UC Santa Barbara
Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title
"Demonic Grounds: Sylvia Wynter," excerpt from Demonic Grounds (2006)

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2bz2s32r

Journal
Journal of Transnational American Studies, 11(2)

Author
McKittrick, Katherine

Publication Date
2020

DOI
10.5070/T8112051014

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Journal of Transnational American Studies 11.2 (2020)
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Demonic Grounds

Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle

KATHERINE McKITTRICK

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS • LONDON

Quotations from "Dis Place—The Space Between," from Marlene Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997), are reprinted here with the permission of the poet.

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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

McKittrick, Katherine.
Demonic grounds : Black women and the cartographies of struggle / Katherine McKittrick.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 13: 978-0-8166-4701-9 (hc)
ISBN 10: 0-8166-4701-1 (hc : alk. paper)
ISBN 13: 978-0-8166-4702-6 (pb)
ISBN 10: 0-8166-4702-X (pb : alk paper)
1. Women, Black—America—Social conditions. 2. African diaspora. 3. Human geography—America. 4. Geography—Psychological aspects. 5. Slavery—America—History. 6. Women slaves—America—History. 7. Women, Black—America—Political activity. 8. Women, Black, in literature. 9. America—Race relations. 10. America—Geography—Psychological aspects. I. Title.
E29.N3M38 2006
305.48'89607009—dc22 2005035148

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

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

chapter 5

Demonic Grounds: Sylvia Wynter

> There is no end
> To what a living world
> Will demand of you.
> —OCTAVIA BUTLER

The discussion of black geographies in the previous chapters has demonstrated that racial-sexual domination is an ongoing spatial project. I have been suggesting that the ideological naturalization of black women is correlated to the production of space, highlighting three processes. First, ideas, about black femininity, racial superiority, and difference are spatialized, consequently curtailing subaltern geographic desires and opportunities. In this case, the historical and historically present body is at stake, frequently returning us to questions of geographic captivity, ownership, and dispossession as they are connected to corporeal schemas. Second, black women's unique geographic concerns are concealed by racial, sexual, and economic processes. That is, the dispossessed black female body is often equated with the ungeographic, and black women's spatial knowledges are rendered either inadequate or impossible. While dispossession and the ungeographic are certainly not guaranteed, traditional social paradigms, such as implementation of transparent space and the geographic manifestation of racial-sexual classificatory systems, shape how we see, or do not see, black women's geographies. Finally, these real and discursive sociospatial processes evidence struggles—over the soil, the body, theory, history, and saying and expressing a sense of place. Importantly, the real and imaginary geographic processes important to black women are not just about limitations, captivities, and erasures; they are also about everyday contestations, philosophical demands, and the possibilities the production of space can engender for subaltern subjects. Black women's geographies—produced in

the margins, on auction blocks, in garrets, through literatures, and in "the last place they thought of"—indicate that traditional spatial hierarchies are simultaneously powerful and alterable. This simultaneity suggests that human geographies are unresolved and are being conceptualized beyond their present classificatory order.

What can these unresolved sociospatial ideas do for us philosophically? If black women's geographies illustrate that our ideological models and the three-dimensional physical world can, indeed, be alterable and reimagined, *where* do their sense of place, and their conceptual interventions, take us? Can black women's geographies also open up the possibility to rethink, and therefore respatialize, our present sociogeographic organization? In order to think about these questions, I turn to philosopher Sylvia Wynter and integrate some of her "creative and world constitutive activities" into my discussion.[1] Wynter's work and ideas demonstrate that the material and conceptual geographies of the black diaspora are not simply "marginal" or "different" or "unacknowledged." Rather, her interest in "new forms of life" opens up philosophical configurations that posit a flesh-and-blood worldview implicit to the production of space. Wynter allows us, then, to imagine black women's geographies not simply as descriptive areas of complex "differences." She also allows us to consider the ways in which space, place, and poetics are expressing and mapping an ongoing human geography story.

It is not within the scope of this chapter to delineate Sylvia Wynter's philosophies in their entirety. As David Scott rightly notes, "the scale and ambition of [her] project is as vast as it is complex."[2] My interest in Wynter's work here is threefold. First, she is a skilled and rigorous interdisciplinary scholar. The range of her textual sources—she engages and interweaves, for example, physics, film, musics, economics, history, neurobiology, critical theory, literature, Christianity—and the depth with which she reads these texts, demonstrate exceptional interdisciplinarity. Although Wynter is not cited as an interdisciplinary scholar per se—she is most notably a critical theorist and the author of *The Hills of Hebron*—the breadth of her analytical interests unsettle knowledge categories and boundaries.[3] Indeed, she writes and thinks deeply across texts to articulate her arguments "outside the terms of the disciplinary discourses of our present epistemological order" and she encourages her readers to struggle with what they know, and where they know from.[4] Second, Wynter's philosophies, while vast,

are secured to her ongoing struggle to re-present the fullness of human ontologies, which have been curtailed by what she describes as an overrepresentation of Man (Western bourgeois Man) as if it/he were the only available mode of complete humanness.[5] Spanning roughly 1492 to the present, Wynter's analyses of the inventions of Man/human and his human Others are genealogies, which trace how racial-sexual-economic categories get made, remade, and disrupted through the production of knowledge and conceptions of time-space. Finally, and related to both of the above points, Wynter's work addresses geographic matters. In addressing the ways in which space and place impact upon knowledge, subaltern political aims, and the overrepresentation of Man, her work is anchored to multiple and multiscalar "grounds"—demonic grounds, the space of Otherness, the grounds of being human, poverty archipelagos, archipelagos of human Otherness, les damnés de la terre/the wretched of the earth, the color-line, terra nullius/lands of no one. In addition to this, the geographies Wynter is interested in are unfinished, in the sense that she insists that there is "always something else besides the dominant cultural logic going on, and that something else constituted another—but also transgressive—ground of understanding . . . not simply a sociodemographic location but the site both of a form of life and of possible critical intervention."[6]

It is on this last point, Wynter's geographic interests, that I will focus in this discussion. I am interested in following alongside her argument regarding the invention of Man, and discussing this in relation to what might be called Man's geographies. So, how do Man's geographies get formulated, cast as natural truths, and become overrepresented? How does this politics of mapping, of making space, shed light on the repetitive displacement of the planet's nonwhite subjects? Can the naturalized but alterable geographies of black women, and subaltern subjects in general, be understood in ways that do not replicate our historically present spatial patterns? What kinds of new and possible spaces are made available through our past geographic epochs? And finally, what can Wynter's discussions of "our fully realized autonomy of feeling, thoughts behaviour," her representation of the human subject, bring to bear on geography and geographic knowledge? I hope to answer these questions by working through three points—the inventions of Man, Man's geographies, and interhuman geographies—as they relate to some of the concerns I have developed in earlier chapters.

