

Out of the Kumbia
Caribbean Women
and Literature

edited by
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***Afterword:
“Beyond Miranda’s
Meanings: Un/silencing the
‘Demonic Ground’ of
Caliban’s ‘Woman’ ” ****

Sylvia Wynter

The point of departure of this *After/Word* is to explore a central distinction that emerges as the dynamic linking sub-text of this, the first collection of critical essays written by Caribbean women. This distinction is that between Luce Irigaray’s purely Western assumption of a universal category, “woman”, whose “silenced” ground is the condition of what she defines as an equally universally applicable, “patriarchal discourse,” and the dually Western and post-Western editorial position of a projected ‘womanist/feminist’ critical approach as the unifying definition of the essays that constitute the anthology. The term ‘*womanist/feminist*,’ with the qualifying attribute “womanist” borrowed from the Afro-American feminist Alice Walker, reveals the presence of a contradiction, which, whilst central to the situational frame of reference of both Afro-American and Caribbean women writers/critics, is necessarily absent from the situational frame of reference of both Western-European and Euroamerican women writers. Thus whilst at the level of the major text these essays are projected within the system of inference-making of the discourse of

*Editors’ note: This is the first section of a much longer manuscript which could not be included here in its entirety, generated, in part, by our request for this afterword.

Feminism, at the level of the sub-text which both haunts and calls in question the presuppositions of the major text, the very attempt to redefine the term *feminist* with the qualifier “womanist,” expresses the paradoxical relation of Sameness and Difference which the writers of these essays, as members of the Caribbean women intelligentsia, bear to their Western European and Euroamerican peers. This dual relation is expressed by both editors if not precisely in these terms. Thus if for Boyce Davies, the term *womanist* necessarily qualifies *feminism*, for Elaine Savory Fido, the unique positional situation of Caribbean women writers/critics, as expressed in their writings, is that of a *cross-roads*, that is, one in which they experience themselves as placed at a crossroad of three variables. These are, on the one hand, the variable of sex-gender, as well as of class, both of which they share with their European/Euroamerican counterparts—*class* in that many members of both intelligentsia groups are still one generation away from our non-middleclass origins, even where this is numerically truer of the intelligentsia of the still, until very recently, colonized Caribbean—and, on the other, the variable of “race” which of course strongly demarcates the situation of the Caribbean women intelligentsia, whether Black or White from that of their Western/Euroamerican counterparts.

I want to argue in this After/Word, from its projected “demonic ground” outside of our present governing system of meaning, or theory/ontology in de Nicolas’ sense of the word¹ that it is precisely the variable “race” which imposes upon these essays the contradictory dualism by which the writers both work within the “regime of truth” of the discourse of feminism, at the same time as they make use of this still essentially Western discourse to point towards the epochal threshold of a new post-modern and post-Western mode of cognitive inquiry; one which goes beyond the limits of our present “human sciences,” to constitute itself as a new science of human “forms of life.”²

The German scholar Hans Blumenberg, in exploring the parallel epochal threshold which led from the European Middle Ages to the emergence of the modern world *pari passu* with the advent of Renaissance humanism and the Copernican Revolution, widens the concept of Thomas Kuhn’s theory of “scientific revolutions.” This theory, he argues, which describes “the breakdown of dominant systems as a result of their immanent rigorism,” and the “downfall” of “the pedantic disposition of every school-like mode of thought” (with both breakdown and downfall leading “with fateful inevitability” to the “self-uncovering of the *marginal* inconsistencies from which doubt and opposition break into the consolidated field”) can be capable “of generalization to a high level in relation to historical phenomena;”³ and therefore to the shift/mutation of one age or epoch and its related, in Foucault’s terms, *episteme*,⁴ to the other. And the central point I want to make in this After/Word is that the contradiction inserted into the consolidated field of meanings of the ostensibly “universal” theory of

feminism by the variable “*race*,” and explicitly expressed by the qualifiers of “womanist” and “cross-roads situation,” of these essays points toward the emergent “downfall” of our present “school like mode of thought” and its system of “positive knowledge” inherited from the nineteenth century and from the Industrial epoch of which it was the enabling mode of rationality and participatory epistemology⁵; and that it does this in the same way as feminist theory itself had earlier, inserted the contradiction of the variable *gender* into the ostensibly “universal” theories of Liberal Humanism and Marxism-Leninism.⁶

