

HERETICAL SCRIPTS:
SYLVIA WYNTER & THE DECOLONIAL ATLANTIC

by

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Abstract

In the early twenty-first century increasing attention has been brought to the critical thought and writings of novelist, scholar-activist, and Black Studies professor, Sylvia Wynter. Wynter's work from the 1960s onward is distinguishable in the ways that it consistently advocates the need for cultural workers, scholars, activists, and educators to challenge the overrepresentation of modern, Western, anti-Black/anti-Native, and purely bioeconomic conceptions of "the human." This dissertation presents a sociobiographical account of Wynter's experience of, and participation in, "decolonial" intellectual communities in Britain, the West Indies, and the United States. "Heretical Scripts" situates Wynter's early body of work within the context of those critical intellectual communities that emerged in the wake of West Indian national independence struggles, and the early post-Civil Rights Movement period of the United States. The critical intellectual formations covered by this dissertation include: the Black Matters Committee (BMC), the Institute of the Black World (IBW), Third College at the University of California (TC-UCSD), the Caribbean Arts Movement (CAM), the New World Group (NWG), U.S. based radical Black feminist women writers, Institute NHI, and numerous others. Also at the center of this intellectual history are key moments in the twentieth-century "decolonial Atlantic world" that are the cornerstone for Wynter's critique of the disciplinary division of the Humanities, and her excavations of the epistemic foundations of modern regimes conquest/settler colonialism, nation-building, and empire. "Heretical Scripts" advances on recent interdisciplinary engagements with Wynterian thought in the early twenty-first century, and also contributes to broader efforts in American Studies and Ethnic Studies to document the history

of collective and collaborative decolonizing intellectual activity among the various structurally subordinated populations of the twentieth and early twenty-first century Atlantic world.

Introduction

Admired by pan-Africanist/Marxist scholar, cultural critic, and political theorist C.L.R. James in the late 1970s as “the greatest mind the Caribbean has ever produced,” Sylvia Wynter has produced a corpus of writings over the past five decades that thoroughly vivisection the epistemological foundations of modern Western racial regimes of conquest, settler-colonialism, nation-building, and empire. Wynter's transdisciplinary critical intellectual activity since the 1950s has included fiction-writing and poetry, stage and radio acting, teaching and activism, cultural criticism and critical historiography.¹ Wynter's creative literature, public lectures, and essays (much of which remain unpublished and undercirculated) may very well represent one of the most significant collections of work on the history of modern, bourgeois, Western, anti-Black/anti-Native humanism by any single Anglophone Caribbean theorist in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.²

¹ This comment is found handwritten in the margins of a transcription of 1977 lecture by Sylvia Wynter located at the C.L.R. James archives of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union in San Fernando, CA. Derrick White references this transcript in his “Black Metamorphosis.” James speaks in similarly glowing terms of Wynter in a 1979 interview found in the anthology *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1979). In an 1980 interview with Daryl Cumber Dance, conducted in James' home in San Fernando, Trinidad, James again comments on his admiration for Wynter, stating: “I want to mention one woman, a West Indian woman; she is a writer of history and a critic of politics; she is a professor at Stanford University; her name is Sylvia Wynter. When you talk about women writers in the Caribbean, I would say she would be up on top, and second to nobody” (Ed. Dance, *New World Adams: Conversations with West Indian Writers* (England: Peepal Tree Press, 1984).

² Anthony Bogues, Paget Henry, Aaron Kamugisha, David Scott, Karen Gagne,

Wynter's early intellectual life crosscuts the twentieth-century Black radical tradition's multiple articulations throughout critical intellectual geographies across the post-World War II Atlantic world. More than just a project of intellectual biography, this dissertation elaborates on the transnational connections and interactions between decolonizing cultures of the early postcolonial/post-Civil Rights Movement period between the 1950s and late 1970s. Wynter's intellectual life during this time presents a unique archive for exploring these trans-Atlantic decolonial intellectual communities because of her involvement in them, and also, because her migrations between the Caribbean archipelago, Britain, and the United States offer a vivid impression of the ways that the idea of "decolonization" - as a process of transformative social and epistemic possibility - found fertile ground in cultures of social inquiry created by structurally subordinated peoples across the boundaries of nation, and between colonies and metropolises. This biography traces moments in Wynter's early intellectual life throughout the Atlantic world where she encountered decolonial political imaginations - from her childhood to her retirement as a university professor in 1995.

The contribution of this dissertation to existing scholarship is two-fold: First, it provides a historical and social context that can accompany current and

forthcoming engagements with Sylvia Wynter's critical thought; secondly, by interfacing anticolonial intellectual cultures that emerged in Britain, the Caribbean archipelago, and the United States between the 1950s and 1970s, it traces the transnational contours of a "decolonial Atlantic world" during a period of twentieth-century history characterized by the massive wave of global-historical social movements by colonized and structurally dehumanized peoples seeking to secure futures beyond the organizing logics of empire, capitalism, White supremacy, and bourgeois humanism. These were social movements facilitated by the liberation struggles of colonized and structurally marginalized communities that imagined new conceptions of human collective social potential. Above all, this dissertation expands on the history of the twentieth-century decolonial Atlantic world through the life of a Black woman intellectual whose philosophies on human social potential originated in the cultures of inquiry that were produced by the historic critical intellectual communities that she participated in during her early life as a novelist, playwright, cultural critic, and Black Studies professor.

On “the Heretical”

Drawing from the general notion that heretical discourse is that which threatens the orthodoxy of a dominant/paradigmatic system of thought, a number of scholars in Latin American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Black/Caribbean studies have deployed “heresy” as an analytical framework for studying the radical intellectual traditions of Western modernity's racially and economically subordinated populations. Caribbean intellectual historian and critical theorist Anthony Bogues offers a compelling argument for studying the radical Black/Third World intellectual tradition, in particular, as nothing short of a heretical political tradition in relation to Western modernity's dominant (state-sanctioned) epistemic regimes:

When we use the word “heresy” to describe the actors of the black radical intellectual tradition, in what sense do we mean it? First, there is the sense of challenging orthodoxy. Black radical intellectual production oftentimes began with an engagement and dialogue with Western radical political ideas, and then moved on to a critique of these ideas as their incompleteness was revealed. Fanon's famous remark that one always had to stretch Marx when dealing with the colonial situation is apropos here. In other words, black radical intellectual production engages in a double operation – an engagement with Western radical theory and then a critique of this theory. In this sense black radical intellectual production is, to use Bourdieu's word, “unthinkable,” breaking the epistemic limits established by the Western intellectual tradition. We are now well aware of the disciplinary dimensions of orthodoxy, which fashions subjects into a specific set of social practices and customs – in the Spanish Inquisition, making the Muslim a Christian. For the black

radical intellectual, “heresy” means becoming human, not white nor imitative of the colonial, but overturning white/European normativity – in the words of Robert Marley, refusing “what you wanted us to be.” Third, for the black radical intellectual, heresy is a constructive project, sometimes developing a different set of political and social categories.³

Heresy is an appropriate way of describing the interventions of anticolonial, anticapitalist, and radical humanist Black intellectuals, such as Wynter, because of the ways in which these “Black heretics” have experienced and resisted the limitations of Western modernity's ruling political-, cultural-, and social-knowledge systems. Neil Roberts additionally argues that the analytical framework of heresy is befitting precisely because it captures the dialectical tension between “center and periphery, non-liminal and liminal ideas, and normative and heretical belief systems.” For Roberts, heresy is descriptive and appropriate for the study of the Black radical intellectual tradition because it articulates both the various regimes of state-sanctioned and extralegal repression experienced by Black radical intellectual communities throughout the history of Western modernity, and, as well, their coinciding commitment to radical and revolutionary (antiracist, anticapitalist, anticolonial) human social transformation. In the past decade scholars from across the disciplines have insisted on the relevance of Wynter's critical thought to the kinds of

³ Bogues 2003: 13.

epistemological questions that have been continually asked by generations of late twentieth and early twenty-first century scholars, activists, cultural workers, institutionally sanctioned, and “organic” intellectuals. Scholars such as Alex Weheliye, Karen Gagne, Demetrius Eudell, Carolyn Allen, Carol Boyce Davies, and Denise Da Silva, have each enlisted Wynter's distinctive theoretical frameworks in their respective ways, yet arrive at similar conclusions about the heretical implications of her calls for a native radical theory of social transformation based on the singularity of our peculiar racial development in the Western world, and therefore of a new conception of human freedom.

Decolonial intellectual history is a field of scholarship that is centrally concerned with elucidating the transcultural tradition of radical anticolonial, anticapitalist, antiracist, and revolutionary humanist social and political thought, which has emerged along side and against modernity's various large-scale regimes of conquest, slavery, colonialism, genocide, nation and empire-building, mass displacement and confinement, and social control. This dissertation argues for Wynter's belonging to this heretical intellectual tradition of trans-Atlantic decolonial intellectual activity through an exploration of the social and political contexts of her early intellectual life. Wynter's biography calls attention to the ways in which twentieth-century radical anticolonial intellectual struggles were

propelled not only by published manuscripts and manifestos, but also creative literature, critical essays, journalism, public education (both within and without the university), and collective and collaborative grassroots struggles for social transformations. My approach to the study of the transnational dimensions of Wynter's early intellectual life is framed by a mode of "contrapuntal analysis" put forth by cultural theorists such as Edward Said and Stuart Hall. A contrapuntal analysis of this sort advocates that proper attention be given "to chains of causation and conditions of existence, to questions of periodization and conjuncture," and "not just celebratory of a general and undifferentiated" presence of colonized and structurally dehumanized peoples and communities.⁴ A contrapuntal analysis maintains a concern with the specificities of historical experiences to time, place, and local culture, but also pays attention their "connection with, and difference from, other histories."⁵ Thinking "contrapuntally" offers a critical means to "think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others."⁶

⁴ Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain" 23.

⁵ Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain" 23.

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 18, 32.

Furthermore, such a mode of historical inquiry expands our knowledge of the “intertwined and overlapping histories” of decolonial intellectual movements that have emerged throughout and across the margins and metropolises, peripheries and centers of contemporary Western imperial geographies.

In setting out to construct an intellectual history of Sylvia Wynter's early life as a critical intellectual, this dissertation situates her philosophies of human freedom and democracy in relation to distinct cultures of decolonizing inquiry that she both participated in, and critically engaged over the course of her early intellectual life. The heretical contours of Wynter's early intellectual life show that throughout the post-World War II Atlantic world, communities of artists, activists, and scholars were in a multitude of voices calling for a fundamental questioning of the limits of Western modernity's prevailing conceptions of human social normalcy (and potential). Wynter's early intellectual life by no means provides complete portrait of decolonial trans-Atlantic intellectual cultures, but it does offer a rich, transnational story of a significant albeit understudied Caribbean intellectual who both witnessed and participated in some of the post-World War II decolonial Atlantic's most politically impactful intellectual formations. The questions that Wynter asks in her corpus of writings echo those questions that a transnational cohort of radical anticolonial artists,

activists, and writers who brought to the fore of their respective critical intellectual labor. To explore the intellectual biography of Wynter is thus also to provide a partial impression of a yet to be fully explored decolonial political geography that made its presence known at a moment where the seemingly (and, legally/literally) contractual obligations of racial-capitalist and colonial order was forcefully dismantled by the collective and often collaborative mass upheavals of racially, politically, and economically dehumanized peoples from across the boundaries of nations, colonies (internal and external), and metropolises. Above all, this project of intellectual history maps – historically and geographically – the migratory routes and transnational scope of what I call the “Decolonial Atlantic Tradition.”

Archive & Chapter Breakdown

I have chosen to focus on Wynter's life in the West Indies, Britain, and the United States because these places were the setting for much of Wynter's critical thought and writings between the 1950s and the 1990s. These sites were home to communities of critical social inquiry that have figured prominently in Wynter's early twenty-first century writings. Articles from *The Jamaica Daily Gleaner* between 1947 on through the 1980s have been particularly informative with

regard to Wynter's political and intellectual activity during the period that this dissertation covers. Wynter's prolificness as a contributor to seminal post-independence Caribbean journals like *Savacou*, *Jamaica Journal*, and *The Daily Gleaner* along with her involvement in conferences, public lectures, and editorial collectives were additionally a valuable resource for tracing the trajectory of her critical intellectual life in relation to those decolonial intellectual communities that she was in conversation with throughout the 1960s and 1970s. I draw from interviews conducted in 1971 (Dance), 1981 (Pond), 1985 (Stanford University archives), 2001 (Scott), 2003 ("a charge to keep"), 2006 (Greg Thomas), and 2013 (Rodriguez), as well as from the biographical content of Wynter's nearly five decades worth of critical writings.

The period between 1947 and 1995 covers the beginning of Wynter's life as a professional writer all the way to her retirement as a university professor in 1995. Chapter 1 considers the relationships between Wynter's early work as a scholar, playwright, and radio actress and the flow of decolonizing intellectual cultures from the Caribbean to Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. Chapter 2 situates Wynter's early life as a cultural critic, university professor, and public intellectual within the context of radical grassroots social movements in the Caribbean that sought to transform the whole of society. Chapter 3 explores

Wynter's involvement in student movements for Black and Ethnic Studies, during the 1960s and 1970s. Chapter 4 examines the questions, concerns, and motivations for a period in Wynter's life in which she produced a collection of essays that are the foundation for what I describe as a distinctly "Wynterian" theory of the human and critique of the humanities. The concluding chapter elaborates further on the contributions of this intellectual sociobiography and the emergent field of "Wynterian Studies" to current discussions in Decolonial Theory & History, the fields of American, Black, and Ethnic Studies, and to the Critical Humanities broadly.

Chapter I

Sugar and Salt

*[T]here is nothing that I am that did not come out of that movement...
that movement when everything was shaken, when the order was shaken.⁷*

⁷ Sylvia Wynter, interview with David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: an Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe*, 8 (2000): 119-207.

Like many Jamaican-born workers struggling to find employment during the years following World War I, Percival Wynter and Lola Maude migrated to Cuba with the hope of securing positions as sugar laborers. Their realization that unemployment was an epidemic faced by workers across the Caribbean archipelago, soon brought Wynter and Maude back to Jamaica, but not without a new addition to their family: a two year old named Sylvia, who was born during their sojourn in Holguin, Oriente in 1928. Struggles over labor in the 1930s reached historic intensity during the 1930s, and Sylvia Wynter's youth in the Caribbean was to be defined by a moment and context where, as she puts it, "everything was shaken, when the order was shaken."⁸ The political education that Wynter and a generation of Caribbean people were receiving, just by witnessing the day to day anti-systemic protests that swept throughout the archipelago, was one that had profound effects on the popular culture, political organizing, and critical intellectual labor of subsequent generations.

