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Critical American Studies Series

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Aberrations in Black

Toward a Queer of Color Critique

Roderick A. Ferguson

Critical American Studies

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University of Minnesota Press
Minneapolis :: London

An earlier version of chapter 3 was published as "The Nightmares of the Heteronormative," *Cultural Values* 4, no. 4 (October 2000).

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Published by the University of Minnesota Press
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520
http://www.upress.umn.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ferguson, Roderick A.
Aberrations in black : toward a queer of color critique / Roderick A. Ferguson.
p. cm. — (Critical American Studies series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8166-4128-5 (HC : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-8166-4129-3 (PB : alk. paper)
1. American fiction—African American authors—History and criticism. 2. Homosexuality and literature—United States—History—20th century. 3. American fiction—20th century—History and criticism. 4. Baldwin, James, 1924– Go tell it on the mountain. 5. Gays' writings, American—History and criticism. 6. Wright, Richard, 1908–1960. Native son. 7. African American gays—Intellectual life. 8. Ellison, Ralph. Invisible man. 9. African Americans in literature. 10. Morrison, Toni. Sula. 11. Gays in literature. 12. Canon (Literature) I. Title. II. Series.
PS374.N4 F47 2003
813'.509896073'008664—dc21
2003012779

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

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12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Something Else to Be: *Sula, The Moynihan Report,* and the Negations of Black Lesbian Feminism

> In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systemized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior. Within this society, that group is made up of Black and Third World people, working-class people, older people, and women.
>
> —Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

> When we talk about "Dykes against Racism Everywhere" and "Black and White Men Together," . . . when we see the coalition of black community organizations in the Boston area that got together to protest the wholesale murder of black women in 1978 and '79, we are talking about real coalitions. We must recognize that we need each other. . . . There are no more single issues.
>
> —Audre Lorde, *Black Women Writers at Work*

When Audre Lorde expressed these words she was naming something, some new mode of exploitation, some recent set of conditions that could yield unexpected ways of intervening and could make space for something else to be. In another instance, describing the fundamental materiality of discourse, she observed, "[W]e have all been raised in a society where those distortions were endemic within our living. . . . [We] do not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance."[1] Speaking at Amherst College in April 1980, Lorde was referring to the discursive and material formations that came to characterize the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s—the pathologization of difference, the displacement of those pathologies onto surplus populations, and the political and cultural challenges to such conservative formations.

Attempting to apprehend Lorde's importance and the significance of other women of color feminists, Chela Sandoval writes in *Methodology of the Oppressed,* "The social movement that was 'U.S. third world feminism' has yet to be fully understood by social theorists. This social movement developed an original form of historical consciousness, the very structure of which lay outside the conditions of possibility that regulated the praxes of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s U.S. social movements."[2] Sandoval's argument about the importance of U.S. third world or women of color feminism can be elaborated by exploring women of color feminism's interest in "difference" and "coalition" as they were theorized by black lesbian feminists. Women of color and black lesbian feminist theorizations of coalition and difference marked the constitution of a heterogeneous labor force diversified in terms of ethnicity, nation, race, sexuality, and gender. These feminist formations can be located within the wake of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 text, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (popularly known as the Moynihan Report). We may also situate women of color feminism within the limitations of national liberation movements and at the cusp of global capital's commodification of third world and immigrant labor. Moynihan's text helped authorize a hegemonic discourse about black matriarchy and enabled a nationalist discourse that understood nonheteronormative racial difference as deviant. Moreover, the discourse of black matriarchy justified and promoted the regulatory practices of the state and the exploitative practices of global capital as the U.S. nation-state began to absorb women of color labor from the United States and the third world as part of capital's new regimes of exploitation. As black nationalist movements often intersected with sociological discourses and state aims by demanding the gendered and sexual regulation of African American nonheteronormative formations, black lesbian feminists gravitated toward culture as a means of formulating a political alternative to heteropatriarchal and nationalist constructions of nonheteronormative difference as deviance. For example, Toni Morrison's *Sula* offered black lesbian feminists an opportunity to formulate a politics that could negate the gender, racial, and sexual regulations of nationalist formations. In sum, black lesbian intellectual and political practices wever edit

became the trace of heterogeneous social formations within capital's new global phase.

To Periodize Women of Color Feminism

We can place women of color feminism's emergence after the period that Immanuel Wallerstein dubs the "second apotheosis of liberalism," that is, from 1945 to 1970, when liberal ideology seemed to have flourished globally. The second apotheosis represented the moment in which Western nations were presumably turning away from their past oppressions and national liberation movements were coming to power throughout the third world.[3] During this period, the United States was achieving superpower status partially on the basis of an apparent commitment to civil rights. The world would also witness the historic passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination against blacks and other minorities. In 1966, the National Organization of Women would be founded, thus inaugurating the second wave of the women's movement.[4] This seeming concern for the liberation of subjugated populations, however, did not go unchallenged. Indeed, as Wallerstein states, an "annunciatory and denunciatory world revolution" took place in 1968 in which

> students and their allies in the Western countries, the Communist Bloc, and the peripheral zones were charging that liberal ideology . . . consisted of a set of fraudulent promises and that the reality for the great majority of the world's population was largely negative.[5]

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Although it formally started in 1966, we may say that the Black Panther Party (BPP) was part of the global challenge that culminated in 1968. We may situate the BPP within other national liberation movements, as the party understood itself to be part of an international and Marxist-Leninist revolution against white supremacy. The Black Power movement and the BPP responded to the presumption that the Voting Rights Act of 1966 represented the consummation of civil rights and emancipation, noting the ways in which civil rights reform worked to preserve a fundamentally racist legal and economic system, rather than to abolish it. In addition to being the period that occasioned the emergence of rights-based movements, like the civil rights and women's movements, the second apotheosis gave birth to revolutionary nationalist organizations such as the Black Panther Party and its denouncements of liberal capitalism. As it challenged the civil rights establishment, the BPP also trained its critique on black cultural nationalist organizations and figures. For the BPP, the cultural nationalism of Haitian dictator Papa Doc Duvalier and Maulana Karenga, the leader of the cultural nationalist organization called Us for us black people, represented the obfuscating practices of liberal ideology. The BPP's Minister of Defense and chief theorist, Huey Newton, argued that Papa Doc and Karenga, like all cultural nationalists, displaced material enfranchisement onto a nostalgic longing for African culture, presuming that "African culture will automatically bring political freedom."[6] Rather than revolting against capitalism, the BPP argued, cultural nationalism only worked to facilitate capitalism and capitalist oppression.

Despite its critiques of civil rights, black cultural nationalism, and U.S. nationalism, black revolutionary nationalism shared some very important affinities with its antagonists. Those affinities had to do with revolutionary nationalism's investments in heteropatriarchy, investments that were consistent with U.S. nationalism, cultural nationalism, and the civil rights movement's beliefs in heteropatriarchal discourses and practices. We may determine the ways that national liberation struggles promoted the gendered and sexual regulations of liberal ideology by looking at how those struggles theorized culture. Revolutionary nationalism's often normative theorization of culture was derived from a normative interpretation of capitalist exploitation. For instance, revolutionary theorist Amilcar Cabral makes the following argument in "National Liberation and Culture":

> The principal characteristic, common to every kind of imperialist domination, is the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces. . . .
>
> . . . Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and it reflects the organic nature of the society, which may be more or less influenced by external factors.[7]

Because culture is rooted in the material environment, for Cabral it reflects the changes that imperialism brings to that environment. As imperialism diminishes the subjugated people's historical agency, culture reflects this diminution.

