding narrative of the colonial state, in terms of the colonization of both resources and racialized belonging, encodes the brutal calculative logic of inhuman materiality as a praxis for dispossession that only later acquires its ideological forms, such as “Manifest Destiny.” There is a parallel between the languages of the dispossession of subjects and land within the context of the inhuman (and its inhumanities). There was a reliance on both the fixity of geologic description to facilitate exchange (gold, slave, Gold Coast) and its porosity, which enabled a range of different materials to be mobilized within a single system despite differences in sentence, location, and affiliation. In this chapter, I explore the structural antagonisms in the designation of the inhuman in its double sense (as material experience and epistemic “category mistake”) and the resistances and refusals in response to this mineralogical intimacy.

**Categories of Matter**

Geology is a category and praxis of dispossession. It has determined the geographies and genealogies of colonial extraction in
a double sense: first, in terms of settler colonialism and the *thirst* for land and minerals, and second, as a category of the inhuman that transformed persons into things. This pincer movement of geology displaces territory as earth and the territory of subjective possession. This is the filiation of “red earth, blood earth, blood brother earth.”

**Geology as the Space of Transaction**

**Laws of property** a. a thing belonging to someone, things, belonging, goods, chattels. b. an attribute, quality or characteristic of something.

**Property Relations**

Slave capture and ownership were initially instigated to mine for gold in the New World. Both enslaved, land and ecologies became subject to encoding as inhuman property, as a tactic of empire and European world building. Gold and silver extracted from mines in the Americas flowed to buoy up European markets. The property lines of empire instigated and marked Blackness as both a consequence of labor requirements and a possibility of capital accumulation through geologic extraction. As Wilderson suggests, “one could say that the possibility of becoming property is one of the essential elements that draws the line between blackness and whiteness” (quoted in Hartman 2003, 188). The historic confluence of the science of recognition, identification, and extraction of geologic materials and the establishment of a color line that policed the border in claims to human freedom organized the language of geology beyond the realms of a material science. As Catherine Hall (2014, 28) puts it, “black racial identity marked those who were enslaved. White marked those who were free.” Blackness was named as a property of “natal alienation” (which is also genealogical and geographical isolation) and its continuance in social and sexu-

al orders through the enclosure of property relations across all binds of relation. It had its counterpart in the naming of whiteness as a different kind of property—access to public and private privileges, the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one’s own life rather than being the object of others’ domination. A set of assumptions, privileges and benefits were attached to being white in colonial society that became legitimated, affirmed and protected by law. (28)

Blackness was a legal code and an epidemiological mode of identification that fixed a body politic of Blackness as transportable property to be continuously dis-placed across different geographies and psychic registers across the “door of no return” (Brand 2001; Hartman 2007). Moreover, Whiteness became established as a *right* to geography, to take place, to traverse the globe and to *extract* from cultural, corporeal, and material registers.

While the accumulation from planter capital was one register of extraction, the accumulation from the violence of *taking place* across multiple registers of belonging was another. The very fungibility of the commodity allowed Blackness to become mobilized as an ontological possibility within inhuman categories, but conversely, the carceral logic of geologic grammars renders Blackness as flesh, matter, and subject position. The fantasy was to assert commodity value of persons through the rendering of a nonagentic materiality (flesh) to generate surplus value, thereby disfiguring the black subject. Hartman argues that the slave is the essential subject as object, an object to whom anything can be done. The first step in this process of dehumanization is the metamorphosis of human into inhuman thing. The discipline of geology is intrinsic to this structural inscription of subjects into matter-objects or property. Compartmentalization and categorization of matter produce the fungibility of the slave as “thing” and the grammar of “thingification.” In a Kentucky slave pen, reconstructed in the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, an iron ring hangs from the central beam, the one feature in
an otherwise empty space. A video playing outside says that the iron ring was “the only human thing in there.” The ring formed by a human hand from the inhuman earth, beaten into shape in the forge, maintained in violence by free human hands, hooked so many into inhuman bondage—a bondage that ricochets across the Middle Passage, through so many inhumanities, in infinite arra-ears. “Here, walls ate skin, footsteps took the mind” (Brand 2001, 224). This fungibility, Hartman argues, is both the breach in natal possibility that leaves subjects unable to access any positionality outside of the codification of Blackness as inhuman property and what organizes the possibility of the interchangeable exchange as a set of properties.