THE INVENTION OF MAN1 AND MAN2, OR, THE INVENTIONS OF MAN

Sylvia Wynter is interested in sociospatial and intellectual epochs wherein the category of human, and representations of humanness, come to be represented as Man. She suggests the European arrival in the New World, economic expansions, and new religious and secular politics ruptured existing planetary organization and forced a reconsideration of how the self, other, and space are imagined. These sociointellectual ruptures were poignant—the inhabitants of Europe had to grapple with the psychic-unimaginable—and created an opening through which the conceptions of humanness began to be organized differently. Wynter's theoretical strategy is to trace how Man comes to represent the only viable expression of humanness, in effect, overrepresenting itself discursively and empirically. In order to elaborate on the formations of Man, she considers two overlapping knowledge shifts prompted by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century voyages to the New World. These moments correspond with the conceptualization of the encountered and encountering human (Man1), who has traveled (materially and imaginatively) to the New World for socioreligious exploratory purposes; and the imperialist political human (Man2), who has traveled outside Europe for territorial expansion, conquest, wealth.[7] Both of these inventions are struggling to develop a cohesive human subject that can consistently correspond with changing intellectual fields. Man1 was invented alongside the rise of the physical sciences, the decline of supernatural planetary sociospatial organization, and evangelistic contact. Man2 was invented alongside the rise of the biological sciences, transatlantic slavery, and land exploitation. In both cases, humanness was re-evaluated, produced in a classificatory, contextual, ideological manner—theologically/scientifically and then secularly/biologically. And both inventions of Man required a differential production of humanness. That is, Man and his human Others came to represent and produce themselves in relation to each other.

The inventions of Man are, Wynter argues, syncretized. The arrival in the New World surely ruptured European understandings of physiology, religion, politics, and geography. Humanness was thrown into crisis by the seeable, ungodly, indigenous peoples and their lands. Two entwining processes took place that initiated the reorganization of humanness. First,

early explorers and religious evangelists had to make sense of a world, and cultures, they had previously considered nonexistent; and they could only make sense of the world through their subjective knowledges and positionalities. In the Middle Ages the New World, like southern Africa, was convincingly *physically uninhabitable* to Europeans. Upon encounters, and alongside Decartes's newly mathematizable world and Copernican theory, the question of humanness became wrapped up in the differences between Man's embodiment of the image of God and the New World inhabitants. The physical sciences and new struggles over religious frameworks (new heavens, new earths, a moving planet) produced a reasonable Man (Man1), located between "the lower natures of brutes" and divine natures. Here, human Others—inside and outside Europe—were identifiable "enemies of Christ," irrational and abnormal; the creed-specific, seemingly universal, conception of the human was a natural and rational "Godded" Man.[8]

Second, indigenous communities, the brutes/enemies of Christ, instigated a philosophical conundrum. They could not, in fact, be identified as enemies of Christ because of their geographic location—Christ's apostles did not reach the New World; Christ was an absolutely unavailable and unrepresentable image/idea for indigenous cultures (just as New World indigenous cultures and their geographies were truly unimaginable to Europeans prior to contact). Thus, the question of humanness had to be pondered in a new way: in what ways can subjugation be justified, and territorialization advanced, if indigenous communities are understood by Christian evangelist travelers—specifically the priest Bartolomé de Las Casas—to be embodying culturally specific and local "truths" that are radically outside a Christian worldview?[9] To put it another way, if these communities were not "enemies of Christ," and had not encountered—or even imagined—the Word, the Church, the orthodox theology of Christianity, how can their relationship to the divine be measured? And what of the local cultural *worldview* of indigenous populations? On what religious terms can their demonization be warranted? And more importantly, for Las Casas, what will become of *his* Christian soul if he spiritually and politically invests in the violent demonization of human Others?[10]

The conundrum noticed by Las Casas had to be resolved. And it was already in the process of being resolved as slave ships were increasingly transporting indigenous African subjects to the New World and indigenous

populations in the Americas were, in fact, rendered "ungodly" by Las Casas's contemporaries. Man had to be worked out differently, humanness altered, on terms that spiritually legitimated a nonindigenous New World presence and the profitable dehumanization of indigenous and enslaved black cultures. This set in motion a second, interrelated, invention of Man (Man2), strikingly brought into focus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Man2 was a more secularized, political state actor whose planetary interests were/are underwritten by bodily schemas and their attendant geopolitical constructs: "'the rise of Europe' and its construction of the 'world civilization' on the one hand, and, on the other, African enslavement, Latin American conquest, and Asian subjugation."[11] Man2 reconfigured humanness by ideologically re-presenting itself as "world" humanness. The indigenous and black categories, conceptualized as an abnormal "enemy of Christ," were understood according to a new biocentric logic that systematized "differential/hierarchical degrees of rationality" and distinguished "different populations, their religions, cultures, forms of life; in other words their *modes* of being human."[12] The inventions of Man paralleled vast and violent colonial and slavery projects, increasingly heightening the meaning of phenotype and physiology and centralized economic power. Man2 and his ideologies set the stage for Darwinian theories to tell "accurate" bodily stories; for W. E. B. Du Bois to identify the color-line; for civil rights activists and academics (feminist, gay and lesbian, nonwhite, aboriginal) to struggle against the overrepresentation of Man; for contemporary capitalist global processes to naturalize and stigmatize the homeless, the underdeveloped, the jobless, the incarcerated.