Because these theories and their related “universalisms” had been erected on the apriori self-description of the human on the model of a “natural organism” [as the inversion of the Euro-Christian “image of God”], the variable “race” was/is constituted as an “object of knowledge” able to function in the system of symbolic representations (Levi-Strauss’ “totemic schema,” Marlene Philip’s system of images as the human analogue of “the D.N.A. molecules at the heart of all life”) as a central *topos* of our present system of meaning and its regulatory behavioral mechanism. For as such a *topos*, “race,” functions to signify a system-specific mode of causality, that is, the causality of a “materialistic substrate” which not only acts so as to place genetically determined constraints on human behaviors, but also, above all, to *prescribe* a teleology—that is, to imply that “ends,” now no-longer, after the full-fledged secularization of the European Enlightenment, set by the most remote watchmaker of Gods, are still extra-humanly set for the human by *nature*, in our case, by the constraints of nature and/or of history.⁷ Thus, if, for Freud, as Irigaray dissects with respect to the variable of “sexual difference,” biology was destiny, with the functioning of the “anatomical model” being described by Freud in a manner which prescribes behaviors,—“It seems” Irigaray writes, speaking ironically in Freud’s voice, “[. . .] you take the term *masculine* to connote *active*, the term *feminine* to connote “passive” and it is true that a relation of the kind exists for “the male sex cell is actively mobile and searches out the female one, and the latter, the ovum, is immobile and waits passively” . . . And I, Freud, have to tell you that the behavior of the *elementary* sexual organisms is indeed a model for the conduct of sexual individuals during intercourse. My way of envisaging . . . these . . . “things” would therefore imply that the psychic is *prescribed by the anatomical* according to a *mimetic order*, with anatomical science imposing *the truth of its model* upon psychological *behavior*.⁸—the variable of *race/racial* difference is, since the sixteenth century, even more primarily destiny. For with Western Europe’s post-medieval, expansion into the New World, (and earlier into Africa), and with its epochal shift out of primarily *religious* systems of legitimation, and behaviour—regulation, her peoples’ expropriation of the land/living space of the New World peoples was to be based on the secular concept of the “non-rational” inferior, “*nature*” of the peoples to be expropriated and governed;⁹ that is, of an ostensible difference

in “natural” substance which, for the first time in history was no longer *primarily* encoded in the male/female gender division as it had been hitherto in the symbolic template of all traditional and religiously based human orders, but now in the cultural-physiognomic variations between the dominant expanding European civilization and the non-Western peoples that, encountering, it would now stigmatize as “natives.” In other words, with the shift to the secular, the primary code of difference now became that between “men” and “natives,” with the traditional “male” and “female” distinctions now coming to play a secondary—if none the less powerful—reinforcing role within the system of symbolic representations, Levi-Strauss’s totemic schemas¹⁰, by means of which, as governing charters of meaning, all human orders are “altruistically” integrated.¹¹

Nowhere in this mutational shift from the primacy of the *anatomical* model of sexual difference as the referential model of *mimetic* ordering, to that of the *physiognomic* model of racial/cultural difference, more powerfully enacted than in Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*, one of the foundational endowing¹² texts both of Western Europe’s dazzling rise to global hegemony, and, at the level of human “life”, in general, of the mutation from primarily religiously defined modes of human being to the first, partly secularizing ones. Whilst on the other hand, both mutations, each as the condition of the other, are nowhere more clearly put into play than in the relations between Miranda the daughter of Prospero, and Caliban, the once original owner of the island now enslaved by Prospero as a function of the latter’s expropriation of the island. That is, in the relations of enforced dominance and subordination between Miranda, though “female”, and Caliban, though “male”; relations in which *sex-gender attributes* are not longer the primary index of “deferent” difference¹³, and in which the discourse that erects itself is no longer primarily “patriarchal”, but rather “monarchical” in its Western-European, essentially post-Christian, post-religious definition. Therefore, in whose context of behaviour-regulatory inferential system of meanings, as the essential condition of the mutation to the secular, Caliban, as an incarnation of a new category of the human, that of the subordinated “irrational” and “savage”¹⁴ *native* is now constituted as the lack of the “rational” Prospero, and the now capable-of-rationality-Miranda, by the Otherness of his/its *physiognomic* “monster” difference, a difference which now takes the *coding* role of sexual-anatomical difference, with the latter now made into a mimetic parallel effect of the former, and as such a member of the *set* of differences of which the former has now become the primary “totemic operator.”¹⁵

Correspondingly, as the play reveals, with this ontological and epistemological mutation effected in the sixteenth century, the new physiognomic model of “race”, (or, in the terms of Elsa Goveia, the Caribbean historian, used in a critical 1970 essay on the integrative principles of Caribbean societies, the “ascription of race”),¹⁶ was to begin that ongoing transformative