Recalling the marches of the Kingston poor and unemployed demanding work and government accountability for social welfare, as well as the public clashes between rival trade unions and the two incipient political parties during her youth, Wynter notes in a 2002 interview:

⁸ Sylvia Wynter, interview with David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: an Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe*, 8 (2000): 119-207.

It was as if you were suddenly in a different dimension. All at once, here were people...acting and counteracting, challenging the government...All in all, the whole sense of activity, of a self-initiated new beginning - I would say that movement determined everything I was going to be or have been. Day after day, one was seeing people on the streets, just ordinary people on the streets, challenging a system day after day. You're getting the news...you were seeing the headlines in the newspaper the next day. You're riding to school on your bicycle and people are marching and countermarching, the asylum is on fire, and all kinds of things are happening, strikes breaking out, pitched battles between rival trade unions, parties erupting, the colonial state under siege.⁹

The questions that preoccupy Sylvia Wynter's writings from the 1960s onward originate in her childhood experiences in colonial Jamaica and her migration to London. To come of age in the Caribbean during the 1940s and 1950s was to encounter at every level of one's daily life the impact of unprecedented mass rebellions by the region's poor and laboring classes against the colonial order. These "twilight years" of twentieth-century Caribbean social movements revolved around protests against high rates of unemployment, appalling labor conditions, widespread impoverishment, and inadequate housing and living conditions despite structural reforms instituted by the region's plantation elites

⁹ Qtd. in Scott 125. Caribbean political historian Anthony Bogues argues that these insurrections "should really be viewed as a regional mass uprising which begins with the 1935 oilfield workers of the Trinidad hunger march led by Uriah Butler. Between 1935 and 1938 there were numerous strikes and mass protests in the anglophone Caribbean, which **shook** the British colonial system" (). For an overview of the strikes and mass protest see Bolland (2001). Bolland, O.N. *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Press, 2001)."

in response to the First and Second World Wars. Among the British Empire's colonial territories, these region-wide antisystemic social movements (and smaller scale struggles that preceded them) were part of a protracted resistance to new forms of labor exploitation and political disenfranchisement orchestrated by the region's plantation elite over a period of nearly one hundred years following the official abolition of slavery by the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.¹⁰

The first major strikes in the West Indies occurred on sugar estates in Honduras and Trinidad in 1934, and St. Kitts in 1935.¹¹ The following year dock workers and banana carriers began staging major strikes in Jamaica. Soon afterward, the 1937 oil workers strike in Trinidad turned into a general strike that led to uprisings in Barbados, which escalated when the British deported key labor leader Clement Payne. In 1938, another major strike occurred in Jamaica when the Frome Estate of the West Indies Sugar Company announced job

¹⁰ By the late nineteenth century racial-capitalism in the West Indies was characterized by a colonial economy of peonage, sharecropping, tenant-farming, forced labor, penal labor, and the importation of “coolie” laborers from South Asia, East Asia, and the Philippines. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1983) 164.

¹¹ The adoption of marxist political ideologies by a select cadre of Black West Indian and African American anticolonial political elites and intellectuals in the early twentieth century certainly belongs to the genealogy of Black radical intellectual tradition. For more on the making of the Black Marxist tradition, see Cedric Robinson's seminal work, *Black Marxism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1983), George M. Frederickson's *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), and Robin D. G. Kelley's *Hammer and Hoe : Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

openings, offered only a few positions to hundreds in search of work, and subsequently led to mass protests in the streets.¹² These along with several other popular struggles would forever alter the political, cultural, and intellectual landscape of the region.

At the same time that this postwar Caribbean political geography was rife with multiple and often contradicting visions of the postcolonial future of the region, the cumulative militancy and regional scale of the political struggles of peasants, workers, and political leaders during this time propelled the formation of radical intellectual movements throughout the Atlantic World that set out to explore “decolonization” as a process of radical social possibility.¹³ This period of social upheaval was the context for the rise of anticolonial nationalist struggles, and for the Left it represented an era of region wide resistance to the social effects of colonial domination in the twentieth century that reiterated the

¹² Sharon C. Sewell *Decolonization and the Other* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholar Publishers, 2010) 18-19.

¹³ When in response to disturbances by protest in the colonial territories, the British Government formed the 1938-39 West Indies Royal Commission, better known as the Moyne Commission. One member of the Commission, Sir Walter Citrine, described his observations of day to day social life the late 1930s West Indies in no uncertain terms, “I felt that if Britain could do no better for these poor, simple, and patient folk than we were doing I for one would not wish to keep them in the British Empire...I felt I could never again hear talk of our “trusteeship” over the coloured peoples without a felling of shame at the callous way in which we had neglected them. I was so burning with indignation at the neglect I saw everywhere, and the stories of poverty I heard, and the wretched houses which I couldn't miss seeing, that it made me depressed and sick at times.”

capacity for structurally subordinated peoples to engage in collective and collaborative actions that could potentially transform a society.¹⁴

* * *

Children of post-World War I Jamaica who could afford to attend school experienced the sociocultural effect of nationalist struggles not only in their homes and on the streets, but also, all throughout the schools and classrooms of Jamaica's colonial education system. For the generations of Jamaican children leading up the 20th century, the colonial education system was oriented primarily towards training youth into being loyal and controllable commodities and laborers. In the face of burgeoning shifts towards the abolition of slavery in the early nineteenth century, Jamaica planter elites, as early 1810, began responding by focusing on the education of black boys and girls as the first step in preparing them to peacefully integrate into their roles as the colony's first

¹⁴ From 1918 to 1923, during the height of their development as organizations, the UNIA and ABB constituted the most formidable Black liberationist political movement in the history of the Americas. The organizational cadres of both the UNIA and ABB consisted largely of West Indians and Afro-Americans who took up professions in as social activists, journalists, and propagandists (Robinson 215). For more on the international influence of Garvism see Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1983), Theodore Vincent's, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*. Berkeley (Calif.: Ramparts Press, 1971), George M. Fredrickson's *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and the numerous writings of Robert Hill and Tony Martin.

generation free black workers. During the brief “apprenticeship” period (1833-1840) leading up to abolition in 1834, much of the white ruling-class believed that the children of apprentices were “bred up in absolute idleness” because their apprenticed parents “took too much care of their children, going to the extreme of over indulgence.”¹⁵ Parliament shared this sentiment, and was certain that the future economic prosperity of the colony rested on “a smooth transition from slavery to freedom,” which ultimately “depended on educating and socializing Afro-Jamaican children.” Holding onto the notion that “increased knowledge and civilization [could] enlarge their ideas, improve their morals and manners...and render them good subjects and fellow citizens admitted to respectability of character,” post-abolition Parliament provided Jamaica with funds to reinforce the education of the island's children by building more schools and recruiting more instructors from London.¹⁶ The emphasis of government inquiries such as the Lumb Report of 1898 on the need for singular focus on agricultural training during the post-abolition period, was indicative of the centrality of the education system to the colonial elite's efforts to counteract the

¹⁵ Qtd. By Colleen A. Vasconcellos, “ ‘To Fit You All For Freedom’: Jamaican Planters, Afro-Jamaican Mothers and the Struggle to Control Afro-Jamaican Children during Apprenticeship, 1833-1840,” *Citizenship Studies* (Feb 2006, Vol. 10, No. 1) 64.

¹⁶ Vasconcellos 64.

mass migration of laborers from the countryside to urban centers in seek of work, and, more generally, its efforts to suppress those political, social, and cultural trends that were seen as a threat to the stability of the colonial economy and way of life.¹⁷ Eventually, increased resistance among elementary schools to any form of purely agricultural training, brought gradual changes that sought to balance “intelligent interest in agriculture and handicrafts” with lessons in British literature, cultural history, and Scripture, and additionally, for boys, on practical fields like science, and girls, on “domestic science.”

The kinds of opportunities for education available to children of Wynter's generation is indicative of the major ideological shifts taking place in post-World War I Jamaica's political system, which began in the early twentieth-century.¹⁸ Marlene Hamilton argues that in the one hundred year period between the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the mass workers rebellions in the 1930s Jamaican colonial education could be summarized in the statement, from a debate that took place in the 1894 proceedings of the Jamaican Legislative Council: “Let them receive such an education as would benefit their station in

¹⁷ Hamilton 137.

¹⁸ The experience of the colonial education system and its legacies in other social and cultural institutions is a central topic in the critical thought of various twentieth century Caribbean radical intellectuals. For more on the topic see Paula Makris “Beyond the Classics: Legacies of Colonial Education in C. L. R. James and Derek Walcott,” David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity*,

life.”¹⁹ Wynter's journey through the pipeline of the Jamaican education system coincided with the political-cultural shift initiated by post-World War I Jamaican nationalist political parties. Receiving a government scholarship at the age of nine to move from Ebenezer Elementary School to St. Andrews Highschool for Girls in Kingston, Wynter was among a generation children who experienced first-hand the effects of the creole nationalist elite's efforts to change the secondary schools from "being comprised of students with the 'ability to pay' to students with the 'ability to benefit from' the education offered" (1994).²⁰ Because much of the Jamaican education system remained thoroughly modeled after the educational curricula of British schools, the conditional terms of “ability to benefit” were symptomatic of the creole elite's desire to provide professional and political training to a new and “native” professional managerial class to take up the reigns of the rapidly disintegrating (white, British) planter elite.²¹ Again

¹⁹ Hamilton, Marlene, "The Availability and Suitability of Educational Opportunities for Jamaican Female Students: An Historical Overview." In *Gender: A Caribbean Multi-Disciplinary Perspective*, ed. Elsa Leo-Rhynie, Barbara Bailey, and Christine Barrow, 133-143. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997. Qtd. by Hamilton 137. From *Proceedings of the Jamaica Legislative Council: Debate on the Montego Bay High School for Boys, 1893-94*. This statement “held true particularly for the elementary school, where, in addition to reading and recitation, writing and English, arithmetic and Scripture, provisions at the turn of the century named manual training and agriculture,” which Hamilton notes, was “open to girls.”

²⁰ See Figure 1. Burchell Whitemen, Minister of Education and Culture of Jamaica confirms this.

²¹ For more on the political economy of the Jamaican education system, see Henrice Altink's “The Case of Miss Leila James B.A.’: Class, Race, Gender and National Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Jamaica,” *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History*, 10.1,2009. Public debates about the color and class prejudice of the selection committees of such educational

recognized in 1946 by the Minister of Education as an exceptional Afro-Jamaican youth who could contribute to the rapidly emerging nationalist movement through higher education, Wynter was declared a recipient of the Centenary Scholarship, which provided her with the opportunity to continue her studies in London.²²

Wynter's experiences as a child of sugar laborers amidst historic struggles against the colonial order, and as a subject of the colonial education system's mission to cultivate a generation of "creole intellectuals," are important prefaces to her subsequent life as an artist, intellectual, and scholar-activist in Britain and the United States. While certainly intertwined with the aspirations of the creole nationalist elite to train its "native" political/cultural intelligentsia, Wynter's early positioning within the pipeline of the colonial education system as a potential

scholarships for children took place most notably with the case of future nationally recognized social worker and educationalist Leila James, who, in 1912 became the first girl to win the Jamaica Scholarship (which provided her with a £150 per year scholarship to study in England). Controversy emerged when it was decided one year after James won the Scholarship that in addition to taking the Cambridge Senior Local Examination, applicants were to be subjected to an interview by a selection committee that would judge the applicants "personal qualities." Henrice Altink notes that "this change in the rules for the Girls' Scholarship led to a major public debate in which many islanders argued that the change was caused by the fact that a 'little dark-skinned girl of humble origin' – Leila was dark-skinned and her father was the dispenser of the Kingston mental hospital – had won the first Scholarship" (1). The government was accused not only of color and class prejudice, but also of gender discrimination because the girls scholarship was lower than that offered to boys.

²² St. Andrew High School for Girls subsequently declared a holiday when Wynter was declared a recipient of the prestigious national award.

intellectual asset to the emergent creole ruling elite was perhaps one the more significant factors that made possible her subsequent life as a student and professional dramatist in London between 1947 and 1961.²³ These memories and experiences cast a palpable shadow in her later and more well-known critiques of the University and the Humanities, along with her calls to move beyond the purely bioeconomic forms of humanism that have accompanied the unfolding of global modernity.

* * *

Wynter became part of an emergent generation of university educated women who would represent the first substantial cohort of Caribbean women to become professors, fiction writers, and public intellectuals. While composed predominantly by university educated men, the campuses, political organizations, and literary communities that constituted the Caribbean Left intelligentsia during the 1940s and 1950s presented an arena of critical social inquiry in which aspiring Caribbean women scholars and writers like Wynter found opportunities to share their critical intellectual labor.²⁴ Although the

²³ See Figure 2.

²⁴ John Gaffar La Guerre describes the political comportment of the Caribbean Left during the

number of Caribbean (and West African) women in London remained small until the 1940s, among the formally educated minority of this community of immigrant women was a generation of West Indian women writers who would begin to grapple with experience Caribbean decolonization from within the metropole.²⁵ Among the subsequently more well-known women students also from the West Indies during the duration of Wynter's fourteen years in London, were Beryl Gilroy who attended University of London between 1951 and 1953 to study Child Development, Elsa Goveia and future diplomat Jamaican Lucille Walton (later Mathurin-Mair) who both entered the University of London in 1945, and Jean D'Costa who received advanced degrees at Oxford University in

1930s: "In West Africa, both British and French, the left comprised the odd University graduate, the letter writer, the school teacher and at times the newspaper writer. In the Caribbean a similar pattern prevailed. In both the British and French Caribbean the left embraced the University graduate, the lawyer or doctor the publicist, and the self-educated or wide reader. Such a group was understandably heterogeneous but what united them above all was an anti-imperialist position. They were all agreed that colonial rule meant subordination, discrimination and under-development. The solutions they proposed consisted of a timetable for eventual self-government, a better deal for workers, and greater access by the middle-class to the higher offices of the state. This was the programme that was described as left. To be left in the context of the colonies during the thirties was to be opposed to the Government. This is why O'Reilly in Trinidad was dubbed a "Socialist" when he advocated self-government for Trinidad and Tobago. The equation of leftist with the niceties of Marxism was to be the preoccupation of a much later generation." ("The Moyne Commission and the Jamaican Left," *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Sept 1982) 60-61.

²⁵ Even prior to Wynter's sojourn to London in the late 1940s, West Indian exiles in London like George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Una Marson, and Amy Ashwood Garvey played decisive roles in making London into a de facto principal source of communication for those in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States that were eager to know of the "colonial issue" that stretched across the imperial geographies of the mid-twentieth century Atlantic.

1962.²⁶ Paralleling the migrations of West Indian and West African intellectuals to Britain were also their migrations to the United States, where they collaborated with students and faculty at American universities involved in early Black studies initiatives, as well as at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like Howard University.

