

Introduction: On Sylvia Wynter and the Urgency of a New Humanist Revolution in the Twenty-First Century

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Empire's most powerful apparatus is the education system. It initiates us into a culture and knowledge system that instructs us to want to be of a specific ethnoclass of humanity. . . . The tragedy of this is that whilst this particular idea of being optimally human holds us together, as Americans, it can do so only in terms of the "us" and "the not us." . . . it is a version of reality in which the American White middle class, or the "Cosby-Huxtable" variants of this, as I wrote in my open letter after the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings, is represented, or rather overrepresented, as the reference point for what a human is supposed to be. . . . We cannot give up writing stories about what it means to be human that displace those that are at the foundation of Empire. There is no order in the world that can exist or hold together, including an empire, without a founding story. Now the question for academia in the twenty-first century is, will you make space within it to be able to write a new foundation?

—Sylvia Wynter

Sylvia Wynter's unrelenting advocacy of a new humanist revolution in the twenty-first century is inspiring critical scholars across the disciplines to continue confronting the limits of the humanisms that presently govern our political, economic, educational, and scientific institutions.¹ A distinguishing feature of Wynter's scholarship since the 1970s is her view that academics are part of a modern professional intellectual class institutionally ordained as "grammarians" of our social order. She made this clear in 1977, when after becoming the first Black woman professor to receive tenure at Stanford University, she reminded her colleagues, "Every society codes you to perceive yourself in one way, and basically what we do in a university is to examine these codings."² Her colleagues may not have considered this a revelation, but for Wynter, who had by then devoted virtually every bit of her professional life to decolonizing struggles staged in the Caribbean academe (during the 1960s) and the American academe (in the early 1970s), it was a point worth reiterating. She restated her position on the social importance of the academic again, even more fervently, in an open letter to her colleagues published in the wake of the LA uprisings, in the fall of 1992, in which she explains the

political motivation of all her scholarly endeavors in the form of a question: “If, as Ralph Ellison alerted us to in his *The Invisible Man*, we see each other only through the ‘inner eyes’ with which we look with our physical eyes upon reality, the question we must confront in the wake of the Rodney King Event becomes: What is our responsibility for the making of those ‘inner eyes’? Ones in which *humanness* and *North Americanness* are always already defined, not only in optimally White terms, but also in optimally middle-class (i.e. both Simi Valley, and secondarily Cosby-Huxtable TV family), variants of these terms?”³ Her conclusion in that letter, as it has been consistently throughout her writings over the past five decades, is that academics and educators must “spearhead the speech of a new frontier of knowledge able to move us toward a new, correlated human species, and eco-systemic, ethic . . . [for] it is only by this mutation of knowledge that we shall be able to secure, as a species, the full dimensions of our human autonomy with respect to the systemic and always narratively instituted purposes that have hitherto governed us—hitherto outside of our conscious awareness and consensual intentionality.”⁴ Wynter’s aspiration for us, her colleagues in academe, is that we may play a key role in paving the way for a mass rebellion against the law-like ways that the desires, interests, and world-making ambitions of the “capitalist neoliberal and corporate financial bourgeoisie ruling class” are represented homologously as those of our species as a whole.

Since retiring from Stanford in 1995, Wynter has continued to underscore in numerous essays, lectures, and interviews the urgency of completing the unfinished humanist revolution begun by the collective and collaborative struggles of modernity’s colonized, structurally marginalized, and “narratively condemned” peoples. Wynter urges us to take seriously our responsibility in the making and *un*making of the epistemes that animate our political, cultural, economic, and educational systems. She challenges us to resist synonymizing White, Western, liberal, middle-class, American life with being “human” in and of itself. She compels us to question “if a society that bases itself on equality and equal opportunity can afford to have an educational system which is so structurally unequal even before people get to the university.”⁵ And she provokes us to continue disrupting the disciplinary divisions that influence how we produce and disseminate knowledge about our species.

The forcefulness by which Wynter encourages heresy against our current epistemes reflects the degree to which she has pushed against the limits of her own thinking throughout the twists and turns of her odyssey as a Black radical anticolonial intellectual. Although she has produced the majority of her essays on race, modernity, and “the human” since moving to the United States in

the early 1970s, her work draws on critical frameworks inspired by the social uprisings, cultural movements, and intellectual struggles she both experienced and participated in the preceding decades. Her childhood in Jamaica during the 1930s and 1940s coincided with a momentous period in the anticolonial tradition of the Caribbean archipelago. While making her way through the colonial education system, she witnessed the region's Black poor and laboring majority initiate an unprecedented series of strikes against the plantation economy, which rapidly swept across the region and created the foundation for national independence movements in subsequent decades. By the time she left Jamaica in 1947 to study early modern English and Spanish literature at King's College in London, Wynter was among a postwar generation of West Indians who foresaw that the transformation of their homelands would likely be determined by the political and economic interests of the increasingly "coloured" middle class and political elite, and at the expense of the promise of improved quality of life for the poor and Black majority.

Before committing herself to life as a writer and social critic, Wynter spent a few years performing throughout Europe with Boscoe Holder's stage act "The Caribbean Dancers," and also found work playing small roles in film and television. Wynter struggled to make a living as an actor, and furthermore, her frustration with the roles given to Black performers led her to redirect her creative energies toward writing plays, beginning in the late 1950s. Her early work as a playwright was broadcast on the BBC radio program "Caribbean Voices," and she was soon recognized as part of an important cohort of West Indian writers who were "restorying" the history of Caribbean modernity from the perspective of its Black majority. Her 1962 novel, *The Hills of Hebron*, is based on one of her first plays, *Under the Sun*, which was produced as a radio play for "Caribbean Voices" in 1958. After returning to the Caribbean in 1961, she helped found a professional theater company in Jamaica and continued to write groundbreaking plays that brought Afro-Jamaican social histories, popular cultural forms, and "folk" aesthetics to the postindependence national theater—these plays include *1865: A Ballad for a Rebellion* (1965) and *Maskarade* (1974).⁶

Wynter's academic career began in 1963, when she took a lectureship in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus. It was there that her commitments to the decolonization of knowledge took on new horizons. She immersed herself in the activities of radical intellectual communities like the New World Group and the Caribbean Arts Movement. By decade's end, she established herself as a prominent anticolonial cultural theorist and an outspoken critic of the postindependence

Jamaican government's subjugation of the rural and urban poor, its marginalization of women's rights, and its counterrevolutionary suppression of the Rastafari movement. When Wynter moved to the United States in 1971, she met a pioneering generation of students, professors, and scholars leading campus movements for the establishment of "new studies" (e.g., Black studies, Third World studies, Chicano studies).⁷ Demetrius Eudell and Carolyn Allen describe this as a time in which Wynter's scholarship on the Caribbean took a distinctly "transcultural" turn.⁸ Just as Wynter witnessed and experienced decolonizing movements in the postindependence Caribbean stagger from political, cultural, and social opposition, so did she experience the decline of radical intellectual cultures that emerged in the wake of social movements in the United States that sought to create new institutions, new concepts, and new visions of human social potential. In her riveting interview with David Scott in 2000, Wynter recalls: "Coming to teach in the U.S. and being able to teach courses which had to do with the Caribbean as a whole, the black African diaspora as a whole, even, at the beginning, the Third World as a whole, I found that I was now going to be forced to begin to rethink the origins of the modern world and, with it, the origins of different categories of people . . . categories [that] had not existed before the West's global expansion and its forcible incorporation of the people and cultures it met up with into its own now secularizing Judaeo-Christian cultural field."⁹ During her time as a professor at the University of Michigan (1972–73), and then at the University of California, San Diego (1974–76), Wynter produced a groundbreaking study for the Institute of the Black World, titled "Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World." The over nine-hundred-page manuscript was never published, but it inaugurated what she considers the most heretical leap in her thinking. Since the 1980s Wynter's scholarly labors have revolved around excavating the origins and epistemic legacies of the forms (or, as she refers to them, "genres") of "the human" that remain overrepresented by the governing institutions of late modernity. One of the goals of her still-unfolding project has been to synthesize "a new world view of 1492 from the perspective of the species and with reference to the interests of *its* well-being."¹⁰ Wynter has also persistently advocated the pursuit of a "new science of the Word" (as envisioned by Aimé Césaire in his 1945 essay "Poetry and Knowledge") that locates the "humanness" of our species not simply in the realities of flesh, bone, blood, genes, and synapses but also in our fundamental capacity to narrate our social worlds into existence.¹¹

Assembled in this forum are essays written by scholars who take up the challenges that Wynter poses in her still-expanding body of critical scholarship.

Each author reflects in some way on the relevance of Wynter's radical thought and praxis to the culture of academic labor in the twenty-first century. The forum opens with an essay by Carole Boyce-Davies, who is among a significant cohort of scholars and professors at the forefront of bringing Wynter's work to the attention of scholars throughout the disciplines. Boyce-Davies's essay chronicles her early collaborations with Wynter and also considers the challenges and resistances to the theoretical magnitude of Wynter's critical thought. Jason Ambrose has written extensively on Wynter's life and ideas, and is also among her former students at Stanford University who was instrumental in the founding of the Institute NHI. The Institute NHI was a collective of undergraduate and graduate students that produced a scholarly journal and organized a conference dedicated to producing "knowledge for the 21st century" based on the "intellectual and political inspiration" of Wynter and Harold Cruse.¹² Ambrose's essay reflects on the new frontiers in Wynter's thinking, based on arguments she makes in *Black Knowledges / Black Struggles* (2015), a collection he coedited with Sabine Broeck.¹³ The forum proceeds with an essay by Greg Thomas, which discusses the influence of Frantz Fanon's revolutionary anticolonialism on Wynter's critical thought. Thomas published a momentous interview of Wynter in 2006 that elaborates on various threads from her scholarship since the 1970s. He draws extensively from Wynter's radical humanist framework in his wide-ranging scholarship on Pan-Africanism, Black fiction writing, race, empire, and sexuality.¹⁴ The forum closes with a coauthored piece by Katherine McKittrick, Frances O'Shaughnessy, and Kendall Witaszek. McKittrick is the author of *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and Cartographies of Struggle*, an illuminating interdisciplinary study of Black women's geographic thought. She also edited the outstanding anthology *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (2015). O'Shaughnessy and Witaszek are master's students in the Department of Gender Studies at Queen's University, who are each using Wynter's critical thought in their respective work in order to pave the way for new directions in social theory. McKittrick, O'Shaughnessy, and Witaszek's coauthored essay asks us to consider the transformative vision of Wynter's call for a new "science of the Word" as the basis for new forms of transdisciplinary and collaborative studies of what "the human" means beyond the epistemic limits of Man.

Notes

This forum was inspired by the magnitude of Sylvia Wynter's body of work, as well as her unrelenting dedication as colleague and mentor to so many. I wish to thank Professor Wynter for her invaluable feedback throughout the making of this forum, and for the conversations we have had over the years that have expanded the horizons of my scholarship and political imagination. I must also express the utmost gratitude to Carole, Katherine, Kendall, Frances, Greg, and Jason. This forum and any future work that it may inspire is the result of their efforts.