meaning process by which it would come to function, within our contemporary, behaviour-regulatory theoretical models and systems of meaning, to provide, parallelly to the earlier traditional sex-gender models of *anatomical* difference of truly “patriarchal” orders, the grounding “mimetic model” or totemic operator which now *primarily* describes/prescribes at the multiple levels of the global order, analogical behavioural relations of dominance/subordination activity/passivity, theory-givers/theory-takers¹⁷ between human populations/geographical races, cultures, and societal groups, i.e. ethnic, class, gender, sexual-preference, etc. The “mimetic model” or totemic operator therefore, which legitimates these relations in now *purely secular* terms, as relations ostensibly pre-ordained by the extra-human ends set by, firstly, in the narrative schema/story of the monarchical discourse of civic humanism (as enacted in *the Tempest*) by an allegedly universally applicable “natural law”¹⁸, and later in the Malthusian-Darwinian-Haeckelian, narrative schema of a monist discourse of “social naturalism” or “biological idealism”¹⁹, by, allegedly, evolutionary biology. Thus, if in the first schema of “civic humanism,” the model of *physiognomic* difference was still attached to the model of religio-cultural difference - with the New World peoples and African slaves defined as “pagan sacrificers of other humans and as idolatious “cannibals”²⁰, in the second, the now *purely physiognomic* difference came to provide a *somatic* mode of difference which would function from the early nineteenth century onwards as the *primary* “totemic operator” of the principle of Sameness and Difference about which our present global, and now *purely secular* order, auto-regulates its socio-systemic hierarchies, including those of gender, class, sexual preference, culture—including, therefore, the processes central to literary scholarship itself and to its normative system of interpretative readings, which have been defined by Cary Nelson as that of “literary idealization” by means of which, in Euro-American “humanism” processes of literary transcendence (i.e. literature as “one of the finer things on earth” one which “exhibits at once a powerful realism about the human condition and a visionary synthesis of its highest ambitions”) are attached “to the experience of only one race, one sex, a restricted set of class fractions within a few national cultures.” With the experiences of most of the world’s peoples “having to be, rule-governedly, within the parameters of the ‘play’²¹ of its interpretative readings,” and regulatory system of meanings, “obliterated”²², as the experiences of the *physiognomic Other*, the “natives”, and in their most “primal” form *niggers*. The systemic “obliteration” is central, therefore to the imperative which impels the counter-readings of these essays.

It is in this context that we can begin to approach the significance both of this collection of essays themselves as essays projected both from the hitherto “silenced” vantage point of the obliterated “experiences of most of the world’s peoples” and from the vantage point of gender, that is of a Miranda now speaking in her own *intelligentsia* name—instead of in the

name of her monarchical father, and of *The Tempest's* Miranda's speech to Caliban; that we can grasp the significance of her legitimated expropriation of the right to endow his purposes—when he did not “savage” know “his own meanings”—with “words that made them known,” her expropriation then of what Marlene Phillips defines as “image-making power.” And here, we begin to pose in this context a new question, the question not of the absence of Caliban's legitimate fatehr as posed by Aimé Césaire and commented on by Clarisse Zimra in her essay on Francophone Caribbean women writers, nor even the question posed by Zimra herself, that of the “silent presence of a mother not yet fully understood” which carries with it the implicit project of “discarding the logos of the Father,” and of replacing it instead with “the Silent Song of the Mother,” but a new question related to a new project. This question is that of the most significant absence of all, that of Caliban's Woman, of Caliban's physiognomically complementary mate. For nowhere in Shakespeare's play, and in its system of image-making, one which would be foundational to the emergence of the first form of a secular world system, our present Western world system, does Caliban's mate appear as an alternative sexual-erotic model of desire; as an alternative source of an alternative system of meanings. Rather there, on the New World island, as the only woman, Miranda and her mode of physiognomic being, defined by the philogenically “idealized” features of straight hair and thin lips is canonized as the “rational” object of desire; as the potential genitrix of a superior mode of human “life,” that of “good natures” as contrasted with the ontologically absent potential genitrix—Caliban's mate—of another population of human, i.e., of a “vile race” “capable of all ill,” which “any print of goodness will not take,” a “race” then extra-humanly condemned by a particular mode of Original Sin which “deservedly” confines them to a “rock,” thereby empowering the “race” of Miranda to expropriate the island, and to reduce Caliban to a labor-machine as the new “*massa damnata*”²³ of purely sensory nature—“He does make our fire,/fetch in our wood, and serve in offices/that profit us”²⁴. And since the empirical relation of rational humans to purely sensory nature humans, and its related physiognomic-cultural model of difference/deference will now serve retrospectively, as the *mimetic model* of an order whose intra-group societal hierarchical structures have been pre-ordained by an allegedly universally functioning code of natural law,²⁵ the “desire” of the ‘lower class’ sailors Stephano and Trinculo can also only be *for* Miranda, with their *optimal* “desire” also transferred from their own “lower class” mates, to her. Hence the non-desire of Caliban for his own mate, for Caliban's “woman”, is, as Maryse Condé brilliantly suggests, in another context, a founding function of the “social pyramid”²⁶ of the global order that will be put in place following upon the 1492 arrival of Columbus in the Caribbean; a function then of its integrating behaviour-regulatory system of meanings and “semantic closure principle.”