Properties

Both the enslaved and minerals are recognized as possessing certain properties or qualities, namely, energy, reproducibility, and transformation. As Hartman (1997, 26) argues, “the fungibility of the commodity, specifically its abstractness and immateriality, enabled the black body or blackface mask to serve as the vehicle of white self-exploration, renunciation, and enjoyment.” The properties of the enslaved “are ontologized as the innate capacities” of the slave property (26). These innate capacities are properties to be worked and channeled, likened to the band of iron that made the ring that held the slaves. These properties for extraction and labor are also tied to the social reproduction of Whiteness; through forced reproduction and rape of the enslaved (or, in Hartman’s words, subjection to desire without consent); and in the use of extracted energy for generating the organization of economies of valuation. The instigation of slavery was prompted by a recognition of the so-called properties of African physiology, where indigenous Indians were viewed as not robust enough for mining and plantation work. What is apparent is that the slave and the mineral are recognized in regimes of value, but only so much as they await extraction (where Whiteness is the arbiter and owner of value).

Both these modes of extracting value—as property and properties—generate surplus. It is the grammar of geology—the inhuman—that establishes the stability of the object of property for extraction. The process of geologic materialization in the making of matter as value is transferred onto subjects and transmutes those subjects through a material and color economy that is organized as ontologically different from the human (who is accorded agency in the pursuits of rights, freedom, and property). The codification of Blackness through the inhuman meant that “there was no relation to blackness outside the terms of this use of, entitlement to, and occupation of the captive body, for even the status of free blacks was shaped and compromised by the existence of slavery” (Hartman 1997, 24). While Hartman argues that property was how the color line was drawn, what is important about her argument is the way in which she demonstrates how the black body becomes a “property of enjoyment” as well as of labor, violence, energy, and so on. The actual body of the slave as an object of identification is always being made to disappear, whether through the optics of pleasure, empathy, or violence, in much the same way as the black or brown body does in the “point and erase” stories of the Anthropocene.

Thus geology was ontologically configured long before the pronouncement of the Anthropocene that designates a “new” geologic identity for humanity. Identification of properties of value and the recognition of property relations to substantiate that theft were the primary drivers of profitability in the colonial context. At the heart of this enterprise was geology as an epistemological discipline and a technology for extraction, settlement, and displacement. The organization of matter and subjects within descriptions that served as a mode of containment produced the very idea of a standing stock of gold, energy, and slaves, organized, as they were, as concomitant categories on a bill of sale. Blackness is rendered as an empty signifier, like gold, silver, and other precious minerals, where the valuation of exchange is established through descriptive markers and subjects are considered as a set of properties.
(exchange value = type [sex, size, age] + properties [skill, future surplus]). Rights of property are established as a configuration of what is identifiable as value and a mode of possession. As Spillers (2003, 208) argues, “the captive body, then, brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for value so thoroughly interwoven in their literal and figurative emphases that distinctions between them are virtually useless.” Objectification is enacted to deaden subjectivity (and relationality to place). This is how the inhuman as a mode of categorization and a monstrous attitude toward the enslaved contains, regulates, and subjugates bodies. The classification of the inhuman as inert, ahistorical, non-political, inorganic, is both a division of matter that is biopolitical and a regime of ordering matter that separates spheres of politics and agency—or, biopolitics achieved through geologic means.

Who then is objectified by geology’s grammar of materiality? Who are its social subjects and kin? What is the ground and relation of these subjects to the earth? Noticing the slide between persons and materials that are consigned to the category of inhuman is not to dispossess further those that have been rendered as inhuman in that configuration; rather, it is to understand the slide between categories and its resistance. Understanding the instability of the category of the inhuman and its stickiness to abject forms of subjection opens an examination into how these attachments were facilitated (and continue to be facilitated). Recognizing how the inhuman slips, how the inhuman is made to slide over personhood as a process of making the subjugated (as in the black body rendered as flesh and units of energy), is an unrecognized dynamic of geologic life that rewrites a radically different text for the Anthropocene.