For Cabral, national liberation rescues and utilizes the generative aspects of culture for the good of emancipation and for the destruction of imperialist domination. Indeed, imperialism defiles and corrupts culture, necessitating national liberation's restorative aims. Cabral writes,

> In order for culture to play the important role which falls to it in the framework of the liberation movement, the movement must be able to preserve the positive values of every well-defined social group, of every

> category, and to achieve the confluence of these values in the service of the struggle, giving it a new direction—the national dimension.[8]

National liberation engages culture through selection and discrimination, separating the negative aspects of culture to "preserve the positive values" of the group and to assemble these values for nationalist struggle. In its engagement with culture, national liberation betrays a normative bias.

More specifically, national liberation induces culture to compel action designed to regain normativity. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon theorizes this relationship between culture and revolutionary action:

> We believe that the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonized people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. . . . After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man.[9]

Culture becomes the impetus toward revolutionary agency and the moral justification for heteropatriarchal uplift. For Fanon and Cabral, culture identifies the exploitations of colonialism as disruptions to heteropatriarchy *and* inspires the restoration of that which colonialism, in its castrating maneuvers, had destroyed. If morality is that which justifies forms of agency,[10] then for national liberation, culture was the moral lever that could determine revolutionary practice. Through national liberation's narrative of exploitation and revolutionary action, historical materialism passed its normative logic of heteropatriarchal retrieval.

We can see the BPP's lineage within the normative formulations of historical materialism and national liberation through the party's narrative of racial exploitation as well. Using the master/slave dialectic to formulate a gendered and eroticized narrative of the racial oppression of African Americans, Newton states,

> The historical relationship between black and white here in America has been the relationship between the slave and the master; the master being the mind and the slave the body. The slave would carry out the orders that the mind demanded him to carry out. By doing this the master took the manhood from the slave because he stripped him of a mind. He stripped black people of their mind. In the process the slave-master stripped himself of a body.
>
> . . . The white man cannot gain his manhood, cannot unite with the body because the body is black. The body is symbolic of slavery and strength. It's a biological thing as he views it. The slave is in a much better situation because his not being a full man has always been viewed psychologically. And it's always easier to make a psychological transition than a biological one. If he can only recapture his mind, recapture his balls, then he will lose all fear and will be free to determine his destiny.[11]

This passage speaks the normative grammar of national liberation, figuring the history of racial exploitation through a narrative of castration and gender distortion and casting revolutionary agency as heteropatriarchal reclamation. While national liberation movements contested the authority of hegemonic nations, those movements reinvested in liberal ideology by grounding agency within the normative assumptions of nation-states, thereby expressing the normative elements of that historic juncture. As Fanon argues, "Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows."[12] With national liberation, the oppositional bears the stamp of the normative.

We may revise Wallerstein's argument to say that the second apotheosis denotes the triumph of liberal ideology through racial and class exclusion and through the expansion of normative gender and sexual regimes. And if national liberation understood culture and agency as the moral justification for and reclamation of gender and sexual normativity, then national liberation enabled the normative itinerary of the second apotheosis. The second apotheosis of liberalism defines the entrenchment of liberal ideology even through the denunciatory strategies and discourses of national liberation movements and rights-based struggles. In the context of the United States, the women's movement became hegemonic as it engaged in racial and class exclusions, thereby normalizing white citizenship; the civil rights movement complied with liberal exclusions through its sexist ideologies and practices, thereby normalizing heteropatriarchal citizenship. A national liberation movement like the Black Panther Party inserted itself into hegemonic waters as it normalized heteropatriarchal culture and revolutionary agency. Hence, despite its antagonisms to liberal ideology, it—like the civil rights and women's movements—facilitated liberalism's triumph.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] movements

To understand the second apotheosis as a contradictory occurrence, that is, as a moment that posited the triumph of liberalism as the triumph of normativity, a moment in which even its antagonists enabled that triumph, we must mine the history of women of color feminism. These cultural, political, social, and epistemological formations challenged the second apotheosis of liberalism and its normative hues among anti-imperialist critics and movements. In doing so, women of color feminism attempted to dislodge interpretations of racial domination from the normative grip of liberal capitalism.

For example, in Frances Beale's essay for the first black feminist anthology, *The Black Woman*, the former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and founder of the Third World Women's Alliance pointed to an emergent affinity between minority and liberal nationalism. She wrote,

> America has defined the roles to which each individual should subscribe. It has defined "manhood" in terms of its own interests and "femininity" likewise. Therefore, an individual who has a good job, makes a lot of money, and drives a Cadillac is a real "man," and conversely, an individual who is lacking in these "qualities" is less of a man.[13]

Liberal ideology, Beale implies, interpellates subjects by hailing them as normative "man" and "woman." In doing so, she addresses the unforeseen convergence between black power, civil rights, and U.S. nationalism. That convergence took place over the mutual investments that these forms of nationalism had in gender and sexual subordination. When black women joined the Black Panther Party during the Free Huey Newton campaign of 1967, many of them discovered that fighting for national liberation entailed subjecting themselves to gender and sexual regulation.[14]

The history of black feminist formations underlines the contradictions of national liberation and identifies the ways in which relations of power were immanent within those struggles. In their book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that national liberation's adoption of the state form as the most rational organization of society poisoned anti-imperialist and anticolonial struggles.[15] While the state form further enacts systems of control, it is important not to figure the contradictions of national liberation simply through a figure of exteriority like the state apparatus. Indeed, the history of gender and sexual regulations within national liberation illustrates how the attainment of the state apparatus was not the only "poison" that compromised national liberation. More important, the history of those regulations suggests that the poison was *internal* to national liberation. The normalization of culture and agency contaminated national liberation from within those movements and before the attainment of the state. Insisting on the memory of gender and sexual regulations means that relations of power emanated from national liberation.

In contrast, women of color feminists attempted to devise notions of culture and agency that would alienate heteropatriarchy and liberal ideology. If the second apotheosis of liberalism encouraged the normalization of culture and agency as part of national liberation, we can cite women of color feminist reformulations of culture and agency as antagonisms to contemporary globalization. Along with the increase in technological innovations, the transfer of populations, and the global circulation of commodity forms, the diverse cultural, intellectual, and political formation known as women of color feminism was a feature of contemporary globalization. If contemporary globalization arose as a disruption to national authority, women of color feminism, as a formation that critiqued national authority, owes part of its genesis to that disruption. Put differently, if modern globalization challenges the claims of nationalist formations, positing national narratives as ideological and discursive,[16] then women of color feminism, in general, and black feminist formations, in particular, were part of analyses that posited culture and nation as constructed, imaginative, and heterogeneous, rather than as natural, objective, and homogeneous. Discussing the place of critical endeavors within the contemporary juncture, Arjun Appadurai argues,

> The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people) and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (both in the sense of labor and of culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ("individuals") and globally defined fields of possibility.[17]

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As critical formations emerging out of the contradictions of liberation movements, U.S. women of color feminism helped to designate the imagination as a social practice under contemporary globalization. In a moment in which national liberation movements and Western nation-states disfranchised women of color and queer of color subjects, culture, for those groups, became the obvious scene of alternative agency. In the process, these subjects reformatted culture as a site of oppositional agency that eschewed nationalism, rather than facilitated it. Culture became the field from which to imaginatively work against the disfranchisements of nationalism and the debilities of global capital.