After earning a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages at King's College from 1947 to 1949, Wynter went on to pursue a Masters Degree from the University of London. She graduated in December 1953 with recognition as having produced a groundbreaking contribution to the historiography of early modern European social ideology, with her thesis edition of Antonio Enriquez Gomez's Spanish Golden Age comedia, "A Critical Edition of Antonio Enriquez Gomez's *A lo que obliga el honor*." This thesis reflected Wynter's interest, from early on in her academic career, with excavating the historical and cultural genealogies that paralleled the colonization of the Americas and the making of the "New World" settler colonial project by Western modernity's imperial powers. Victor L. Chang contends that Wynter's thesis work was praised by her colleagues and mentors "as being a scholarly work of real importance in a crucial

²⁶ The centrality of HBCUs to the flow of radical ideas from throughout the Atlantic world is striking, and is a topic that beckons for further inquiry.

and relatively unexplored field."²⁷ Wynter's research interests as a student were foundational studies that would reappear later on in her writings during the 1980s and 1990s on the conquest of the New World and the founding of modern Western humanism. Amidst the burgeoning of revolutionary Panafricanist visions and manifestos about the future of decolonization from across the Black Atlantic, Wynter's interests in exploring the origins and contexts of late Western modernity was perhaps of marginal interest to most anticolonial West Indian intellectual circles. As part of the early acts of substantial critical inquiry that Wynter would produce, this interests in approach that would persist in subsequent decades of her intellectual life and work. Ultimately, this early scholarship was a critical precursor to her subsequent interests in literature, drama, and cultural criticism, areas of interest that distinguished Wynter's critical and creative writings from the 1960s onward.²⁸

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The disintegration of the colonial order in the Caribbean, from the 1940s to the 1960s, occurred during a major historical juncture in what scholars of the

²⁷ Ed. Daryl C. Dance. *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) 498.

²⁸ Upon leaving the university in 1948, Wynter briefly shifted her energies away from academic research and towards theater productions, both as an actress and a writer of stage plays.

African diaspora have termed “the black Atlantic.” Caribbean national independence movements paralleled both the civil rights and Black Power movements in the US, the rising concern of the British government and white British citizens regarding the post-war nation's “colour problem,” and the opening phase of popular struggles against the apartheid state in South Africa. All told, this was a post-World War II context in which local struggles by the poor and working-classes throughout the mid-twentieth century Atlantic World converged as a powerful force advocating radical social transformation.

As with a number of Europe's major colonial metropolises, London in the 1950s saw the arrival of a wave of migrant workers and students from across the colonial territories of the British empire.²⁹ Among the new rising populations of “dark strangers” or “coloured visitors” from Britain's colonies were West Indian migrants who, in the face of the deteriorating economic and political conditions of the post-war West Indian territories, looked outside their islands for opportunities for employment.³⁰ Nearly half a million West Indians migrated to

²⁹ Schwartz 13-14. Schwarz notes, “Those who journeyed from the Caribbean recall that they became West Indian (as opposed, say, to Antiguan or Guyanese or St Lucian) in London or Birmingham: indeed for many of them this was part and parcel of *becoming black*. In the 1950s, especially, West Indian identity in which the realities of the diasporic experience reverberated deeply – an identity, in fact, given special force by those who had departed their Caribbean homelands. Cultural institutions in the Caribbean, consciously seeking to fashion a new collective West Indian identity free from the trammels of colonialism, called upon West Indian writers wherever they were to be found.”

³⁰ Ruth Glass notes, in her 1960 study *Newcomers: The West Indians in London*: “West Indians are

Britain from their respective homelands between 1948 and 1970. Many of these migrants arrived in the metropole seeking better opportunities for employment to support themselves and their families, some to work for a while, save money and return home, some who had been recruited by British government to fill the shortage of laborers needed to run the metropole's transport system, postal service and hospitals, and also too those West Indians service men who returned after fighting for the British during the Second World War (1939-1945).³¹ This postwar migration was a key moment in the twentieth-century diaspora of Caribbean peoples, and by the middle of the 1960s the anglophone West Indian population in Britain exceeded that of any single Caribbean territory other than Jamaica and Trinidad.³² Bill Schwartz contends, “[t]o live as an immigrant, on the

used to traveling in search of work, but the desire to go to Britain has only recently become strong. Already in the 1880's there was a large-scale movement from Jamaica to work on the Panama Canal, which remained the main reception area for Jamaican emigrants for some thirty years, followed in importance by the United States and Cuba. With the completion of the Canal in 1914, the United States became the main receiving area until 1924, when immigration was restricted by American legislation. Generally speaking, for the next 20 years the net movement was inward, and the Caribbean territories did not become exporters of population again until after World War II” (6).

³¹ Among the earliest substantial sociological studies of West Indian migrants in post-World War II Britain is Ruth Glass' *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London: Centre for Urban Studies, 1960) and Sheila Patterson's *Dark Strangers: A Study of West Indians in London* (London: Penguin, 1963). Marika Sherwood's *Many Struggles: West Indian workers and service personnel in Britain, (1939-45)* (Karia Press, 1985) is exemplary of the more recent contributions made to the historiography of the lives and political struggles of West Indian immigrants in mid to late-twentieth century Britain.

³² Schwartz 13-14.

home ground of the imperial nation, required many mental transformations, all of which depended on the capacities to interpret the signs and symbols of their new environment. It required that West Indians quickly learned the dispositions of the unspoken, invisible world about them – that they became, essentially, practical readers of the culture of the British. Despite the occasional plea from C.L.R. James, we should not be led into supposing that that the forms of knowledge which resulted were unique to West Indians, a function only of their particular historical past and thus unavailable to colonials from other parts of the empire. We know that this was not so. But nor should we underestimate what was specific to the West Indian situation.”³³ In their metropolitan homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and places of leisure, this first significant wave of West Indian immigrants to arrive in London confronted on a daily basis, and throughout the various geographies of their social lives, the British government's interarticulated logics of antiblack racism, xenophobia, imperialism, and white ruling-class warfare. Far from merely accepting the racial order of British social life, these migrant communities organized collective protests at work and in the streets, and, at the same time, established self-governing cultures of co-interdependence involving child care, religious worship services, education, and

³³ Bill Schwartz. *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 12.

even intracommunity banking.³⁴ Operating at “the front line...of the unofficial work of decolonization,” Caribbean migrants of 1950s Britain projected, in a multitude of ways, their hopes about the decolonized future of their colonial homelands as well as their new homes in the metropole.³⁵

The movement of peoples and ideas from the Caribbean archipelago to the British Isles could be felt in other aspects of London's cultural landscape. Cedric Robinson has noted that the late nineteenth and early twenty-first century British Empire's Black migrant populations from Africa and the Caribbean did in many instances secure opportunities in the metropole to receive advanced training and pursue professional careers.³⁶ The invasion of Abyssinia by Italy in October 1935 was one event in particular which prompted the intensification of anticolonial and Panafricanist political discourse among Britain's exiled and migrant international community of Black intellectuals. Worker's uprisings taking place throughout the West were also reverberating with the struggles over labor

³⁴ Sandra Courtman “Fed Writer to Literati or How does Louis Shore get to be a Jean Rhys,” *Federation* (Spring 1996 Vol. 7) 8. Courtman notes further, “Caribbean women without a university education did not confine their energies to dealing with the daily pressures of establishing a home and a life, they joined writers’ and literacy groups and sought a means of expression to deal with their cultural dislocation” ().

³⁵ Schwartz 13-14.

³⁶ Robinson's seminal study of the Black radical intellectual tradition offers a vivid trans-Atlantic portrait of the kind of decolonial intellectual activity that was occurring in the decades prior to the arrival of Wynter and the post-World War II generation of migrant Caribbean workers, artists, and intellectuals in Britain. See Robinson's *Black Marxism* 260-262.

occurring in the colonies Europe's imperial powers. At the same time, Pan-Africanism was being infused with energy from anticolonial, antiracist, and labor organizations and activists based in Great Britain. Prominent groups included the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), the West African Student's Union (WASU), and the International African Service Bureau (IASB). The IASB was formed in London in 1937 by a group that included the Trinidadian Marxists George Padmore (the nephew of the 1900 Pan-African Conference convener Henry Sylvester Williams) and C.L.R. James; the future Kenyan leader Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta; the student leader I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson from Sierra Leone; and the British Guianan Pan-Africanist T. Ras Makonnen. The IASB was the galvanizing force for the creation of the Pan-African Federation (PAF) in 1944, which provided a "united front" infrastructure for bringing together labor, anticolonial, and student organizations (with the notable exceptions of the WASU and LCP) from Britain and British-held Africa and which eventually played a key role in shifting Pan-Africanism's institutional and ideological gravity from United States and West Indian civil rights and economic uplift organizations to British and African anticolonial and labor groups. At the World Trade Union Conference in London in February 1945, members of the PAG and black delegates from left and labor organizations in the West Indies, British Guiana,

African, and Europe demanded a universal application of the self-determination clause of the Atlantic Charter, reforms in the colonies, an increased role for labor in postwar planning, and representation in the United Nations. After reconvening for a weekend meeting in Manchester, site of much black and anticolonial activism, conference delegates, members of the IASB, and others called for a Pan-African Congress, coinciding with a second World Trade Union Conference in Paris that September. They hoped their efforts could be coordinated with the NAACP's and Du Bois's. Yet this group stressed the need for more African and labor representation. They also planned to invite to the conference "fraternal delegates from Asia and the Middle East," as well as "sympathetic whites" as nonvoting delegates. IASB founders Padmore, Kenyatta, and Wallace-Johnson were on the "special international conference secretariat," under the direction of Dr. Peter Milliard, which was also given the task of producing a manifesto to present to the United Nations. Joining them was Nkrumah, still based in the United States."³⁷

Panafricanist and future leader of Ghanaian independence, Kwame Nkrumah arrived in London in May 1945 to pursue his doctoral studies at the London School of Economics and soon after became an active member of the

³⁷ Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Race Concept at Midcentury* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 113-14.

West African Students' Union (WASU).³⁸ That year he helped organize the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, which further led to founding of the short-lived albeit unprecedented Panafricanist and anti-imperialist organization, West African National Secretariat (WANS). Writing his most well-known works across the Channel, in Paris, where he had expatriated in 1946, was novelist, poet, short story writer and essayist Richard Wright. Also in Paris during this time was Wright's Left Bank comrade and fellow expatriate writer and social critic James Baldwin. Not far from Wright and Baldwin, in Lyon, Martinique-born revolutionary anticolonial humanist Frantz Fanon was just beginning his doctoral studies in psychiatry, which culminated in 1951 with his doctoral thesis, "Essay on the Disalienation of the Black"; this thesis was ultimately rejected by Fanon's department, but was published soon after as *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952.³⁹ After being deported from the United States during the McCarthy period, Communist journalist Claudia Jones made her way to London in 1955, where she started *The West Indian Gazette* and *Afro-Asian Caribbean News* (two highly influential sources of Afrodiasporic news in

³⁸ WASU was founded on 1925 by Ladipo Solanke and Herbert Bankole-Bright as a social, cultural and political focus for West African students in Britain interested in obstacles faced by West Africans. For more on WASU see Philip Garigue's 1953 "The West African Student Union, A Study in Culture Contact" (*Africa* Vol 23. No 1, 55-69).

³⁹ Fanon also wrote a number of plays during this time. There are unfortunately no known manuscripts of his plays available. See David Macey's biography.

Britain), and the London Carnival, which has since become known as the Notting Hill Carnival.⁴⁰ Trinidadian Marxist-Panafricanist C.L.R. James, deported from the United States in 1953, was in London studying the mass upheavals of laborers and the poor throughout eastern Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and United States; these were studies that were a motivating factor for his return to the Caribbean in 1958, after an absence of twenty-six years. Anne Grimshaw explains that James' consciousness of the revolutionary promise these world wide uprisings led him specifically to the Caribbean because, "he was anxious to make the Caribbean people aware that they were indeed at the forefront of the struggle to found a new society – one, James anticipated, which would reflect something fundamental about the movement of world society as a whole."⁴¹ Guyanese historian Elsa Goveia was a student in the history department at London's University College and the Institute of Historical Research, where she was writing her 1952 doctoral thesis, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, a foundation piece for her pioneering work on the history of the West Indian colonial-plantation-slavery regime. Also

⁴⁰ Carole Boyce Davies, "Sisters Outside: Tracing the Caribbean/Black Radical Intellectual Tradition," *Small Axe* (28, March 2009) 217. See also Carole Boyce Davies' *Left of Karl Marx* (), and Bill Schwartz' "Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*': Reflections on the Emergence of Post-colonial Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* (Vol. 14, No. 3, 2003) 264 -285.

⁴¹ *The C.L.R. James Reader* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Press, 1991) 18.

active during this time was antiracist feminist activist Una Marson, who after arriving in London in 1932 went on to lead campaigns on Black women's issues (including discrimination in the nursing profession) as secretary to the League of Coloured Peoples, and in 1941 became a host on BBC radio's "Calling the West Indies," a show in which she helped Caribbean-born service men and women stay in touch with their families during the Second World War.⁴²

More than just a cornerstone to her early intellectual biography, Wynter's life as West Indian migrant in 1950s London paints a portrait of the vast cultural and epistemological effects that the flow of capital, goods, people, and ideas between the colonies and metropolises of the post-World War II Atlantic had on the imaginations and critical intellectual practices of a generation of artists,

⁴² There was also Una Marson, who was During the Second World War Una Marson became the BBC's first black programme maker. She volunteered as an air raid warden in her spare time. Una arrived in London from Jamaica in 1932. She was secretary to the League of Coloured Peoples and campaigned on black women's issues such as discrimination in the nursing profession. In March 1941 Una was appointed as programme assistant on the BBC's Empire Service. She later became presenter of BBC radio's 'Calling the West Indies' through which she helped many service men and women from the Caribbean stay in touch with their families during the war. Portrait of Una Marson from the BBC's Empire Service's weekly listing journal, 'London Calling', 1943. The Empire Service (or Overseas Service) broadcast to parts of the British Empire, including the West Indies and Africa. Courtesy of Stephen Bourne 16 Una was widely respected and counted literary figures such as George Orwell and T. S. Elliot among her BBC colleagues. Her international circle included prominent African Americans, such as writers Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson. Una died from a heart attack in Jamaica in 1965. In 2005 she was awarded a Southwark Blue Plaque. (excerpt from Cumming Museum resource pack for exhibit *keep Smiling Through: Black Londoners on the Home Front, 1939 – 1945*, p. 16 – 17). For more on Una Marson see Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson 1905-65* (Manchester University Press, 1998).

scholars, writers, and activists, who ultimately forced the Atlantic world to reckon with the contradictions, and radical conditions of possibility, represented by the idea of Caribbean/Third World decolonization. "The typewritten novels and poems in their suitcases, their mimeographed manifestos, their music: all were testament to the depth of of emergent anti-colonial sensibilities. Formally or informally, explicitly or implicitly, the case for West Indian independence (and, indeed, for federation) registered in the public culture of the metropolis. As they unpacked their bags, hawked their manuscripts around the little magazines of the capital, went on the stump agitating against the injustices in far-off islands, they were improvising new lives for themselves, creating new possibilities for those whom they encountered, and decolonising the world around them."⁴³

The broadcasts of Jamaica's first radio station became part of Wynter's life early on, when, in 1938, Jamaica founded its first radio station. Jamaica's first broadcast radio station was established by the British Rediffusion Group in 1938. Rediffusion services centered primarily on the rebroadcast of the British Broadcasting Company's radio programming. By the early 1950s, Wynter had witnessed the flourishing of broadcast radio as a critical source of post-World War II mass media and entertainment. For emerging Caribbean-born writers like

⁴³ Schwarz 3

Wynter, growing interest between the colonies and metropole in the creation of a distinctly “West Indian” cultural production during the 1950s presented a creative forum to participate in the unofficial work of decolonization. Most importantly for emerging writers like Wynter, a postwar boom in book publishing coincided with heightened public interest in the English speaking West Indian nations. West Indian perspectives on their tropical homelands as well as their experiences as immigrants in British society found a ready market in the metropole, even if they included direct and indirect critiques of colonialism.⁴⁴

Aspiring artists, actors, writers, and cultural workers arriving in Britain from the Caribbean in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s found a range of opportunities open to them, especially if they lived in London.⁴⁵ Radio was one important venue of mass media by which this generation of Caribbean artists found employment, and also a critical forum by which the popular experience of Caribbean struggles for national independence was projected in British and

⁴⁴ Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Arts Movement, 1966-1972* (London: New Beacon Press, 1992) 11.