While rewriting the Anthropocene is not of central importance in and of itself (i.e., as an epistemic exercise), the modes of geologic subjectivity that are imagined, and the relation of these ideas of geologic subjectivity to regimes of extraction, are. Understanding how modes of subjectivity are established as categories of extraction is a historic shift in the narrative of world making and a redress of how modes of subjectivity are formed in relation to one another (i.e., the making of chattel as an indifferent category of subject description is tied to the possibility of the possessive liberal individual and white patriarchal family). It is only at the level of the symbolic that the substitutions between Black and Gold can be mobilized as material registers that travel across a monolithic ground. Only through a shift of the axis of sense that allows this transaction (at a material and symbolic level) can a different possibility be enacted to trouble this geophysics predicated on the deformation of brown and black bodies. Looked at through the lens of geology and slavery, the descriptive opacity of the Anthropocene as a reckoning with geologic relations seems disingenuous. For the displacement from land and ecologic relation that form the possibility of place are covered over, and subjective life is tied to the instigation of chattel slavery (which is coded in parallel with material extraction). It is the very codes and grades of inhuman matter as they are generically applied to minerals that become reconstituted in the generic slave codes (of property and properties). While the recognition of material properties of colonized land in terms of extractable properties drives the colonial imperative and its need for slave labor, the slave becomes an effect of that extractive grammar and its embodiment and resistance.

In twining the traffic between the inhuman and inhumane, the presumed neutrality of geology as a mode of description is disrupted. Blackness is displaced and effaced in the pursuit of value for Western colonialism through and as extraction. Geologic principles are used to establish a biocentrism that delineates from the human to subhuman to inhuman, as a property relation and as a mark of agentic properties. It is not that geology is productive of race per se but that empirical processes mesh across geological propositions and propositions of racial identity to produce an equation of inhuman property as racially coded. This dynamic of disinheritance (and white inheritance) is ideologically maintained through the notions of species in geologic time. As Fanon (1963, 39) argued, “this world divided into compartments, this world cut
in two is inhabited by two different species. . . . When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species.” It is equally true that the optics of belonging to a given race is the techné of origination that is invented to parcel out the earth.

“The Principles of Geology”
Sir Charles Lyell, president of the Geological Society of London and author of The Principles of Geology (a text that directly informed Darwin’s ideas of evolution), makes clear the ways in which geology and racial propositions are intertwined in his published accounts of his geologic surveying of North America (Lyell 1845, 1849). Eclectic in a manner that must have been familiar to his audiences, he moves in between “Geology and Cretaceous strata” and “Montgomery. Curfew. Sunday School for Negroes” in one chapter (chapter XXI) and “Distinct Table for Coloured and White Passengers” and “Fossil Shells” (Lyell 1849, chapter XXIII) in another. The ledger for chapter IX reads, “Return to Charleston—Fossil Human Skeleton—Species of Shells common to Eocene Strata in America and Europe—Condition of Slave Population—Cheerfulness of the Negroes: their Vanity—State of Animal Existence—Invalidity of marriages—The Coloured Population multiply faster than the Whites—Effects of the interference of Abolitionists.” Lyell’s speculations on race are firmly underpinned by the language he has forged for geology, as he defines the problems of the races and their respective (as he understands them) positions in relation to time, in much the same way as his descriptions of geology define the stratification of rock formations and species in time. That is, the Negro is understood by Lyell as a different species in time than “the White.” Notwithstanding his concerns over the population growth of Negroes and the subsequent effect on the white race, both racially and economically, Lyell (1849, 95) suggests, “I shall cherish the most sanguine hopes of their future improvement and emancipation, and even their ultimate amalgamation and fusion with the whites, so highly has my estimate of their moral and intellectual capabilities been raised by what I have lately seen in Georgia and Alabama.” While Lyell’s paternalist opinion seems to have been bolstered by an invigorating sermon in a Negro church, where he praises the lyricism of the Negroes and how they have embraced his understanding of moral progress, his representation of the problem of the race is directly informed by his account of the principles of geology (and the notion of improvement and gradualism that framed his account of geologic formations). As the table of contents attests, he sees no difference in the crossings between social and geologic strata with regard to the language of property and possibility across fossil objects and Negroes.