In the late 1970s and during the 1980s, black lesbians were most prominent in critiques of heterosexuality and patriarchy.[18] In their work as activists, cultural workers, critics, and theorists, black lesbian feminists tried to wrest culture from the normative confines of nationalism at the moment that the authority of nationalist culture was being challenged worldwide. In terms of black feminism, black lesbians went farthest in retheorizing culture so that it would reflect a gender and sexual disruption to heteropatriarchy and inspire practices and formulations that were alternative to nationalism. Rearticulating culture meant that the presumably "nonpolitical language"[19] of a cultural text like *Sula* provided black lesbian feminists with a model for alternative subjectivities. The imaginative terrain of culture became a politicized site for women of color feminists during a historic moment in which liberal nationalism, cultural nationalism, revolutionary nationalism, and hegemonic feminism usurped the meaning of the political to suppress racialized differences of gender and sexuality. Black lesbian feminists helped to render the imagination into a social practice that utilized cultural forms precisely because of the overlapping gender, sexual, class, and racial exclusions that constituted forms of nationalism.

Locating women of color feminism within the contradictions of contemporary globalization means that we must position its oppositional properties within *and* outside the global parameters of the second apotheosis and its normalization of gender and sexual regulations. We must understand that women of color feminism attempted to negate the normalization of heteropatriarchal culture and agency by an inchoate global economy. Indeed, black lesbian feminist articulations of difference, queer identity, and coalition bear traces of this negation. Theorizing negation in his preface to *Reason and Revolution,* Herbert Marcuse states,

> The negation which dialectic applies to [concepts imposed by common sense] is not only a critique of a conformist logic, which denies the reality of contradictions; it is also a critique of the given state of affairs on its own grounds—of the established system of life, which denies its own promises and potentialities.[20]

The second apotheosis of liberalism was an attempt to neutralize race, gender, and sexuality as overlapping differences that suggested rupture and critique. As forms of nationalism attempted to neutralize those differences through gender, sexual, and racial regulation, they were in fact acting according to the logic of globalization. As women of color and black lesbian feminists invested racialized gender and sexual differences with negative potentials, they were actually opposing the logic of globalization, naming it as a new ground of exploitation *and* emergence. The negative articulation of categories such as "lesbian," "coalition," and "difference" represented an attempt to cease appropriating culture to demonstrate the accoutrements of national identity—homogeneity, equivalence, normativity, and essence. These categories came about as a way to theorize capital and culture as racialized sites of gender and sexual heterogeneity. Put simply, women of color feminism, generally, and black lesbian feminism, particularly, attempted to place culture on a different path and establish avenues alternative to the ones paved by forms of nationalism.

The Moynihan Report and Black Nationalism

If the convergence of national liberation and liberal ideology marked the rise of contemporary globalization, we can actually see the intersections of black nationalism and liberal ideology through the discourse of black matriarchy, formalized in the Moynihan Report and propagated, in part, by black power spokespersons. The discourse of black matriarchy simultaneously enabled leftist and conservative formations within the United States. Leftist and conservative investments in black matriarchy served as the linchpin that sustained black nationalist formations and animated neoconservative ones.

The Negro Family: The Case for National Action was published in 1965, a year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The report was written by sociologist (and future U.S. senator) Daniel Patrick Moynihan for the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Policy Planning and Research. The report attempted to place the African American family—particularly female-headed families—within national policy discourse. Popularly known as the Moynihan Report, it framed itself as a document interested in advancing the aims of civil rights. The report stated that the gains won by civil rights belied the fact that "the gap between the Negro and most other groups in American society [was] widening." "The fundamental problem," according to the Moynihan Report, "[was] that of family structure." As I argued in the preceding chapter, the contradictions of capital in the 1940s were displaced onto African American gender, sexual, and familial relations. Similarly, Moynihan displaced the contradictions that framed the civil rights era onto the African American family. For Moynihan, African American nonheteronormative relations were *the* impediment to such a transformation. The virus of racism had afflicted blacks such that they could not meet the competitive challenges of a liberal capitalist society. While racist prejudice might be irrational, there were objective differences that prevented black achievement. For the sociologist, African American familial arrangements and their nonheteronormative disfigurements spawned those differences.

The Moynihan Report attempted to address these material contradictions by questioning whether legal maneuvers could socialize African Americans for a competitive society. He began, "Liberty and Equality are the twin ideals of American democracy. But they are not the same thing. Nor, most importantly, are they equally attractive to all groups at any given time; nor yet are they always compatible, one with the other."[21] Indeed, for the Moynihan Report, the difference between equality and liberty is a racialized one, a difference that takes on particular meaning in the period of civil rights agitation. It states,

> The demand for Equality of Opportunity has been generally perceived by white Americans as a demand for liberty, a demand not to be excluded from the competitions of life—at the polling place, in the scholarship examinations, at the personnel office, on the housing market. Liberty does, of course, demand that every one be free to try his luck, or test his skill in such matters. But these opportunities do not necessarily produce equality: on the contrary, to the extent that winners imply losers, equality of opportunity almost insures inequality of results. (3)

For the Moynihan Report, citizens instantiate the ideal of liberty by competing in the political, educational, and economic spheres. Liberty preserves competition but does not imply equality of outcome. As such, a society could be liberated and have inequalities that manifest as racial, gender, and class hierarchies, but those inequalities would be the outcome of competition, rather than power and domination. The differences that result from competition represent the objective outcomes of that competition. For this reason, "equality of opportunity could insure inequality of results" without suggesting racist, classist, or patriarchal dynamics.

African Americans, according to the report, misunderstand liberty's relationship to equality. Moynihan states, "The point of semantics is that equality of opportunity now has a different meaning for Negroes than it has for whites. It is not (or at least no longer) a demand for liberty alone, but also for equality—in terms of group results" (3). For Moynihan, this misunderstanding has to do with the ambiguity that inheres within civil rights laws, an ambiguity that violates the distinction between equality and liberty. He writes, "Some aspects of the new laws do guarantee results, in the sense that upon enactment and enforcement they bring about an objective that is an end in itself, e.g., the public accommodations title of the Civil Rights Act" (3). Provisions such as the ones dealing with voting, he goes on to state, "will achieve an objective that is an end in itself . . . but the exercise of those rights will no doubt lead to further enlargements of the freedom of the Negro American" (3). The ability of the laws to guarantee some results, however, should not suggest that this is their principal character: "[B]y and large, the programs that have been enacted in the first phase of the Negro Revolution—Manpower Retraining, the Job Corps, Community Action, et al.—only make opportunities available. They cannot insure the outcome" (3). Civil rights laws, while giving the impression that they can ensure equality of outcome, can only grant equality of opportunity, according to the report. In other words, the law can protect and guarantee the subject's right to compete within the political, academic, and economic terrains of the American nation-state, but the law does not ensure that the subject will attain the rewards and privileges of those terrains. Therefore, African Americans are mistaken inasmuch as they assume access without competition. The next phase of the civil rights revolution, he wrote, would be to correct this assumption by making "certain that equality of results will now follow. If we do not, there will be no social peace in the United States for generations" (3). As he understood it, "The time, therefore, is at hand for an unflinching look at the present potential of Negro Americans to move from where they now are to where they want, and ought to be" (4).