1. Epigraph: Sylvia Wynter, conversation with the author, October 2013.
2. *Stanford Daily*, October 25, 1977, 1.
3. Sylvia Wynter. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Forum H.H.I. Knowledge for the Twenty-First Century* 1.1 (1994): 44.
4. *Ibid.*, 70.
5. *Stanford Daily*, October 25, 1977, 1.
6. For more on the significance of Wynter's work in theater to her critical thought, see Imani D. Owens, "Toward a 'Truly Indigenous Theatre': Sylvia Wynter Adapts Federico García Lorca," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 4.1 (2017): 49–67.
7. Nick Mitchell details the ways that the American university specifically used Black studies and women's studies as part of a managerial strategy to neutralize radical student activism in his forthcoming book *Disciplinary Matters*.
8. See Demetrius Eudell and Carolyn Allen, "Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 10.1 (2001): 1–7.
9. Quoted in David Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe* 8 (2000): 174.
10. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View* (1995): 5–57. This essay is based on a keynote lecture Wynter delivered at a symposium on the *quincentennial* anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas, at the Smithsonian Institution in 1991.
11. Wynter offered her first formulations of a "new science of the Word" in the early 1980s. She has elaborated on the urgency of such a framework in a number of lectures, interviews, and essays since the mid-1990s.
12. The other students involved in the founding of Institute NHI were Demetrius Eudell, Kwame Anku, Jason Glenn, Tai James, Marshelle Jones, Carmen Kynard, and Khwezi Peters.
13. Jason R. Ambrose and Sabine Broeck, eds., *Black Knowledges / Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015).
14. Greg Thomas, "PROUD FLESH Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter," *ProudFlesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics, and Consciousness*, no. 4 (2006), www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/proudflesh/article/view/202.

Occupying the Terrain: Reengaging "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's Woman"

Carole Boyce-Davies

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.
—Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings"

The introduction to *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature* (1994), "Women and Literature in the Caribbean: An Overview," made a critical argument that referenced Sylvia Wynter as one of those erased because of the inattention to women in the Caribbean literary corpus.¹ Wynter's participation as the writer of the afterword, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings," has attained signature importance and in my view ushered in her widened recognition in the US intellectual community.² As we engage some of this text's meanings, it is important to also address its intellectual history.

While still in the process of putting together *Out of the Kumbla*, I met Abdul JanMohamed at a forum at the University of California, Berkeley, and described the forthcoming book to him, as one does when asked in conversation about ongoing projects.³ His response was immediately affirmative and supportive. But, more important, he suggested that I contact Wynter and ask her to contribute something, particularly because she had been recently criticized for not taking a firm feminist stance at a conference in California.⁴ JanMohamed felt then that she was perhaps misunderstood and that this was a good opportunity to get her ideas into circulation to a different audience.

At first, I felt that Wynter would be beyond the reach of our project. Her novel *The Hills of Hebron* (1962) was one of the first books by a Caribbean woman writer I encountered in my local library in Trinidad during my girlhood. Significantly, during my days as an African studies graduate student at Howard University, I would sit in C. L. R. James's Panafricanism course with a dear friend, Kenneth Forde, who was a member of a loose group of leftist/

Panafricanist students at Howard, all of whom were enamored, some disciples, of James. Studying African literature with related scholarly and political interests, I happily attended the James class whenever I could and particularly one day when Ken told me that there would be a guest speaker whom I should hear. It was Sylvia Wynter, and she became then the first Caribbean woman scholar of intellectual power I had ever encountered.

In the mid-1980s, after I started working at Binghamton University (SUNY), one of my colleagues, Bill Spanos, who was the editor of the post-modern journal *boundary 2*, asked me if I was familiar with her work. When I indicated I was, he shared a recently published essay “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism” with me.⁵ As with most Wynter essays, it demanded multiple readings, always with the accompanying feeling when first encountering a Wynter essay, that full meaning was just beyond one’s grasp.

I consulted with my coeditor, Elaine Savory Fido, following JanMohamed’s suggestion, with a great deal of excitement, and we immediately decided to ask Wynter if she would write the afterword to what then was the first edited collection of critical works on Caribbean women’s writing. We felt that this would be a good contribution if she agreed, precisely because she was both creative writer and scholar, and so her position would be a fitting way to indicate our intent with such a collection. Wynter graciously accepted, and since we had received all the other essays, we submitted a selection to her as she requested and waited patiently on her contribution. Interestingly, during the question-and-answer period after her lecture “Why We Cannot Save Ourselves in a Woman’s Manner” at the First International Conference on the Women Writers of the English-speaking Caribbean, at Wellesley College in 1988, Wynter mentions this collection as offering her considerable reengagement with the topic. For in many ways, this lecture covered the same ground as the essay she submitted to us. When the essay arrived, it was over ninety pages long and loaded with European philosophical references, many not specific to the collection’s intent.

A few colleagues who were contributors to the collection expressed an interest in reading this essay. Lemuel Johnson, then at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, indicated that he knew Wynter’s work well and would take a stab at finding a way for us to reduce it with her permission to a manageable afterword length. He read the text but, in the end, indicated that he was not able to find any appropriate way to accomplish this. Another colleague, based on her University of the West Indies–Mona student experience, indicated angrily that she was distressed that Wynter was always incapable of finding a way to respond in a succinct way to any issue and particularly for such a volume as this one. It is important to add that throughout the subsequent years of her

presentations at conferences, Wynter was constructed as unintelligible or too dense by a range of Caribbean scholars. For example, at the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars Conference in Trinidad (1990), while giving a plenary address, she was placed literally between two male scholars, Wilfred Cartey and Selwyn Cudjoe, to manage and interpret the complexity of her thought. I remember being the only one who stood up to offer a strong critique, though with shaking voice, of what I saw unfolding in that forum,⁶ as for me it was a recognizable attempt to restrain the full articulation of this black woman scholar from the Caribbean whom I so respected and admired. I recounted this event to bell hooks subsequently, who corroborated my response and saw it as precisely a performance of silencing the full extent of a black woman's speech. In reminiscing with Wynter on this event recently,⁷ her response to this event was that in challenging fixities of any kind, one is always technically "out of order."

In the end, Savory Fido and I decided to use only the first section of this rather lengthy essay, and its conclusion (the middle sections being early supporting arguments for her positions on the theory of the human, now available in other essays), and so retain the spirit of the afterword, as there we had the most direct response to this first book of criticism on Caribbean women's writing. Our note to the afterword said: "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" (355).

In "Beyond Miranda's Meanings" Wynter argued that the variable "race" complicates any gendered reading by itself and therefore provides definitional differences. For her, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* sets up these categories best, indicating Caliban as the monstrous, irrational, native subject and effecting simultaneously the consigning of "Caliban's woman" to a space of nonexistence, even at the level of Caliban's desire. *The Tempest*, then, reenacts Western society's founding structures of racialized gender's presence and absence:

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. (360)

We are left only with Miranda's meanings as the genesis of a Western feminism or minimally a white woman's voiced position in relation to colonialism's founding principles. This absence of Caliban's woman is the ontological absence of the black woman, the native woman, and her population from systems of

articulation. It is in this essay that Wynter deploys and explains the “demonic ground” reference that has since been rearticulated in different ways. There, “demonic ground” is defined as that space “outside of our present governing system of meaning, or theory/ontology” (356).

Wynter was in the process of clarifying, as she had started to in her 1982 essay “Beyond Liberal and Marxist-Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference,” that what had transpired was “in the wake of the sixties, women activists had ceased the earlier ‘echoing’ of Marxist thought and had redefined the Woman Question into an issue that was specific to their own concerns, rather than being, as before, a subset of what might be called the Labor Issue.”⁸ Still, in her argument, it was always the “multiple movements related to these questions that had most forcibly erupted in concrete political and social struggles all over the globe.”⁹ This line of thinking is at the heart of the Wynter argument, that “gender (genre) is only one of the means by which the human is constituted,”¹⁰ and that therefore focusing on women (and by extension a single-strand feminism as a political position) to the exclusion of all the other deselected identities, misses the larger argument about how Western man instituted himself as the only human.

Possibly the only critical response to this position comes from Natasha Barnes, also a Caribbean woman, who in her definition of Wynter as a “reluctant matriarch” begins with the opening question: “Why did the nationalist movements of the 1950’s and 1960’s not inaugurate a progressive identity politics where gender as well as race can be equally relevant categories of anticolonial resistance.”¹¹ In her reading, she saw Sylvia Wynter as “standing at the crossroads between this juncture of feminism and nationalism” (136), but her charge was further that “Wynter’s reluctance to be identified as a feminist intellectual . . . makes Wynter virtually stand alone as the only female scholar of the region who remains unmoved by feminist identity politics.” Barnes argues further that Wynter misses an opportunity to articulate directly a feminist assertion, which she saw as urgently needed for the Caribbean. To be fair to her intent, Barnes felt that Wynter’s audience in *Out of the Kumbla* was not Western feminists but Caribbean women trying to articulate a new political and intellectual pathway but in the end seemed to “lead to a repudiation of feminism as a site of emancipatory imagining” (12).

To be clear, and by contrast, what was admirable for us as editors of *Out of the Kumbla* was that her afterword was pushing us “beyond” the Western feminist-gendered frameworks, affirming and then methodically exceeding the “discursive-ideological terms” of this collection. Barnes was writing without

having had the opportunity to read "Beyond Liberal and Marxist-Leninist Feminisms," a still-unpublished essay, in which Wynter actually analyzes the various available versions of feminist theory, engages them but also identifies their limitations, and in the end calls for an "autonomous feminism," which owes nothing to Western definitions of humanity. Much of this argumentative thread is taken up in "Beyond Miranda's Meanings," but this time, specifically looking at a Caribbean attempt to engage feminist scholarship from its own "cross-roads," as she saw the space. She does not so much repudiate feminism as call into existence other theories that cumulatively overturn the assumptions build into current systems of knowledge.

As one of the two editors of this now classic in Caribbean literature, *Out of the Kumbia*, and the one who sought out Wynter for her contribution, it is important to admit that the intent was never to demand allegiance by any of the contributors to a Caribbean feminist position. At that time, such a Caribbean feminist theoretical position was still quite nascent and undefined. We hoped instead to provide an opening, which its descriptive subtitle *Caribbean Women and Literature* indicates is precisely what happened in its wake. Though coming from different feminist positions as editors and even engaging this as a discussion in the preface "Talking It Over: Women, Writing, and Feminism" (ix–xx), we felt that for such a first collection, on women and writing, the idea was to provide space for a variety of articulations of Caribbean women writers and scholars.

The fact is that "Beyond Miranda's Meanings" did help inaugurate a new wave of Wynter scholarship, creating new readership among a second and now third generation of graduate students. It begins with the position implicit in the intent of the collection that race is the variable that challenges always the discourse of feminism with its already implied assumption of a Western/Euroamerican discourse (357). From this point, it goes on to articulate Wynter's theory of the human, demonstrating how Western "man" instituted himself as "Man" in that he defined all others as "natives." For Wynter, this major move that subordinates the world into "deselected others" has more significant import than the male–female gender anatomical distinction that feminism makes. This particular point has been the central argument of the Wynter corpus in the succeeding body of her writing, rearticulated in many different ways by the author herself and by a range of scholars.