On the question of emancipation, Lyell quotes an advocate from the North, reasoning that if emancipation were not granted, then the Negro population would grow to outnumber the White population. He says, “But would not the progress of the whites be retarded, and our race deteriorated, nearly in the same proportion as the negroes would gain? Why not consider the interests of the white race by hastening the abolition of slavery. The whites constitute nearly six-sevenths of our whole population. As a philanthropist, you are bound to look at the greatest good of the two races collectively” (Lyell 1849, 101). More than a hundred years later, James Baldwin debates at Cambridge University Union with the conservative right-wing author William F. Buckley on a motion that is both the child of this question of the progress of Whites and its inversion: “Has the American Dream been achieved at the expense of the American Negro?” In his statement, Baldwin exposes the hypocrisy of liberalism and tears apart the notion of progress when one-ninth of the population is excluded. Toward the end of his speech, Baldwin declared that until it was accepted that “I am not a ward of America,” a subject of pity and charity, but instead that “I am one of the people who built the country—until this moment comes there is scarcely any hope for the American
dream.” What Lyell addresses as the issue of progress, as a system of reality that is produced through a temporal geologic formulation, Baldwin is still challenging a century later.

Lyell (1845) states the social work of temporal formations explicitly when he says, “To inspire them with an aptitude for rapid advancement must be the work of time—the result of improvement carried on through several successive generations. Time is precisely the condition for which the advocates of the immediate liberation of the blacks would never sufficiently allow” (191–92, emphasis added). Employing the notion of “Times Arrow” (later made famous by another geologist, Stephen Jay Gould), Lyell makes the symbolic offering of time and its possibilities for freedom and then represses that possibility through a generational requirement, so that Blackness is always belated in time and therefore never fully now and human. Wright suggests that “the tendency to misread this Blackness as a ‘what’ imposes even more the fixity so that Blackness, as a vaguely biological ‘what’ takes on an eerie resemblance to those anti-Black discourses that first claimed Blacks were indeed a ‘what’—a distinct subspecies ‘marked by nature,’ as Jefferson opined” (Wright 2015, 25). The “what” of Blackness was rendered through the lexicon of the inhuman. Only geologic time, according to Lyell, would allow for the transformation of what into who.

As in answer to the legacy of Lyell’s thinking and its multiple manifestations through the generations of the Jim Crow era, Baldwin, in the 1989 documentary The Price of a Ticket, challenges the idea that racial progress needs to “take time.” He says, “What is it you want me to reconcile myself to? I was born here nearly sixty years ago, I’m not going to live another sixty years, you always tell me it takes time. It’s taken my father’s time, my mother’s time, my uncle’s, my brother’s and my sister’s time, my niece’s, my nephew’s time, how much time do you want for your progress? The cut with which Baldwin spits out the word progress is clean to the bone. Nina Simone sings it in ‘Mississippi Goddam’ (1964), in response to the murder of Medgar Evans and the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four black children, ‘Too slow’; ‘Keep on sayin’ ‘go slow’ . . . to do things gradually would bring more tragedy. Why don’t you see it? Why don’t you feel it? I don’t know, I don’t know. You don’t have to live next to me, just give me my equality!” As Mbembe (2017, 17) argues, “the notion of race made it possible to represent non-European human groups as trapped in a lesser form of being. They were the impoverished reflection of the ideal man, separated from him by an insurmountable temporal divide, a difference nearly impossible to overcome.” Locked into a belatedness in becoming human enough in relation to the ideal (white) humanist subject, the spatializing of time along a vertical line is used as a mechanism to deny juridical rights, wherein Whiteness becomes the achievement of one’s temporal identity in geologic time.