Equality of outcome and indeed peace, the report suggested, depended on the gender and sexual compliance of African American culture. Like *An American Dilemma* before it, the Moynihan Report regarded the African American family as that institution that suggests the African American's distance from the normative ideals of American citizenship:

> That being the case, it has to be said that there is a considerable body of evidence to support the conclusion that Negro social structure, in particular the Negro family, battered and harassed by discrimination, injustice, and uprooting, is in the deepest trouble. While many young Negroes are moving ahead to unprecedented levels of achievement, many more are falling further and further behind. (4)

It is important to note that Moynihan actually inherited his thesis about the African American family from E. Franklin Frazier's writings on black families and the problems of black matriarchies.[22] Basing the problems of African American social structure on the troubles of the African American family, the Moynihan Report renders African American intimate arrangements into the obstacle to equality of outcome. As the family was imagined as that institution that prevented many African Americans from "moving ahead," family became that institution that determined the direction of mobility, socializing its members to competitive ideals and practices and granting them equality of results only as the family yielded to heteropatriarchal dictates.

According to the text, the history of racial exclusion stretching back to slavery and reconstruction accounts for the so-called gender and sexual devastations of African American families, devastations evinced by the number of female-headed households, "outcomes that worked against the emergence of a strong father figure."[23] The Moynihan Report draws on a notion that masculinity is innate to men and biologically driven, declaring that "the very essence of man is to strut" (16). For Moynihan, this masculinity is integral to American national character. Hence, the history of racist violence has castrated African American men, preventing them from realizing a masculinity that is fundamental to all men. While Park's "Temperament, Tradition, and Nationality" may have articulated liberalism through sentimental notions of the "Negro as the lady among the races," the Moynihan Report enunciated liberal ideology through an identification with and conception of the African American male as castrated and therefore bereft of heteropatriarchal entitlements.

For the text, this gender and sexual devastation did not simply remove the male from the head of the household. To compound the matter, it replaced the male patriarch with a female head, retarding "the progress of the group as a whole and [imposing] a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well" (29). As a familial formation that "retards progress" because of its nonheteronormative conformity, the female-headed household impedes the march of civil rights. The designation of the female-headed household as an impediment typifies the normative underpinnings of civil rights. While imagining the female-headed household as the antithesis of civil rights, the document argues that it is the matrix of urban and social ills, producing a "tangle of pathology" (29).

Masculinization, hence, had to come from outside African American culture. The report designated the armed forces as an institution that could masculinize black men, placing black men in an idealized context in which "'Negro' and 'white' do not exist" (42). The Moynihan Report cast racial exclusion as fundamentally feminizing. If exclusion is the trace of feminization, then equality can only be won by recovering the heteropatriarchal loss suffered under racism. Set in the moment of imperialist wars within Asia, this argument was a way of arguing that black men could resolve their alleged gender insufficiency by participating in those wars. Since the U.S. government was drafting young African American men for the war, the Vietnam War was a contentious issue that placed African Americans at the heart. The government's drafting of African American men was a bitter source of protest for the BPP especially.[24] Instead of black men being used for the aims of U.S. imperialism, the BPP countered that black people, especially black men, should commit themselves to the revolutionary struggle of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. As Eldridge Cleaver stated, "The black man's interest lies in seeing a free and independent Vietnam, a strong Vietnam which is not the puppet of international white supremacy. If the nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa are strong and free, the black man in America will be safe and secure and free to live in dignity and self-respect."[25]

The Moynihan Report attempted to transform a presumably "pathological" culture into one that was suitable for gender and sexual conformity and compliant with heteropatriarchal regulation. As evidenced by the text's argument about the military, the state would take the place of the absent patriarch in the African American family and would regulate African American familial practices.[26] Only a "national effort . . . directed towards the question of family structure could resolve the problems that inhibited African American progress."[27] United States policies would have to be designed to "strengthen the Negro family so as to enable it to raise and support its members" as other families supported their members (47–48).

U.S. policies and practices that targeted African American families were both distorting and invasive. Confronting the ways the discourse of black matriarchy disfigured black women, Johnnie Tilmon, chairwoman of the National Welfare Rights Organization, stated, "There are a lot of other lies that male society tells about welfare mothers; that AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) mothers are immoral, that AFDC mothers are lazy, misuse their welfare checks, spend it all on booze and are stupid and incompetent."[28] As the discourse of black matriarchy presented black mothers as unscrupulous and "incompetent," it also justified practices of surveillance in which "welfare detectives" would apparently wake up black women and their children to look through dirty clothes hampers and refrigerators in search of black men.[29]

The Moynihan Report actually is an important genealogical node in successive and hegemonic discourses about minority communities within the United States. These discourses, George Lipsitz argues, emerged after the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts. Such discourses suggested that "the problems facing communities of color no longer stem primarily from discrimination but from the characteristics of these communities themselves, from unrestrained sexual behavior and childbirths out of wedlock, crime, welfare dependency, and a perverse sense of group identity and group entitlement."[30] These discourses owe their origin and coherence to the Moynihan Report.

Blacks as victims for inequality

The discourse of black matriarchy was founded on assumptions that presumed heteropatriarchal culture as the appropriate and regulatory norm. As such, the discourse provided sanctuary for liberal, leftist, and soon-to-be conservative formations. For instance, black nationalist groups, while they contested Moynihan's argument about the state being the appropriate catalyst to masculine agency, agreed with Moynihan's thesis about the emasculating effects of black women and the need for black men to resume their role as patriarchs. To Moynihan's list of pathologies caused by black matriarchy, black nationalists like Eldridge Cleaver would add homosexuality. According to Cleaver, the antagonisms of class society and "a dying culture and civilization" had produced homosexuality, and the black revolution could achieve heteropatriarchal status by ending class antagonisms and

homophobic conception of anti-racism

[illegible]

subsequently homosexuality.[31] In supporting heteropatriarchal regulation, black nationalists like Cleaver and Nathan Hare facilitated the triumph of liberalism. The ideological affiliations between black nationalists and Moynihan were actually part of a global phenomenon in which national liberation was establishing fellowship with the normative claims of liberal ideology. Cheryl Clarke sheds light on this fellowship in her remarks about the homophobic alliances between the Family Protection Act, a bill proposed to the U.S. Congress in 1981, and the First National Plenary Conference on Self-Determination in December of that same year. Clarke draws our attention to the ways in which the bill and the conference flyer respectively denounce homosexual organizations as unworthy of federal funding from the U.S. nation-state and refute homosexuality as "a threat to our survival as a [black] people and as a nation."[32] Clarke's illustration is much more than an isolated incidence. It is, in fact, typical of the alliances between national liberation and modern state-formation during the second apotheosis.