The choice of *The Tempest* is significant here, as Caliban had come to stand in colonial and anticolonial discourses as the representation of the dispossessed native African and Taino/ Arawak (indigenous) subject, used and reused in

Caribbean and Latin American anticolonial discourse. Miranda, though female, functions as the white woman as representative/participant in the colonial project that categorizes Caliban as the native, savage, brute for Wynter “in this new secular order [which] auto regulates its socio-systemic hierarchies including those of gender, class, sexual preference, culture” (359). Further, Caliban’s absent mother is symbolically present, implied in Sycorax whom Caliban mentions: “This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother / Which thou takest from me.” So it is Caliban’s mate, the black woman, the Caribbean woman, the native woman, who remains absent. Instead, the desire for her is displaced to Miranda and simultaneously erases Caliban’s future possible progeny, as it institutes the control by the “master population.” Thus, for Wynter, “the absence of Caliban’s woman is therefore an ontological absence, that is, one central to the new secularizing behavior-regulatory narrative schema” (361), which also “functions to ontologically negate their progeny/population group” (362).

Wynter saw an “insufficiency of all existing theoretical interpretative models 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” (363). This is the demonic ground outside the “consolidated field” of our present mode of being/feeling/knowing, as well as of the multiple discourses, their regulatory systems of meaning. Thus,

In effect, rather than only voicing the “native” woman’s hitherto silenced voice, we shall ask: What is the systemic function of her own silencing, as both woman and, more totally, as “native” woman? (365).

In my view, Wynter’s essay fulfilled the intent of her inclusion, as, since then, it has instituted the placement of her discourse of the human at the center of current intellectual projects, with allied arguments that critiqued the tendency to limit analyses to either race or gender, or class, or even read them as “intersecting” rather than accounting for the larger picture, that is, the way that Western man constituted himself as bio-economicus. In other words, supporting or advancing a gender and/or feminist position for Wynter is only one strand of a much larger set of engagements. In fact, there has been a growing body of scholarship by women of color scholars since her 1982 intervention, and the critique of Western feminism’s indication of a universal category, woman, and of feminism itself as a monolithic has been fundamentally addressed by a range of “Third World” and other feminisms, including Caribbean feminism.¹² Additionally, coloniality has had to be redefined and reengaged in a range of continuing decolonial discourses.

In responding to Wynter's recently found, unpublished nine-hundred-page manuscript "Black Metamorphosis," Nijah Cunningham sees her thinking as offering a "formidable critique of Western humanism and its normative configurations of human life, "but also revitalizing " philosophical debates across black studies, critical ethnic studies, postcolonial criticism and black feminist theory around both the historical project of decolonization and the ontological status of blackness in the modern world" (119).

While it was not unusual in a variety of professional contexts to see Wynter attacked by more nationalist male scholars for "being mired in her own discourse,"¹³ the critique was often that she refused to buy into specific racialized nationalist, leftist, or feminist discourse. A new generation of scholars trained in graduate school on Western postmodernist readings and still finding these not able to engage black subjectivity have the tools to bring these analytic insights to a reading of Wynter's scholarship. Wynter, for her part, has also articulated that she felt Karl Marx got his analysis only "partially right."¹⁴ Perhaps one of the best articulations of her positions is "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," which she presented first at the Coloniality Working Group at Binghamton University.¹⁵

What is also fascinating since then have been the ways that "demonic ground/s" has/have been deployed. Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006) devotes a chapter to delineating the concept as it pertains to her work on black geographies. For her, Wynter's formulation of "demonic grounds" addresses "the ways in which space and place impact upon knowledge, subaltern political aims, and the overrepresentation of Man" (157). Wynter herself is clear about this unfolding process, as she indicates in conversation with McKittrick: "In *Demonic Grounds* you are extending—you've caught what I am struggling to say—and you're making it become your own, argued in your terms. And I know that that's how it's going to be, because the struggle we are confronted with cannot be in any way a one-person task" (18).

Similarly, Alexander G. Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus* is deliberate about engaging Wynter's theory of the human conceptually throughout his work. For Weheliye, "*Demonic Ground* is Sylvia Wynter's term for perspectives that reside in the liminal precincts of the current governing configurations of the human as Man in order to abolish this figuration and create other forms of life" (21). For him as well, it is significant that Wynter articulates her positions from Black studies and from the Caribbean "the primal scene of the protracted modern colonization of the Americas" (29).

Nijah Cunningham, who indicates that “Wynter has become one of the most compelling thinkers of black radicalism and anticolonial politics” (119), for his part charts the “daemonic” through Walter Benjamin—“the mysteries and dreadful elements that irrupt within the aesthetic realm” (113). The distinction he makes, though, is that “Wynter’s brilliant formulation of the ‘demonic ground’ is how the latter is preoccupied with the systematic function of the “ontological absence” of a black female subject position within the ruling epistemes of the modern world” (116).

In “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings,” Wynter concludes that the task is for these silenced others to speak and also to account for their speech: the “daemonic” and now unsilencing trans-“isms” ground of Caliban’s woman (366). Interestingly, these “trans-isms” also provide for the unsilencing of a range of other subjects also consigned to absence. Wynter’s theoretics, which still demand the deep reading, application, and engagement of most theoretical texts, seem to have been foreshadowing all these projects now unsilenced. C. Riley Snorton’s (2017) work on trans identities is illustrative, deliberately acknowledging Wynter’s influence via Frantz Fanon’s sociogenic principle (7). For Sylvia Wynter, though, it was always the “multiple movements related to these questions that had most forcibly erupted in concrete political and social struggles all over the globe” (312). The call for a “second self-assertion able to respond to the new metaphysical imperative . . . a second epistemological mutation” (365), a “second counter assertion” (366), has been heard.

Notes

1. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), 12. Hereafter cited in the text.
2. “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings” would be subsequently included in Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s *Black Feminist Reader* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2000).
3. JanMohamed is a professor at UC Berkeley and the author of *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* and cofounder of the journal *Cultural Critique*.
4. From all accounts, and based on the historical time frame, that particular encounter would have been responses to her paper “Beyond Liberal and Marxist-Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference,” presented for the session “Feminist Theory at the Cross-roads,” at the annual conference of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, September 1982. Thanks are due to Greg Thomas of Tufts University for sharing a copy of this unpublished essay.
5. See also the more recent bookend “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition,” which was the keynote address at a conference in Bremen, Germany, in 2009 in which Wynter begins by indicating the *boundary 2* essay. Spanos, its longtime editor, transitioned on December 29, 2017, and is recognized here for, above all, a kind and progressive collegiality besides his intellectual presence.

6. Wilfred Cartey (1931–1992), from Trinidad and the author of *Whispers from a Continent* (1971), while a professor at Columbia University would come to Howard University as a lecturer to African literature students (I was one of them) in the African Studies and Research Program. Cartey responded to my intervention by telling me that I was out of order. I stood up again to say in response that at a Caribbean Women Writers conference in Trinidad where I was from was the only place I could never be out of order. He actually telephoned me a few weeks afterward to indicate that he was pleased that I stood up to challenge that arrangement. Selwyn Cudjoe is a Trinidadian professor at Wellesley and organizer of the first conference of Caribbean women writers and scholars at this all-women's college.
7. Sylvia Wynter, personal conversation with the author, April 2018.
8. Wynter, "Beyond Liberal and Marxist Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference."
9. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," *New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 312.
10. Sylvia Wynter in conversation with Greg Thomas, "Yours in Intellectual Struggle," in *The Caribbean Woman Writer as Scholar: Imagining, Creating, Theorizing*, ed. Keshia Abraham (Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2009), 54–59. Wynter expresses the timeliness of this collection and her happiness with its range of perspectives on page 57.
11. Natasha Barnes, "Reluctant Matriarch: Sylvia Wynter and the Woman Question," in *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 135.
12. A few texts would precede the Wynter position, including Toni Cade, ed., *The Black Woman* (Berkeley, 1970); and Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back* (Latham, NY: Kitchen Table / Women of Color Press, 1981). However, the classic *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, was published in 1982. A groundswell of scholarship by women of color would occur from the mid-1980s and throughout the 1990s.
13. Voiced at the Walter Rodney conference at Binghamton University, 1998, by Horace Campbell and Winston James, Wynter's position was defended by writer George Lamming.
14. Wynter, quoted in Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
15. The Coloniality Working Group was a Binghamton-SUNY-based study/reading group that besides discussing their own and other's writings also organized conferences, and importantly had as its project a series of articulations that opened the door to decolonial discourses featuring the first presentations by Annibal Quijano, Sylvia Wynter, and a range of scholars on this topic. Walter Mignolo attended some of these sessions and after that wrote his essays on decoloniality. Some of the essays from participants have been published in the *New Centennial Review* (2003) edited by Greg Thomas. It is significant that this was a group organized by and with professors and graduate students, Thomas being one of them, in order to learn from but advance beyond the dominant Binghamton World Systems paradigm and also to capture the critique of still-existing colonialisms in the then rapidly advancing field of postcolonial studies. In that process they deliberately engaged a Braudel Center visiting scholar, Anibal Quijano, who was then theorizing the "Coloniality of power" first published as "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad," *Perú indígena* 29 (1991): 11–20, which has since become a staple in decolonial theory. Central to this Coloniality Working Group was the point that what is often erased or not clear is that the US and Europe continued to have existing colonies, and indigenous people and US African Americans functioned as internally colonized. Thus the students in particular, many of them African American, Latino, white left Jewish, wanted to push Quijano to consider in his work these internal colonial contexts but also the subordinated black communities in Latin America. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, in "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality," Franz Fanon Foundation, frantzfanonfoundation-fondationfrantzfanon.com/IMG/pdf/maldonado-torres_outline_of_ten_theses-10.23.16_.pdf, offers a good genealogy of the concept coloniality of power, as does Mignolo in "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101.1 (2002): 57–96. For Quijano's analyses, see "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3 (2000): 533–80, which lays out the discussion; and Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/ Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21.2–3 (2007): 168–78.

On Sylvia Wynter's Darwinian Heresy of the "Third Event"

Jason R. Ambrose

In her interview in *On Being Human as Praxis* (2014), Sylvia Wynter puts forth the most far-reaching discussion of her meta-Darwinian, meta-biocentric view of our species as a uniquely third level of existence, as well as of its implications for our contemporary global sociohuman community and "global *problematique*" that threatens the overall viability of both humankind and the planet's biodiversity.¹ With the coevolution of the human brain—including its storytelling/mythmaking region—along with our species-specific capacity to convey meanings/symbols and stories/myths via language, she holds that our uniquely human existence emerged via a fundamental moment of rupture and *discontinuity* with the purely biological realm.² In turn—and in heretical opposition to Charles Darwin's "part science, part myth" proposition that we humans are constituted solely by laws of bioevolution in *pure continuity* with those of the rest of the living world—Wynter argues that as a result of this rupture/discontinuity, *being human* is hybridly determined both by laws of bioevolution and by what she terms "*laws of auto-institution*," of "*autopoesies*."³ Consequently, our origins, nature, and social ways of existing emerge out of the mutation that she further identifies as the "*Third Event*."⁴