In this first phase of Western Europe's expansion into the Americas, Caliban, as both the Arawak and African “forced” labor needed by the mutation in the land/labor ratio which followed²⁷, and given the existence of rapidly available fresh supplies provided by the expanding slave trade in “negroes” out of the Europe-Africa-New World triangular traffic, had no need/desire for the procreation of his own “kind”, since such a mode of “desire” would only be functional in the very much later stages for the master-population group's purpose, as the only secularly-theoretically “idealized” purpose which now mattered.

Hence the empirical logic of the absence from the play's character system of Caliban's woman, for its erecting of its plot upon the “ground” not only of her absence, but also of the absence of Caliban's endogenous desire for her, of any longing. All his desire instead is “soldered” on²⁸ to Miranda as the only symbolically canonized potential genitrix. Hence his first act of overt rebellion is his attempt to “people this isle with Caliban's”; his attempt to copulate with her. However, this rebellious possibility is not to be—for if the absence of Caliban's woman is a central function of the play's foundational ontology in which Caliban “images” the human as pure sensory nature and as appetite uncurbed by reason, whilst Prospero and the prince, Fernando, “image” the human possessed of a rational nature and therefore able to curb their lustful appetites, (with the ship's Boatswain and the sailors Stephano and Trinculo, lower down the scale between the two), then the metaphysical-ly imperative elimination of the *potential* progeny of Caliban, must rule-governedly bar him from any access to Miranda as the potential genitrix of a “race” which, as the beneficiaries of both rational and sensory natures bequeathed them by Nature, must necessarily behave so as to effect the “ends” ostensibly implicit this differential legacy; that is, must ensure the stable dominance of the “race” of good natures over the “vile race” of Caliban's purely sensory nature, if the now secularizing behaviour—regulatory system of meaning, and its related “semantic closure principle” is to be stably replicated.

The absence of Caliban's woman is therefore an ontological absence, that is, one central to the new secularizing behaviour-regulatory narrative schema, or in Clarisse Zimra's term, mode of “story-telling”²⁹, by means of which the secular Laity of feudal-Christian Europe displaced the theological spirit/flesh motivational opposition³⁰ and replaced it with its own first secularly constituted “humanist” motivational opposition in history. That is, the rational/sensory opposition between a projected redeemed “race” of “gentes humaniores” as the bearers of a rational nature able to master their own sensory nature at the same time as they mastered—and mistressed—the “vile race” dys-elected by Nature to be bearers of a purely sensory nature, and the new secular *massa damnata* of the “vile race” themselves.³¹

To put it in more directly political terms, the absence of Caliban's woman, is an absence which is functional to the new secularizing schema by

which the peoples of Western Europe legitimated their global expansion as well as their expropriation and/their marginalization of all the other population-groups of the globe, including, partially, some of their own national groupings such as, for example, the Irish.³² Yet it was with this same secularizing narrative schema that they were also to effect that far-reaching mutation, in which they were to displace, not only their own *religious* version of the narrative schemas of good and evil and their modes of “story-telling”,—that is, their own religious version of the behaviour-motivational schemas/stories, by means of whose opiate-inducing signifying meaning systems which function to trigger the neuro-chemical processes of what Danielli defines as the internal reward system of the brain³³ and to induce and regulate the collective set of “altruistic” behaviours by means of which each human model of being and related human orders are stably brought into, and maintained in, being—but *all* other religious versions to the marginally private, rather than centrally public, spheres of human existence.³⁴ And, if the latter schemas, religious and/or mythological, together with their projection of a transcendentally ordered behaviour-regulatory definition of good and evil, had hitherto functioned to stabilize and guarantee all human “forms of life”, the new narrative schema, powerfully re-enacted in the plot-line of *The Tempest*, was to initiate the first form of a secularly projected definition of Good and Evil, and therefore of a secularly guaranteed and stabilized “form of life” or human order, now dynamically brought in to being by the collective behaviours motivated and induced by its (the schema’s) oppositional categories of secular “good” (as rational nature incarnated in Prospero and Miranda) and of secular “evil” (as pure sensory nature outside of the control of rational nature incarnated in Caliban when his own “master, his own man.”)³⁵ In other words, in this epochal threshold shift to the secular, the physiognomic (and cultural) difference between the populations groups of Prospero/Miranda and that of Caliban is now made to function, totemically, as a new, so to speak infra-scientific³⁶ oppositional principle of good and evil which is ostensibly as extra-humanly ordained (by Natural Law), as, before, the Spirit/Flesh opposition had been ostensibly pre-ordained by supernatural decree—rather than as, in both cases ordained by the imperative of the respective narrative schemas, and the “semantic closure of principle” of their respective behaviour regulatory systems of meanings.³⁷