The discourse of black matriarchy bears the trace of a hegemonic formation, one in which sociological discourse, black nationalist movements, civil rights, and neoconservative alliances are entangled. In addition to seducing black nationalists, that discourse facilitated a conservative blockade of social welfare policy in the United States, a blockade that began in the late 1970s.[33] Displacing the contradictions of capital onto African American female-headed households established the moral grammar and the political practices of the very neoconservative formations that would roll back the gains of civil rights in the 1980s and 1990s and undermine the well-being of black poor and working-class families. Hence, the Moynihan Report and the pathologizing of black mothers as nonheteronormative provided the discursive origins for the dismantling of welfare as part of the fulfillment of global capital by the millennium's end.

With the advent of a world recession resulting from the oil crisis in the 1970s, the pressures of a global economy bore heavily on welfare states like the United States and Britain.[34] In a context in which the budgetary practices of welfare states were questioned, private enterprise increasingly understood welfare state institutions as fetters to capitalism. Moreover, private enterprise acted as the discursive incubator for neoconservative formations.[35] Neoconservative ideologies emerged within a context in which public spending that exceeded economic growth produced imbalances between revenues and expenditures. The weakening economic power of welfare states compromised the budgetary aims of those states and undermined a Keynesian logic that public spending would inspire economic growth.[36] Such disruptions to the power of welfare states and to prior economic logic produced an electoral situation that favored the rise of neoconservative administrations.[37]

The pathological image of nonheteronormative formations like the female-headed household played a key role in this conservative resurgence. Neoconservatives explicitly based their objections to public spending on the discourse of black matriarchy, arguing that black "welfare queens" were getting fat off liberal social policies and producing destructive urban environments in which young blacks had no regard for competition and honest work.[38] For neoconservatives, both the welfare state and African American communities were outcomes of a misunderstanding about the distinction between liberty and equality. Neoconservatives inherited this presumption about African Americans' perverse sense of entitlement, which abolished all competitive drive. Once imagined as buffers for the underdogs of global economic transformations, welfare states, according to neoconservatives, now abolished competition as a necessary factor in everyday life. For neoconservatives, the absence of a competitive ethos originated within an insufficiently regulatory and therefore nonheteronormative minority culture.

"Lesbian" as Negation of Identity Politics

The discourse of black matriarchy was part of the genealogy of black feminist formation, in general, and black lesbian feminist formation, in particular. Ostensibly a discourse about an aberrant heterosexuality, the discourse encouraged, as Cheryl Clarke suggests, the suppression of other nonheteronormative formations. In the context of the 1970s and 1980s, black lesbians pointed out the ways in which the discourse of black matriarchy regulated a range of racialized gender and sexual formations. We may look to their interaction with a cultural text like Toni Morrison's *Sula* as an indication of how black lesbian feminists engaged the gender and sexual heterogeneity of African American culture. We may then understand those engagements as ways of negating the commonsense understandings of that culture and of gesturing toward the potentialities that inhered in a global economy.

Sula begins with the Peace family, represented by Sula, her matriarchal grandmother Eva, and her mother Hanna. On the surface it would seem that the novel repeats the narrative contours of the black matriarchate discourse: Eva raises her children without her husband, who runs away early in the novel. Hannah raises Sula without a father. In the banal language of that discourse, it would appear that the Peace family exemplifies the vicious cycle of the female-headed household. But the novel suggests alternative readings of the Peace family, readings that black lesbians seized to construct a politics that was feminist, queer, antiracist, and coalitional. In a 1983 interview, Audre Lorde considered the main character's quest for agency within the confines of a social world that was thoroughly heteropatriarchal. She stated, "*Sula* is a totally incredible book. It made me light up like a Christmas tree. I particularly identified with the book because of the female-outsider idea. That book is one long poem. Sula is the ultimate black female of our time, trapped in her power and her pain."[39] Black lesbian feminists' engagement with *Sula* represented a process of negation in which an apparently nonpolitical literary text about two black women became a resource for epistemological and political practices that could express alternatives to existing social movements. Devising such practices meant resuscitating nonnormative difference as the horizon of epistemological critique, aesthetic innovation, and political practice.

The second apotheosis expanded liberal ideology and its normative investments, in part, through national identity. In such instances, citizenship was not the only nationalist articulation of identity. The category "woman" and its suppression of racial, class, and sexual heterogeneity represented such an articulation. "Colonized man" as the suppression of gender and sexual difference within relations of race expressed yet another articulation. We may also add that the category "worker," inasmuch as it obscured gender, racial, and sexual differences within capitalist relations of production, expressed yet another articulation of national identity. It is important to note that these nationalist articulations of identity were "important models of social and political unity necessary for coherent liberation struggles."[40] For our current historic moment, it is just as important to address the ways in which the women's, civil rights, black power, and labor movements neglected to conceptualize the multiple specificities and differences that constituted their various subjects. In doing so, they normalized the suppression of subaltern gender, racial, and sexual identities and revealed their investments in nationalism.

Rendered invisible by the political subjects of hegemonic feminism, minority nationalism, and marxism, women of color feminists attempted to articulate identity formations that would work to negate the nationalist presumptions and protocols of identity. As Gladys M. Jiménez-Munoz observes, women of color feminism intervened into the question of identity by refusing to posit identity as a goal, "a site empty of social contradictions, or unhelpful constructions. Rather, it is the space where these other social contradictions can be addressed and worked through, insofar as it is the space where these contradictions become visible."[41] Jiménez-Munoz remarks further that "[i]t is this place of departure, of creating and reinventing spaces, that is crucial because as lesbians of color oftentimes this meant being located in positions in which one could not take for granted the social solidarity characteristic of racially oppressed/cultural-national families and communities in Europe and North America."[42] In other words, lesbian of color feminism contributed to the theorization of identity by arguing that if identity is posed, it must be constantly contravened to address the variety of social contradictions that nationalism strives to conceal.

An example of this effort at negation can be found in Barbara Smith's classic essay, "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism." Much has been written about the presumed failures of the essay, that it reduces "Black feminist criticism . . . to an experiential relationship that exists between black women as critics and black women as writers who represent black women's reality."[43] Such critiques appropriately attend to the identity politics within the piece, but there is a politics of difference at work within Smith's essay as well, a politics that disrupts identity's presumptions of equivalence and verisimilitude. This politics expresses black lesbian feminist practices of negation. Indeed, we may locate Smith's essay within black lesbian feminist attempts to devise another politics, "one which engages with rather than suppresses heterogeneities of gender, class, sexuality, race, and nation, yet [one] which is also able to maintain and extend the forms of unity that make common struggle possible—a politics whose vision is not the origin but the destination."[44] To reiterate, these attempts to formulate a politics of difference took place within a moment in which a nascent global capital was working to disrupt the promises and the stability of national identity.