Here Wynter modifies and extends the 1990 thesis of the 1977 Nobel Prize laureate in chemistry, Ilya Prigogine. Prigogine argued that the universe we inhabit is a "dual" one composed of both *laws* and *events*. Laws are "associated to a continuous unfolding"; events, on the other hand, "involve discontinuities." He then concluded that "the most decisive events we know are related to the birth of our universe and to the emergence of life."⁵ Yet to Prigogine's two decisive events, Wynter adds a third: "the *origin of specifically human life*" as a "hybridly *bios/logos* or *bios/mythoi* level of existence" whose thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are irreducible to the first two events' respective laws of functioning.⁶ For if, as Terrance Deacon asserts in *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain* (1997), that "though we share the same earth with millions of living creatures," humans *alone* "tell stories about our real experiences . . . invent stories about our imagined ones, and . . . make

use of stories to organize our lives,” doing so in “shared virtual worlds,” then Wynter’s *Third Event* formulation necessarily makes use of Deacon’s insights by proposing that his thesis not only calls for a rethinking of the *laws* specific to “us.”⁷ But she further asserts that such a thesis also calls for our redefinition beyond the dually reinforcing, Western-bourgeois and purely biocentric (i.e., biology-centered) terms of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus/Homo sapiens*. For via a rhetorical strategy that presumes that the similarity of sound between “Man” and “Human” necessarily implies the same referent, Wynter demonstrates how *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* is overrepresented in Darwin’s “part science, part myth” origin story as put forth in his *The Descent of Man* (1871) as the species itself, thereby securing what she identifies as this self-definition’s “monopoly on *being human*.”⁸ Instead, Wynter counters this “monohumanism” by meta-proposing that its ethno-class, purely biocentric self-definition should be replaced with a new one of “us” as the hybridly *biological* and storytelling/mythmaking *symbolic species* that we are—that is, what she terms “*Homo narrans*.”⁹

Wynter’s new *Homo narrans* species’ self-definition extends the pioneering proposals of the Martiniquan activist-intellectuals Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. Césaire, in his 1944 lecture “Poetry and Knowledge” (published in 1945 and translated into English in 1946), argued that the natural-scientific worldview remains “impoverished” and “half-starved” with respect to our uniquely human level of existence. Yet this “silence” urgently requires and provides the conditions of possibility for the formation of a “new science” that takes our capacity for language or “the *word*” as its starting point.¹⁰ Césaire’s 1944 call for a hybrid *nature/word* science of the human was paralleled by Fanon in the latter’s 1952 classic, *Black Skin, White Masks* (translated into English in 1967). Here Fanon challenged the purely biocentric explanations of his trained field of psychoanalysis—and of the late modern, secular-Western episteme of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*—via his meta-biocentric declaration: “Besides phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny.”¹¹ In doing so, Fanon proposed that *all humans* are socialized to know, feel, and experience *being human* in hybridly *skin/masks* terms, thereby already implying our existence in the Third Event terms of Wynter’s *Homo narrans* self-definition.

Césaire’s and Fanon’s proposals anchor Wynter’s formulation that we *humans* are not merely “beings” constituted by the *bios*. Instead, we are also constituted/auto-instituted by and through the *logos* or *mythoi*—that is, by and through the stories or myths of origin that we invent as answers to questions that, according to the anthropologist Jacob Pandian, “people everywhere” *are compelled to ask*: “‘What is humankind?’ . . . ‘Who am I?’ . . . ‘What am

I?"¹² Thus, as Wynter asserts, "*our 'stories' are as much a part of what makes us human . . . as are our bipedalism and the use of our hands.*"¹³ For it is through these origin stories/myths or "*cosmogonies*" that, as the literary scholar David Leeming also observed, we tell both ourselves and the world "who we are" while also being/behaving, as Wynter further proposes, both individually in ways and collectively through the formation of societal orders—including their instituted hierarchies and allocated social roles—that performatively enact and conserve these self-definitions.¹⁴

In this vein, Wynter demonstrates how the "part science, part myth" cosmogony of *Evolution*—as a purely biocentric answer to the question "what is humankind?"—assumes the same auto-instituting and order-legitimizing role for our contemporary (neo)liberal-economic, Western-bourgeois societal order and *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* self-definition, as the theocentric answer of the Genesis story/myth did for the early-modern Western societal order of the aristocracy/slavocracy/landocracy and *Man(1)* as *Homo politicus* self-definition, as well as for the Western European Middle Ages' feudal order of the Roman Catholic clergy and *Christian* self-definition.¹⁵ She as well demonstrates in her seminal work "*Do Not Call Us Negros*": *How Multicultural Textbooks Perpetuate Racism* (1992) the way in which the "nation of immigrants" answer to "who are we?" assumes the same instituting/legitimizing role for the *racially* "White" and now *multiethnic* "Euro-American" middle and upper classes of the post-1950s/1960s United States, in place of the pre-1950s/1960s "Plymouth Rock" origin story/myth specific to their *racially* "White" and *mono-ethnic* "Anglo-American" counterparts.¹⁶ And she further demonstrates elsewhere the way in which the origin story/myth that "Columbus discovered America"—as the interpretive lens for both the "1492 event" and the transformative world-historical processes it spearheaded—also assumes the same instituting/legitimizing role for the globally hegemonic societal order of the post-medieval West, now in the late-modern terms of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*.¹⁷

In other words, to quote the literary theorist Richard Waswo, "*We are still acting out stories*" (emphasis added).¹⁸ And just as the *bios* of the bee prevents this living being from knowing the collective entity that is the beehive—including the hive's "queen bee" versus "drone" and "worker bee" hierarchies/roles—outside terms that secure the hive's overall formation and replication, Wynter puts forth an important analogy for us humans in her rewriting of the story of the Americas, the 'modern' (postmedieval Western) world, and our species overall. This analogy is that our constitution also by and through the *logos* or *mythoi* prevents us from *normally* knowing the societal order that we inhabit outside the terms of the auto-instituting story/myth of origin (and

“shared virtual world”) that secures that order’s overall formation and replication. For such self-knowledge or conscious awareness would mean not only that the hierarchies, role allocations, and systemic injustices of that societal order could not be tolerated, but that the order itself would, in Chinua Achebe’s brilliant conception, “fall apart.”¹⁹

Three major propositions are related to Wynter’s Third Event formulation of our origins and existence in hybridly *bios/logos* or *bios/mythoi* terms as *Homo narrans*, as proposals that effectively bridge/transcend the gap between C. P. Snow’s “two cultures” of sociohuman and natural-scientific knowledges.²⁰

1. Unlike the rest of the living world, Wynter proposes that we humans know, feel, and experience ourselves not solely in biocentric terms as a purely biological being but also in pseudospeciating terms as a specific “type,” “kind,” or “sort” of *being human*—what she terms a “*genre* of being hybridly human”—that is derived from each origin story’s/myth’s answer to the questions “what is humankind?,” “who am I?,” “what am I?” Put another way, we experience *being human* not in Second Event terms as purely biological males/females or in groups as purely biological kin, but in Third Event terms as *San, Yoruba, Aztec, Maya, Greek, Roman, Jew, Christian, Muslim, Mongol, Man(1)* as *Homo politicus*, or *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* (including in terms of the latter’s nation-state “imagined communities” [e.g., as an *American* of the United States]).²¹ Fanon’s seminal treatise *Black Skin, White Masks* can therefore be retitled in Wynter’s “ecumenically” (or “universally”) human language as “Biological life, Symbolic lives” or “Biological being, *Genres* of being.”

Yet each genre of being hybridly human exists not as a self-contained and neutral identity but in value-laden opposition to the systemic sociohuman category identified by the anthropologist Asmarom Legesse as the “liminal other.”²² For the “normalcy” of each genre of being is instituted via the “abnormalcy” of being (as a genre of nonbeing) that the “liminal other” is also narratively made to embody—be it the valorized *Greek* citizen to its non-Greek *Barbarian*; the “redeemed” *Christian* to its “fallen” *Pagan*; “rational” *Man(1)* as *Homo politicus* to its “irrational” *Indias/Indios* and *Negras/Negros*; or “biologically-superior” *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* to its “biologically-inferior” (*Ghetto*) *Nigger*. Thus, our stories/myths of origin function as behavior-motivating prescriptions, in that they also induce us to desire the “normalcy” encoded in each ruling genre of being human, while likewise inducing us to be aversive to the “abnormalcy” embodied in its correlated genre of nonbeing—even at our own expense.

2. Wynter further proposes that because of our hybrid nature, our experience of *being human* results not solely from species-specific processes of biological

birth, biological life, and biological death but also from genre-specific processes of symbolic birth, symbolic life, and symbolic death. The latter include the ancient symbolic birth practice of "circumcision," the institution of "initiation," to Greek "paideia," Jewish "bar/bat mitzvah," Christian "baptism," and our contemporary system of "education" within *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*. Furthermore, our *being human* in hybrid terms means that not only are we confronted with biological afflictions or ills for which we prescribe cures that conserve our biological well-being. Based on the insights of the religious scholar Norman J. Girardot, Wynter demonstrates how our stories/myths of origin also postulate symbolic afflictions or "significant ills" while prescribing cures or "pathways to redemption" that have as their fundamental imperative the conservation of our genres of being hybridly human.²³ Such include the post-Augustinian symbolic affliction/illness of *original sin* put forth as only curable/redeemable for the *Christian* genre by the *church* and its behavior-motivating prescriptions of the *religion* of Judeo-Christianity; or the post-Hobbesian *irrational state-of-nature* put forth as only curable/redeemable for *Man(1)* as *Homo politicus* by the *state* and its secular morality of *politics*; or of post-Malthusian *natural scarcity* put forth as only curable/redeemable for *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* by the *economy* and its ("free market") morality of (neo)liberal-*economics*.²⁴

3. Wynter's third related proposal derived from her postulate of our hybrid nature is that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors must be motivated and oriented by not *one* but "*two sets of instructions*": our species-specific "*genetic codes of biological life and death*" and, extending Fanon, our "*genre-specific sociogenic codes of symbolic life and death*."²⁵ These latter codes or prescriptions, while implemented and conditioned by laws of bioevolution, are nonetheless determined by our uniquely human *laws of auto-institution* via the origin stories/myths that we invent and tell ourselves in order to "organize our [genre-specific] lives" in "shared virtual worlds." This fact holds for the sociogenic code of "*redeemed spirit versus fallen flesh*" instituted by the post-Augustinian Judeo-Christian Genesis story of the Western European Middle Ages.²⁶ And this fact she demonstrates also holds for the code of "*biological superiority versus biological inferiority*" as instituted by the "part science, part myth" Evolution story of our contemporary Western-bourgeois societal order, as a code/prescription enacted by the *founding biomythology of race* identified by W. E. B. Du Bois as the "*color line*," as well as by the interrelated biomythologies of *class, gender, and sexual orientation*.²⁷ And just as Césaire had in 1944 called for a "unique handling of the *word*" that could elucidate the way in which it conditions *nature*, Wynter proposes that our genre-specific sociogenic codes

condition our species-specific genetic codes through the semantic or verbal activation of what neuroscientists have identified as the biochemical reward and punishment system of the brain (and body), collectively operating as a *symbolic-life/chemical-reward/placebo* versus *symbolic-death/chemical-punishment/nocebo* behavior-motivating and -orienting mechanism. In turn, we humans are at times induced to sacrifice our biological well-being and its genetic codes for the survival and replication of our genes of being and their sociogenic codes.²⁸

With its premise of our Third Event origins and existence in hybridly *bios/logos* or *bios/mythoi* terms as *Homo narrans*, Wynter's formulation demonstrates how "life" takes on a qualitatively *different* meaning for humans than it does for the rest of the living world. For as the paleoanthropologist Juan Luis Arsuaga points out in his 1999 book *The Neanderthal's Necklace: In Search of the First Thinkers* (translated into English in 2002), our species alone makes use of "articulated language, at the service of a unique capacity to manipulate symbols, . . . to tell stories and create fictitious worlds."²⁹ This fundamentally different meaning of human life further entails that the continued Western-bourgeois, biomythological representation of Africa as the "cradle of *Mankind/Homo sapiens*"—that is, as the birthplace of the "primitive child" in the phylogeny of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* or, in Fanon's insightful characterization, as "a mere stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man"—is a misrepresentation abductively projected from within the Second Event's purely biocentric "part science, part myth" *story* of our species' origins, nature, and social ways of existing.³⁰ For if Fanon's postulate of "*sociogeny*" is indeed correct, its pointing to our origins and existence in the Third Event means that Africa is veridically the site of a moment of rupture and *discontinuity* in the living world that led to our emergence as *Homo narrans*, and thereby of the first auto-instituting symbolic processes that our ancient human ancestors invented to hold together within the terms of genre-specific stories/myths of origin and their "shared virtual worlds."