In the presumption of what needs to be explained about slavery, a geohistorical horizon is established into which questions of race and possibility are staged as self-evidently differentiated in time, to justify subjection and material dispossession (from intimate kin and sexual relations to the ownership of land). Lyell’s whimsical speculations point to how these geological underpinnings of the rubric of property, paternalism, and moral economy establish modes of subjectification as thoroughly sedimented in the bedrock of geology and its categorizing of fossil objects in time. The figure of the Negro is the substantive subject of this historicization that figures the question of race within and through geological classi-
fications and its descriptive modes of extractive preconfiguration. The construction of the human as such, as it pertains to origins, is divided along with geologic strata into White and Negro as part of the differentiating discourse of race and time, in which Whiteness signals arrival and Blackness belatedness. Lyell (1845, 191) says,

I am by no means disposed to assume that the natural capacities of the negroes, who always appeared to me to be an amiable, gentle, and inoffensive race, may not be equal in a moral and intellectual point of view to those of the Europeans, provided the coloured population were placed in circumstances equally favourable for their development. But it would be visionary to expect that, under any imaginable system, this race could at once acquire as much energy, and become as rapidly progressive, as the Anglo-Saxons.

When Lyell tries to justify this carceral lacuna in time, he comes up with a transcendental categorical distinction across generations, where the teleological principles of thought take a presumption of the “unimaginable” as a principle. Yet, there is a slippage in this description of the unimaginable acquisition of “as much energy” which allows progress, in that it names the theft of energy that is slavery as the propulsion of white evolutionary achievement. As a slow converter to the idea of the transmutation of the species through Darwin’s concept of natural selection, Lyell was suspicious of the possibility for change, preferring to see the relations between races (as with geology) as defined by gradual transformation and the impact of favorable conditions (understood by him as both social and climatic). Geology becomes a way to frame the unfolding progress of liberal teleology. He says,

They cannot be fused at once into the general mass, and become amalgamated with the whites, for their colour still remains as the badge of their former bondage, so that they continue, after their fetters are removed, to form a separate and inferior caste. How long this state of things would last must depend on their natural capabilities, moral, intellectual, and physical; but if in these they be equal to whites, they would eventually become the dominant race, since the climate of the south, more congenial to their constitutions, would give them decided advantage. (193)

In Lyell’s reasoning, Blackness was a monolith that was separated from Whiteness through metaphors of value that are complicated by understandings of the biologic determinism through climate (as a racialized construction). Again, there is the slippage between the categorization of property and its effects and the role of “natural” properties that determine (in Lyell’s mind) the environmental possibilities of evolution, and thus a risk to white society. The epistemic violence is doubly enacted: “it touches generations of social formations both over time (transhistorical and memorial) and in time (historical and material)” (Spillers 2003, xiii). Lyell’s comments reveal the affective infrastructures that travel under scientific reason that privileges white comfort (“anxiety”) over black pain:

Had the white man never interposed to transplant the negro into the New World, the most generous asserters of the liberties of the coloured race would have conceded that Africa afforded space enough for their development. Neither in their new country, nor in that of their origin, whether in a condition of slavery or freedom, have they as yet exhibited such superior qualities and virtues as to make us anxious. (Lyell 1845, 195, emphasis added)

While Lyell’s views replicate rather than elucidate any departure from norms in the discussion of slavery, what is important to note is how his argumentation draws on a linear notion of time (see Wright 2015, 37) that is embedded in a biopolitical tale of applying stratigraphic thinking to ideas of cultural and biological progression. This notion of progression is used inversely to excuse and diminish the effect of the forced migration and enslavements of Africans to the Americas. Lyell makes explicit in his discussion on slavery and the interspersion of these discussions through his notes on rocks and mineral resources how geology functions as the racial supplement to the progress narrative. This racial supplementarity of geology is not just a material placement in the order of things, but it does psychic work in assuring white anxiety so that recognition of being fully human is forestalled (and thus remains fully exploitable). Lyell’s anxiety
read in reverse shows that what allows white self-actualization (or comfort) is slavery.