We can see the epistemological articulation of this disruption within Smith's use of the category "lesbian." She writes,

> Despite the apparent heterosexuality of the female characters, I discovered in re-reading *Sula* that it works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Sula and Nel, but because of Morrison's consistently critical stance toward the heterosexual institutions of male/female relationships, marriage and the family. Consciously or not, Morrison's work poses both lesbian and feminist questions about black women's autonomy and their impact upon each other's lives.[45]

While Smith does not clarify what she means by "lesbian novel,"[46] what is striking is the way that Smith deploys "lesbian" outside the boundaries of identity. She defines "lesbian" not in terms of identity, but in terms of a set of critiques of heterosexuality and patriarchy. Rather than naming an identity, "lesbian" actually identifies a set of social relations that point to the instability of heteropatriarchy and to a possible critical emergence within that instability. Another way of stating this would be to say that Smith's use of "lesbian" designates the ways in which heteropatriarchal relations are rife with unrest and contradiction and that these disruptions rebuke heteropatriarchal ideals and claims. As Smith's use of the category "lesbian" explains social relations rather than identity, it disrupts the heterosexual/homosexual dyad. Interpreting *Sula* as an allegory of such a disruption, Smith writes, "Sula's presence in her community functions much like the presence of lesbians everywhere to expose the contradictions of supposedly normal life."[47] In the historic moment of the novel's production and circulation, "normal life" was the hegemonic articulation of nationalist discourses. Situating *Sula* in the wake of Addison Gayle's cultural nationalist anthology, *The Black Aesthetic,* Madhu Dubey argues, "Nel and Sula's union constitutes the novel's strongest challenge to Black Aesthetic discourse. As we have already seen, one of the functions of black women writers, as prescribed by the Black Aesthetic, was to depict black male-female relationships as necessary, complementary unions."[48] As the material presence of black lesbians exposed the contradictions of "normativity," between the presumed universal nature of normativity and the actual discrepant fact of nonnormativity, black lesbian existence became a practice of negation.

Inasmuch as black lesbian difference functioned as a force of negation that illuminated the very heterogeneous formations that nationalist ideologies worked to conceal, this difference negated identitarian presumptions about authorial intention, presumptions that constructed an equivalence between the author and the cultural form. We can see this negation at work in Smith's comments about Morrison and *Sula.* Smith states,

> If one sees Sula's inexplicable "evil" and nonconformity as the evil of not being male-identified, many elements in the novel become clear. The work might be clearer still if Morrison had approached her subject with the consciousness that a lesbian relationship was at least a possibility for her characters. Obviously Morrison did not intend the reader to perceive Sula and Nel's relationship as inherently lesbian. However, this lack of intention only shows the way in which heterosexist assumptions can veil what may logically be expected to occur in a work.[49]

As Mikhail Bakhtin argues, "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others."[50] Smith suggests that black lesbian feminist critique negates the presumption that *Sula* is the private property of Morrison's intentions. Instead she suggests that the text is populated with interests that Morrison could not imagine. Indeed, the socially heteroglot world that locates Sula as a cultural form, a world characterized by gender and sexual heterogeneity, frustrates authorial intention. An essentialist notion of identity would have compelled Smith to assume that Morrison as a black woman had a lesbian identification. Indeed, Smith seems to be more concerned with the ways in which Morrison's text spirals away from Morrison's intentions, and in that spiraling connects to black female subjects that Morrison did not imagine.

Indeed, the essay arose from and produced heterogeneous circumstances that made it difficult for the category "black woman" to speak a logic of equivalence. Black lesbian feminist organizations and activists came from a diverse range of social movements—the women's, the antiwar, the civil rights, the black power movements, and so forth. The black lesbian feminist group the Combahee River Collective illustrates the heterogeneous composition of black lesbian feminism. Founded in Boston in 1974, the Combahee River Collective formed after the first eastern regional meeting of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), in part as an alternative to the "bourgeois feminist stance of the NBFO and their lack of a clear political focus."[51] Conceived out of the intersections of civil rights, black power, and socialist feminism, the Combahee River Collective attempted to construct a notion of black woman that was simultaneously queer, antiracist, feminist, and socialist. Salsa Soul Sisters Third World Womyn Inc. was organized in 1974 as a third-world lesbian organization including African American, African, and Caribbean women, as well as Asian American woman and Latinas. In the 1980s, Sapphire Sapphos emerged as a black lesbian organization with a heterogeneous class composition made up of women in and around Washington D.C.[52] The class, national, ethnic, political, sexual, and racial diversity that made up black lesbian feminist organizations compelled articulations of black feminism and black womanhood that allowed for such multiplicity.

The heterogeneous composition of black lesbian feminism inspired a politics of difference that could critique the nationalist underpinnings of identity and challenge the racial regulation and gender and sexual normativity that composed the second apotheosis. In this way, women of color feminist negations were very different from the politics of negation that national liberation proffered. National liberation negated Western national identity by substituting subaltern identities. This negation was one in which identity was retained as both the vehicle for and the destination of national emancipation. Contrary to national liberation's preservation of national identity, women of color feminism negated both Western nationalism and national liberation by working to theorize the limits of subaltern identity. They did so within a moment in which ethnic and feminist movements' deployment of identity proved their complicity with the normative claims of liberal ideology. Commenting on lesbian of color attempts to theorize those limits, Jiménez-Munoz states, "[There] are difficult matters that lesbian writers of color have assumed and that further problematize the issue of identity from the perspective of women of color: this is the question of how an oppressed subject can also, simultaneously, be an oppressing subject."[53] This theorization of identity as both enabling and fraught was theorized into the practices of black lesbian feminist organizations. Those organizations engaged those questions particularly within the often difficult context of coalitional work, as it necessitated engaging racial and national differences many times governed by divisive discourses of race. Women of color feminism had to express a politics of negation and difference in which identity was a point of departure since the gendered and sexual regulations of national liberation proved that women of color, in general, and lesbians of color, in particular, could not take comfort in the presumed accommodations of nationalism.

Sula and the Upward and Downward Expansion of Minority Social Structure

Sula was published within the period that occasioned the upward and downward expansion of black social structures. The economic changes of the 1970s launched some African Americans into middle-class lifestyles and locked others into poverty.[54] The polarization of social structures was not specific to the United States. Indeed, it was part of a general global trend reached as the economies of highly industrialized countries shifted toward service. As sociologist Saskia Sassen notes, the shift to a service economy, coupled with the "redeployment of manufacturing and office jobs to less developed areas," has "directly and indirectly . . . created a significant increase in the supply of low-wage jobs, particularly female-typed jobs, in highly developed countries."[55] As sociologist Rose Brewer has argued, for African American women, the shift toward a service economy within the United States has helped to segregate black women in service and clerical jobs, working in hospitals, nursing homes, fast food outlets, and cafeterias.[56] As the polarization of African American social structure became a context for normalization, it helped constitute the normative character of the second apotheosis.