Indeed, this hypothesis regarding our Third Event origins in Africa has been up to now confirmed by archaeological findings along the southern coast of South Africa that date back seventy thousand to one hundred thousand years. Located in the dwelling now known as "Blombos Cave," these findings archaeologists have deemed the *earliest yet uncovered* evidence of behaviors that are reflective of "symbolic thinking/representation" or, in Wynter's terms, of the hybridly *bios/logos* or *bios/mythoi* mode of being that is *Homo narrans*.³¹ Thus, while geneticists have done great work recently in illuminating the spread of our species first throughout Africa and then across the globe by tracking the distribution of and reformations and mutations within our single human

genome, this purely genetic/biocentric story is still necessarily a partial one.³² To complete this *species-oriented* narrative from a Third Event perspective, we must now elucidate the various stories/myths of origin and "shared virtual worlds" that held us together as genre-specific *I's/We's* versus *not-I's/not-We's* throughout that global "great migration"—including during its most dislocating, traumatic, and intrahumanly antihuman eras.³³

For most of our species' existence, these auto-instituting stories/myths of origin, correlated genres of being/nonbeing, and societal orders as "shared virtual worlds" were articulated in varyingly theo(s)centric terms. While during the last five hundred plus years within the "modern" era of the postmedieval West, Wynter demonstrates how these uniquely human modalities have been articulated first in the early-modern ratiocentric terms of monohumanist *Man(1)* as *Homo politicus*, whose civic-humanist "shared virtual world" and commercial-agrarian societal order necessitated the negation/subjugation of the displaced and/or reservation-confined *Indias/Indios* and enslaved *Negras/Negros*. While within our contemporary, late-modern Western era, she demonstrates how these modalities have been articulated within the purely biocentric terms of monohumanist *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*, whose neoliberal-economic "shared virtual world" and commercial-techno-industrial societal order continues to necessitate the negation/subjugation most totally of "*Black*" but also of other "*non-White*" peoples on the "darker side" of the "*color line*," as well as of the trans-racial *Poor* across the globe.³⁴

Yet within our millennially theo(s)centric, early-modern Western ratiocentric, and now late-modern Western purely biocentric stories/myths and "shared virtual worlds," we humans have made opaque our agency in the authorship, formation, and replication of our genre-specific social ways of exiting by projecting their origins as having come from "elsewhere"—including from various *supernatural beings*, by divinely instituted *natural law*, or by *natural selection* as an inexorable law of bioevolution. And while this process of *extrahumanization*—Wynter shows—protects against the "entropic disintegration" (or "falling apart") of our genre-specific identities and societal orders as "shared virtual worlds," the resulting cognitive-closure and imperative of self-conservation also prevents us from collectively recognizing and identifying the *laws of auto-institution* that determine these uniquely human modalities—that is, that determine "us."³⁵ Until now . . .

For Wynter proposes that the escape hatch exists in all cases with Legesse's "liminal other." When this sociohuman category mobilizes to socially, aesthetically, and intellectually challenge its systemic negation/subjugation, it also

necessarily, as Legesse asserts, “casts doubt on the thinking of the community about the validity of its way of life.”³⁶ In turn, the “liminal other” reminds the subjects of each societal order that they no longer need be enslaved to its story/myth of origin, behavior-motivating prescriptions, and ruling genre’s “monopoly on *being human*.” Such was the case, Wynter demonstrates, with the overall self-assertion of the Laity at the end of the Western European Middle Ages, in their Renaissance-Humanist challenge to their negation/subjugation within the “fallen,” “sinful-by-nature” *Man* terms of the post-Augustinian Judeo-Christian Genesis story/myth, doing so on the basis of their new *revalored* self-definition of “rational” *Man(1)* as *Homo politicus*. And such *must be* the case, Wynter asserts, with “Black” African and Afro-mixed descent peoples because of what Césaire characterized as the “singularity of our ‘situation’” as the represented “biologically inferior” (*Ghetto*) *Nigger* “liminal other” to *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus* within the “part science, part myth” Evolution story instituting of the now late-modern, postmedieval West. Indeed, this overall imperative of counterassertion is likewise applicable to *all* peoples and populations negated/subjugated within the terms of this dually ethno-class, purely biocentric self-definition.³⁷ For we are all now compelled to renarrate the story of ourselves and of our species overall *outside* the terms of *Man(2)* overrepresented as the *Human*, in order to—in Wynter’s words—“give humanness a different future.”³⁸

At the end of his seminal 1966 work *The Order of Things* (translated into English in 1970), Michel Foucault predicted that on the basis of “some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility . . . *man* would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (emphasis added).³⁹ Sylvia Wynter’s new Third Event formulation and redefinition of our species in hybridly *bios/logos* or *bios/mythoi* terms as *Homo narrans* is that event Foucault predicted. Her proposed new cognitively open and self-correcting view of ourselves—through its *de-biologization* of our always *hybrid* origins, nature, and social ways of existing—at the same time reveals our collective human agency in the authorship, formation, and replication of our uniquely human, genre-specific modalities of existence and the also uniquely human laws that determine them. Such self-knowledge and conscious awareness will enable us to transcend the cooperative limits imposed by the now globally hegemonic, ethno-class, and purely biocentric monohumanism of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*, and thereby empower us to bring to an end its “global *problematique*” immiseration, impoverishment, and condemnation of the majority of humankind for the well-being of subset few, as well as of the

ongoing environmental and climactic catastrophes that threaten both our species' overall viability and that of other living beings.⁴⁰ To enable/empower us to remake ourselves and the societal order that willy-nilly connects us all in the more far-reaching, *species-oriented* terms so desperately necessary for our collective survival and now *ecumenically human* realization; and whose conditions of possibility exist not only because we are of a single human genome but because "we" as members of *Homo narrans* are *all* also subject to the Third Event's uniquely human *laws of auto-institution*.⁴¹

Notes

- I want to thank Sylvia Wynter for her unwavering intellectual support and mentorship, as well as for her fellowship over the past three decades. I also want to thank Anthony Bayani Rodriguez for editing this forum on Wynter's work, as well as for soliciting my participation.
1. Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 9–105. For "global *problematique*," see Gerald Barney, *Global 2000 Revisited: What Shall We Do?* (Arlington, VA: Millennium Institute, 1993), 7.
 2. For discussion of the storytelling/mythmaking region of the human brain, see Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 64–76.
 3. For "part science, part myth" argument regarding Darwin's evolution story purely applied to humankind, see Glynn Isaacs, "Aspects of Human Evolution," in *Evolution from Molecules to Men*, ed. D. S. Bendall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 509–43. For "autopoiesis," see Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (1972; repr. London: Reidel, 1980).
 4. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 39–41.
 5. Ilya Viscount Prigogine, foreword to *The Arrow of Time: A Voyage through Science to Solve Time's Greatest Mystery*, by Peter Coveney and Roger Highfield (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990), 15–18.
 6. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 30–32.
 7. Terrance Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 21–22.
 8. This rhetorical strategy is defined by Paolo Valesio as the "topos of iconicity." See Valesio, *Novantiqua: Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). For Charles Darwin's overrepresentation, see his *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871).
 9. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 24–25.
 10. Aimé Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," in *Aimé Césaire: Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946–1982*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: CARAF Books, University of Virginia Press, 1999), xlii–xliii, xlvi–xlix.
 11. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lamm Markman (New York: Grove, 1967), 12. For a discussion of secular-Western episteme of *Man(2)* as *Homo economicus*, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).
 12. Jacob Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition: Towards an Authentic Anthropology* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1985), 5.

13. Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges / Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, ed. Jason R. Ambrose and Sabine Broeck (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 217.
14. David Leeming, *Myth: A Biography of Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36–37; Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 223–35, 235–36.
15. See Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 9–105; Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 184–252.
16. Sylvia Wynter, *Do Not Call Us Negroes: How Multicultural Textbooks Perpetuate Racism* (San Francisco: Aspire Books, 1992).
17. For her most comprehensive discussion, see Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origins of the Americas*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57.
18. Richard Waswo, "The History That Literature Makes," *New Literary History* 19.3 (1988): 542.
19. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Portsmouth, UK: Heinemann, 1958); Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 209–10.
20. C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
21. For "imagined communities," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).
22. Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 249.
23. Norman J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
24. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 219, 235–36; Max Lynn Stackhouse, foreword to *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond*, by R. H. Nelson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), ix–xiv.
25. Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience," in *National Identities and Socio-Political Changes in Latin America*, ed. Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30–66.
26. Jacques LeGoff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 94–103.
27. See chapter 2, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," in W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; repr. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
28. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 23–33, 63–65; Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 11; Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," xlix.
29. Juan Luis Arsuaga, *The Neanderthal's Necklace: In Search of the First Thinkers*, trans. Andy Klatt (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002), 307–8.
30. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 17.
31. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 68.
32. For a recent version of this purely genetic/biocentric story, see David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got There: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018).
33. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 62–69.
34. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 185–93.
35. *Ibid.*, 209–10, 227–30.
36. Legesse, *Gada*, 249.
37. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 185–94; Aimé Césaire, "Letter to Maurice Thorez" (1956), trans. Chike Jeffers, *Social Text*, no. 103 (2010): 147.
38. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 9–105.
39. Foucault, *Order of Things*, 387.
40. Barney, *Global 2000 Revisited*, 7.
41. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 243.

Wynter with Fanon in the FLN: The “Rights of Peoples” against the “Monohumanism” of “Man”

Greg Thomas

After the fruitful struggle that it [“the French conscience”] waged two centuries ago for the respect of individual liberties and the rights of [M]an, it finds itself unable to wage a similar battle for the rights of peoples.

—Frantz Fanon, *El Moudjahid* (1957) / *Towards the African Revolution* (1964)

I

The “Black” African and Afro-mixed descent peoples were now made into the iconic embodiment of this now extreme form of (racialized) Human Otherness, as well as of the Western world-system’s later nineteenth-century, territorially expropriated, and now colonized neoperiphery category of native labor as, in Fanonian terms, *Les Damnés de la terre*, meaning, literally, “the condemned of the Earth.”

—Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Found” (2015)

In hindsight, “The Ceremony Must Be Found” (1984) must have marked a new moment in the multifaceted career of Sylvia Wynter. The dancer-dramatist and cultural critic who wrote *The Hills of Hebron* (1962) becomes an epic critical essayist on Western humanism, “Ethno-Class Man,” Western bourgeois humanism. Now that essay from *boundary 2: a journal of post-modern literature* can only be read with “The Ceremony Found” (2015), if this major contribution to a collection titled *Black Knowledges / Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology* has yet to reap a significant readership in scholarship on the scholar.¹ One of many ways to engage this text is to remark the relationship between a new coinage and a sustained commitment or concern—namely, “monohumanism” and Wynter’s revolutionary Fanonism.