⁴⁵ “Better known entertainers included Ken ‘Snakehips’ Johnson from Guyana, Adelaide Hall and Elisabeth Welch from America, and Leslie ‘Hutch’ Hutchinson, a star of the cabaret circuit, from Grenada. The singer Evelyn Dove was born in London with African/ British parents and often made broadcasts for the BBC. In addition to entertaining the troops and munitions factory workers, many entertainers were employed by the BBC. They regularly made broadcasts for light entertainment programmes. In 1943 singer Adelaide Hall had her own series ‘Wrapped in Velvet’. In 1944 the Trinidadian folk singer Edric Connor arrived in Britain and began making broadcasts for the BBC. He was keen to raise the profile of the British West Indies.”

Caribbean public culture. After attending University of London Wynter found work as a writer and voice actor for the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Caribbean Voices radio series (active from 1943 to 1958).⁴⁶ In addition to providing regular, open access to radio publication for West Indian writers, Anne Walmsley notes that Caribbean Voices also served as “a fledgling school in creative writing, and a broad based literary club.”⁴⁷ Wynter's most significant work as a dramatist was done for the BBC radio drama, “The University of Hunger” (1960), which chronicled the struggles of three inmates in the penal colony of French Guiana to escape their doubly confined existence as prisoners and colonized peoples. Cowritten with (her then husband) novelist Jan Carew, Wynter added female characters that were not in the original play to the 1961 television adaptation, renamed “The Big Pride,” which was commissioned by the ITV for its Drama '61 series.⁴⁸ Film historian Stephen Bourne observes, “Like

⁴⁶ “Meanwhile Caribbean Voices continued to provide regular, open access to radio publication. It was also in effect a fledgling school in creative writing, and a broad-based literary club.” (Walmsley 11-13). Those involved in theater productions included V.S. Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, John Figueroa, Henry Swanzy, Pearl Connor, Nadia Catto8se, Carmen Munro, Edric Connor, Sam Selvon, Errol John, Errol Hill, Derek Walcott, Lloyd Reckord, Mervyn Morris, Barry Reckord, Bari Jonson, Jan Carew, Evan Jones.

⁴⁷ Walmsley 12.

⁴⁸ Jan Carew qtd. in Stepehn Bourne's *Black in the British Frame*. (London: Continuum, 2001) 70. Wynter's creative writing mostly was done from her family's home in Wimbledon. Carew, who was a highly regarded novelist to emerge from Britain's migrant community of West Indian writers, notes in a 1958 article from *Radio Drama* (see **Bourne files**). Carew published his novel about postcolonial Guyana, *Black Midas*, in 1958.

many of the first plays written by the first generation of Caribbean writers settled in England, the play is located in the Caribbean and addresses political issues that would be immediately understood by a West Indian audience also trying to survive the frequently hostile climate of 1950s England.”⁴⁹

Among her most notable roles as a radio actress was for Trinidadian born writer, actor, and director Errol John's radio adaptation of his award winning play “Moon on a Rainbow Shawl” (1955), retitled for BBC radio as “Small Island Moon” (1958).⁵⁰ Described by English theater critic Kenneth Tynan in 1957 as a “hauntingly, hot-climate, tragi-comedy about backyard life in Trinidad,” “Small Island Moon” was one representative example of the efforts of West Indian dramatists to bring the lived experiences of the Caribbean people to the attention of British eyes and ears.⁵¹ By the late 1950s Wynter became part of an important generation of emerging African, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean poets

⁴⁹ Stephen Bourne. *Black in the British Frame*. (London: Continuum, 2001) 69-70. The television adaptation of the play – *the Big Pride* – was commissioned by the British International Television Authority's (ITV) *Drama '61* series. The recording that was made of *The Big Pride*, remained forgotten until Stephen Bourne persuaded the National Film and Television Archive to find and restore the film for the public. Bourne notes “It is a unique visual record of the work of two important black dramatists, for very few examples of the early television plays of Africa-Caribbean writers have survived. Among those lost for ever are three by Trinidadian Errol John: *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, *The Dawn* (1963) and *The Exiles* (1969).”

⁵⁰ A recording of *Small Island Moon* is available at the BBC's Sound Archive.

⁵¹ Qtd. by Bourne 120.

and novelists in Britain whose work centered upon the historical significance of anticolonial nationalist struggles that swept the mid-20th century planet.

* * *

Wynter's arrival in London in the late 1940s was part of the migration of a trans-Atlantic community of workers, activists, scholars, and artists who were exchanging and debating ideas about decolonization and anti-racist social transformation. This was a critical juncture in Afrodiasporic grassroots struggles that would carry into the 1960s, and were key in the development of unprecedented revolutionary socialist, internationalist, and anti-imperialist Black/Third World political organizations throughout the Western hemisphere. These foundational movements by colonized and structurally subjugated peoples in the metropolises of the West were nevertheless paralleled by growing insecurities among governments and ruling-classes who saw these cultures of grassroots activism and social criticism as threats to the hegemony of postwar white/European, liberal, capitalist society.

The seismic shifts that occurred in the entire political, economic, social, and popular cultural contours of the Caribbean archipelago, were critical to the radicalization of the political imaginations of Wynter and of anticolonial

intellectuals throughout the Atlantic world. In London Wynter saw the arrival of an international community of expatriates, exiles, and students from colonies in Africa, South Asia, and the Americas, who were beginning to create communities of cultural production that reflected on the structural and epistemological burdens of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized.⁵² A second generation of anticolonial Caribbean, West African, African American, and South Asian migrants expanded their view of what “decolonizing” political struggles meant in relation to the emerging post-independence, post-Civil Rights, neoliberal, neocolonial age. As a critical transit point for dissident writers in exile from the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean, the beginnings of Wynter's life as a writer-intellectual in London shed light on the influence that decolonizing struggles in the Caribbean had on the political imaginations of anticolonial, anti-imperialist, antiracist, and anti-capitalist Black intellectuals, artists, activists, and workers throughout the post-World War II Atlantic World.

These politicohistorical contexts of the post-World War II “decolonial Atlantic” are the cornerstone of Wynter's subsequent life as an anticolonial intellectual. Wynter comments in a 1980 interview, “My growing up coincided with the [Caribbean] region coming to consciousness. And therefore, when I

⁵² See *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain & West African Intellectuals in Britain*.

started writing, I never had any hesitation about what were the questions I wanted to answer. It's always been that in a way, and it's still that to a certain extent.⁵³ Wynter was among a minority of these West Indian migrants who arrived as university students, aspiring writers, artists, and academics whom traversed the pipeline of the colonial education system to study in the metropole's major cities, such as London, and would propel an important wave of self-identified "West Indian" art, literature, and scholarly research for the decades to come. Wynter's education as a British colonial subject in Jamaica and London along with her disappointment in the direction of Caribbean nationalist political struggles served a significant stimulus for her to begin asking "fundamental questions about the nature of history and the discourses by which societies produce and maintain order."⁵⁴ Wynter's intellectual life in London during this historic moment in twentieth-century Black internationalist and anticolonial history was furthermore defined by the radical political and intellectual cultures that were to form a crucial foundation for the decolonial humanist perspectives that she would begin to explore later on as a cultural critic from the 1960s to the present. Wynter's life in London remains a key moment in

⁵³ Dance 299.

⁵⁴ Demetrius Eudell and Carolyn Allen. "Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity" *Jamaica Journal*. Vol 10 Nos 1 & 2. 1

the development of her decolonial literary praxis. The presence of Black internationalist consciousness along with the anticolonial nationalism and social justice activism of newly identified “West Indian” workers in London during the 1950s was a defining force in the cultivation of unprecedented cultures of critical social inquiry among writers, artists, academics, and public intellectuals. Embracing questions regarding the future of decolonization and radical democratization in the West, these intellectual cultures constituted a key part of the transnational superstructure that carried radical visions of social transformation across the liminal geographies of the West's colonies, as well as in the very heart of their respective metropolises.

Wynter's early life as a student, playwright, stage and radio actress, are part of the genealogy of her subsequent inquiries as a cultural critic and decolonizing intellectual from the 1960s onward. Although this period of Wynter's life was beyond the bounds of the university, as well as beyond traditionally accepted understandings of “activist” work, Wynter's life in London must be seen in relation to the burst of intellectual-activist activity represented in the work of Black artists, thinkers, and workers across the Atlantic world that were in some form or fashion documenting and interrogating their experiences of the shift from more direct systems of colonial governance to what would later

be described as “neocolonialism.” They must also be read in conversation along with the historic struggles by the structurally subordinated to channel these shifts towards radical social transformation. Though Wynter's life in London as a student and a dramatist constitutes only a small part of her over five decade long journey as a critical intellectual, the political contexts that paralleled her early development as a writer undoubtedly set the tone for her commitments to decolonizing intellectual labor in the decades to follow.

Although Wynter's influence as an anticolonial writer and public intellectual was to truly begin only upon her return to the West Indies in 1961, and with the publication of her 1962 novel *The Hills of Hebron*, her life as a playwright for British radio and stage during the 1950s coincided with an extraordinary burst of literary and artistic productivity from exiled and migrant Caribbean writers like herself.⁵⁵ She was importantly one among a first

⁵⁵ “Most of these writers first worked on BBC Colonial Service as broadcast journalist before publishing their first novels, and later contributed to a BBC radio programme “Caribbean Voices.” Published by Longman and Faber, as well as newly established presses keen to attract new voices in the context of a post-war publishing boom, Caribbean writers were reviewed to critical acclaim by leading periodicals and the mainstream press. Their South Asian contemporaries, Kamala Markandaya and Attia Hosain also published their first novels in 1950s Britain, achieving quieter critical success. In the immediate aftermath of Britain's withdrawal from India in 1947 and Sri Lanka in 1948, there was not a wide constituency or readership for writing on India or empire, which was no longer an immediate concern. In contrast Caribbean writers became important figures in London's literary scene by translating post-war, urban themes of migration, race-relations and the waning of empire into high culture.” Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison eds, *The Post-War British Literature Handbook* (London: Continuum Books, 2010) 179.

generation of self-identified “West Indian writers” including Orlando Patterson, Merle Hodge, Beryl Gilroy, George Lamming, Andrew Salkey, Sam Selvon and V. S. Naipaul, whose individual works shared in common an exploration of the lived experience of the colonialism in both the colony and in the metropole.⁵⁶

Although Wynter has not been properly recognized as part of the early generation of West Indian artists of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), her activity as a playwright and cultural critic during the late 1950s and early 1960s demonstrate that she belongs among an early generation of “exile” West Indian artist-intellectuals in London who would set the stage for the founding of CAM by West Indian writers and artists Kamau Brathwaite. Including Wynter in this early prehistory of CAM adds not only to the richness of the scholarly archive on this artistic movement, but also to Wynter's body of critical writings. Although not conventionally viewed as modes of critical intellectual labor, Wynter's early activities as a student, actress, and writer for British radio and theater, were undoubtedly influenced by and influential of the broader transatlantic geography of Caribbean decolonial culture of the post-World War II period leading up to achievement of national independence in the region from the 1960s onward. This aspect of Wynter's early intellectual life shores up some of the

⁵⁶ Other notable Caribbean women writer's that entered British universities at this time were Elsa Goveia and Lucille Walrond in 1945.

experiential archive that animates her later critiques of the Humanities and its “disciplinary division of the study of the human.”

Chapter II

“What, in our context, is history? What is our context?”
History, Fiction & Radical Scholar-Activism in the Post-
Independence West Indies

Alienation in a neocolonial situation, in a world dominated by a handful of metropolitan mega-corporations, increases. It is our only truly national growth product, yet a growth product that links us in Jamaica to the equally neocolonialized Third World, to vast sections of the youth, and some sections of the workers and middle classes of the developed world themselves. They are born into a world in which for the first time the humanity of Mankind as a whole is questioned.⁵⁷

To reinterpret this reality is to commit oneself to a constant revolutionary assault against it. For me then, the play, the novel, the poem, the critical essay, are means to this end - not ends in themselves.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Sylvia Wynter "One Love — Rhetoric or Reality? — Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism ." *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Oct., 1972), 71 – 72.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Wynter "We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk about a Little Culture,"

Wynter's return to the Caribbean, in 1958, coincided with the intensification of anti-Black and anti-immigrant national antagonisms throughout postwar British society.⁵⁹ During the 1960s the United Kingdom (the primary outlet for West Indian emigration) severely restricted its intake of Commonwealth immigrants. By the mid-1960s, these restrictions had reached their maximum impact, causing Jamaicans, in particular, to shift their emigration outlets decisively to North America. Within the streets of London the emergence of a "law and order" regime of white supremacist governance was a palpable reality.

