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Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, And Black Feminist Theories Of The Human



Synopsis

Habeas Viscus focuses attention on the centrality of race to notions of the human. Alexander G. Weheliye develops a theory of "racializing assemblages," taking race as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans. This disciplining, while not biological per se, frequently depends on anchoring political hierarchies in human flesh. The work of the black feminist scholars Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter is vital to Weheliye's argument. Particularly significant are their contributions to the intellectual project of black studies vis-à-vis racialization and the category of the human in western modernity. Wynter and Spillers configure black studies as an endeavor to disrupt the governing conception of humanity as synonymous with white, western man. Weheliye posits black feminist theories of modern humanity as useful correctives to the "bare life and biopolitics discourse" exemplified by the works of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, which, Weheliye contends, vastly underestimate the conceptual and political significance of race in constructions of the human. Habeas Viscus reveals the pressing need to make the insights of black studies and black feminism foundational to the study of modern humanity.

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Customer Reviews

I'll provide a slight variation on of a previous review:Habeas Viscus takes western-white-European philosophers like Agamben, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, etc, and makes them relevant, period. Because these philosophers have presume a subject who is fully-human (aka white, aka Western,

whatever), they fail to understand the sociopolitical order as it is, they fail to problematize the "genres of the Human", as Sylvia Wynter puts it. By putting these poststructuralist philosophers in conversation with various black thinkers and thinkers of color - Weheliye draws on the work of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynters primarily, but they're not alone - Weheliye takes the abstract, narrow, identitarian philosophers, and brings them back into the fleshy world of humans. Weheliye's interrogating the question of the Human is brilliant, and while he does not have all the answers (he doesn't pretend to), this is certainly a book that prompts discussion and further inquiries, which was his goal. Well done, Weheliye. This book ought to be engaged with widely, by anyone who is interested in philosophy, politics, racism, or humans.

Expertly written piece, if not dense in some areas. Blasts through the prison of "Man" and envisions alterior futures and ways of being in the lived experiences of oppressed peoples.

Weheliye's book is a must read for anyone in humanist/post humanist studies or critical race studies.

"Habeas Viscus takes western-white-european philosophers like Agamben, Foucault, Heidegger, Deleuze and others and makes them relevant to discussions of race. Traditionally, these white philosophies abstracts questions of race, but Weheliye infuses and forefronts race into these theories.

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