The importance of Fanon in Wynter is hard to overlook yet not easy or simple to gauge in its assorted dimensions. Before “The Ceremony Found” there was “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be ‘Black’” (2001). Earlier still,

there was “Tras el ‘Hombre,’ su última palabra: Sobre el posmodernismo, les damnés y el principio sociogénico” (1991), via Spanish translation by Ignacio Corona-Guitérrez. It appeared in the same year as “After the New Class: James, *Les Damnés*, and the Autonomy of Human Cognition” (1991), which also upholds Fanon’s “starving fellah” as “the truth,” as she would so boldly in “*No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues*” (1992). Many a notion from Fanon will frame the texts of Wynter over the years. Most monumental are the concepts of sociogeny and damnation or condemnation. Their constant mobilization by Wynter sets her work apart from the standard “postcolonialist” containment of Fanon in Western academe, which only rarely if ever conjoins rather than severs the insights of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* with the insights of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

To open “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, It’s Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition,” Wynter returns to “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism” by recalling the political legacy of the 1950s and 1960s, especially the “Anti-Colonial Revolutions,” which would be such a determining factor in her intellectual work. The first Fanon she cites here in the introduction is the *ultimate* Fanon—of *Les Damnés de la terre*, whose title she is at pains, again, to retranslate as “The *Condemned* of the Earth.”² Part 1 of “The Ceremony Found” next presents itself as a manifesto meant to retrieve the “failure” of “The Ceremony Must Be Found” and to practice a heresy—“after Frantz Fanon”—in providing a “profoundly ‘narcissistic’ and revalorizingly *new answer* to the question of who-we-are as humans.”³ Soon, *Black Skin, White Masks* is uniquely engaged to craft the “new Fanonian answer” of “The Ceremony Found” in a manner that matches him, again, with Copernicus in worldly significance. Here’s where “sociogeny” is key, departing equally from the biologist or biocentric “ontogeny” foundational to “ethno-class” “Man” and the “phylogenetic” expression of Western individualism systematized by Freud’s psychoanalytic thought. After the Copernican Revolution, en route to his “African Revolution,” this Fanonian Revolution motivates Wynter’s proposition in part 2 of a counter-cosmogonic “Autopoetic Turn/Overturn” with Rastafarian intonations. That is how we resolve or escape the predicament of “The Ceremony Must Be Found” and modern intellectual, “monohumanist” life at large. Notably, part 3 of “The Ceremony Found” summons *Les Damnés de la terre* on humanism, beyond the early, *assimilé* Fanon’s mighty critique of the human sciences, toward a more total and radical critique of humanist assimilation under the white bourgeois West. The conclusion of “The Ceremony Found” returns to Fanon texts once

more by quoting *Black Skin, White Masks* before literally closing with a call for "a new society," the clarion call of the "Anti-Colonial Revolution" of *A Dying Colonialism* or *L'An V de la revolution algérienne* (1959).

II

Saint Domingue belonged to her. Blacks would regain real freedom there as they became human. Having acknowledged their duties, they would accede to the realm of rights through pathways and entrances prepared for them by France.

—Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (2006)

In a word, Wynter is on the same page as Fanon of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) when she recently writes against "monohumanism." The academic institution that discovers Fanon decades after Black social movements of the sixties and seventies effectively censors him still with a selective focus on a few chapters or passages of his first book alone, inculcating its scholars to ignore or "un-see" the revolutionary critique of Western bourgeois humanism that he develops after the assimilationist phase of his critical-intellectual career comes to an anticolonialist end. Fanon's collection of FLN articles written for *El Moudjahid* and posthumously published in *Toward the African Revolution* (1964) is extraordinary in this regard, militating against "monohumanism" by any name.

Such an analysis can begin with "Concerning a Plea" from section IV: "Toward the Liberation of Africa" of the fourth Fanon book. It is a polemical review of a book by Georges Arnaud and Jacques Vergès on Djamila Bouhired, the female FLN fighter and accused bomber who famously laughed upon "hearing the announcement of her death sentence" in a French colonial court.⁴ Here Fanon instigates a new discourse on "rights" as an anticolonial antithesis of the French Revolution and its canonical imperial humanism. He shifts the point of analysis from individuals to peoples—in the plural—taking shot after fiery shot at "1789": "After the fruitful struggle that it waged two centuries ago for the respect of individual liberties and the rights of [M]an, it finds itself unable to wage a similar battle for the rights of peoples."⁵ The "humanism" of France's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* is exposed and discarded as what Wynter will dub "monohumanism"—a monological and *monopoly* "humanism" of empire incapable of recognizing or merely tolerating the rights of any other peoples to any other humanisms outside Europe and in continental Africa perhaps most of all.

This line of thought is abundant across *Toward the African Revolution*. Relentless, Fanon insists that French colonialism is executed in the name of the *people* of France, the French *people*, French *public* opinion, and so on. The war between colonialism and anticolonialism is a war concerning “two peoples,” he adamantly and repeatedly maintains.⁶ He confronts the human question at the level of *populations*, in other words, just as Wynter would confront the institutionalized question of gender in an anticolonialist fashion at the level of populations instead of at the intra-Western level of individuals or Eurocentric individualist genitalism.⁷ These FLN texts are united and defined by this popular discursive framework that unsettles and subverts the monohumanism of Western bourgeois “Man.” They speak not only of the Algerian or Maghreb peoples but, pluralistically, of colonial peoples, colonized peoples; free peoples, oppressed peoples, other peoples; African peoples, Afro-Asiatic peoples, the peoples of African south of the Sahara—*etc.*—for the “conquest by the peoples of the lands that belong to them.”⁸ They speak of the advent and “liberation of the new peoples,” moreover, and how colonialism contests their very “right to constitute a people” in “The Algerian War and Man’s Liberation.”⁹

Article after article amplifies the critical discourse on humanism that may be more associated with *Black Skin, White Masks* for some and *The Wretched of the Earth* for others, although Wynter’s ample corpus would mobilize the complete Fanon for decade after decade. Colonialism practices a “dehumanization rationally pursued” in “Algeria Face to Face with the French Torturers.”¹⁰ He scorns “these humanists” of Europe as they concern themselves with the “souls” and “honor” of the French soldiers who torture, not the actual Algerian men and women whom they torture and massacre historically.¹¹ Fanon disdains “*homo occidentalis*” explicitly for “First Truths of the Colonial Problem.”¹² “Neocolonialism,” he observes wryly, “because it proposes to do justice to human dignity in general, addresses itself essentially to the middle class and to the intellectuals of the colonial country.”¹³ For his classic critique of the colonized elite famous from *The Wretched of the Earth* registers here too: Felix Houphouët-Boigny, for example, is not a “Man,” or a “man,” but an odious practitioner of what Fanon more than once mocks as “*beni-oui-ouism*”:¹⁴ “yes-man-ism” obstructing humanism proper. This is how Fanon repudiates the “oppressive” Western “standard” of humanity and the presumed “humanist superiority” of the West—for the vital, anti-colonialist project of “humanization”¹⁵—in his *El Moudjahid* articles that make up the mass of *Toward the African Revolution*.

A profound prefiguration of Louis Sala-Molins’s *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (2006) or *Les Misère des lumières: Sous*

la raison, l'outrage (1992), Fanon's rhetorical assault (or counterattack) from Algeria on the "Rights of Man" humanism of Franco-Western empire is far from an isolatable moment of these terribly underappreciated texts. The "right of peoples" is reiterated in its fullest form as the right of peoples "to self-determination."¹⁶ The fresh appearance of *Ecrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté* (2015) / *Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom* (2018) adds to the mix other *El Moudjahid* articles uncollected in the *Toward the African Revolution* collection, such as his "Combat Solidaire" speech for Kwame Nkrumah's All-African Peoples' Congress in Accra, Ghana, in addition to his intervention for the Afro-Asian Conference in Conakry: "This is why we Algerians, on the eve of the important conference of this summit, maintain that international détente and the security of the world can only be achieved through national independence, the recognition in real terms of *the right of peoples* to self-determination, and the liquidation of the regimes of oppression." Indeed, Fanon declared in Guinea in opposition to "Man" and its francocentric universalism: "the recovery of Algeria's national sovereignty will not only be an Algerian victory, but an African victory, an Asian triumph, *a step towards the realization of a free and joyful humanity*."¹⁷ The happy, joyful humanity of Fanon should live a "reign of freedom" (and the "unconditional reign of Justice"),¹⁸ however resisted by the tacit—"miserable," "outrageous"—*Reign of Terror* that French and all Western "revolutions" of slavery and colonialism represent by contrast, from Haiti then (in light of *Les Misère des lumières*) to Algeria's Africa and beyond.

Scrupulous in approach, Wynter's "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation" (1971) essay would start with a series of striking questions seeking to define terms: "What, in our context, is the novel? What, in our context, is history? What *is* our context?"¹⁹ *El Moudjahid's* Fanon had rejected the totalizing history of the Republic of France toward a reassumption of history or historicity in the collective person of colonized peoples. He rewrites French-European history from Algeria, Africa, in terms of "130 years of colonialist oppression."²⁰ He recasts that official history as "mythic" and a "systematic historical falsification."²¹ Its "democracy" is reinscribed as "barbarism" in disguise. Renewed appeals to a false idea of a "common past" between European countries and their colonies (e.g., "French Union," "Franco-African community," "Eurafrica") signify a ruse concocted to secure a "rejuvenated colonial pact" and to obscure what should be an authentic "historic process" in tune with the "demands" of "the peoples."²² Typically, European colonialism claims rights in and over African territory without there being any rights of Africa or Africans to any territory anywhere. This tactic "alienates the African personality," Fanon cautions in

“Appeal to Africans,”²³ *continuing his signature quest for dis-alienation here on a macro-historical, geopolitical or political-economic plane*. “Mono-historical,” as it were, this false strategy of French colonial “Man” sets the stage for neo-colonialism, propagating those “notorious” “Rights of the former occupant,” which are “wrenched from the people, as the price to be paid for a piece of independence,” a “puppet independence” in point of fact.²⁴ Because he too asked, “What, in our context, is history?”—in *El Moudjahid*, no less, Fanon could demystify the history of “the Republic” and displace “the Revolution” of France and its “Rights of Man” so that “the Revolution” of world-historical reference becomes “our Revolution” *as a rule*—the Algerian Revolution, the African Revolution.

Speaking of the “Anti-Colonial Revolutions” hailed by Wynter once again in “The Ceremony Found,” Fanon hails their “deeply human inspiration” as a “defeat for racism and for the exploitation of man.”²⁵ For “what the West has not in truth understood,” he explains in the “political essays” of *Toward the African Revolution*, “is that today a new humanism, a new theory of man is coming into being, which has its roots in man.”²⁶ This is the only humanism “that can be considered valid” in his “Letter to the Youth of Africa,” an address that actually embraces those of “Madagascar and the West Indies” in the self-same voice.²⁷ These are texts from 1958. At least three and a half years, then, in advance of his historic proclamations in *Les Damnés de la terre*, Fanon’s FLN articles persistently echo the Aimé Césaire formulation that would become a familiar chorus for so many statements by Wynter: “At the very time when it most often mouths the word, the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world.”²⁸

III

The men asserted their being, founding it on the non-being of the natives. . . . This new struggle is that of the world’s natives, the wretched of the earth, to reclaim their disputed humanity. The rights of the natives to manhood implies imperatively the negation of the rights of some men to super-manhood.