The inventions of Man are neither guaranteed nor absolute. Implicit to Wynter's argument are two disruptions to Man. First is the ongoing social production of humanness, which compels us to recognize the ways in which we normatively conceptualize difference, cast our present hierarchical order as a truth, and site Man as a location of desire. That is, it is *conceptions* of Man/humanness that denaturalize Man and yet ground our present social systems through discourses of normalcy. Let me give an example from Wynter's interview with David Scott:

> The conception is *the* imperative. This is why, however much abundance we produce, we cannot solve the problem of poverty and hunger. Since the goal of our mode of production is *not* to produce for human beings in general, it's to provide for the material conditions of existence for the production

> and reproduction of our present conception of being human: to secure the well-being, therefore, of those of us, the global middle classes, who have managed to attain its ethno-class criterion.[13]

Second, and related, are the underlying histories and philosophies of other truths, the *local contextual* criteria of humanness that prompted Las Casas's dilemma, which are in contradistinction with, yet substantiate, the making of Man: new and alternative forms of life that are implicit to Man yet totally interlinked with a different *conception* of humanness. In the process of making religious, intellectual, and physiological distinctions between Man and his human Others, varying *genres* or *modes* of the human are being constituted and *lived*. Race, gender, sexuality—biocentric differences—are the terms through "which we can alone experience ourselves as human."[14] Human genres simultaneously make and disrupt Man and open up the possibility for citing and imagining alternative forms of being, knowledge, and geography—from an interhuman/species perspective.

To sum up, our present order of existence centers on the inventions of Man that are anchored and constituted by discourses of normalcy. Normalcy is made and remade in relation to historically specific shifts that critically change the planetary order of things. The making of Man is a process, connected to broad and violent classificatory systems and local contextual experiences. The hierarchy of human normalcy is a dilemma, furthermore, because it is difficult to think outside of what appears to be a natural human story: we are bound to it, anchored to a familiar plot that "should not be taken as any index of [. . .] justness."[15] Humanness is, then, both Man made and human made, pivoting on the displacement of difference and alternative forms of life, which can be articulated, Wynter argues, through a new poetics.[16]

MAN'S GEOGRAPHIES: THE UNINHABITABLE, ARCHIPELAGOS, AND THE MAKING OF DEMONIC GROUNDS

As mentioned previously, the inventions of Man coexisted with important geographic processes and sociospatial ruptures. Following Sylvia Wynter's model, it can be suggested that in order to come into being, Man has to encounter the unimaginable and unrepresentable. I consider here the ways in which Man comes into being through encountering geographic

unknowns and making them biocentrically knowable. Here I focus on two concepts signaled by Wynter in her essay, "1492: A New World View"—the uninhabitable and archipelagos—to think about how the production of space is worked out through mapping and attempting to constitute the space of human Others as disembodied and then transparently abnormal. The interrelated quest to map the unknown—the geographic unknown, the corporeal indigenous/black unknown—sets forth what Neil Smith calls "uneven development," albeit from a very different analytical perspective: the systematic production of differential social hierarchies, which are inscribed in space and give a coherence to disproportionate geographies.[17] I suggest that the negotiation of social, corporeal, and spatial human configurations, initiated by encounters with the unknown, created new spaces, specifically Man's geographies, which are overdetermined, normalized, and naturalized. The inventions of Man come to be reflected in spatial queries and arrangements. If Man is an overrepresentation of humanness, Man's human geographies are an extension of this conception. The development and mapping of the uninhabitable and uneven archipelagos are two important ways Man's geographies are overrepresented.

In "1492: A New World View," Wynter describes how the seemingly complete world geography of explorer Christopher Columbus shaped his spatial expectations. The land of the Western hemisphere (the "New World"/various Caribbean islands) should not have been there upon Columbus's arrival. These landmasses should have been, according to "the earth" and accepted geographies of his Latin Christian Europe, submerged: these areas were comprehensively non-navigable, uninhabitable, unlivable, and oceanic.[18] Columbus's geographic "discovery"—and his *personal* belief that God did put land in the Western Hemisphere—radically challenged the embedded geo-religious rules of his time; geographic imaginations were stretched and forced to confront the unimaginable: landmasses above the water! This "discovery," like the discovery of populations inhabiting what were considered "torrid zones" (present-day Senegal) signaled a geographic disruption of Eurocentric space: a newly expanded ecological, geological, environmental planet, new spaces of Man, alterity, and difference:

> The series of fifteenth-century voyages on whose basis the West began its global expansion voyages (one of which proved that the earth was homogeneously habitable by humans, seeing that the Torrid Zone was indeed inhabited as

> was that of the land of the Western hemisphere that turned out to be above water), together with Copernicus's new astronomy (which proposed that the earth also moved about the Sun, projected as the center, and was therefore of the same substance as, homogenous with, the heavenly bodies), were to initiate . . . a new order of cognition in which "the objective set of facts" of the physical level of reality was to now be gradually freed from having to be known in the adaptive terms of . . . the nonhomogeneity of the geography of the earth and . . . the nonhomogeneity of the earth and the heavens.[19]

The uninhabitable landmasses were initially disembodied by European cartographers and explorers. In naming them "terra nullius/lands of no one" and mapping them as "peopleless" voids, the uninhabitable was abstracted by cartographic translations of where and who can constitute the terms of normal habitability.[20] This cartographic abstraction corresponded with claims to sovereignty, and the lands were perceived as legitimately appropriable in the name of the (Spanish, European) state. The spatial concerns of Manı became wrapped up in an ideological perspective that dehumanized and disembodied subaltern populations by conflating their beingness with *terra nullius,* places and bodies outside God's grace: idolaters in the uninhabitable; uninhabitable idolaters. Remember, however, that *terra nullius,* the lands of no one, incited the philosophical conundrum with which Bartolomé de Las Casas was faced. It was precisely *the geographic location* of the New World, radically outside the conceptual/imaginary categorical models of Christian Europe, that disclosed the *worldviews* of indigenous/black populations in *local-cultural* terms. This Other local-cultural worldview, notably, identifies Manı's geographic perspective (his Godly claim to indigenous lands) as mad, irrational, drunk.[21]