It is within this latter “real” imperative that the absence of Caliban’s woman as Caliban’s sexual reproductive mate functions to ontologically negate their progeny/population group, forcing this group to serve as the allegorical incarnation of “pure” sensory nature; that is, the group for whom the image of Caliban stands, i.e., the original owners/occupiers of the New World lands, the American-Indians, now displaced empirically and metaphysically reduced, by the new regulatory system of meanings, to a “native” savage Human Other status now central to the functioning of

the first secularizing behaviour - regulatory schema or motivational apparatus in human history. Whilst with the rapid decimation of the indigenous Arawaks of the Caribbean Islands, Africans bought and sold as “trade goods” were now made to fill the same slot in the behaviour regulatory schema, as they were made to fill a parallel slot in the system of forced labor. As such they too, as Caliban’s women, are reduced to having no will or desire that has not been prescribed by Prospero/Miranda in the name of the existential interest of the population-group for whom the “images” of Prospero/Miranda, stand. Given that the idealization/negation of both groups is effected precisely by the dominant group’s imposition of its own mode of volition and desire (one *necessarily* generated from the *raison d’être* of its group—existential interests) upon the dominated; as well as by its stable enculturating of the latter by means of its theoretical models (epistemes) and aesthetic fields, generated from its increasingly hegemonic and secularizing systems of meanings. **In consequence if, before the sixteenth century, what Irigaray terms as “patriarchal discourse” had erected itself on the “silenced ground” of women, from then on, the new primarily silenced ground (which at the same time now enables the partial liberation of Miranda’s hitherto stifled speech), would be that of the majority population-groups of the globe—all signified now as the “natives” (Caliban’s) to the “men” of Prospero and Fernando, with Miranda becoming both a co-participant, if to a lesser *derived* extent, in the power and privileges generated by the empirical supremacy of her own population; and as well, the beneficiary of a mode of privilege unique to her, that of being the metaphysically invested and “idealized” object of desire for all classes (Stephano and Trinculo) and all population-groups (Caliban)³⁸.**

This therefore is the dimension of the contradictory relation of Sameness and Difference, of orthodoxy and heresy which these Caribbean critical essays must necessarily, if still only partially, inscribe, and do inscribe with respect to the theory/discourse of feminism, (as the latest and last variant of the Prospero/Miranda ostensibly “universally” applicable meaning and discourse-complex); the relation of *sameness and difference* which is expressed in the diacritical term “*womanist*”. And if we are to understand the necessity for such an *other* term (projected both from the perspective of Black American women (U.S.) and from that of the “native” women intelligentsia of the newly independent Caribbean ex-slave polities,) as a term which, whilst developing a fully articulated theoretical/interpretative reading model of its own, nevertheless, serves, diacritically to draw attention to the insufficiency of all existing theoretical interpretative models, both to “voice” the hitherto silenced ground of the experience of “native” Caribbean women and Black American women as the ground of Caliban’s woman, and to de-code the system of meanings of that other discourse, beyond Irigaray’s patriarchal one, which has imposed this mode of silence for some five centuries, as well as to make thinkable the

possibility of a new “model” projected from a new “native” standpoint, we shall need to translate the variable “race”, which now functions as the intra-feminist marker of difference, impelling the dually “gender/beyond gender” readings of these essays, out of the epistemic ‘vrai’³⁹ of our present order of “positive knowledge”⁴⁰, its consolidated field of meanings and order-replicating hermeneutics. Correspondingly, since this order/field is transformative, generated from our present purely secular definition of the human on the model of a natural organism, with, in consequence this organism’s “ends” therefore being ostensibly set extra-humanly, by “nature”, i.e. Haeckel’s monism, neo-classical economics Natural Scarcity, Marx’s “materialist” imperative of the “mode of production”, Feminism’s . . . bio-anatomical “universal” identity⁴¹, we shall need to move beyond this founding definition, not merely to *another* alternative one, non-consciously put in place as our present definition, but rather to a frame of reference which parallels the “demonic models” posited by physicists who seek to conceive of a vantage point outside the space-time orientation of the humuncular observer. This would be, in our case, in the context of our specific socio-human realities, a “demonic model” outside the “consolidated field” of our present mode of being/feeling/knowing, as well as of the multiple discourses, their regulatory systems of meaning and interpretative “readings”, through which alone these modes, as varying expressions of human “life,” including ours, can effect their respective autopeosis as such specific modes of being. The possibility of such a vantage point, we argue, towards which the diacritical term “womanist” (i.e. these readings as both gender, and not-gender readings, as both Caribbean/Black nationalist and not-Caribbean/Black nationalist, Marxian and not-Marxian readings)⁴² point, can only be projected from a “demonic model” generated, parallelly to the vantage point/demonic model with which the laity-intelligentsia of Western Europe effected the first rupture of humans with their/our supernaturally guaranteed narrative schemas of origin,⁴³ from the situational “ground” or slot of Caliban’s woman, and therefore of her systemic behaviour regulatory role or function as the ontological “native/nigger”, within the motivational apparatus by means of which our present model of being/definition-of-the-human is given dynamic “material” existence, rather than from merely the vantage point of her/our gender, racial, class or cultural being.⁴⁴ In other words, if the laity intelligentsia of Western Europe effected a mutation by calling in question its own role as the ontological Other of “natural fallen flesh” to the theologically idealized, post-baptismal Spirit, (and as such incapable of attaining to any knowledge of, and mastery over, either the physical processes of nature or its own social reality, except such knowledge was mediated by the then hegemonic Scholastic *theological* interpretative model,) and by calling this role in question so as to clear the ground for its own self-assertion which would express itself both in the political reasons-of-state humanism (enacted in *The Tempest*), as well as in the