Significant moments in the crystallization of this distinctly anti-Black/anti-immigrant British national consciousness and public policy were the 1964 General Election campaign in Smethwick in which supporters of subsequently victorious Tory candidate Peter Griffiths circulated the slogan, "If you want a nigger for a neighbor - vote Labour." The racial contours of British immigration policy was announced with no uncertainty with the passing of the Immigration Acts 1968 - with their "second-class" and "partial" categories. The militancy by which the British government and white ruling-class sought to control the

⁵⁹ Veronica Marie-Gregg. *Caribbean Women: An Anthology of Non-Fiction Writing, 1890 to 1980* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 59-60. Wynter also spent time in Seville and completed research on ... She resumed this interest in essays she wrote later on, such as

presence and influence of its Black and immigrant populations was furthermore reinforced into a rallying cry in 1968, when Enoch Powell appealed to the racial insecurities of white British citizens in order to justify the intensification of the state's policing forces in a speech to the Conservative Party (which became widely known as Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech).⁶⁰ This surge of anti-Black and anti-immigrant white British sentiment reached a climax in London's streets in 1958 with outbreaks of violence by white mobs against the city's West Indian communities. In areas where large numbers of West Indians lived, such as Nottingham, there were attacks by white mobs amounting in the hundreds that left many Black/West Indian homes and neighborhoods vandalized, and in some instances, destroyed. The murder of Antiguan-born carpenter Kelso Cochrane by white youth in 1959, was one instance which ultimately prompted a government investigation into British "race relations," which was chaired by Jamaican Panaficanist Amy Ashwood Garvey. In the years that followed numerous grassroots campaigns were initiated which called for an end to stop-and-search "sus" laws that were a direct cause of the increase of police surveillance and brutality against Black, and predominantly male youths, as well as to the numerous instances of unprovoked violence by white British youth against South

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall "'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-war History.'" *History Workshop Journal Issue 61* 16.

Asian immigrants, which would become known in British street slang as “Paki-bashing.”

1960s Britain's burgeoning grassroots struggles against its various modalities of state-sanctioned racism, paired with the freedom and rights struggles of Black workers and activists from across the Atlantic (including the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa), made London an especially important meeting ground for internationalist visions of anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist social justice. The radical political ambitions of activists from the United States and the Caribbean during the 1960s was felt most palpably in instances such as the speeches of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X's during their visits to Britain; the formation of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) inspired by King and X's visits; and the appearances of Black revolutionaries like Trinidadian born Panafricanist and Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael, who arrived in 1968 to attend the Dialectics of Liberation Conference. The melding of Black Power ideologies from the Americas with the tradition of West Indian activism in London reached a high point between 1967 and 1972 with the transnational and local struggles initiated by the vibrant (albeit short-lived) British Black Power Movement, the formation of social justice organizations the British Black Panthers, along with the political

activities of numerous other anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist organizations.⁶¹

Across the Atlantic, paralleling the emergence of Britain's post-World War II anti-Black and anti-immigrant racial regime, Jamaica's social structure showed little change following independence in 1962. The growth of the middle classes in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the systematic marginalization and increased social and economic alienation for the poor and laboring classes. Middle class Jamaicans, both White and non-White, typically deployed racial explanations for the regions persisting poverty, placing blame squarely on the "backwardness" of the "African habits" of the poor/working-classes in order to distinguish themselves as the educated citizens of postcolonial nationhood. These years corresponded with Wynter's ten years in Britain, government officials and political leadership among numerous West Indian nations were beginning to abandon their own rhetoric about the virtues of democratization. Cary Fraser has argued that the evolution of U.S. policies toward the West Indies from the 1940s to the mid-1960s represents "a case study of American responses to the growth of non-European nationalism and the decolonization of European

⁶¹ For more on the history of the Black Power struggle in Britain see Anne-Marie Angelo's "The Black Panthers in London, 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* (Issue 103, Winter 2009) 17-35.

imperial systems.”⁶² In the view of many of the Caribbean left throughout the 1960s and 1970s, “independence marked the passage of these territories from British colonialism to American hegemony.”⁶³ The ideological division among post-independence West Indian nation's major political parties resulted in violent public clashes.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the emphasis of the Caribbean's leading political factions on “development” during the 1960s promised improvement in standard of living and quality of life, but, ultimately strengthened the forces of capital and the regions colonial terms of rule and order.⁶⁵

⁶² Fraser 203.

⁶³ Fraser 208. “The Jamaican Labor Party government, which remained in office for the first decade of independent Jamaica, was sensitive both to the concerns of the United States government and to social pressures which manifested themselves in the emergence of the Rastafari movement and in such events as the anti-Chinese riots of 1965. American concerns were driven by the exigencies of the US role in the Cold War. In the case of Jamaica, this meant fear of possible Cuban or other Communist influences. Foreign investment (particularly in bauxite and sugar), tourism, and the continued existence of ethno-racial minorities (particularly since some of them controlled much of the wealth of the island), were central concerns to the JLP prime ministers, Sir Alexander Bustamante, Sir Donald Sangster, and Hugh Shearer, as they presided over the government. They had been central concerns of the pre-independence PNP administration of Norman Manley (Gray, 1991: 38).” (Ledgister 81)

⁶⁴ For a detailed account of political warfare during this time see Terry Lacey's *Violence and Policing in Jamaica, 1960 – 1970* (Manchester University Press 1977) 82 – 99.

⁶⁵ Legister 84 – 85. “The two-party system, however, was the main means of mobilising the lower classes. In the mid-1960s, an increase in political violence (led, to a large extent, by Edward Seaga's efforts to consolidate control of his constituency) obliged the government to impose a state of emergency in West Kingston in 1966 (Waters, 1984: 69; Payne, 1994: 20). The JLP's electoral victory in 1967 might have seemed to indicate that the government was on the right course, but there had already been rumblings among the poor in different parts of the island. After the Henry incident of 1960, there had been a conflict between six Rastas and the police at Coral Gardens near Montego Bay in 1963 after the Rastas attacked a filling station there. In 1965, when a black employee at a Chinese-owned store in downtown Kingston claimed to have been beaten by her employers, anti-Chinese rioting broke out along the

The escalation of violence between Jamaica's rival party groups - namely the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP) - led the disenfranchised Jamaican poor and working-class to openly challenging the political parties and leaders of organized labor that had failed to place their social welfare at the forefront the post-independence national agenda. Though ideologically distinct in their discourse and policy, by the mid-1950s these two political parties become "cross-class, catch-all vote-getting machines."⁶⁶ An "unemployment explosion" particularly among Jamaica's youth and its aging-peasantry and the rapid urbanization of Jamaican society was the most immediate cause for the mass discontent and political agitation that could be felt among the post-independence poor and working-class. Among the more consequential events to occur during this time as a result of this structural alienation, were the Henry rebellion of 1960, the Coral Gardens uprising of 1963,

Spanish Town Road in west Kingston (Waters, 1984: 79). Even though the signs of discontent from lower class Jamaicans involved issues of race, both parties used appeals to class in their 1967 campaigns: the JLP presented itself as the party of the small man while the PNP emphasized the JLP's increasing orientation to the wealthy (Waters, 1984: 76-77). References to race were rare in that election campaign, and multiracialism and racial harmony were depicted as the norm (Waters, 1984: 79). Beneath the surface, however, things were different. It was perhaps in recognition of the need to acknowledge Jamaica's racial reality that Edward Seaga, as the minister with responsibility for culture, ensured the repatriation of the remains of Marcus Garvey and their entombment in a monument to the father of black nationalism in 1965; in that same year, the centenary of the Morant Bay Rebellion was commemorated by the proclamation that Paul Bogle and George William Gordon were henceforth to be National Heroes (Waters, 1984: 80)."

⁶⁶ Legister 82.

the anti-Chinese riots of 1965, violent clashes between supporters of the JLP and PNP during the state of emergency of 1966-67, and finally the Rodney riots of October 1968.

Faced with the question of how to control the dissident energy of the economically abandoned, politically dispossessed Black urban and rural poor, the early decades of post-independence Jamaica saw the continued implementation of colonial laws against “groups and individuals thought to be subversive.”⁶⁷ These counterrevolutionary political regimes in Jamaica were undoubtedly part of the broader wave of law and order regimes of domestic policing and racist social control that swept across Britain and the United States.⁶⁸ In addition to conflicts between the rival political parties, the post-independence ruling classes' anxieties and insecurities surrounding the unrest of the burgeoning urban slums led to the rise of state-sanctioned counterrevolutionary political violence.⁶⁹ The government sanctioned repression of grassroots

⁶⁷ Obika Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991) 47.

⁶⁸ For more on the political climate of Britain and the United States during the 1960s and 1970s see Stuart Hall's *The Empire Strikes Back* () and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's “Globalisation and US prison growth: from military. Keynesianism to post-Keynesian militarism”. For more on the devolution of national independence politics among the Jamaican middle-class see Louis Lindsay's “The Myth of Independence: Middle Class Politics and Non-Mobilization in Jamaica” (1975)

⁶⁹ F. S.J. Ledgister (2008): ‘Intellectual Murder’: Walter Rodney's Groundings in the Jamaican Context, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* (46:1) 81 - 83.

community activists, union leaders, rastafarians, and radicalized youth was foremost in the minds of radical Caribbean intellectuals of the period. Importantly, for West Indian intellectuals, artists, activists, and workers alike, these counterrevolutionary political regimes were a haunting reminder of the long lasting legacies of racial-capitalism and colonial governance in the region, even after the achievement of nominal independence. These contexts were furthermore the ground by which a tradition of decolonizing critical intellectual labor in the Caribbean was resuscitated and rearticulated to confront the “neocolonial” realities of the late twentieth-century Atlantic world order.

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If the anticolonial Caribbean that had cut across Wynter's childhood in the 1930s and 1940s motivated her activities in post-World War II London, her disappointment with the direction of post-independence politics and social life fueled her subsequent work as a novelist, essayist, and cultural critic from the 1960s onward. The decade following Jamaican independence in 1962 confirmed for many – including an emergent generation of anticolonial/anticapitalist Caribbean artists, activists, intellectuals, students and workers – that the achievement of nominal national independence hardly signified the completed

work of true decolonization.⁷⁰ Wynter's return to the West Indies in 1961 coincided not only with the widespread disappointment concerning the social realities of independence for Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago in 1962, but also with the growing excitement surrounding the collaborative political activity among communities of scholars, public intellectuals and social activists throughout the Atlantic world who were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the "neocolonial" direction of post-independence societies.⁷¹ Across the Caribbean emerged nationalist movements with political visions ranging from conservative colonial thinking, to revolutionary Marxism.

In British Guyana, where she first arrived upon her return to the Caribbean, Wynter was among numerous West Indian intellectuals from Britain

⁷⁰ The impact of the Bandung Conference in 1955 on the thinking of Third World intellectual communities like those Wynter encountered upon her return to the Caribbean, cannot be understated. Representing one of the most significant international gatherings dedicated to the twentieth-century planet's multitudes of racially and economically subordinated peoples, the Bandung Conference inspired a unprecedented wave of grassroots social activism, historical scholarship, fiction writing, and critical cultural production that posed important challenges to the neocoloniality of the postcolonial social life. The significance of the conference was furthermore the affirmation it gave (on an international stage) to Third World struggles for statehood, national sovereignty, and visions of radically democratic geopolitical transformation, all of which led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement. In its broadest impact, the conference captured the imagination of anticolonialists throughout the world with its insistence on the historical possibility (and necessity) of conceiving of new possibilities for the political futures of the formerly colonized peoples of the Third World, as well as for racially marginalized people living in the First World.

⁷¹ C.L.R. James was in Trinidad helping to organize the West Indian Federation, along with Lloyd Best, George Lamming, etc.

and the United States who traveled back to the Caribbean amidst the flurry of excitement and concern surrounding the post-independence future of the region. As a colony, Guyana was a pivotal location in radical West Indian political activity and thought and was, in the words of Nigel Westmaas, “a trial zone for potential new ideas and directions in post-colonial nation building.”⁷² Wynter's direct involvement in national politics began almost immediately upon her arrival in Guyana, where she was enlisted by Cheddi Jagan - a leading anti-colonialist, communist, and founder of the People's Political Party (PPP) - to write radio lectures that explained the economic budget to everyday working people. Wynter recalls:

I tried to speak to Cheddi [Jagan], I said that whilst I'd love to continue working there [in Guyana] it seemed to me that the greatest emphasis was to see if we could build a common history, place the emphasis on creating a sense of shared community, of solidarity, because it did not exist. But Cheddi at the time was a very orthodox Marxist, and to even suggest that the superstructure was not automatically determined by the mode of production but was constructed, so that you can reconstruct it, that would have been heresy for him, genuinely.⁷³

Writing the radio scripts from her home in the outskirts of Guyana's capital, Georgetown, Wynter witnessed first-hand the immense contradictions of racial,

⁷² Westmaas, “A Field of Ideas,”

⁷³ White 2010: 134.

ethnic, and class politics of dominant post-independence national political formations.⁷⁴ Tensions between Guyana's Black and Indian workers were particularly important in the development of Wynter's critiques of post-independence governance. In Wynter's view, the socialist platforms of the region's leading parties were far too limited in their understanding of the fundamental intersections of the region's histories of race, class, and ethnic formation. This was an important moment in Wynter's interrogations of the coloniality of dominant post-colonial Marxist paradigms as a heretical intellectual. Wynter comments, "like most of my generation, I was a Marxist because Marxism gave you a key which said look, you can understand the reality of which you're a part. A lot of my rethinking came out of that experience. It was not a matter of negating the Marxian paradigm but of realizing that it was one aspect of something that was larger."⁷⁵ Wynter's questioning of orthodox Marxism would be a significant factor in her marginalization by the Caribbean left intellectual community from the early 1960s onward.⁷⁶ The evolution of her heretical perspectives on the Marxist tradition would continue well into her

⁷⁴ White 2010: 134-135

⁷⁵ Qtd. White 2010: 134.

⁷⁶ Qtd. White 2010: 135.

journey to the United States in the 1970s, and would become a frequent topic in her scholarly and journalistic writings up to the late 1970s.

Wynter's critiques of the direction of post-independence Caribbean society were further nurtured in Guyana with her immersion in a diverse community of critical intellectuals who were taking up the questions directly and indirectly posed by the popular upheavals of the time. There is perhaps no better example of the immense political influence that self-identified "West Indian" writers like Wynter had as de facto social activists with truly regional influence, then the emergence and growth of the transnational community of Caribbean artists, activists, and scholars known as the New World Group (NWG), which was founded in Guyana in 1963.⁷⁷ The NWG described itself, in its early statements of purpose, as a "movement which aims to transform the mode of living and thinking in the region," and wished to challenge the "uncritical acceptance of dogmas and ideologies imported from outside and bases its ideas for the future of the area on an unfettered analysis of the experiences and existing conditions of the region."⁷⁸ The NWG was certainly a dissident voice in relation to the

⁷⁷ Nigel Westmaas " 'A field of ideas': The New World group, the Caribbean and Guyana of the 1960s."