We must address this polarization of social structure not simply as an economic phenomenon, but as a social phenomenon with normative implications as well. The discourse of black matriarchy may have preceded the polarization that characterized the beginnings of contemporary globalization, but in the context of the United States it helped to constitute the ideological and discursive climate for the shift toward postindustrialization. We can think of Moynihan's argument that civil rights legislation was helping to advance some blacks and not others as a way of foreshadowing the normative polarization of African American social structure. We may say that African American social structure in the polarizing moments of the 1970s

assimilation & outsider status

inherited the normative ideologies of civil rights, canonical sociology, and national liberation. As the discourse of black matriarchy justified reinvestments in heteropatriarchal discourse—reinvestments that occasioned the regulation of black single mothers and black lesbians alike—that discourse helped to constitute the upward and downward expansion of African American social structure as the polarization of heteronormative and nonheteronormative African American social formations. This polarization of African American social structure encompassed a period that simultaneously produced the single black mother and the black lesbian as the female-outsider in contradistinction to the normative black middle-class subject who could claim legitimacy within African American communities.

We may read the following scene as an allegory of the polarizations that were beginning to take place within African American communities, divisions over heteronormative belonging and nonheteronormative exclusion. Sula—after returning to the Bottom, the black section of the town called Medallion—has just placed her grandmother Eva in a nursing home, slept with Jude, her best friend Nel's husband, and has built a reputation as sexually and culturally transgressive. The narrator states,

> When the word got out about Eva being put in Sunnydale, the people in the Bottom shook their heads and said Sula was a roach. Later, when they saw how she took Jude, then ditched him for others, and heard how he bought a bus ticket to Detroit (where he bought but never mailed birthday cards to his sons), they forgot all about Hannah's easy ways (or their own) and said she was a bitch. . . .
>
> But it was the men who gave her the final label, who fingerprinted her for all time. They were the ones who said she was guilty of the unforgivable thing—the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuse, no compassion. The route from which there was no way back, the dirt that could not ever be washed away. They said that Sula slept with white men. It may not have been true, but it certainly could have been. She was obviously capable of it. . . .
>
> So they laid broomsticks across their doors at night and sprinkled salt on porch steps. But aside from one or two unsuccessful efforts to collect the dust from her footsteps, they did nothing to harm her. As always the black people looked at evil stony-eyed and let it run.[57]

By constructing Sula as other, her accusers can claim normativity for themselves. Moreover, Morrison establishes Sula's construction as other within the imperatives of heteropatriarchal privilege. It is the men who "fingerprint" her, marking her according to patriarchal law. This scene allegorizes the regulation of nonheteronormative difference as Sula is disciplined for inappropriate object choices—white men. Fingerprinting her is also metaphoric for the ways in which national liberation regulated other nonheteronormative formations. Moreover, it evokes the ways in which black nationalists often assumed control over black women's bodies. As Sula was called "bitch," black lesbians and black single mothers were addressed at various times as "little men," "bulldaggers," and "matriarchs." In sum, the aforementioned scene points to multiple practices of fingerprinting and thereby gestures toward nonheteronormative strata within African American culture.

In addition to interpreting the scene through the history of national liberation, we may also read the passage as metaphorical for an emergent class formation among African Americans, a class formation that was equally as regulatory. Morrison points to the regulatory ethos of the period of national liberation in the chapter entitled "1965":

> Everything had changed. Even the whores were better then: tough, fat, laughing women with burns on their cheeks and wit married to their meanness: or widows couched in small houses in the woods with eight children to feed and no man. These modern-day whores were pale and dull before those women. These little clothes-crazy things were *always embarrassed. Nasty but shamed.* They didn't know what shameless was. They should have known those silvery widows in the woods who would get up from the dinner table and walk into the trees with a customer with as much embarrassment as a calving mare.[58]

The aforementioned scene is striking inasmuch as 1965 has brought with it not only a new class formation, "young ones [who talk] about community, but [leave] the hills to the poor, the old, the stubborn—and the rich white folks," but a new sensibility, one organized around shame and embarrassment for nonheteronormative subjects. This shame, this embarrassment, we may read as the evidence of disciplinary techniques that were simultaneous with a new class emergence among the people in the Bottom. We may go even further to say that the scene is metaphorical for a then advancing middle-class formation that negotiated the upward and downward expansion of African American social structure by regulating and differentiating persons that remained in the Bottom.

Something Else to Be: Coalition as a "Globally Defined Field of Possibility"

Sula allegorized not only the conditions of black women's gender and sexual regulation, but also a desire to formulate identities and social practices that could withstand and provide alternatives to those limitations. Morrison writes,

> Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be.[59]

Being "something else" was not a task restricted to the realm of personal identity but extended to social practice as well. We may see this extension in women of color and black lesbian feminist theorizations of coalition. Indeed, Smith attested that coalition building among women of color and third-world feminists was the "single most enlivening and hopeful development in the 1980s."[60] As with Smith's illumination of the heterogeneity that characterizes black women's experiences in her reading of *Sula,* black lesbian feminists desired and produced a political and theoretical engagement—at times tension-filled[61]—that acknowledged the heteroglot nature of women's identities and experiences and in doing so, disrupted essentialist articulations of blackness and womanhood. Those engagements indexed women of color and black lesbian feminist desires for modes of agency that departed from nationalist articulations of coalition. In addition, such interventions attested to the material and discursive conditions of an emergent and heterogeneous labor force. If negation, as Marcuse argues, partly refers to the forces that compel destruction, then we may say that black lesbian feminist writing and organizing pointed to capital's global phase as particularly exploitative for U.S. and third-world women of color. In the context of the rapid commodification of U.S. women of color and third-world female labor, the discourse of black matriarchy provided much of the normative syntax by which to regulate global capital's emergent labor force. Black lesbian and women of color feminist interpretations of coalition gestured toward regulatory modes that claimed the lives not only of black women, but of Asian, Asian American, Latina, and Caribbean women as well. In doing so, such theorizations of coalition traced the properties of capital's new phase and sought to address that mode as one that could produce unprecedented possibilities.

To understand how women of color feminists innovated understandings of coalition, we must contextualize those innovations within revolutionary nationalist articulations of coalition. For the Black Panther Party, as for many national liberation struggles, coalitions were based on nationalist alliances against imperialist domination. Nationalist theorizations of coalition thus became a way of extending the heteropatriarchal logic of national liberation. In doing so, coalitions based on anti-imperialist nationalism actually propagated the normative components of liberal ideology.

Women of color and black lesbian feminists took up the issue of coalition not to extend revolutionary nationalist theorizations, but to radically revise them. For instance, in the introduction to *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology,* the first black lesbian feminist collection of writings, Smith draws a connection between the analysis of intersections and coalitional work. She argues, "Approaching politics with a comprehension of the simultaneity of oppressions has helped to create a political atmosphere particularly conducive to coalition building."[62] Indeed, the simultaneity of oppressions allowed passage away from national liberation and into a completely different understanding of alliances across difference. The Combahee River Collective statement offers a glimpse of this understanding:

> We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. . . . We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labor force, while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable tokens at white-collar and professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women.[63]

Articulating class formations as significant in terms of racial and sexual oppression meant that the collective had to address capitalism and imperialism as processes that were formed according to those differences. In doing so, the collective refuted the disciplinary maneuvers of several critical formations. Unlike revolutionary nationalism, the collective did not privilege race and nation to the exclusion of gender or sexuality. Unlike traditional marxism, the group did not evoke class to occlude the significance of all other differences. And contrary to socialist feminism, it did not posit gender and class to deny race and sexuality. The Combahee River Collective and other black lesbian feminists were actually rearticulating coalition to address gender, racial, and sexual dominance as part of capitalist expansion globally. Rather than naming a process that crushes difference and particularity, globalization described the formation of economic modes from which critical differences burgeon and normativity incubates.