putting in place of the *Studia Humanitatis* (i.e. as the self-study of “natural man”), and in the laying of the basis for the rise of the natural sciences,⁴⁵ it is by a parallel calling in question of our ‘native’, and more ultimately, nigger women’s role as the embodiment to varying degrees of an ostensible “primal” human nature. As well, challenging our role as a new ‘lay’ intelligentsia ostensibly unable to know and therefore to master our present sociosystemic reality, (including the reality of our “existential weightlessness” as an always “intellectually indentured”⁴⁶ intelligentsia), except as mediated by the theoretical models generated from the vantage point of the “normal” intelligentsia, clears the ground for a new self-assertion. This time, as one which brings together the human and natural sciences in a new projected science of the human able to constitute *demonic models* of conition *outside* what Lemuel Johnson calls, in one of the essays in this collection, the always non-arbitrary pre-prescribed, “designs of the measuring rod” in whose parameters both our present hegemonic interpretative and anti-interpretative models⁴⁶ are transformatively generated; one able in fact to take these designs of the measuring rod and their “privileged texts” as the object of our now conscious rather than reactive processes of cognition⁴⁷. In effect, rather than only voicing the “native” woman’s hitherto silenced voice⁴⁸ we shall ask: What is the systemic function of her own silencing, both as women and, more totally, as ‘native’ women? Of what mode of speech is that absence of speech both as women (masculinist discourse) and as ‘native’ women (feminist discourse) as imperative function?

The larger issue then is of the ontological difference and of our *human* and “native” *human* subordination, hitherto non-conscious, to the governing behaviour-regulatory codes of symbolic “life” and “death.” It is an issue which calls for a second self-assertion able to respond to the new metaphysical imperative, not now of altering nature, but of altering our systems of meanings, and their privileged texts, and, therefore, of abolishing Elsa Goveia’s ascriptions of “race” and “wealth” (whose *particularisms* work to contradict the *universalism* of one-(wo)man,-one-vote), as well as those other ascriptions of the same totemic set which function to the same effect, i.e. culture, through the mechanism of literary scholarship’s “idealized” (Cary Nelson) canonism,⁴⁹ religion, an allegedly “natural” erotic preference⁵⁰ as well as that of gender. The issue then of a second epistemological mutation—based on the new metaphysical imperative of the now conscious alterability of our governing codes, their modes of ontological difference and their rule-governedly generated behaviour-regulatory meanings, together with their always non-arbitrary “designs”⁵¹ of interpretative readings—one able to complete the *partial* epistemological mutation of the first which ushered in our modern age as well as that first process of the non-conscious secularization of human modes/models of being, of whose order-maintaining discourses, the doubly silenced “ground” of Caliban’s “native” woman, was a central meaning-coherence function; and of whose *incomplete*

epistemological mutation, both the gender hierarchy of the ostensible equality of our symbolic contract, as well as of the “hard and uncomfortable life” of the, since the 1960’s, now politically empowered Caribbean black and poor majority as noted by, and finely imaged in, Christine Craig’s complex figure *Crow*, as both young woman metaphysically invested as the negative of normative object-desire, and old woman/Carrion bird with the garbage dump as food for both), as well as then, of the “hard and uncomfortable” life of all those who inhabit the global archipelagoes of hunger in the midst of a new technologically produced surfeit of global abundance,⁵² are an imperative effect and consequence.⁵³ That is, the paradoxical effect of that first, incomplete, and now objectified, secularizing epistemological mutation:

“There are phases of objectivation” Blumenberg wrote, “that loose themselves from their original motivation (*the science and technology of the later phases of the modern age provide a stupendous example of this*); and to bring them back to their human function, to subject them again to man’s (the human’s) purposes in relation to the world, *requires an unavoidable counter-exertion. The medieval system ended in such a phase of objectification that has become autonomous, of hardening that is insulated from what is human. What is here called ‘self-assertion’ is the counter-move of retrieving the lost motives, of a new concentration on man’s (human) self-interest.*”⁵⁴

The appeal of the Abeng is therefore to the larger issue of retrieving the lost motives of our “native” human self-interest, and, increasingly degraded in our planetary environment, of our human self-interest. This issue, which clearly calls for a second counter-exertion, has been initiated, in its first transitional phase by these diacritically “womanist” essays as the counter exertion of a “native women” intelligentsia, who, by refusing the “water-with berries” strategy sets, of all our present hegemonic, theoretical models in their “pure” forms, based on their isolated “isms”⁵⁵, has enabled the move, however preliminary, on to the “demonic” and now unsilencing trans-“isms” ground of Caliban’s woman. This terrain, when fully occupied, will be that of a new science of human discourse, of human “life” beyond the “master discourse” of our governing “privileged text”, and its sub/versions. Beyond Miranda’s meanings.