⁷⁸ Qtd. In Nigel Westmaas "A Field of Ideas: the New World Group, the Caribbean and Guyana of the 1960s."

mainstream political visions and philosophies of the West Indian left. Responding to skepticism and often hostile criticism of their intellectual project, the New Worldists declared in 1965 that their perceived “radicalism” should be seen as “nothing more or less than the sustained application of thought to the matters that concerned us deeply – starting from a position free of restrictive doctrine...”⁷⁹

The beginnings of Wynter's early life as a public intellectual are most clearly marked by her immersion in the political culture of the NWG and the broader “second wave” of West Indian nationalist literary communities that emerged between the early 1960s to the early 1970s. Brian Meeks and Norman Girvan contend, “At its apogee, New World exceeded in conceptual and geographical scope any other Caribbean intellectual venture tried before its time or since. A quarterly journal of critical ideas was published in Jamaica; a fortnightly in Guyana; numerous pamphlets appeared on important social economic and political issues of the day; groups were formed in North America and throughout the archipelago, including Puerto Rico; and in Trinidad, New World moved from being a small circle of thinkers to approach the scale of a pre-party political formation. Its young membership, composed at the core of newly

⁷⁹ Qtd. In Westmaas.

recruited faculty of the University of the West Indies, was transdisciplinary in nature and held heterogeneous perspectives. However, it is fairly easy to define this healthy mix of ideas an inner core of commonly held 'New World' positions. These included a general assertion of sovereignty over the resources of the Caribbean region, the placing of 'the people' at the centre of the project of national and regional development and, despite the collapse of the federal experiment, the reassertion of the Caribbean as the broader canvas over which sovereignty should be exercised."⁸⁰

Among the more widely known West Indian born intellectuals to visit the region and participate in the NWG's activities during this time was Trinidadian-born novelist, cricket historian, and Panafricanist-marxist social theorist C.L.R. James, whose captivation with the worldwide uprisings taking place during the 1960s led him to the Caribbean, primarily because "he was anxious to make the Caribbean people aware that they were indeed at the forefront of the struggle to found a new society – one, James anticipated, which would reflect something fundamental about the movement of world society as a whole."⁸¹ Other notable members and associates of the NWG during its nearly decade long height of

⁸⁰ *The Thought of the New World*. Ed. Brian Meeks and Norman Girvan. (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2010) xi.

⁸¹ *The C.L.R. James Reader* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Press, 1991) 18.

prominence from 1963 through the early 1970s were: Lloyd Best, David de Caires, James Millette, Edwin Carrington, Norman Girvan, George Beckford, Miles Fitzpatrick, Roy Augier, Syl Lowhar, George Lamming, William Demas, Kari Levitt, Sandra Williams (later Andaiye), Clive Thomas, Havelock Brewster, Alister McIntyre, Donald Locke, Wilson Harris, Jan Carew, Martin Carter, Moses Bhagwan, and Jocelyn Springer. Wynter's limited direct involvement in the day to day activities of the NWG do not discount the influence that this historic formation and the turmoil that surrounded it had on her subsequent life as a critical intellectual. The NWG's enthusiasm for challenging the orthodoxies of the Guyanese Left followed Wynter to Jamaica, where similar communities of social criticism and activism were emerging throughout the streets and the universities.

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Wynter resumed her academic career in 1963, taking on a lectureship in modern Spanish history, at the newly founded University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona campus.⁸² This return to the halls of the academy occurred at a critical moment in the history of scholar-activism in the Caribbean, and placed Wynter in the center of the most important debates taking place among

⁸² Thomas 18

anticolonial activist-intellectuals of the time. The founding of the University of the West Indies in 1948 represented a real opportunity to provide higher education to an expanded segment of the population.⁸³ The formation of UWI was a venture of unprecedented scale and success, Gordon Rohlehr and others see the university of this period as rising from the ashes of the failed efforts at a West Indian Federation: “[It] was the only regional institution to survive the Federation...For West Indian [scholars] and students at UWI during the sixties, the Caribbean as a region became a slowly-emerging reality...As the decade wore on, there was a noticeable phenomenon: key West Indian academics would make their intellectual and often political contributions to territories other than their own...What this meant was that a West Indies had come into being for the academic, which had little meaning for the politicians” (Rohlehr 1974, iv).⁸⁴

Wynter began her career in the academy in a time and place where decolonial intellectual cultures like the NWG and the critical intellectual communities of the university stood as major forces along side the various social and political upheavals of the region. Behind the widespread radicalization of college students and faculty during this early neocolonial moment was a

⁸³ Legister 82.

⁸⁴ Veronica Marie-Gregg. *Caribbean Women: An Anthology of Non-Fiction Writing, 1890 to 1980* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 59-60.

recognition of the university's power as a site of mass political education. The interaction and collaboration between academics, writers, artists, workers and university administrators was a defining characteristic of the UWI campus during this period. Among Wynter's notable colleagues at UWI were poet George Lamming, pioneer of creole linguistics Mervin Allyne, novelist and sociologist Orlando Patterson, Edward Brathwaite and historians Elsa Goveia, Douglas Hall, and Fred Augier (who authored the first textbook on West Indian history written by West Indians).⁸⁵ The cultural and intellectual atmosphere that Wynter participated in at the Mona campus served as an extension of the political and cultural vibrancy and experimentation that was occurring throughout the Caribbean during the 1960s.⁸⁶ UWI, Mona was ultimately the

⁸⁵ German professor of African Studies Eckhard Breitingger gives a detailed account of the political environment at UWI during the 1960s in *Crab Tracks: Progress and Process in Teaching the New Literatures in English* (Rodopi: 2002) 16. Norman Girvan, also a student during this time, recalls: "I was privileged to first hear CLR at a lecture he delivered on the Mona Campus at the UWI in late 1959. I was a first year student, an impressionable youth, and the experience was unforgettable. His subject was The Artist in the Caribbean." ("C.L.R. James Memorial Lecture" at Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies in Valsayn, Trinidad Tobago May 12, 2011.).

⁸⁶ The University of the West Indies was formed as an autonomous regional institution supported by and serving fifteen countries in the English-speaking Caribbean – Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Christopher & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines and the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago. The University was established in 1948 initially in Jamaica, on the Mona Campus, as a University College (UCWI) in special relationship with the University of London, and it achieved independent University status in 1962. Formerly known as "the University College of the West Indies," the University of the West Indies became an independent institution the same year as the beginning of the West Indies move towards constitutional independence from Britain. The University of the West Indies was formed as an autonomous regional institution supported by and serving fifteen

place where Wynter began to focus her intellectual labor on exploring those questions that had defined the lives of multitudes of peasants, workers, artists, and intellectuals of her generation. It was as a faculty member at the university that Wynter first took on the work of confronting the disappointments of political independence, and it was also at the university where her life as a writer and critical intellectual began.

The political organizing of Jamaican students and academics like Guyanese activist Walter Rodney, who attended UWI as a student from 1961 to 1962, made an especially strong impact on Wynter's early commitments to teaching and cultural criticism.⁸⁷ Rodney campaigned extensively on campus for the the Jamaican Referendum on the West Indian Federation and also produced

countries in the English-speaking Caribbean – Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Christopher & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines and the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago. The University was established in 1948 initially in Jamaica, on the Mona Campus, as a University College (UCWI) in special relationship with the University of London, and it achieved independent University status in 1962.

⁸⁷ *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual*, introduction by Robert Hill, Forward by Howard Dodson (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990), 13. Rodney graduated from UWI in 1963 and went on complete his graduate studies in African history at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). While in London in the mid-1960s Rodney joined a study group led by C.L/R. James and Selma James along with other West Indian students like Norman Girvan. As a lecturer in the 1968 Rodney was banned from the country because his public advocacy for the social justice struggles of the country's working-poor, which caused a popular outcry and the "Walter Rodney Riots." See Anthony Bogues' "Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics," *boundary 2* (Vol.36, No 1, 2009) 127-147.

his first writings on slavery and Guyanese politics during this period.⁸⁸ In 1967, as a professor at UWI, Rodney was banned from teaching at the university by the Jamaican government as a result of his public criticisms of postindependence governance. Determined to challenge what he considered the philistinism of his peers in the academy, Rodney did not limit his public lectures on Afro-diasporic history, modern Western imperialism, and racial-capitalism to the auditoriums and classrooms of the university. In effort to interact with and provide political educations to ordinary Jamaicans, Rodney organized speaking and teaching engagements in locations through West Kingston, including sports clubs, local schoolrooms, churches, as well as the “gully corners” and “rubbish dumps” within which many of the Black poor created homes and sought refuge.⁸⁹ The widespread impact and popular support for these activities were the determining factor in the Jamaican government's refusal to allow Rodney re-entry into the island upon his return from the Congress of Black Writers in Montreal on October 15th of 1968.⁹⁰ The banning of Rodney led to a march of

⁸⁸ Horace Campbell. “Walter Rodney: A Biography and Bibliography.” *Review of African Political Economy* (No. 18, Special Issue on Zimbabwe, May - Aug., 1980) p. 132-137.

⁸⁹ Rodney, 1969: 64. See F.S.J. Ledgister's “‘Intellectual Murder’: Walter Rodney’s *Groundings* in the Jamaican Context.” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 46 (1), 79-100.

⁹⁰ Ledgister, 86. Ledgister adds, “Prime Minister Hugh Shearer told Parliament that Rodney had ‘openly declared his belief that as Jamaica was predominantly a black country, all brown-skinned, mulatto people and their assets should be destroyed’. While Gannon sees this as Shearer’s ‘exaggerating the significance of political rhetoric’, there is no evidence that Rodney

nearly nine-hundred students, faculty, and poor Kingstonians the following day. This three day protest was met by the violent counterinsurgent force of police, and led to a week long siege of the university by the police. The event was soon after known in local media and state discourse as the “Rodney Riots” of 1968.⁹¹

The removal of several non-Jamaican lecturers considered to be too politically provocative soon after the events of October 1968 led to a number of student organized protests and demands for “greater student participation and in and control of its administration,” along with proposals for the creation of new curricula that would decenter Eurocentric and colonial perspectives, with more emphasis on West Indian cultural and historical perspectives.⁹² The occupation of the UWI Creative Arts Centre (CAC) on February 22, 1970, by nineteen UWI students with specific demands for the “West Indianisation” of its cultural events, and for the democratization of university decision-making was one event that Wynter, and notable lecturers like her colleague, James Irish, openly supported. The radical democratic and Afro-Caribbeanist spirit of the demands of the CAC was a powerful reminder that the replacement of colonial tradition

said anything like this (Gannon, 1975: 311). Rupert Lewis cites a Special Branch officer who said that Rodney was banned because he ‘was charismatic at the grassroots level and had a following among intellectuals’ (Lewis, 1998a: 41).

⁹¹ Ledgister 92 -94.

⁹² Legister 84 – 85.

and forms of knowledge with the political and cultural desires of the West Indian poor and working-classes was an intellectual project with far reaching support.

The critical intellectual labor of dissident artists, activists, students, workers, and writers during the early post-independence decade of the 1960s did not cease in response to the intensification of counterrevolutionary state violence and repression in the decade to follow. It did nevertheless inspire anticolonial thinkers to find alternative means by which to engage Caribbean people in critical dialogues concerning the future of the region. For many activists and critical intellectuals, this involved creating underground political organizations. For Wynter and many others, the state and ruling-class' repressive violence against radical activists and public intellectuals was an impetus to begin waging critiques of post-independence nationalist Caribbean literature and culture. The growing interest in "West Indian" literature was of special concern to Wynter, who observed that dominant national narratives characteristically marginalized the "indigenous" histories and cultural traditions of the nation's poor and laboring classes. Creative literature and cultural criticism consequently became an important way by which Wynter could begin posing her own interrogations of the neocoloniality of post-independence Caribbean governance and everyday life.

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Anthony Bogues notes that Wynter's subsequent work as a fiction writer, critical theorist, and scholar builds specifically “upon black radical anti-colonial thinkers and theorists while striving to open up another set of theoretical frontiers through which we can both imagine and think about emancipation in the twenty-first century,” and also resonates with nineteenth and twentieth-century Black radical traditions that have sought to “establish a new set of political, social and knowledge categories which point to alternative ways out of the political, economic and the ideological and philosophical dominance of capital.”⁹³ Drawing centrally upon the inquiries of Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon, Wynter's preoccupation is in critiquing the genocidal exclusions of modern, Western, liberal humanism and establishing a “new grounds for being human” in a late twentieth and early twenty-first century (postcolonial, post-civil rights, neocolonial) geohistorical context.⁹⁴

⁹³ Bogues 2010: x.

⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon's radical humanist outlook stemmed from his view that psychological, psychiatric praxis in the context of Western modernity called specifically for a kind of *social* psychology/psychiatry that addressed the material and ontological conditions of colonialism. Thus unlike other psychoanalytic theorists of his time, Fanon did not seek to discover human psychology through instinctual, genetic, or intrapsychic reductionism. According to him, all human problems must be cast in a definite socio-historical and cultural context. The press and gravity of lived human travails imbued in him a keen sense of urgency and passion particularly as a result of his direct involvement and support of the Algerian liberation movement as well as other Third World liberation struggles (See Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan's

The emergence of a self-identified “West Indian literature” from the 1950s to the 1960s was a critical means by which post-independence society could begin to create new narratives about the political and cultural history of the region from the perspective of the colonized. It was a significant event in the cultural battlefield of not only the ruling-classes and leading political parties of the region, but also, for dissident intellectuals who were critical of post-independence governance. Perhaps the most important debates which Caribbean writers, intellectuals, and literary critics persistently engaged well into the early decades of the postindependence era were those concerning history – both in critiquing the history of colonialism as narrated by the “English tradition,” and in creating new modes of historical and cultural consciousness that could break from the colonial legacy.⁹⁵ This period saw the appearance of work by writers and cultural critics such as Orlando Patterson (*Children of Sisyphus*, 1964), Wilson Harris (*Tradition, the writer, and Society*, 1967), Louis James (*The Islands in Between*, 1968), Kenneth Ramchand (*the West Indian Novel and Its Background*, 1970), among other foundational texts.⁹⁶ A vibrant tradition of

Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression).

⁹⁵ For more on the significance of critical historical inquiry in Caribbean literary history see Nana Wilson-Tague's *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in Caribbean Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

⁹⁶ Gregg 34-35.

critical historical research and scholarship also crystallized, featuring the such works as Eric Williams' *Capitalism & Slavery*, Elsa Goveia's *A Study of the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Walter Rodney's *A History of the Guyanese Working People* (and his later major work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*) and Richard Hart's *The Origin and Development of the People of Jamaica*. Although Wynter's interest in "re-storying" the history of the Caribbean never coalesced into a major historiographical project comparable to those by Williams, Hart, Rodney, or Goveia, the works of historical fiction and cultural criticism Wynter produced during this early phase of her intellectual life are the foundation for the critical decolonial imagination she articulates in subsequent decades.⁹⁷

Wynter writings in the Caribbean from 1962 to 1974 engage the most critical issues confronted by Caribbean anticolonial thinkers of the time, including, "the problem of the Western conceptualization of the history of

⁹⁷ Of particular influence on Wynter was Richard Hart. Wynter recalls, "Here was somebody who came not just from the upper middle class, but from the racially dominant white elite stratum. And here he had formed this Jamaica Youth Movement and he caught us up in it. Yet the memory that I have of him has nothing to do with Marxism. Very few of us of my age group even knew who Marx was! I remember him as a very good human being, the example that he set, by reminding you that your life would be meaningless if you were not part of whatever it was that could lead to a just society, simply because a just society is so much easier to live in." (Qtd in Scott 126). For more on the Jamaica Youth Movement see Richard Hart's *Toward Decolonization: Political Labour, and Economic Development in Jamaica, 1938 – 1945* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1999) 129, 169).