As black lesbian feminist theorizations of coalition implied, global capital was erecting regimes of normativity that would discipline a largely female labor force. To reiterate, the shift toward a service economy within the United States rendered the changes to African American social structures into one symptom of capital's new phase. Indeed, the expansion of service industries within this new phase entailed an increase in both low-wage and high-income jobs, making the polarization of social structures less of a U.S. phenomenon and more of a global one.[64] With the growth of service economies, more women were proletarianized. From 1970 to 1980, the number of women who worked in low-wage service jobs increased from 42 to 52 percent.[65] Connecting the feminization of labor under globalization to African American women's specific labor predicament, Brewer states, "[U]neven economic growth and internationalization have involved Black women in the complex circuitry of labor exchange of women nationally and globally."[66] Contradictorily, while many black women were concentrated in low-wage service jobs, still others in the 1970s and 1980s were pushed out of the job market altogether, as capital sought even cheaper third-world female labor outside the United States and within.[67] The devaluation of African American labor is thus directly tied to the proletarianization of third-world labor. U.S. capital could cease to rely on African American labor, generally, and black women's labor, specifically, as foreign investment from firms within highly industrialized countries developed export manufacturing in less economically advanced regions. In countries whose economies depended on export manufacturing, countries in Asia and the Caribbean for instance,[68] women often constituted the labor in manufacturing jobs.[69] As anthropologist Aihwa Ong notes, "In the 1960s developing countries greatly improved conditions for a new round of investments by foreign capital."[70] With tax-free privileges for foreign capital, goods manufactured in free-trade zones could be exported abroad (63). In these settings, third-world countries could bid for modern nation status by supplying workers for multinational capital. Ong summarizes the phenomenon:

> By the 1970s, a network of industrial zones scattered throughout Southeast Asia opened up the region to industrial investments by Japanese transnational companies, to be quickly followed by Western corporations. At about the same time, the implementation of the Maquiladora (assembly plant) program along the U.S.–Mexican border opened up Mexico to North American firms. (63)

As laborers entered commodity exchange, they would be thrust into a simultaneously racialized, gendered, and eroticized arena of normative regulation. An expanding service economy subjected many Chinese, Malaysian, Thai, Filipino, and Sri Lankan women to layoffs and low wages, pushing many into sex work (64). In the 1970s, U.S. firms pressed female employees in Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia to submit to gender normativity by dating, buying makeup from company stores, and participating in beauty pageants. As Ong states, "Such emphasis on Western images of sex appeal engendered a desire for goods that working women could satisfy only by increasing their commitment to wage work" (74). The reproduction of racialized gender and sexual regulation would thus facilitate the production of global capital.

In the context of the United States, sociological discourse provided the lexicon for the gendered and eroticized components of racial regulation for nonwhite surplus populations. In the 1980s and 1990s, specifically, the discourse of black matriarchy provided the language for regulating immigrant racial formations. From 1980 to 1995, roughly fifteen million Asians and Latinos immigrated to the United States.[71] During this period as well, neoconservative alliances assaulted public spending for racialized nonwhite immigrants. As ethnic studies scholar Lisa Cacho notes, "In 1996, a democratic president and a republican Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act" (389). In the tradition of retrenchment practices, these bills "effectively eliminated public assistance to undocumented immigrants, severely cut and restricted aid to legal immigrants, imposed harsher penalties for illegal immigration (including immigrants seeking asylum), and relaxed deportation procedures" (389). These anti-immigrant measures were the outcome and cause of a discourse of white injury that was most powerfully exhibited in the 1994 passage of California's Proposition 187, which denied public expenditures (medical care, education, and so forth) to undocumented immigrants and their children (389). The discourse of white injury legalized through Proposition 187 and the congressional acts constructed nonwhite immigrants, particularly Latin immigrants, as financial and social burdens to white taxpayers. Like the discourse of black matriarchy, the discourse of white injury displaced the contradictions of capital onto the immigrant home. Writing about the construction of immigrant women of color under this discursive environment, Cacho argues, "The racialized female is . . . demonized along the lines of reproduction; mothers are cast as the harbingers and reproducers of social ills and pathology—providing children with empty folded tortillas that lead to lifetimes of crime" (400). Pathologizing women of color immigrants as wild reproducers, women who spawn communities with no regard for the distinctions between liberty and equality, became a way of justifying cuts to public spending and obscuring the ways in which the United States needed immigrant labor. The theory of black matriarchy, in other words, helped to generate discourses about other nonheteronormative racial formations, legitimating the exploitation of nonwhite labor and devastating the lives of poor and working-class communities of color.

But negation not only refers to the conditions of exploitation. It denotes the circumstances for critique and alternatives as well. More specifically, the commodification of female labor under globalization produced coalitions as a site of antiracist, feminist, and queer critique. In the context of capital's new economic phase, which depended on racialized gender and sexual discourses to manage an emergent female labor force, coalitions could only challenge these modes of regulation by making gendered, eroticized, and racialized exploitation the basis of political and intellectual intervention. In this context, coalition was based on women of color's subjection to simultaneous oppressions, oppressions constituted through normative undercurrents, modes of exploitation that would characterize globalization in the late twentieth century.

African American culture, as this book has attempted to illustrate, functions as one location that negates and critiques the normative itineraries of capitalist modes of production. The alternatives that African American culture offers owe their significance to the gender and sexual diversity that characterize that culture. This text has also attempted to address African American cultural forms as registers of that heterogeneity. In effect, such interpretations have departed from traditional (i.e., canonical) analyses of African American literature. In relation to those analyses, I have tried not to approach sociology as the discrete history of an academic discipline. Instead, we may read sociology as a discursive and ideological formation that has worked to establish the normative character of U.S. national culture, and has helped narrate and regulate nonheteronormative racial formations. The U.S. nation-state's claims to universality were indeed formed through a racialized normativity that belied the state's regulation of racialized nonnormative gender and sexual formations. With regard to African Americans, sociology has helped to produce the gendered and sexualized components of African American racial difference. The sociological production of racial knowledge about African Americans has thus intersected with capital's own production of and constitution through differences of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Because of their own normative underpinnings, oppositional forces like the black power movement fell prey to capital's new global mode as it sought to regulate a burgeoning labor pool through appeals to normativity. Within contemporary globalization, liberal ideology fed on national liberation movements, using their investments in normativity as a source of capital's nourishment. In this historic moment, probably more than any other, oppositional coalitions have to be grounded in nonnormative racial difference. We must look to the differentiated histories of women of color and queer of color critical formations to aid us in this enterprise.