Spillers (2003, xiii) writes that “material values engender symbolic and discursive ones (vice-versa) in perfect synecdochic harmony.” This emplacement of the slave within geologic orders demonstrates the racial encoding of political life (bios) in slavery through the categories of matter and its properties before it becomes ideologically sedimented in a discourse of racialized biology. Yet, there is a biopolitical disjunction between the description of geology and its corporeal affects that produces a monstrous impolitic materiality. Rather, geologic time provides the context for the formation of the privileged biocentric subject. The organization and categorization of materiality enact a praxis of colonialism or a taxonomy of race that is productive of racial logics that extend through and beyond mineralogy and its extractions. The ancestry of human beings is not to be always and entirely conflated with work on the development of species but origins of human–animal filiation are part of the story that frames the development of both the geologic and biological sciences. The context of slavery and the practices of geology as an extractive science provide a co-constituting fabric to colonial enterprise and the projects of description of both the earth and the “place” of different humans within it. That is, perceptions of social formations and geologic organizations are linked through both practices and sets of ideas/ideals. In the context of the propulsion of species narrative as the survival of all in the Anthropocene, this cozy, “innocent” universal of geologic realism reinforces the idea of matter as independent of its languages of description rather than as a structuring device of property and properties. Thus it replicates the political and racial divisions of matter even as it obscures them. Geology as colonial mode of classification underwrites the Anthropocene regardless of which settler origin story of the Anthropocene is taken as the moment of origination. If we see the Anthropocene turn to the species thinking as a way to try to save it—in a recuperative mode—this literally requires a writing of the rock (i.e., via a geologically

established mode of subjectivity) to achieve the overhaul of human to species via geological epoch. To achieve this ideal of the Anthropos as universal subject, the human needs to become both abstracted (from its previous forms of exclusionary humanism) and already populated in the form of the White Western master-subject whom Sylvia Wynter calls “Over Represented Man.”

Geology is a mechanism of power and statecraft that has a lower resolution or a more subterranean subjective operation than more performative biopolitics, but it nonetheless continues to be repressive in its extraction qualities and sediments the settler-colonial state. This extractive praxis sets up an instrumental relation to land, ecology, and people. If the geosocial relations of Old and New Worlds are put in conversation with their racial formations, the racial nomos of white settler colonialism can be seen to be established through the infrapolitics of geologic relations. Race and its marking through the geologic term of the inhuman upsets the supposed “natural” boundaries of matter in the classification of human/inhuman, estranging both these terms. Whereas we recognize geologic material practices (oil and mineral extraction) as explicitly tied up in the realm of the political, the declared innocence of acts of description and their historical inscriptions on bodies and geographies are left unexamined. Blackness opens up this “scene of subjection” (Hartman 1997) to its historical fault lines, but it also bears on those geoforges in the present, on the “now” of Blackness, and how Blackness is cast in the storms of environmental change. Corporeality is always established in the zone of territoriality as a form of territoriality over and through black subjects, from chattel slavery through ongoing environmental racism, wherein Blackness becomes what could be termed an ontology without territory.

The purchase and extension of the territorial impulse (to conquer lands for resource extraction and to organize labor forms to mobilize that extraction, while simultaneously severing the bonds of attachment and territory of enslaved peoples) to subjects organize the dual excess of colonialism. Corporeality for black subjects
was not established in the zone of ontology but foreshadowed in the zone of territory and its grammars of extraction. Intervening at the level of narrative is not just a redirection of sense and politics—political aesthetics—but a recognition of how those narrative forces shape the possibilities for praxis in contemporary extraction. It is a tactic to secure a territory in the present against the redress of this historic possession and the ways in which properties are cast and traded as fungible in processes of valuation that make them exchangeable. Therefore any attempt at an Anthropocenic universality is not a question of reorganization at the level of ontology, or what could be called the desire for ontodeliverance, that is, the idea that a new ontological formation that includes differently situated subjects will change the terms of engagement. The very “matter” of territorial impulse that materially comprised the Anthropocene is anti-Blackness; it is racialized matter that delivers the Anthropocene as a geologic event into the world, through mining, plantations, railroads, labor, and energy. While Blackness is the energy and flesh of the Anthropocene, it is excluded from the wealth of its accumulation. Rather, Blackness must absorb the excess of that surplus as toxicity, pollution, and intensification of storms. Again, and again.