—Sylvia Wynter, “Slave Revolts” (1970)

It would be something of an event for *any* scholar, let alone Sylvia Wynter—with her epochal project of Black-and-human liberation, to announce that she has found an answer to the problem of her intellectual life’s work. Yet this is what we get in “The Ceremony Found.” That essay has yet to garner much attention in scholarship on the scholar, or the commentary that threatens to

approach her as a mere trend in the corporate-social media consumer age of Twitter, Inc. We also get more of her renewed, remarkable Fanonism. It is truly exceptional insofar as it ranges time and again across the complete Fanon—*le Fanon complet*, his *oeuvre complète*—a movement so contrary to the belated and myopic mismanagement of *Black Skin, White Masks* by US or Western academe as of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

When Ayi Kwei Armah published "Fanon: The Great Awakener" (1969) in Hoyt Fuller's *Negro Digest* before that journal became *Black World*, he proffered a model of total-Fanonist engagement for the most part unfollowed. The bulk of Fanon has been systematically avoided by the neocolonial humanities in particular, ironically or not, even though *The Wretched of the Earth* is the illustrious climax of his legendary call for "a new humanity." Nevertheless, besides its structural reference to "sociogenic replicator codes," "The Ceremony Found" is sure to recall the new humanism of its African Revolution:

Frantz Fanon was precisely to diagnose the reasons, especially in the case of the non-Western anti-colonial struggles, for our failure, as indeed for my own failure in the 1984 essay "The Ceremony Must Be Found," to re-enact the dimensions of the autopoietic *heresy* now called for. As he wrote in his *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961), translated as *The Wretched of the Earth*:

Western Bourgeois racial prejudice as regards the nigger and the Arab is a racism of contempt; it is a racism which minimizes what it hates. Bourgeois ideology, however, which is the proclamation of an essential equality between men, manages to appear logical in its own eyes *by inviting the sub-men to become human, and to take as their prototype Western humanity as incarnated in the Western bourgeoisie* (Fanon, 1963; emphasis [Wynter's]).²⁹

What's more, the "profoundly 'narcissistic' and revalorizingly *new answer* to the question of who-we-are as humans"³⁰ provided by Wynter in "The Ceremony Found" communicates directly with other parts of the ultimate Fanon as well, such as this once widely cited passage from the "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves constantly: 'In reality, *who am I?*'"³¹ When Wynter further invokes the lessons of "self-alienation" revealed in Fanon's Black "peers in Martinique" along with his "peers and patients" in Algeria, impressively, there is implicit reference to *A Dying Colonialism* and/or his various clinical studies in political so-called ethno-psychiatry, whether published or unpublished, interestingly enough. And, finally, "The Ceremony Found" *could* assist a new appreciation for *Toward the African Revolution* thanks to Wynter's extended

critical articulation of “monohumanism”—which may put to bed the conventional scholar’s dichotomy of (European) “humanism” and (European) “anti-humanism” to boot. If it has unfortunately gone unread or overlooked thus far, Fanon’s radical repudiation of the “Rights of Man” for the “rights of peoples” to self-determination in his articles for *El Moudjahid* was another means by which he championed a new and *valid* humanism against the old pseudo-humanism of France or “the combined West.”³²

But, now, we know that Wynter wrote her mammoth *Black Metamorphosis* manuscript throughout the 1970s. The tenth chapter devoted to “slave revolts” and the history of struggle is stunning in this respect: “The men asserted their being, founding it on the non-being of the natives. . . . This new struggle is that of the world’s natives, *the wretched of the earth*, to reclaim their disputed humanity. *The rights of the natives to manhood implies imperatively the negation of the rights of some men to super-manhood.*”³³ Did Wynter then cue FLN Fanon’s “rights of peoples” challenge to “rights of Man” humanism decades ago in *Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World* (1970s), way ahead of the “post-colonial” trap-game—its spurious “posting” of colonialism in narrow territorial terms as if it were somewhere over and done somehow? Conceptually, does she focus more on “sociogeny” today without ever leaving “damnation,” “condemnation,” behind? Now, at any rate, as if an epic, long-distance response to his revolutionary call, Wynter’s latest “answer” can allow us to see Fanon’s more neglected writings anew, for a new century, welcoming his kind of omni-humanist and, à la Huey P. Newton, an “intercommunalist” turn with her “trans-disciplinary, trans-epistemic, trans natural-scientific *cum* trans-cosmogonic modality” in “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition.”³⁴

Notes

1. Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition,” in *Black Knowledges / Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, ed. Jason R. Ambrose and Sabine Broeck (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015).
2. *Ibid.*, 87.
3. *Ibid.*, 192.
4. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Grove, 1967), 73.
5. *Ibid.*, 74. “Concerning a Plea” was originally published in number 12 of *El Moudjahid* on November 15, 1957.

6. Ibid., 73–75.
7. See G. Thomas, "The Body Politics of Man and Woman in an Anti-Black World: Sylvia Wynter on Humanism's Empire (A Critical Resource Guide)," in *On Marronage: Ethical Confrontations with Anti-Blackness*, ed. P. Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), 62–78.
8. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 120.
9. Ibid., 145.
10. Ibid., 64.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 123.
13. Ibid., 122.
14. Ibid., 125.
15. Ibid., 86.
16. Ibid., 76, 79, 81, 90.
17. Thanks to Viktoria Metschl for this translation: Frantz Fanon, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*, ed. Jean Khalfa and Robert J. C. Young (Paris: L'Éditions La Découverte, 2015), 527–28.
18. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 90, 64.
19. Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95.
20. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 83.
21. Ibid., 84.
22. Ibid., 122, 126.
23. Ibid., 133.
24. Ibid., 121–22, 194, 155.
25. Ibid., 66.
26. Ibid., 125.
27. Ibid., 114, 118, 119.
28. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (1955; repr., New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 73.
29. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 230n48.
30. Ibid., 192.
31. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1963), 250 (italics mine).
32. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 112.
33. Sylvia Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World," unpublished MS, n.d., IBW Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, 148; italics mine.
34. Wynter, "Ceremony Found," 245.

Rhythm, or On Sylvia Wynter's Science of the Word

Katherine McKittrick, Frances H. O'Shaughnessy, and Kendall Witaszek

If you don't dance, make sure you got the rhythm
 Make sure that your heartbeat beats with the rhythm.

—Robyn Rihanna Fenty, "Dancing in the Dark"

The writings of Sylvia Wynter are, in part, animated by her difficult concept "science of the word." This concept identifies two overlapping themes. The first is Wynter's dislodging of our biocentric system of knowledge, one that conceptualizes the human under a Darwinist model of the natural organism and posits that we are purely and totally evolutionary beings.¹ She argues that we are, as a human species, bios-mythois: the word (*mythoi*) conditions the study of nature (*bios*); mythoi and bios are enmeshed and, together, posit the human as a biological-storytelling species. For purposes of this short essay, bios-mythois is a rhythmic interplay between nature and narrative. The double-entwined assertion that we are, simultaneously, scientific (biologic) beings and narrative (storytelling) beings provides a rhythmic framework that refuses the linear teleology of "evolution," which hierarchically organizes—and evaluates—humans according to phenotype. Science of the word thus illuminates a genre of being human that rethinks the racial underpinnings of who and what we are by overturning a knowledge system—evolution and its economic-colonial ally, accumulation-by-dispossession—that justifies racism and other practices of violence.² With this in mind, genre signals different kinds and ways of being human that are relational to one another and are, *collectively, across geographies and racial identifications*, bios-mythois. Put succinctly, genre uncodes and recodes humanity by centering that we are *all* bios-mythois. While we are all stifled by the Darwinian genre-*specific* version of the human, thinking in genres capaciously, conceptually troubles and un-masks this as a false narrative by offering a species perspective on humanity (different and relational kinds and ways of being, different and relational stories about who and what we are and how we came to be).³ The second theme that science of the word opens up is radical collaborations. Specifically, the

coupling of “science” with “word” is a methodology that insists we think across disciplines rather than rely on disconnected tracts of knowledge production. Wynter undisciplines discipline and offers radical interdisciplinarity: she shows us that the natural sciences cannot be bifurcated from the social sciences and the humanities; she demonstrates how the links between the hard sciences and other disciplines are generative sites of inquiry; and she thinks relationally, across a range of intellectual histories, disciplines, and interdisciplines. In sum, Wynter asks that we recognize the ways in which narrative is scientific (to enunciate stories is a physiological practice) and science is narrated (evolution is a socially produced origin story) while illustrating the potentiality of thinking and theorizing relationally.⁴

This is an undoubtedly complex reading of humanity and knowledge that we attribute, more generally, to scholars of the Caribbean and its diaspora. Movements and rhythms—the work of thinking across and with tracts of knowledge and reimagining humanity—can be found in a great deal of Caribbean scholarship; conceptual, geographic, and embodied interruptions—to Euro-modernity writ large—trouble a genre-specific and biocentric version of the human. Aside from Léopold Sédar Senghor, who lived most of his life in Senegal and France, the writers whom we center in this piece move through modernity from the axel and matrix of the Caribbean and its diaspora. Kamau Brathwaite describes the region as being caught in the center of an explosion—a cultural catastrophe.⁵ Relatedly, as Édouard Glissant notes, the Caribbean is a site of ruptures and relations, an experiment in aesthetic unbelonging.⁶ Many Caribbean intellectuals theorize humanity through the messiness of our global predicament; their ideas emerge from being *in but not narratively of* the “West.” Wynter’s work is exemplary of this kind of positioning, emerging from sites of modernity (chaos, catastrophe) to produce relational theories—uncomfortable but generative rhythms—that are in but not of the West. She theorizes across thinkers, disciplines, ideas, and histories, demonstrating that collaboration engenders her conceptualization of science of the word. In the next pages, we work across these and other themes to think about how the writings of Sylvia Wynter—specifically, her concept science of the word and her engagement with the work of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Senghor—illuminate rhythmic reading practices.