African peoples as 'prehistory' or as nonhistory; the problem of ideology and its relation to fiction; and, lastly, the problem of the 'normative' illusion in criticism, the illusion that all works of fiction should be evaluated in relation to an implicit absolute model."⁹⁸ The significance of fiction-writing to the development of Wynter's critical thought, from the 1960s onward, resonates with the creative endeavors of radical Black writers, public intellectuals, and activists throughout the twentieth-century.⁹⁹ Some of Wynter's early literary contributions to postindependence critical intellectual culture arrived in the form of plays she wrote for the Jamaican national stage.¹⁰⁰ As a playwright, Wynter's optimistic

⁹⁸ Sylvia Wynter, "History, Ideology, and the Reinvention of the Past in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Laye's *The Dark Child*" () 43.

⁹⁹ Along side his pivotal works as a sociologist and historian, African-American scholar and activist W.E.B. Dubois wrote numerous poems, plays, and short stories, including pioneering works of Black science fiction such as his 1920 story, "The Comet." During his doctoral studies, Martiniquan-born panafricanist anticolonial revolutionary Frantz Fanon wrote a few unpublished plays prior to his more well-known and internationally influential manuscripts: *Black Skin, White Masks, The Wretched of the Earth, and Towards the African Revolution*. Prior to his life as a key revolutionary panafricanist-Marxist intellectual, Trinidadian-born C.L.R. James directed his entire focus on writing fiction, and by his twenties was a well-known literary figure on the island. It was, in fact, with the success of one of his short stories in Britain, that James would make the journey to England to pursue a full-time career as a writer and public intellectual.

¹⁰⁰ In his 1976 *The Devil Finds Work* African-American novelist, activist, and public intellectual James Baldwin reflects on the importance of theater as a means by which dehumanized communities have not only inquired into the experience structural domination, but also explored the transformative potential of resignifying human social potential: "This tension between the real and the imagined *is* the theater, and it is why the theater will always remain a necessity. One is not in the presence of shadows, but responding to one's flesh and blood: in the theater, we are re-creating each other" (included in Toni Morrison's edited anthology *James Baldwin: Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998) 501). For more on Baldwin's relatively understudied theories of performance and creative culture as practices of

aim in the 1960s was to engage regional histories of poor/working-class Afro-Caribbean “folk” cultures, and also “to form a Jamaican professional theater company” because the country needed a “truly indigenous theater.”¹⁰¹ In a 1962 interview with *The Daily Gleaner*, Wynter explained that with the attainment of Jamaican independence she felt the responsibility to “help create new values, new cultural images...project new Jamaican images.”¹⁰² This abiding interest in theater as a means of creatively participating in Jamaica's decolonial cultural communities guided Wynter's creative output in the next few years.¹⁰³ Wynter wrote and directed a number of plays, including, “Under the Sea” (1958) “Miracle of Lime Lane” (1962), the musical “Shh...It's a Wedding” (1961) and an adaptation of Roger Mais' “Brother Man.” She was also commissioned by the JLP government for a variety of creative projects, including the drafting of a play

social transformation see Koritha Mitchell's “James Baldwin, Performance Theorist, Sings the Blues for Mister Charlie,” *The American Quarterly* (Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2012) 33.

¹⁰¹ Although Wynter remains a marginal figure in scholarship on the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) (appearing most frequently in research concerning late twentieth-century Caribbean/Black women writers) scholarship on West Indian literature and theater points to her contributions to the early cultural formations of this movement. For more on the Caribbean Artists Movement see Anne Walmsley's *The Caribbean Artists Movement* and Stuart Hall, “Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three ‘Moments’ in Post-war History.” *History Workshop Journal Issue 61*.

¹⁰² Find citation *The Jamaica Daily Gleaner*.

¹⁰³ For more on the history of the Black Press in twentieth-century Britain see Ionie Benjamin's *The Black Press in Britain* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 1995).

about the history of Jamaican labor struggles, which resulted in her 1965 historical drama on the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, "A Ballad for a Revolution." Even while participating in the nationalist cultural production of the JLP, Wynter was at work refining her critiques of the limitations of the Caribbean's dominant nationalist political cultures. These critiques appeared most vividly in her most substantial piece of fiction-writing, a historical novel, *The Hills of Hebron*, written first as the radio play "The Ends of Exile" in London in the late 1950s by Wynter and Jan Carew .

* * *

Published in the same year of the achievement of Jamaican national independence, and one year after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, (a particularly "excruciating experience" for Wynter), *The Hills of Hebron* articulates many of Wynter's concerns with the neocolonial direction of postindependence state policies, and her accompanying thoughts on the systemic and epistemic shifts that a truly decolonized future for the Caribbean would require.¹⁰⁴ Of prime emphasis in the novel are the complications that arise

¹⁰⁴ For more on the political history of novel writing among Caribbean anticolonialists, see Aaron M. Love's dissertation "The Caribbean Novel and the Realization of history in the Era of Decolonization."

among the formerly enslaved religious community reminiscent of mid-century anticolonial “back-to-Africa” formations, such as Claudius Henry's African Reformed Church, which was formed in 1958.¹⁰⁵ Among the important personal facets of *The Hills of Hebron* is its mirroring of Wynter's experiences with the limitations of dominant nationalist and Marxist political organizations in the post-independence Caribbean.

A particularly poignant scene in the novel involves Isaac, the heir to the throne of the New Believers, who leaves the secluded community to pursue a career in education at the university in Kingston. In the midst of a growing disillusionment with the anti-black, anti-native, and anti-proletarian perspectives of the “English” archive, Isaac's criticism of the unquestioning political imaginations of his peers are a proxy for the sentiments of politicians, activists, workers, artists, educators, and writers that constituted the radical left of the early decades of the post-independence West Indies:

Their talk, as always, drifted first to their future careers, then to politics, then to women. Several of the cleverer students planned to make teaching a stepping-stone to the law and then politics. They would teach for a few years, save enough money to go to England, and study at one of the Inns of Court. For the future road to power lay in politics, man, they assured each other. Once they threw out the British a new day would dawn and the world would

¹⁰⁵ Legister 83 – 84.

be theirs. They never discussed how they would grapple with the problems of the future, how they would feed the hungry, provide jobs for the jobless, wipe out the three hundred years of malnutrition and mental atrophy that was the legacy of colonial rule. Instead they argued heatedly over the proper constitutional law and practice. They spoke glibly of freedom and democracy, but were incapable of understanding their meaning. They came from the generations of slaves on whose toiling backs the noble slogans of democracy had been conceived. And they were ready to die defending concepts which could have no meaning for them.

One student stood up on the bed and made a violent anti-colonial speech. The night of the long knives would come, he declared, the day of blood. The others applauded, smiling. They had no real feeling of bitterness or of violence. Unlike their illiterate would-be followers, they were spiritually and emotionally emasculated. In exploring the symbols of power that their rules had trapped in books, they had become enmeshed in their complexities, had fallen victims to a servitude more absolute than the one imposed by guns, whips, chains, and hunger.

Politics for them meant an unending series of meetings, where, standing on raised platforms under street-lamps, they would move the multitude of black faces with the force of their eloquence. And this anonymous black mass would surge like a hurricane through the island, would drive the English rulers into the sea; whilst they, calm and smiling, would don the robes of office abandoned by their former masters, would echo firmly their platitudes and half-truths and compromises and subtle distortions, would make themselves counterparts of the men whom ostensibly they had overthrown. For them politics was a game with a set of rules codified by their adversaries. They would play the game brilliantly without ever questioning the rules.¹⁰⁶

Isaac's meditations on what Wynter would describe in a later essay as "the coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," is a portrait of the remaining

¹⁰⁶ *The Hills of Hebron* 256-57.

epistemological burdens of the historical experience of racial-capitalism, chattel slavery, anti-Black humanism, settler-colonialism, and modern state-building. The organizing logics of patriarchy, anti-Blackness, and misogyny are omnipresent in both Hebron and the world surrounding it, and, in subsequent scenes, Wynter extends no pardons even to Isaac as an agent of its material violences. Offering no definitive resolution for the community of Hebron, other than total epistemological revolution, the novel distinguishes itself from conventional nationalist novels of the time in order to move beyond celebrations of post-independence society, and towards a collective and collaborative assault against the recolonization of political, economic, and cultural knowledge in the late-twentieth century.

Although Afro-Caribbean women's experiences are not a centered theme of the novel, contemporary Caribbean feminists have included *The Hills of Hebron* among a body of literature that constitutes "an embryonic feminist tradition in the region."¹⁰⁷ Interfacing an early and creative work like *The Hills* with Wynter's later critical essays presents an important historical and political grounding for understanding her insistence on folding Black radical feminist critique into the broader project of epistemological decolonization in late twentieth and early

¹⁰⁷ Belinda Edmondson. *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 89.

twenty-first century modernity. As a record of Wynter's early thinking, *The Hills* previews the kinds of questions that directed her subsequent inquiries as a cultural critic. *The Hills of Hebron* belongs to a generation of Black fiction-writing that directly challenges triumphalist nationalist narratives of the early post-independence (and post-Civil Rights movement) period. Wynter's focus in *The Hills of Hebron* is on the essential anti-Blackness/anti-Nativeness of neocolonialism's governmentality and structuring humanism.

* * *

Wynter's most fervent challenges to post-independence social life took form in her work as a cultural critic, beginning in 1967. Wynter published many of her numerous essays in seminal postcolonial Caribbean journals like *Caribbean Quarterly*, *The Daily Gleaner*, *New World Quarterly*, *Savacou* and *Jamaica Journal* (which she helped found in 1967).¹⁰⁸ Louis James recalls that Wynter's scathing critique of his introduction to the 1968 anthology *The Islands in Between* (the first book of criticism on West Indian writing in English) was particularly important to the interventions that CAM would make over throughout the late

¹⁰⁸ These essays include "Novel and History: Plot and Plantation" (), "Creole Criticism: A Critique" (), and "One Love: Rhetoric or Reality - Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism" ().

1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁹ In Wynter's assessment, these articles, essays, and book reviews were part of her efforts to open "a new dimension for [West Indian] cultural criticism," and furthermore, to construct a history of the Western colonization of the New World from the perspective of the development of modern, Eurocentric, liberal, bourgeois forms of humanism that would accompany the rise of modern Western colonial/racial regimes.¹¹⁰

The essays that were to make the most significant impact on the field of West Indian literature and cultural criticism during the 1960s and 1970s were "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," "One Love," "Lady Nugent's Journal," "History, Ideology, and the Reinvention of the Past in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Laye's *The Dark Child*," "Jonkunnu," and "We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture." Perhaps the paradigmatic essay of this early period in Wynter's focus on cultural criticism, "We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture: Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism" appeared in *Jamaica Journal* in two parts between 1968 and 1969. The essay weaves together Wynter's various questions concerning the

¹⁰⁹ Anne Walmsley. *The Caribbean Artists Movement* () 30

¹¹⁰ Quoted by Chang, Victor L. Chang. Ed. Daryl C. Dance. *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) 500. Originally from an unpublished letter, UWI, Mona.

decolonization of history, culture, and consciousness. Described by Kamau Brathwaite as “one of our great critical landmarks: a major essay into literary ideas, and the first to be written in the West Indies,” this essay established Wynter's critique of “creole criticism” among mainstream postcolonial West Indian literary communities.¹¹¹ In her view, these critics perpetuated the dismissal of the modern Caribbean's “native” or “folk” epistemologies and represented “English literary criticism rehashed in brown or black face.”¹¹² Directing her attention primarily to West Indian academics, educators, and cultural critics, these essays placed the decolonial project of challenging anti-black/anti-native racism squarely in the hands of the region's thriving and politically formidable intelligentsia. Wynter furthermore puts forth key arguments about the politicohistorical imperatives of Black cultural studies as an emergent field of academic study.¹¹³

During this early phase of her public intellectual life, Wynter established herself among a generation of mid-century Caribbean intellectuals, including

¹¹¹ Gregg 34-35.

¹¹² Qtd by Chang 501, and taken from an unpublished document prepared for the Spanish Department of the University of the West Indies, Mona.

¹¹³ Wynter expands on her views of subaltern studies and Black cultural studies. “*Jonkonnu* in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process,” *Jamaica Journal*, 4/2 (1970), 40. *Jonkunnu* “One Love Rhetoric or Reality - Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism” (1972), *Caribbean Studies* 12:3. In “One Love” Wynter .

Roger Mais, George Lamming, Rex Nettleford and Kamau Brathwaite, who wrestled mightily to decipher the past and fashion a future in a language which was distinctively Caribbean.¹¹⁴ The overall rejection of metropolitan intellectual and political hegemony by Jamaica's literary, academic, and cultural left presented a political environment that influenced Wynter's critical intellectual labors during this period. In spite of the frequent limitations of the Marxist and nationalist discourse of the Caribbean Left during this time – particularly with regard to their analysis of the pervasive governing logics of gender, sexuality, and race within the context of postindependence society - the collective insistence of academics and public intellectuals, activists, artists, Rastafarians, and workers on the historical possibility and necessity of overthrowing the epistemological dominance of modern, Western, antiblack, bourgeois, capitalist, and colonialist modes of governance opened up historically unprecedented intellectual spaces for theorizing the radical possibilities of a decolonial future in the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world at large. Building on the politico-cultural infrastructure established by anticolonialist journals, newspapers, and magazines that appeared in the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1930s and 1940s, Wynter and other “second generation” West Indian anticolonial writers began to

¹¹⁴ Bogues 2006: xiv.

put forward ideas on the future course of Caribbean decolonization that confronted neocolonial social realities in the region.¹¹⁵

These essays were recognized by West Indian literary critics of the early postindependence era as marking a new phase in Caribbean cultural criticism, and became central to CAM debates.¹¹⁶ They are, furthermore, the political foundation for Wynter's interest in fiction and history-writing as essential cultural venues in the decolonization of knowledge. By 1968 Wynter had established herself as a West Indian intellectual with a political consciousness of the interconnections between the struggles for radical social transformation in the Caribbean and those occurring throughout the rest of the planet. Her 1972 essay "One Love," captures the kind of political urgency behind her cultural criticism during this period of her intellectual life :

The younger generation of new-wave writers were born and grew up in a world in which the gradual "stages" to independence were being "achieved" and the quest for the Grail had almost been accomplished. They write now in a world in which the Grail marks our independent spot on the world's map, and, looking, they see that not only is the Grail cracked, but that it is made of plastic manufactured in Manchester or Miami. The certainty is gone. The

¹¹⁵ Gregg 29. Among the key periodicals that started this anticolonial public literary culture was C.L.R. James and Alfred Mendes' *Trinidad* which was founded in 1929 with the general purpose of propogating cultural definitions of the West Indies that was not British. .Other seminal journals are *Bim* (1942), *Focus* (1943), and *Kyk-over-al* (1945).