The uninhabitable—the nonexistent lands and underwater places—were existent, occupied, and above water. But what becomes of the native-occupied "uninhabitable" zones is a geo-racial reorganization. The "new symbolic construct of race," which coincided with post-1492 colonial arrangements, was spatially organized according to a new biocentric logic.[22] This spatial organization did not completely replace existing indigenous worldviews, arrangements, and geographies, but it did thrive on geo-racial management. Wynter traces the biocentric codes that arose out of these new encounters and examines how ideologies of "difference" were extensions

of what Columbus's contemporaries considered geographically uninhabitable and unimaginable. She does this by looking specifically at what Columbus's contemporaries and his colonial descendants assumed to be "naturally geographic" (Europe prior to his first voyage) and "naturally ungeographic" (the uninhabitable/underwater). This geographic dichotomy, *after* 1492, unraveled into New World cultural exchanges that settled into a rigorous nonhomogeneous human model. Humanness became a classificatory text, distinguishing white, native (nonwhite), African (native/Other/nigger) from one another and identifying subtypes of human Otherness, such as class, gender, sexuality. This model, traceable into the present, comes to pivot on the middle-class model of Man2 and guarantees a foundation for what constitutes a "normal being" and therefore a normal way of life.[23]

Keeping in mind Wynter's focus on modes of humanness, I want to address the ways in which the uninhabitable still holds currency in the present, and how conceptions of what I call "the inhabitability of the normal" organizes contemporary geographic arrangements. Wynter only briefly suggests that the uninhabitable, like biocentric human hierarchies, is a presently traceable category. Building on this, I argue that the uninhabitable is especially traceable vis-à-vis uneven geographies: while encounters with the unknown made the uninhabitable a newly available geography for exploration and economic gain, it also translated places that were previously deemed nonexistent (underwater, unlivable) into conquerable and profitable spatial categories. Post-1492, what the uninhabitable tells us, then, is that populations who occupy the "nonexistent" are *living* in what has been previously conceptualized as the unlivable and unimaginable. If identity and place are mutually constructed, the uninhabitable spatializes a human Other category of the unimaginable/native/black.

It follows, then, that the question of geographic interrelatedness—colonial geographies—came to be coded in much the same way as described above: spaces for white/nonwhite/African(black). The now profitable and workable lands of the uninhabitable are not so much unlivable and unimaginable as they are grids of racial-sexual management and geographic growth (which "grew" due to free slave labor). That is, the uninhabitable creates an opening for a geographic transformation that is underscored by racial and sexual differences. To transform the uninhabitable into the inhabitable, and make this transformation profitable, the land must become

a site of racial-sexual regulation, a geography that maps "a normal way of life" through measuring different degrees of inhabitability. This geographic transformation, then, does not fully erase the category of "uninhabitable," but rather re-presents it through spatial processes as a sign of social difference. This is expressed through uneven geographies: spatial arrangements that map and measure populations according to "normal," "a normal way of life," or the normally inhabitable. Presently, this spatial re-presentation brings to mind the discussions advanced by Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore on U.S. (California) prison expansion, which Davis describes as the "perfect site for the simultaneous production and concealment of racism."[24] What their work shows is not only the (concealed) spatial management of race/gender/class, but also the ways in which new geographic formulations are produced according to "normative views of how people fit into and make places in the world."[25] The extension of what Columbus's contemporaries assumed was "nonexistent" is a geographic system that comes to organize difference in place: the color-line, the wretched of the earth. Clyde Woods has described these places of difference as: burned, toxic, unhealthy, incarcerated, killing fields, extinct, starved, torn, endangered, impoverished, while Wynter describes them as "poverty archipelagos."[26] These places, global in existence are, from the view of what is "normal" or inhabitable, new versions of the unlivable-uninhabitable. I am going to quote Wynter at length in order to illustrate *where* archipelagos take place and how the overrepresentation and normalization of Man's geographies underwrite dispossessions and desires:

> . . . all our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment, global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the earth's resources (20 per cent of the world's peoples own 80 per cent of its resources, consume two-thirds of its food, and are responsible for 75 per cent of its ongoing pollution, with the leading two billion of earth's peoples living relatively affluent lives while four billion still live on the edge of hunger and immeseration, to the dynamic overconsumption on the part of the rich techno-industrial North paralleled by that of overpopulation on the part of the dispossessed poor, still partly agrarian worlds of the South)—these are all differing facets of . . . Man vs. Human struggle . . . [poverty archipelagos,

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> spaces of the Other are categories] defined at the global level by refugee/economic migrants stranded outside the gates of the rich countries, as the postcolonial variant of Fanon's category of les damnés . . . with this category in the United States coming to comprise the criminalized majority of Black and dark-skinned Latino inner-city males now made to man the rapidly expanding prison-industrial complex, together with their female peers—the kicked-about welfare moms—with both being part of the ever expanding global, transracial category of the homeless/jobless, the semi-jobless, the criminalized drug-offending prison population. So that if we see this category of les damnés that is internal to (and interned within) the prison system of the United States as the analog form of a global archipelago, constituted by the Third- and Fourth-World peoples of the so-called "underdeveloped" areas of the world—most totally of all by the peoples of the continent of Africa (now stricken with AIDS, drought, and ongoing civil wars, and whose bottommost place as the most impoverished of all the earth's continents is directly paralleled by the situation of its Black Diaspora, with Haiti being produced and reproduced as the most impoverished nation of the Americas). . .[27]

The inhabitability of the normal, consequently, also produces two forms of geographic nonexistence, which differ from what was assumed was "not there." First, what Audre Lorde describes as the "institutionalized rejection of difference": invisible workforces, sites of homelessness, unpropertied communities, undocumented and/or "justified" violences; marginalized, silent women, men, and children; what has been described as "the rest" beyond the West (the South, the Caribbean, the non–United States, and so forth). And second, what Édouard Glissant describes as the "real but long unnoticed" places of interhuman exchanges: cultural sharings, new poetics, new ways of being, "a new world view," human struggles.[28]