In her reading of Césaire’s “Poetry and Knowledge,” Wynter explores the interconnectedness of science and poetics.⁷ Césaire notes that while scientific knowledge is impoverished and impersonal (it enumerates, it kills, he writes), he also suggests that it is *within* the discursive work of objectivity that poetic knowledge resides.⁸ Césaire writes, for example, that science cannot truly

capture the emotionality present within humans' discovery of "the first sun, the first rain, the first breath, the first moon"—an observation that interlinks natural sciences (ecologies and physiologies), human activity (discovery), and psychic activity (emotionality).⁹ Césaire's observation—that a creative science reckons with how poetic knowledge "is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge"—calls on the harmonious structures of collaborative thought in order to reconceptualize what it means to be human.¹⁰ Like Césaire, Wynter does not turn away from scientific knowledge and privilege poetic knowledge, but rather shows that science of the word is an articulation of science and poetics *together*. This provides a "fulfilling knowledge," one that understands the human in its most actualized form through the "climate of emotion and imagination."¹¹

Wynter's extension of Césaire can be further read alongside her research on Fanon. In studying his work, Wynter thinks through Fanon's concept of sociogeny to theorize the *sociogenic principle* and the Fanonian leap to the Third Event, wherein humans are recognized as a hybrid species.¹² Centering Fanon's statement, "beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny," Wynter calls for a conceptualization of the human that accounts for the enmeshment of Nature and Culture via the sociogenic principle.¹³ Through the coevolution of the human brain (bios) with storytelling (mythois), all genres of humanity are, as alluded to above, a "hybrid-auto-instituting-languaging-storytelling species."¹⁴ It is this rhythmic recoding of the human (the enmeshment of Nature and Culture, science and word, bios and mythois) that leaps us into the Third Event of Fanonian human origins. Wynter emphasizes the tripleness of Fanon's being—race, body, and ancestors—that disrupts biocentric linearity through exposing these scripts as overlapping (rather than discrete) fictions that necessitate such a different genre of humanity.¹⁵

Thinking through the rhythmic connections within this Wynterist discussion of hybridity, we rewind and remix time to observe how the writings of Senghor perform as a prelude to Wynter's work on science, race, poetics, and new humanism. In her 1970 article "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," Wynter uses the following Senghor guide-quote: "But what is Culture? . . . In effect it is the result of a double effort of the integration of Man with Nature and Nature with Man."¹⁶ She thus begins this important essay with the poetic melding together of Nature and Culture, introducing science of the word for perhaps the first time through the scholarship of Senghor. Here, Wynter writes that,

Senghor seems to imply, the great expansion of Western civilization, "*an economic and instrumental civilization, could make us believe that one part of the process, the transformation of Nature by Man is the very essence of Culture.*"¹⁷

Both Wynter and Senghor use the intimacies of “Man,” “Culture,” and “Nature” to present the human as a bios-mythois species. The process of Man transforming Nature in order to “make us believe” in Culture—in a way that becomes so normalized that Man’s descriptive statement appears as a scientifically predestined “Truth”—masterfully conceals the kinds of relational complexities of humanness that Wynter argues we must pay close attention to. Indeed, the very touching by Man makes Nature appear to be untouched by Culture!

Elaborating on poetics, Senghor presents an understanding of humanity, the arts, and race that hints at a deeper duality and *sentiment-idée* (feeling-idea) that stages the rhythmic—and thus bios-mythois—movement of creative forms of knowledge.¹⁸ In his essay “Constitutive Elements of an Inspirational Negro-African Civilization,” Senghor notes that “the poetic truth is identified, here, with the scientific truth, for which the being of the being is energy, that is to say rhythm.”¹⁹ Here, Senghor illuminates the vibrancy of science of the word by locating physiological and poetic energies that underwrite the praxis of rhythm. For Senghor, rhythm translates “the word into Verb,” as rhythm is the only thing that can “cause the poetic short circuit and transfor[m] the copper into gold.”²⁰ Here, we pair Senghor’s insights with Wynter’s (and thus Fanon’s and Césaire’s) and press that rhythm—sounds, beats, sways, grooves, moves, steps, claps, tempos, pauses, silences, flows—is a form of being human that signals science of the word and collaborative-bios-mythois praxis.

Working with this “theorizing across” and the chaotic messiness of our current forms of being human, we suggest that rhythm—which we define generously as repeated and patterned (but not necessarily metered) sounds and/or movements—invites collaboration. At the same time, rhythm grounds the thought of Wynter and others in everyday praxis; rhythm *is* collaboratively navigating racial infrastructures. To feel the groove of a dance, for example, is to harmoniously work with its lyrical, tonal, and aural qualities; the beats flowing throughout rhythm require reckoning with sensorial, intellectual, aesthetic ways of being.²¹ Rhythm does not privilege singular ways of being but rather insists, in advance, that collaborative engagement is necessary to who and what we are.²² As we groove—even if alone—we collaborate with tunes, poetics, and styles, fusing the ostensible disconnect between science (sound vibrations, physiological movements, flesh and blood) and narrative (musical score, lyric, cultural text). Rhythm might be conceptualized as one way to invite collaborative worlding; rhythm lays bare not only emotions and imaginations but also their scientific underpinnings.²³

Positing rhythm as reading praxis, we can perhaps merge new or different stories together—tracking continuities, seeking out flows, noticing pauses that occur across a range of texts and ideas—and thus challenge disciplinary silos that currently define normative and disciplined ways of knowing. Rhythmic reading practices, which are embraced by many theorists, gesture to and complement a range of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and decolonial projects that are interested in generating conversations across multiple scholarly inquiries (rather than being beholden to a singular disciplinary tract).²⁴ Through noting conversations among readers and writers, for example, a rhythmic reading practice asks that we work through ideas *together*, inducing a rhythmic return to and rereading of the text in newly synergetic ways. Rhythmic reading is thinking together, always, even when we do not realize that we are doing such. Even when conversations bring forth moments of forgetting—moments where someone asks, “What page or section was *that idea* on again?”—it is precisely these lapses that initiate a discursive rhythm prompted by memory, return, and the sharing of ideas. In rhythmic reading—which is performative and thus, in part, biological act—we recognize that *we think together* and are, at times, suspended from linear textual structure, moving and flowing alongside the ideas of friends, colleagues, students, teachers, and authors before returning again to reread the text anew. These intimate conversations parallel the flipping back and forth we often enact as readers—when we review footnotes, bibliographies, and our own thoughts as we read the main text—highlighting the relational, multisited, and nonlinear foundation to rhythmic reading practices.

Rather than formulating discrete projects, Césaire, Fanon, Senghor, and Wynter are rhythmically working together. It should not go without notice that in the moment Senghor speaks “I feel therefore I am,” he is speaking in relation to the works of Césaire.²⁵ It should also come as no surprise that when Fanon writes of the “shameful science!” of racially linked genes, he soon finds resolve within the basic element of rhythm within humanity.²⁶ As many readers know, Fanon begins *Black Skins, White Masks* with a guide-quote by Césaire, one that speaks of “*millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement.*”²⁷ Many of these references ask the reader to sit with the multiple rhythm(s) offered by anticolonial thinkers and other texts and stories as they/we seek out liberation collectively. These processes—collaboration with a view to liberation—repliate the very structure of Wynter’s work, as she not only begins many of her essays with interdisciplinary guide-quotes but also deliberately thinks across and through ideas comprehensively. The centrality of collaboration within her

project, as exemplified by her guide-quotes, bibliographies, notes, and reading practices, also offers an opening to study Wynter's work as rhythmic praxis.

While this forum attends to Wynter's work in relation to American studies and the twenty-first century, we offset this by arguing that Wynter's rhythmic work with Césaire, Fanon, and Senghor unfolds into a different recourse. More specifically, Wynter's work asks that we contend with the *unfinished anticolonial* demands made by her, her colleagues and contemporaries, and their predecessors. This is not a nostalgic or anachronistic return but a grappling with the interdisciplinarity of radical black thought as an ongoing projection of humanity. It is not, moreover, a question of *inserting* science of the word into American studies in the early twenty-first century but of how its analytics—bios-mythois—redefine the human and therefore provide a rhythmic outlook that restructures, even if momentarily, our wholly racialized world. The "America" in American studies entraps with its monumental US-specific shadows (just as it seeks to promise that nation's undoing); the interdisciplinary inventions and interventions offered by Wynter and others demand a different kind of intellectual project that does not begin with, and is thus not bound by, disciplined geographic particularities but, instead, enters the conversations from a different (relational, chaotic, rhythmic) angle. This moment—how and what and where we are living now, where the oft-cited Man defines the human and provides the conditions to annihilate alternative ways of being—is punctuated by biocentricity. Our collective biocentric knowledge system, iconized by (normalized) white supremacy and racial–sexual violence and ongoing practices of ecocide (all of which are so often conceptualized as distinct acts rather than interconnected processes that uphold racial capitalism) is why science of the word is especially urgent. If, indeed, rhythm and relationality underpin science of the word as we note above, then what Wynter offers is an intertemporal, intergeographic, interhuman, co-relational, interdisciplined analytic refusal of colonial time-space. Indeed, it is her commitment to a cadence that lays bare the ways science and poetics are melded that opens up not what she can *offer* existing systems of knowledge (including American studies), but what she *does* to who and what we are.

Césaire, Fanon, Senghor, and Wynter provide us with a set of instructions. They ask us to look to the creative as not only a reimagining of what it means to be human but also a politicization of what it means to *share* knowledge. While we have worked toward identifying the provocations that science of the word invites, we end by acknowledging that much of this work is messy and unfinished. This brief, intimate, and incomplete rhythmic process of reading and collaboration, however, fleetingly animates the provocations and potentials

of bios-mythois. This is a witnessing *through* rather than a witnessing *about*, one that dances across the intimate, conversational, rhythmic engagement of Césaire, Fanon, Senghor, and Wynter's scholarship so as to offer one way to imagine the world differently.

Notes

- The authors would like to thank Anthony Bayani Rodriguez, the referees, and our colleagues in the graduate seminar Gender Studies 801—all of who provided wonderful insights into the writings of Sylvia Wynter.
1. Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désètre: Black Studies toward the Human Project," in *Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 117–18.
 2. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Paula Chakravartty and Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism—an Introduction," *American Quarterly* 64.3 (2012): 361–85.
 3. See Wynter on gender and genre, too: Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory," 117, 130–31; Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, To Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 33.
 4. See Wynter on autopoiesis: Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 25, 28.
 5. Kamau Braithwaite, "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Proem for Hernan Cortez," *England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly* 7.4 (1985): 454.
 6. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
 7. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 328–29.
 8. Aimé Césaire, "Poetry and Knowledge," in *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946–82*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), xlii.
 9. *Ibid.*, xliii.
 10. *Ibid.*, xlii.
 11. *Ibid.*, xliii.
 12. On Wynter's discussion of the Fanonian leap of sociogeny, see Sylvia Wynter and Greg Thomas, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," in *The Caribbean Women Writer as Scholar*, ed. Keshia N. Abraham (Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2009), 33–34; David Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000): 189; Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 46, 50, 53–54.
 13. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 2008), 4. We capitalize Nature and Culture when following and referring to Wynter's writings specifically.
 14. Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 25.
 15. Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience," in *National Identities and Socio-political Changes in Latin America*, ed. Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 42.
 16. Sylvia Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 4.2 (1970): 35, emphasis in the original. The original quote is from Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Le problème de la culture," in *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 93. In her later work, Wynter offers versions of Man, although we collapse them throughout this essay for reasons of clarity. See Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 257–337.

17. Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," 35.
18. The term *sentiment-idée* is theorized in many of Senghor's essays. We are working from Senghor, "La littérature Africaine d'expression Française," in *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 400–401. Senghor's *sentiment-idée*, which directly translates to "feeling-idea," speaks to his search for the sensual qualities of Black art, be it the auditory dynamics of the rhythm and music within the poetic verse or the visual translation of one's inner thoughts in the lines, shapes, and colors of paintings. Senghor maintains, for example, that the novelty of poems is their *sentiment-idée*, as it functions based on the dramatic progress, limits, and absences of rhythm.
19. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Éléments constitutifs d'une civilisation d'inspiration Nègro-Africaine," in *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 281. All quotes from Senghor have been translated into English by the authors.
20. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Comme les Lamantins vont boire à la source," in *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 221.
21. Here we nod to the grooves across Wynter's interdisciplinary work (dance, poetry, fiction, theory).
22. L. H. Stallings, *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Katherine McKittrick, "Rebellion/Invention/Groove," *Small Axe* 20.1 (2016): 79–91; Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
23. Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," 38.
24. See, for example, Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
25. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "L'apport de la poésie nègre au demi-siècle," in *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 141.
26. Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, 91, 93.
27. *Ibid.*, 1.