The Division of Matter and Geologic Life

Crisscrossing this caesura between the inhuman and inhuman(e) is a way to talk about the historical forms and contexts of the racialization of matter. The organization and categorization of matter enact racialization. This enactment is productive of racial logics that extend through and beyond mineralogy and the deterritorialization that accompanies extraction. Geology provides the logics to elide those attachments to geography through its classification system of value and resource. While the search for geologic resources instigated the imperative to enslave, geology quickly established itself as an imperial science that both organized the extraction of the Americas and, in the continued context of Victorian colonialism, became a structuring priority in the colonial complex, especially in India, Canada, and Australia. These territories became organized as material resources and markets for Empire, and the geologic practices established in these colonies continued to underwrite current neocolonial extraction processes by Canada and Australia throughout the world (Canada, for example, is the largest national global mining corporation). The ownership of strata and the surface–subsurface bifurcation in Australia and Canada by the Crown continue to unsettle native title and reservation lands. Thus the classificatory logics of geology have implications for ongoing colonialism.

Geologic classification enabled the transformation of territory into a readable map of resources and organized the apprehension of extraction and the designation of extractable territories. Geology was the science of material dispossess but also a social technology of naturalization. The motivation of colonialism was as an extraction project. The consequence of this formation of inhuman materialism was the organization of racializing logics that maps onto and locks into the formation of extractable territories and subjects. While the critiqued notion of environmental determinism of the continents provided the basis for accounts of the classification of the continents and sediments race into climatology, the rocks escaped being understood as part of the determination of races. There was a material division made between climate and earth through a property relation. The ideological notion of environmental determinism is historically concurrent with the classification of rocks, but rather than cement the relation between nature and race, geology is used to separate one race (Blackness) from the mineralogical ground while enriching another (Whiteness) through the description and division of matter into a sign and system of containment. Bodies become gold, emptied of the sign of the human, reinvested with the signification of units of energy and properties of extraction. Black is made as will-less matter, a commodity object of labor. This is what Hartman calls the “double bind of agency,” where acceptance into the genre of
the human is only offered as a further inscription in the terms of labor and its modes of subjectivity. Geology then becomes a spacing in the imagination that is used to separate forms of the human into permissible modes of exchange and circulation. This is the geotrauma of a billion Black Anthropocenes. If geologic relations are to be examined, a radical interrogation must remain as traumatic as its passage.

This chapter has paid attention to the transactions between geology and slavery as a traffic in modes of production and subjection, organized around the grammar of the inhuman. Rather than turning away from this geologic code, Black Poetics (to use Silva’s term) has intensified this bond as a release from its bondage to redefine both black subjectivity and “inert” materiality. In her poem Coal, Audre Lorde (1996, 6) revisits the essentializing biology of matter in the context of language as a structuring matter-economy, engaging the blackness of coal and its idealized form (diamonds) as an oppositional transmutation (see also Dhairyam 2017; Gumbs 2017):

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\begin{align*}
I \\
Is the total black, being spoken \\
From the earth’s inside. \\
There are many kinds of open. \\
How a diamond comes into a knot of flame \\
How a sound comes into a word, coloured \\
By who pays what for speaking.
\end{align*}
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Turning away from the privileged white subject of biopolitical life, the “I” that Lorde throws her intimacy in with is allied to the inhuman earth. “I/Is the total black” resists the autonomous and individualized subjectification of Whiteness and refuses the inhuman codified as property to embrace the collective subject of Blackness that has been gathered into categories of earth. As Glissant (1997, 9) confirms, “we know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrorize. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.” Shifting the terms of participation in humanist models that were born in a scene of anti-Blackness, Lorde offers another “open” that makes a commonality of the filiation of Blackness with the earth. Repowering this inhuman designation through the rocks, spoken from the earth’s insides, in the context of their extraction, she asks the crucial question in the generation of value from black bodies and black rocks: who pays what for the speaking? In the bold resistance of a given inhuman life, poetry and spatial practices “replant” (in Wynter’s words) place, mark another possible inhuman relation that does not replicate the confinements of colonial grammar. Transmutation, metamorphoses, and ideals haunt the graphia and geologies of the black radical tradition. In the next chapter, I turn to this intimacy with the inhuman as an alliance with freedom in the matter and maroonage of imposed lands, to think freedom in the earth, outside and against the world of the “given” humanist subject (and their space-time).