The uninhabitable and archipelagos of difference signal the conceptual openings 1492 made possible and the incompleteness of geographic processes and note where poetics might disrupt the habitability of normal. These conceptions of space and place, Man's geographies, are important because they reveal the limitations of existing geographic arrangements and, consequently, put demands on the ways in which we presently organize the world. The overrepresented spaces of Man disclose that space is socially constituted—and that historical epochs are underwritten by differential

encounters with geography. These encounters always include the underrepresented conceptions of being *in place*—the spaces of Otherness, subjective worldviews—that may not be immediately available in our geographic imaginations because Man's sense of place is naturalized as normal. However, archipelagos of poverty, hemmed in and categorized by global colorlines and biocentric logics—are, like Man's geographies, inhabited. And, if we return to Glissant and connect his poetics of landscape to this present discussion, encountering, saying, and living geography brings the subject into being—regardless of place. Those who occupy the spaces of Otherness are always already encountering space and therefore articulate how genres or modes of humanness are intimately connected to where we/they are ontologically as well as geographically. To return to an earlier discussion, spaces of Otherness are "palpitating with life."[29] What do we do with the biocentric spaces of unevenness that are life-filled and poetic? And what are the poetics saying about space and place, and a new worldview? Can this lead to another geographic disruption—one which, in noting the alterability of our present geographic organization, takes seriously the possibility of more humanly workable geographies? I now turn to demonic grounds in order to think about how the habitable/uninhabitable can perhaps be reframed as interhuman geographies.

As mentioned in my introductory remarks, the *place* of black women is deemed unrecognizable because their ontological existence is both denied and deniable as a result of the regimes of colonialism, racism-sexism, transatlantic slavery, European intellectual systems, patriarchy, white femininity, and white feminism. Correlated, their grounds are silent and their place is uninhabitable within the given frameworks of Man's geographies.[30] Placeless and silent black women, if legitimately posited in the world (placed, unsilenced), call into question our present geographic organization. The geographies of black womanhood, as demonic grounds, put forth a geographic grammar that locates the complex position and potentiality of black women's sense of place.

Demonic grounds can be detected through the biocentric categories of race and sexuality (black femininity), political locations (black/Caribbean feminism), and alongside social theories and ideologies, such as white European and Euro-American feminism, patriarchy, and black/Caribbean studies. By adding the variable of race-sexuality to existing grounds of human being, black femininity establishes a slightly different path through social

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theories and ideologies as well as material and conceptual geographies. This path does not have to be understood as entwined with erasures and absences but rather indicates the human, expressive, and geographic terms of disavowal *and* black women's geographies. Where demonic grounds differ from, say, other black feminist and feminist geographies is in their function. Specifically, it is the making and meaning of black womanhood and black feminism that discloses the *purpose* of race/racism within feminism and sex/sexism within black social movements. To put it another way, and to expand on one theme discussed earlier, it is not simply a marginal special-partial vantage point that divulges the workings of black womanhood or black feminism or feminism. And this is exactly where feminism(s) and other identity-theories sometimes get stuck, by recycling and politicizing biocentric modes of humanity *in* the margins, in the classroom, in theory; this emphasizes that hierarchical *genres* of human/gender difference will somehow complete the story. Instead, it is useful to imagine the ways in which the margin is a serious conceptual intervention into what it means to be/not be a black woman: the margin (or "race-class-gender-sexuality," or the garret, or "difference," and so forth) is part of the story, not the end of the story. As I began to ask in chapter 2, through Marlene Nourbese Philip, and what thinking about black women's geographies as "demonic" opens up is: what happens when black womanhood, black femininity, black women's spaces, places, and poetics are "*Not* on the margins"?[31]

If the grounds of black femininity and black feminism, what Wynter describes as the terrain of "Caliban's woman," *is* inhabited, it is therefore part of a larger human geography story. This story indicates that the grounds of what is considered "the inhabitability of normal" are socially produced and alterable. Black femininity and black feminism are therefore also establishing new oppositional demands that recast human normalcy through the politics/poetics of black femininity. Importantly, black feminism and the discourses of marginality-identity have made a difference to feminism and to other social theories by: disrupting the category of "woman" and the centered subject (race, class, gender, location); calling into question the patriarchal and feminist meanings of private/public, home, work, motherhood, selfhood, nation; critiquing black political movements, black popular culture, feminist theory, and activism; reshaping women's studies, black studies, cultural studies; re-historicizing transatlantic slavery and post-slavery landscapes. If these conceptual and political differences are

not simply cast as marginal, they do not have to replicate marginality. Demonic grounds are not, then, only reifying and politicizing marginality in itself (black women's identities = margin/position = difference in/and feminism; or, our present form of life). Rather they are also a projection of what the biocentric human (*genres* of black womanhood) means in relation to "the normally inhabitable." This troubles a formerly familiar landscape and reveals that the places of black womanhood—the garrets and auction blocks, the streets of Montreal, the political interventions—can be conceptualized as particular, contested moments, which necessarily connect Man's geographies to ongoing locations of subaltern struggle.

What is compelling about Wynter's discussions—and where she differs, sometimes radically, from antiracist and/or feminist theories of "inclusivity" and "special vantage points"—is how seriously she takes the flesh-and-blood human species and the grounds of the subaltern to fashion a workable and new politics. This politics recognizes our present history as simultaneously "interhuman and environmental."[32] Specifically, Wynter asks that we recognize that the making of the Americas was/is an (often dangerously genocidal and ecocidal) interhuman and environmental project through which "new forms of life" can be conceptualized. Recognizing that new forms of life, occupying interhuman grounds (beneath *all* of our feet), can perhaps put forward a new worldview from the perspective of the species—that is, from outside the logic of biocentric models: not as a *genre* or *mode* of human but as human. Consequently, if the flesh-and-blood human can know from outside the logic of biocentric models, special/partial vantage points only make sense as indicative of patterns that are *inside* the logic of biocentric models and familiar plots—because special-ness and inclusions, in these theories and through our existing sociospatial arrangements, are necessarily produced in conjunction with (repeating and/or undermining) Man's geographies, old hierarchical tensions, old grounds, partial histories, and partial interests.