NOTES

1. See A. T. de Nicolas, “Notes on the Biology of Religion” in *Journal of Social and Biological Structures* 3, no. 2 (April 1980):225.
2. I have put forward this proposal in two earlier essays, but most fully in the second. See Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse: Minority Literature and Beyond” in *Cultural Critique, The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse Vol. 11*. Fall 1987, No. 7.
3. See Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1983).
4. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).
5. For the concept of “participatory epistemology” see Francisco Varela, *Principles of Biological Autonomy* (New York, North Holland Series in General Systems Research, 1979).
6. At the theoretical level “feminist” theory developed on the basis of its rupture with the purely economic and class-based theory of Marxism, thereby calling into question both the “universalisms” of Marxian Proletarian identity and of the Liberal humanist “figure of man.”
7. See Blumenberg, op. cit. where he discusses the function of Darwinian thought in this articulation of the concept of ends set by nature and by evolution.
8. See her *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1985, 15.
9. See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge U.P., 1982).
10. See Levi-Strauss, C. *Totemism*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).
11. See J.F. Danielli, “Altruism: The Opium of the People,” *Journal of Social and Biological Structures* 3, no. 2 (April 1980):87-94.
12. See D. Halliburton, “Endowment, Enablement, Entitlement: Toward A Theory of Constitution” in *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*, ed. A.J. Cascardi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) where he develops this concept of “endowment.”
13. A play on the Deridean concept of “difference” where the temporal dimension is replaced by the stratifying/status dimension, making use of the concept of “deferent” behaviour which functions to inscribe difference, and to constitute “higher” and “lower” ranking.
14. See in this respect, the book by Jacob Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition: Towards an Authentic Anthropology* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1985).
15. See for an excellent analysis of this concept, the book by Jenkins, Claude. *The Social Theory of Claude Levi-Strauss*. London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1979.
16. See her essay, “The Social Framework” in *Savacou*, Kingston, Jamaica, 1970.

17. The analogy here is to the always *deferent* relation of the wife-taker category to that of the wife-giver category.
18. See Anthony Pagden, *op. cit.* for an analysis of this intellectual process which was to lay the basis of today's concept of "international" law.
19. See my discussion of this concept/discourse which is founding to our present order of knowledge in the Cultural Critique essay already cited.
20. See Pagden, *op. cit.*
21. The reference here is to the "freeplay" concept of the deconstructionists. As is clear, our counter concept is that the parameters of interpretation are always set, in the last analysis, by what we develop later as the mode of ontological difference and its related code of symbolic "life" and "death".
22. See Nelson, Cary. "Against English: Theory and The Limits of the Discipline in Profession," 1987, M.L.A. Publication.
23. The analogy here is to the Christian theological concept of the non-elect by predestination.
24. See William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. R. Langbaum, (New York: Signet Classic, 1964).
25. This code, developed from Aquinas' formulation of an ontological natural law able to be detached from its Christological base, will be central to the later mutation to the secular orders of things.
26. See her book, *La parole des femmes: Essais sur les romancieres des Antilles des langues francaises*. (Paris, Harmattan, 1979).
27. Europe's expropriation of the lands of the Americas initiated a land/labor ratio of a new unprecedented extent. Both the *encomienda* and *hacienda* and the plantation institution were the answer to this vast "enclosure system" by which the category of "native labor" and "native being" came into existence.
28. See the essay by Arnold Davidson where he quotes Freud's point about the plasticity of the "sexual instinct" and how it can be easily "soldered" on to specific objects of desire. See his essay, "How to do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's *Three Essays On The Theory of Sexuality in Critical Inquiry* 13:2 Winter, 1987.
29. See the illuminating point made by Clarisse Zimra in her essay in this collection.
30. The proposal here is that the Spirit/Flesh opposition of medieval Europe functioned as the motivational mechanism of desire/aversion by means of which the secular laity were made desirous of attaining to being only through the baptismal model of medieval Christianity. See Walter Ullman's book, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977).
31. The roots of contemporary racism are sited in this system of speculative thought that would be "materialized" in the *encomienda* and the *plantation* systems, since these institutions were to be based on this new secular post-Christian mode of legitimation.
32. Recent work by political scientists have begun to focus on the parallels between the discourses by means of which the New World Indians were expropriated and those by which the Cromwellian conquest and partial occupation of Ireland were also legitimated i.e. by the projection of a "by nature difference" between the dominant and the subordinated population groups.