Sylvia Wynter's work entails not only "deconstructing" or denaturalizing categories such as "race"; it also means envisioning what is beyond the hierarchical codes and partial human stories that have, for so long, organized our populations and the planet. This means accepting that global, human, and environmental *connections*—of cultural histories, exchanges, "discoveries," experiences—are evidence of a conceptual shift. This shift, while overrepresented as hinging on the voyages of Christopher Columbus

and subsequent intellectual and global expansions, also brought into being our present world order and a single world history, and therefore new culturally connective subject positions.[33] It is the geographic and human connectiveness that makes possible envisioning and accepting flesh-and-blood humans as an interrelated, co-identified species.

REVISITING THE POETICS OF LANDSCAPE

I want to turn to two examples—one historical and one contemporary—to clarify how the uninhabitable and demonic grounds relate to Wynter's framework and geography. These examples return me to black Canada and the body, and I suggest that the poetics of landscape is perhaps one way to think through and trouble biocentric geographic organization. In seventeenth-century Montreal, in response to increased colonial demands for free labor, Louis XIV gave limited approval to institute slavery in New France. In his statement sanctioning the institution, the monarch also commented that the project of slavery may fail in Canada—black slaves, he suggested, coming from such a different climate might perish due to the cold Canadian weather.[34] That New France might be an uninhabitable site for blackness collapses biocentric categories and geographic categories. While the weather certainly did not prevent slavery in New France, and black communities did not perish, the monarch's comments did affirm a discourse through which black in/and Canada could be imagined—as unacceptably impossible or geographically inappropriate. This discourse continued, long after the execution of Marie-Joseph Angélique, attaching itself to other black diaspora populations from Africa and the Caribbean. Among other reasons for immigration prohibition between the 1900s and the 1950s were the potential immigrants' "geographical area of origin" and his/her "unsuitability" to the Canadian climate.[35] The question of the uninhabitable Canadian nation was established in relation to the normally inhabitable (livable cold, white, Canadian-European geographies), allowing the *idea* of the cold land to determine the natural place or placelessness of black diaspora communities. Thinking about this in relation to Wynter's discussion of 1492 reveals three important moments: the ideological turn away from "what is not there, submerged, unlivable"; the ideological shift that demonstrates that "what is here, above water, livable, conquerable" requires a biocentric logic through which Canadian geography could be

managed; and a reassertion of the uninhabitable—the erasure of black histories, impossible black geographies, nonexistence. By institutionalizing and recycling natural connections between geography and the biocentric body, the uninhabitable becomes a meaningful racial category utilized to reassert how livable Canada is, and for whom it is appropriately livable.

The meaning of Canada/place thus came to underpin the "institutionalized rejection of difference" and the "real but long unnoticed" sites of interhuman exchanges. But as unacceptably impossible, and keeping in mind what demonic grounds disclose, the uninhabitable, cold landscape in fact houses a new form of blackness. I am thinking in particular of Dionne Brand's discussion of Bathurst Street in Toronto, Ontario. This piece not only places blackness right in the middle of the black-uninhabitable (Canada), it identifies how genres or modes of humans put new demands on the nation on interhuman terms:

> Bathurst Subway. I say it like home. It's an uneasy saying . . . They first took you to Bathurst and Bloor to locate you, your place, the point from which you would meet this country. And your relationship to it was clear since this was the only oasis of Blacks in the miles and miles to be learned of in the white desert that was a city. They took you here for you to get a sense of your new identity, the re-definitions you knew were coming but could never have anticipated though you had some sense when you gave yourself up to the journey you'd emptied a place for them. Bathurst was the site of new definitions . . . in 1978 we were working the four corners of the intersection [protesting/flyering] just after the killing of Albert Johnson by the cops. Only months before they had killed Buddy Evans down on Spadina Avenue. And those who could have saved his life said that he was just a nigger and left him to die. Now Albert Johnson was shot on the staircase of his house on Manchester.[36]

What is interesting about Brand's recollection is not only her description of Toronto, Ontario, as a "white desert" (biocentrically black-habitable, what Wynter might call a "torrid zone," seemingly geographically suitable for the black diaspora), but the ways in which she mixes geographic possibilities with the uninhabitable. She writes an incomplete human geographic story, and she situates this incomplete story under the familiar geographic sign of "Canada," signaling how these unfinished projects are

particular to the nation (projects of, then, Canadian benevolence, safe havens, Underground Railroads to freedom). As a site of new definitions and death, Bathurst Street proves demonic for Brand, a site where she can map a location of new inhabitability ("home," "your place") with an uneasiness that accentuates the discomfort and pain of the uninhabitable. Interhuman exchanges are premised on the politics of the four corners of Bathurst, where sites of protest, community, "newness" (or alterable geographies) intersect with the logic of the uninhabitable and unacceptable (he was left to die, an incomplete human geography story). Incomplete human geography stories are, in part, disclosed through the poetics of landscape. Brand's imaginative and real geographies insert "past" spaces of blacklessness and death into contemporary geographic matters.

Dionne Brand's poetics, her mapping of Bathurst Street, Toronto, Canada, cold torrid zones, urban archipelagos for "just a nigger," bring the city, and her selfhood, into existence on new terms. I want to turn to the ways in which contemporary black expressive cultures have also contributed to what might be considered new and contestatory geographic acts. These geographic acts communicate the livability of the world through mapping it as a terrain that can publicly and creatively express blackness and black femininity. Here I am thinking specifically about music and music-making as geographic acts—soundscapes that are implicit technologies of the poetics of landscape. The terrain of music and music-making is, as many have argued, one of the more vibrant, creative, and complexly private/public spaces in which blackness is articulated.[37] It stages and presents creativity, politics, sex, violence, struggle, and diaspora connections; it is a site of invention, reinvention, parody, performativity, community, and critique. Music expresses a wide range of emotions and ideas; it establishes and severs human relationships; it is buyable, transferable, and sometimes free. Musical expressions are also geographic. Musical expressions are fundamentally about place because they alter the soundscape. The art of noise is not just about listening, it is also about dancing, seeing, not listening, and (in)voluntarily listening to other people's music; it also enhances our privacy, wards off loneliness, and simulates aloneness (through use of Walkmans, for example).

In his discussion of black musics and economics in the Mississippi Delta, geographer Clyde Woods has argued that the act of making music paralleled an intellectual transformation that has been overlooked. Woods

is not arguing that black musics were not heard or listened to—indeed, musicians and musics were worshipped, celebrated, envied, and feared. But an intellectual "mutation," to borrow from Sylvia Wynter, expressing "the origins, consequences, and varieties of life lived in a brutal and loveless society," has been ignored. Black musics, evidencing a *mutation* and arranging a viable participatory soundscape through which blackness can say itself and its history, is often rendered trivial.[38]

There are geographic and social demands implicit in the soundscape. For example, contemporary music and music-making has, geographically, contributed to the spatialization of blackness. It has publicly presented a kind of blackness that cuts across the hierarchical genres of human normalcy and re-presents the ways in which black artists (sometimes but not always) embrace and/or perform the normal and change the stakes of normalcy. The consumption of contemporary black musics and black video has established an arena through which the artist, musician, dancer, can publicly disclose the contradictions, possibilities, and histories of blackness: at an awards show, the hip-hop act Outkast restaged a plantation, populating it with minstrel images: "the whole world," they sang, "loves you when you: don't get down, when you sing the blues, when you're in the news." In her hit video "Get Ur Freak On," artist Missy Elliott uses lynch symbolism as a backdrop: live pained bodies, hanging upside down (and dead/dying lynched bodies)—a demonic landscape that creates a provocative space for Elliott to sing about and expose the connections between black sex, violence, and pleasure in the historical present.[39] New and old archipelagos mapped across Man's and black geographies, unsettling how the "whole world" is imagined by Man and his human others. Music, as a geographic act, is an available space through which blackness can be read as an integral and meaningful part of the landscape.[40] This identifies the soundscape as a contestation, which publicly and privately communicates geographic possibilities. It is a space and place used by several black artists to "say" the historical present. It is this "sayability" that I am interested in here, and how singer-songwriter Macy Gray uses the sphere of the soundscape to integrate a seeable and critical intervention into the normal.

At the 2001 MTV music awards, Macy Gray arrived in a dress with a message sewn on the front which read: "My new album drops Sept. 18 2001." The back of her dress read: "Buy my album."[41] Whether or not the

legacy Gray invoked with her dress was intended, her public body-self, her expressive dress, worked its way into the space of the music awards in a provocative way. When discussing this occasion with a class of undergraduate students—alongside a discussion of black feminist thought—several students asserted that Gray's fashion choice was an inappropriate and an unstylish catastrophe: she exhibited desperation which was wrapped up in a "bad" dress.[42] The student responses to Gray's popular presentation indicated their comfort zones—in terms of femininity, popular culture, music marketing, and blackness. Their responses demanded a kind of black femininity Macy Gray refused to deliver. Gray's expressive fashion act at the MTV music awards inappropriately exceeded the bounds of public self-presentation and respectable womanhood. Or did it?

Macy Gray's use of her body and fashion at the MTV awards tells us something interesting about blackness: in a way, she wrote the historical weight of black womanhood on her body. She was not articulating womanhood; she was expressing black womanhood, in the flesh. That Gray could enter hyperpublic space and "say" her body in this way was an important expressive act: it was, to borrow from Stuart Hall, "a profoundly mythic use of public space."[43] In choosing to write "buy my album" across her back she created a space of parody, one that distorts who she is supposed to be (as a woman) by invoking the ways in which her historical body is shaped by another, less familiar, legacy (as a black woman).

Like other human geographies, black expressive cultures do not communicate whole geographies. Instead, the mixture of presentation, music, noise, bodies, performance, and musical arrangements are used to exploit existing geographic arrangements and push narratives of normalcy out of the comfort zone. The geographic act of expressing blackness and black femininity illustrates what happens when gender and race are overtly attached to public space. It points to how uncomfortable the normal can be and how the "sayability" of place is caught up in the expressive economy of the racial-sexual. But singing and writing the unspeakable can, to return to Macy Gray, allow her to also utter her "unedited" newness, her freaky-ness, and her loving-human/freak-connection with others "deep in the struggle": "you are relating to a psychopath/your role model is in therapy/you must be real far gone/you're relating to a psychopath"; or, "I wanna be with you for all of my life/I'm so glad you're a freak like me."[44]

Gray's biocentric body and her sense of place, she suggests, are not quite normal: she produces and lives, then, a mutation, which is evidence of the ways in which black femininity is implicated in an unjust, but speakable, human geography story: "Ask if I'm free and I'll say 'oh yes'/ but down here in reality everybody knows there ain't/no such thing/. . . What I'm looking for is not here on earth."[45] Gray's expressive acts are musical geographies that call into question "down here in reality," through poetically expressing that "down here" is an uneasy social reality. She provides a communicative act that is a respatialization because "down here in reality" is not, in fact, a humanly workable place. Gray, momentarily, leaves her historically present geographic story behind, imagines another place for her blackness beyond the "no such thing," or the impossible, and invites her audience into a different spatiality, "beyond the moon," or outside the anticipated realms of the normal.[46]

Is it feasible, then, to link respatialization to practices of subaltern expression? Or, to put it differently, what is different about geography—in the material and the imaginary—if we "say" geography on new poetic terms? Is saying geography a respatialization and therefore a repoliticization? Can creative expressions of new geographic forms—interhuman, in the beyond, outside the normal, "not here on earth"—widen our understanding of human geography and loosen the ties between biocentric categories and what are now familiar, and for some, comfortable, locations? In chapter 1, I mentioned that geography is deeply dependent on imaginary work. This is where I think Sylvia Wynter's contribution to black geographies is most important. She not only advances a way to reconceptualize black women's geographies, she also insists that creatively communicating this reconceptualization formulates geographic options in a way that is more humanly workable; she makes us think hard about what we imagine, what we want to imagine, and what we can imagine for human geographies. It is, then, new forms of life, imagining, expressing, and living geography that put demands on spatial arrangements, that contest, respatialize, and inhabit the uninhabitable. If "there is no end/to what a living world/will demand of you,"[47] how are we living this present world? If our expressive demands can demonstrate a new worldview, in what ways can ethical human geographies, or interhuman geographies, be mapped?