33. In this respect see the original and illuminating essay by Danielli, James F. "Altruism and the Internal Reward System or The Opium of the People" in *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, 1980, 3.
34. Even where in the case of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and Islamic fundamentalism this might seem not to be so, the religious tenets of Islam are now a *function* of a religious-nationalist ideology adapted from the West's process of secularization.
35. This then legitimates his subordination to "rational nature" incarnated in Prospero.
36. Coined on the model of transcendental, but this time, although also extra-humanly, but from below.
37. The concept of a "semantic closure principle" is borrowed from the biologist Howard Pattee's description of the integrative functioning of the cell. The proposal is that human orders *should* function according to analogous principles. See Howard H. Pattee, "Clues from Molecular Symbol Systems" in *Signed and Spoken Language: Biological Constraints on Linguistic Forms*, U. Bellugi and M. Studdert-Kennedy, eds. (Berlin: Verlag Chemie, 1980). 261-274, and "Laws and Constraints, Symbols and Languages" in *Towards a Theoretical Biology*, C.H. Waddington, ed. (Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press, 1972), 248-258.
38. The sailors' dream too, is to be king on the island and to marry Miranda.
39. The term is used by Foucault in his talk, *The Order of Discourse* given in December 1970 and published as an Appendix of the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Harper and Row., tr. A.M. Sheridan-Smith, 1972). Here Foucault notes that Mendel's findings about genetic heredity were not hearable at first because they were not within the "vrai" of the discipline at the time.
40. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault points out that because "Man" is an object of 'positive knowledge' in Western culture, he cannot be an "object of science."
41. "Women" can only be co-identified as a universal *political* category on the paradoxical basis of their/our shared bio-anatomical identity.
42. The force of the term *womanist* lies in its revelation of a perspective which can only be *partially* defined by any of the definitions of our present hegemonic theoretical models.
43. With respect to the functioning of the narrative of origins in human orders, including the "evolutionary" narrative of origin of our own which also functions as "replacement material for genesis," see Glyn Isaacs, "Aspects of Human Evolution" in D.S. Bendall, ed., *Evolution From Molecules to Men*, (Cambridge, New York, C.U.P., 1983), 509-543.
44. The contradiction here is between "cultural nationalism" i.e. the imperative to revalue one's gender, class, culture and to constitute one's literary counter-canon, and the scientific question. What is the function of the "obliteration" of these multiple perspectives? What role does this play in the stable bringing into being of our present human order?
45. See Ullman, Walter *op. cit.* and Hans Blumenberg, *op. cit.* as well, as Kurt Hubner, *The Critique of Scientific Reason* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), for the linkage of the rise of the natural sciences to the overall secularizing movement of humanism.
46. The term is Henry Louis Gates', and is central to the range of his work. See for

example, his use of a variant of this term (“interpretative indenture”) in his essay, “Authority (White) Power and the (Black) critic” in *Cultural Critique*, Fall 1987, no. 7, 19-46.

47. That is, cognition outside of the parameters prescribed by our participatory epistemology (See Francisco Vorela, op. cit.) or the World View, integrative of all orders, including our own.
48. In a paper given as a panel presentation at the recent 1988 March West Coast Political Science Conference, Kathy Ferguson of the University of Hawaii pointed to the contradiction, for feminist deconstructionists, between the imperative of a fixed gender identity able to facilitate a unifying identity from which to “voice” their presence, and the deconstructionist program to deconstruct gender’s oppositional categories.
49. The attack on the master canon, and the thrust to devise new canons by hitherto marginalized intelligentsia groups allow us to speak of canonism, as one of the ordering “isms”.
50. The stigmatization of homoerotic preference, plays a key role in the projection of the idea of “natural” preference, which is founding to the inferential logic of the discourse of economics.
51. Again the point here is that interpretative readings occur within parameters set by the governing code, and are never arbitrary, even if the governing codes are.
52. The problem that faces the world is one of distribution. But if as we argue, economic distribution is a function, in the last instance of the *integration* of our present order, then the contradiction between the global surpluses of food enabled by the Green Revolution and the spread of massive world hunger reported by world agencies is an effect, not of an economic imperative, but of an order-maintaining one, i.e. of the imperative of its “altruistic” integration.
53. In *The Tempest*, Caliban accuses Prospero of having given him “water with berries” and stroked him when the latter arrived, thereby getting Caliban to show where the streams and food sources on the island were. The proposal is that all theoretical models function both as “knowledge” and as the water-with-berries strategy sets of specific groups. I have developed this more fully in a paper - *Why We Cannot Save Ourselves In A Woman’s Manner: Towards A Caribbean World View*, to be presented at the First Conference of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars, and hosted by the *Black Studies Dept.* at Wellesley College.
54. The proposal here is since all the *isms* constitute a totemic system or set, the attempt to abolish any of these as an isolated ism is everywhere a “strategy set” of the specific group for whom, as in the case of Duvalierisme for the new Haitian black middle class, the abolition of a specific *ism* will be empowering. See with respect to feminism, Moraga and Anzaldúa, op. cit.