62. Lorena Gale, *Angélique,* 3.
63. Ibid., 69,
64. Toni Morrison, "The Official Story," xv.

5. DEMONIC GROUNDS

1. Paget Henry, "Sylvia Wynter: Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Thought," *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy,* 118.

2. Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 121. While I am not taking on all of Sylvia Wynter's literatures and ideas in this chapter, a fairly comprehensive list of her collected works is included in my bibliography. For additional engagements with Wynter's work, see the special issue of *The Journal of West Indian Literatures,* 10:1/2 (2001) and the "Coloniality's Persistence" issue of *CR: The New Centennial Review,* 3:3, (Fall 2003).

3. Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron: A Jamaican Novel.* Wynter is also known as an actor, dancer, playwright, short story writer, and translator.

4. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," 331, n1.

5. Ibid., 257–337.

6. Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 164.

7. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 264, 286. Man1 and Man2 are Wynter's framings.

8. Ibid., 284, 299.

9. Ibid., 293–95.

10. Ibid., 298.

11. Ibid., 263.

12. Ibid., 300. My emphasis.

13. Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 160. Emphasis in the original.

14. Ibid., 183. This argument is elaborated on through Wynter's analysis of Frantz Fanon in her "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience," 30–66.

15. Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," 271.

16. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 46–49.

17. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space,* xi–xvii.

18. Sylvia Wynter, "1492," 18.

19. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 280.

20. Ibid., 293; Matthew Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps: (Dis)-Placing Cartographic Struggle in Canada," 305–36.

21. Sylvia Wynter, "The Pope Must Be Drunk, The King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality and the Caribbean Rethinking of Modernity," 17–41.

22. Sylvia Wynter, "1492," 34. See also Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays,* 13–52; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest,* 21–74.

23. Sylvia Wynter, "1492," 42–43.

24. Avery Gordon, "Globalism and the Prison Industrial Complex: An Interview with Angela Davis," 147; Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Globalisation and U.S. Prison Growth: From Military Keynesianism to Post-Keynesian Militarism," 171–88.

25. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," 16.

26. Clyde Woods, "Life After Death," 62–66; Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," 243. See also Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 195.

27. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 260–61.

28. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 115. Édouard Glissant, "Creolization and the Making of the Americas," 268. See also Rinaldo Walcott's discussion of creolization and new human forms in "Pedagogy and Trauma: The Middle Passage, Slavery and the Problem of Creolization," 135–51.

29. Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience,* 100.

30. Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings," 355, 364.

31. Marlene Nourbese Philip, "Dis Place—The Space Between," *Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays,* 94. Emphasis in the original.

32. Sylvia Wynter, "1492," 8. In terms of the "special vantage point," I am referring to bell hooks's *From Margin to Center,* 15, and Donna Haraway's "privileging of the partial perspective" found in her *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* 190–91. See also the discussion of marginality and feminism in chapter 2. With regard to "inclusivity," I am thinking in particular about Angela Miles's *Integrative Feminism: Global Perspectives on North American Feminism.* This is not meant to suggest that partial perspectives and inclusion are not useful ways to think about social differences, but rather to signal Wynter's call for a "new world view from the perspective of the species, with reference to the interests of *its* well-being." (Emphasis in the original.) So, for example, what happens to the margin if it is analyzed as evidence of biocentricity and an assertion of black women's humanity *as connected to* the species?

33. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 47, 13.

34. Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica,* 11; Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History,* 5, 8. Importantly, some black slaves were purchased from other "cold" locations in the northern United States.

35. Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 436–38. Remember, as well, Frantz Fanon's discussion of winter wherein the cold weather assists in producing Fanon's inhumanity *and* transforms him into a black man who is not shivering, but "quivering with rage." Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 114.

36. Dionne Brand, "Bathurst," *Bread Out of Stone,* 28–33. Albert Johnson, thirty-five, was shot and killed in his home on August 26, 1979. Toronto Police Constables Inglis and Walter Cargnelli were charged with manslaughter but were later acquitted. Buddy Evans, twenty-four, was shot and killed on August 9, 1978, by Toronto Police Constable Clark. No charges were laid against this officer.

37. For example: Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness;*

Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism;* Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta.*

38. Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested,* 288.

39. Outkast, "The Whole World"; Missy Elliot, "Get Ur Freak On."

40. See Stuart Hall on the complexities and contradictions in black popular culture: "What Is This 'Black' in Popular Culture?" 465–75.

41. Soon after, Black Entertainment Television Internet voters chose Gray as "Tackiest Diva of the Year," who fashioned the "The Worst Awards Show Ensemble" of 2001. Laini Madhubuti, "2001 BET Fashion Disaster Awards."

42. Indeed, several students also commented on Gray's surprisingly "huge" tall body and strange (speaking) voice.

43. Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Popular Culture?" 474.

44. Macy Gray, "A Moment to Myself"; Macy Gray, "Relating to a Psychopath" and "Freak Like Me."

45. Macy Gray, "The Letter."

46. Ibid. Here, of course, Gray may be signaling death and also returning us to slave resistances, such as suicide.

47. Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower,* 137.

CONCLUSION

1. Sylvia Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics," 78–94; Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking Aesthetics," 238–79.

2. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 8.

3. Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," 454–81.

4. Michael Franti and Spearhead, *Stay Human.*