¹¹⁶ Louis James, "The Caribbean Artists Movement." *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 220.

name of the game is changed. The stage was only a stage. Alienation in a neo-colonial situation, in a world dominated by a handful of metropolitan mega-corporations, increases. It is our only truly national growth product, yet a growth product that links us in Jamaica to the equally neo-colonialized Third World, to vast sections of the youth, and some sections of the workers and middle classes of the developed world themselves. They are born into a world in which for the first time the humanity of Mankind as a whole is questioned. And since the black man was the first and only race to have his humanity questioned, he lives and moves in the vanguard of that frontier area of experience, As Jack Corzoni, exploring the concepts of Negritude and Antillaneity, wrote: "The Caribbean has symbolized the breeding ground par excellence of the resistance against the cultural oppression of the West, and because of this was the first spokesman of what was later called the Third World." 5 The new wave is born to a struggle at once national and international. Although, unlike the old wave, they remain physically present in their own islands, the intensive alienation which they experience as the mega-corporations spread out their industrial tentacles, introducing a technology designed not to improve the quality of life, but to maximize profits, this generation suffers a psychic uprooting, an inner exile and disruption which is edged with despair, since the certainty of a point of return to national independence as the solution has been removed for them. For it is that national political independence (of which the old wave dreamed) that has paradoxically served to modernize the old colonial structure enough to prepare and make it ready for the new industrial corporate imperialism. It is the intensity of this experience of alienation that links the new wave of writers to the earlier Caribbean Movements of Negritude – the literary counterpart of the politico-social movement of Garveyism, itself national and international – and even to the earlier mode of writing that took place in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and was spearheaded by poets like the Cuban Emilio Ballagas, the Puerto Rican, Palés Mates, and the mestizo Cuban Nicolas Guillén. That both Ballagas and Pales Matos are "white", points up the insistence of Wilfred Cartey that the literary and cultural revindication of the humanity of the black lies at the core of, and is essential to, the

solution of an urgent and fundamental problem with which all modern literature and art grapples: the reconstruction of man's humanity in a world of increasing and rapid dehumanization.⁶ For the death of man in a world dominated by things, a death prophesied, is now in the full sweep of its realization.¹¹⁷

During the 1960s the anti-systemic struggles that weighed most heavily on the minds of anticolonial Afro-Caribbean intellectuals like Wynter were the decolonization of Europe's imperial powers, the "high tide" of the African-American civil rights and Black Power movements in the U.S., and the beginnings of popular struggles against the apartheid regime in South Africa. During this critical juncture in the history of the decolonial Atlantic world, Wynter's intellectual labor consequently centered on the contention that, "A society reluctant to examine its premises, evasive of its past, uncertain of its identity, afraid of its own promise, worshiping in its white heritage, despising its Black, or at best settling for...being a multiracial, multicultural 'Out of Many, One,' is in danger...For it is a society where the majority are still exiles in their own country."¹¹⁸

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¹¹⁷ Sylvia Wynter "One Love — Rhetoric or Reality? — Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism ." *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Oct., 1972), 71 – 72.

¹¹⁸ See Sylvia Wynter (1967) "Lady Nugent's Journal" in *Jamaica Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, December, 23 – 34.

Wynter's work during this time places her firmly within a generation of twentieth century radical Black intellectuals who sought to reinterpret the history of the modern world from the perspective of the plantation system of the ex-slave archipelago of the America, and "to re-represent the lives and social worlds of the majority of its people."¹¹⁹ What is elaborated in her writings during this pivotal moment in West Indian literature and criticism is a theoretical practice of subaltern cultural studies that specifically approaches Caribbean cultural history from the perspective that Black cultural resistance to the colonial order was an indigenous one.¹²⁰ The critical intellectual spaces that Wynter traversed laid the methodological, theoretical, and political foundations for the emergence in the 1980s of an interdisciplinary movement of Black left social criticism that would become known as Black British cultural studies.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Qtd in Demetrius Eudell "Toward Aime Cesaire's 'Humanism Made to the Measure of the World'," *The Hills of Hebron* (Ian Randle Publishers: Kingston, 2010) 311.

¹²⁰ From Anthony Bogues' annotated biographies in *The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonization* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011) 424.

¹²¹ Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, Isaac Julien, Paul Gilroy,

Chapter III

Against the Profession

In London, in 1960 – 61, I felt I must come back because we [West Indians] were becoming independent so I've got to do something, help build. So I go to Guyana, then to Jamaica, and I genuinely never thought I would ever leave again. Then this black civil rights struggle, the whole black movement against segregation and so on, explodes in the United States. Then in its wake, a plurality of the movements springing up spontaneously, and a profound intellectual questioning begins to take shape in the United States.¹²²

¹²² Qtd. by Scott 171 – 72.

While anticolonial political communities in the Caribbean emerged with new militancy in the early post-independence Caribbean, a parallel order of radical Black political consciousness and widespread grassroots activism took form in the early post-Civil Rights United States. Cedric Robinson characterizes the racial regimes of North America as “analogous to that of colonialism,” and, like the colonized world, “produced a complementary Black radical intelligentsia.”¹²³ In response to the post-World War II/post-Civil Rights movement U.S. government's failure to address rampant racial regimes of police violence, high rates of unemployment, lack of access to education, inadequate healthcare and housing conditions, a historic wave of poor/working-class urban rebellions took place in the late-1960s. Following closely with these mass protests for social transformation was the rise of numerous internationalist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist Black political and cultural organizations, and the Black Power Movement. By the late 1960s many college campuses became focal points of social activism and served as spaces of political education and radicalization for an early post-civil rights generation of activists, many of whom would go on to found revolutionary leftist political organizations like the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the

¹²³ Robinson 313.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Combahee River Collective (CRC).¹²⁴

Paralleling these political movements and organizations was the rise of student-led struggles, at upwards of a thousand American colleges and universities, which demanded the creation of new fields of academic study relevant to the Black experience and the reform of existing educational institutions, and the creation of new ones.¹²⁵ In its embryonic stages the Black Studies Movement was represented by a network of public intellectuals, students, educators, and activists that amidst the political ferment of the 1960s collectively and collaboratively demanded curricula in history, arts, and social science from Afrodiasporic perspectives. Although an African-American scholarly tradition of critical intellectual labor composed of historical, literary, and sociological research existed far prior to the 1960s (spanning as far back as the mid-nineteenth century with the work of abolitionists such as Martin Delaney), few colleges and universities explicitly dedicated themselves to supporting Black studies as an institutionally recognized field of scholarship.

¹²⁴ For more on the emergence of revolutionary Black political organizations in the 1960s and 1970s see Muhammad Ahmad's *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*.

¹²⁵ For more on the urban rebellions of the 1960s see Daryl B. Harris' "The Logic of Black Urban Rebellions" *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Jan., 1998, the edited anthology *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*. And for more on revolutionary Black political organizations see Muhammad Ahmad's *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*.

Key antecedents to calls for a socially transformative Black Studies agenda by were Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* and Carter G. Woodson's *The Miseducation of the Negro*, and C.L.R. James' 1969 "Black Studies and the Contemporary Student." Between 1969 and 1974 struggles for Black studies yielded nearly 120 degree granting programs as well as dozens of other Black studies units, research centers and nondegree programs, ultimately setting a crucial precedent for the formation of new academic disciplines aimed at critically examining group-differentiated structural oppression, including: Chicano Studies, Latino Studies, Women's Studies, and Gay/Lesbian Studies.¹²⁶ Calls for the creation of these fields of academic study were seen as a major historical event by Wynter and other radical Black intellectuals of the time. The institutionalized response to these demands was nevertheless not embraced without concerns from Wynter and others who maintained that the modern university was both a site of social critique and intervention, and also political repression and neutralization.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ For a thorough summary of the distinct political principles that motivated original formulations of the Black studies curriculum see Jason E. Glenn's "A Second Failed Reconstruction? The Counter Reformation of African American Studies: A Treason on Black Studies."

¹²⁷ Houston A. Baker Jr. Stephen Best, and Ruth H. Lindeborg aptly summarize the powerful albeit politically indeterminate construction of the idea of "Blackness" in relation to the political organizing of Black students, professors, and cultural worker: "The aim of black studies and the black arts in the United States was to employ the rhythms, tone, kinesthetics, cultural memory, and common sense of the black masses to create new spaces of inquiry

Over the course of her early life as a professor in the U.S. Wynter was in the presence of a number of critical intellectual formations and organizations that would further propel her ambitions as a decolonial scholar, writer, and educator. This chapter identifies the most significant of these intellectual circles as a way of elaborating a sociopolitical genealogy for her subsequent work on “the human,” from the 1980s onward.

* * *

It was in the context of the direct-action, antiracist, anticapitalist political movements that swept the U.S. that Wynter accepted a position at the University of Michigan in 1971. There, she encountered a group of students, professors, and

within the academy and new grounds for creativity within the arts. The work was unabashedly referential (a far better description we think than 'essential'), positing always a mass black constituency as its source of cultural influence and as its ideal audience. Its determinative question was captured by the title of a Sonia Sanchez drama, *Uh Huh, But How Do It Free Us ...Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe* all responded to the polemics, poetry, music, drama, rhetoric, and rhythms of a newly emergent United States blackness with varying degrees of affirmation and identification. Malcolm X, LeRoi Jones, June Jordan, Stokely Carmichael, and many other black spokespersons became models for cultural nationalist struggles in the arts and politics of emergent African universities and Caribbean popular arts movements alike. Europe's endorsement of United States black nationalist scholarship and art was akin to its legendary adoption of black American music. Black American literature and literary study of the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, gained far more currency and support from certain French, English, and German scholars than from the United States academy as a whole. At points during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it seemed as if black studies and the black arts offered man international precedent for radically challenging white Western hegemony." *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 9-10.

researchers who were concerned with making their scholarship relevant to freedom and liberation movements across the country and throughout the world. Between 1971 and 1973, Wynter participated in activities organized by the Black Matters Committee (BMC), a study group organized by graduate students and faculty at the University's Department of Political Science. The BMC was founded in the aftermath of administrative responses to university-wide Black student strikes and subsequent shutdown of the campus in 1971, in which demands were made that the public university substantially increase the number of Black undergraduate and graduate students as well as the number of Black faculty and faculty of color.¹²⁸ The students and their allies managed to shut the university down as a result of the vigilance of their protests, and, in 1972, the Department of Political Science and the University of Michigan "decided to make a pretense at addressing itself to the alleviation of oppression in the United States," and established a Center for African American and African Studies.¹²⁹ Demonstrating their commitments to carry out the university's proposed mandate, a cadre of black and white faculty and graduate students including one

¹²⁸ Darryl C. Thomas, "Black Studies and the Scholarship of Cedric Robinson," *Race & Class*(Vol. 47 No.2, October 2005) 1-22.

¹²⁹ The Black Matters Committee, "Racism and Reaction: The Effort to Reform the University of Michigan's Department of Political Science," 1-2. Located in the Bentley Archives at the UM-Dearborn.

Chicano graduate student and one Ceylonese faculty member, began seeking changes in academic curricula and praxis that would make their studies relevant to antiracist social justice movements occurring throughout the country. At every step, however, these students and faculty were “rebuffed, patronized, and plainly repressed” by campus administration.¹³⁰

The BMC was formed by Black graduate students directly as a result of what was perceived by the campus' scholar-activists as a strategy of depoliticization at work in the university's superficial embrace of “social justice” oriented academic culture. Their analysis of the intertwined economies of whiteness, capital, and the American education system are clarified in a memo, “Race and Reaction: The Effort to Reform the University of Michigan's Department of Political Science”:

Why would they give us a mandate to create a new program, and then systematically block us? The answer is really quite simple. In their politics and research these white men are allies and servants of the ruling-class. They care nothing about working men and women. Indeed, much of their academic work has been directed at explaining away or justifying the oppression of most of the world's peoples.

What a travesty. These men suck up fat salaries at the University of Michigan, a public university, financed out of the taxes falling most

¹³⁰ The Black Matters Committee, “Racism and Reaction: The Effort to Reform the University of Michigan's Department of Political Science,” 1-2. Located in the Bentley Archives at the UM-Dearborn.

heavily on working people. And as they sip their martinis and fly back and forth to centers of power in New York, Washington, and overseas, they hatch new programs to intensify the oppression of the very people who have financed them.¹³¹

With support from radical faculty, including Cedric Robinson, Archie Singham, William (Bill) Ellis, Joel and Rachael Samoff and Nancy Hartsock, the BMC made its chief objective to use the funds allocated by the university to create a curriculum in which students could specialize in the study of the “political economy of race, gender, ethnicity and development ran alongside behavioural and quantitative approaches to political science.”¹³² This proposal was in and of itself a direct challenge to the basic tenets of the department, and was cause for concerns about how the department and the university administration would respond to such demands. Cedric Robinson, political science professor and a key member of the BMC, made clear declarations regarding the political stance of the BMC as an critical scholar-activist formation, stating that any institutional retaliation against their challenges simply meant that faculty would need to find jobs elsewhere, and students would need to transfer schools.¹³³ Travis Tatum

¹³¹ The Black Matters Committee, “Racism and Reaction: The Effort to Reform the University of Michigan’s Department of Political Science,” 1-2. Located in the Bentley Archives at the UM-Dearborn.

¹³² Thomas, “Black Studies and the Scholarship of Cedric Robinson,” 2

¹³³ (*Black Marxism, Anthropology of Marxism, Black Movements in America*, etc.)

recalls the impact that Robinson's statements had on members of the BMC: "He was pointing out that we could be agents of change. We, in fact, had more authority to change our environment than we realized. To me, this was a powerful statement. It pointed out the degree to which we restrain and constrain ourselves when it comes to change. We act as if the institutions can at all times control us."¹³⁴

Robinson's stance was reflective of the BMC's broader critique of the political and intellectual economy of the American university, which also appears in the "Race and Reaction" memo:

In the Fall [of 1971], the Committee on Black Matters was formed as a regular committee of the Department and was duly recognized by Richard Park, then the Department's Acting Chairman. The Committee included three Black faculty members, Nellie Varner, Cedric Robinson, and William Ellis; one Ceylonese faculty member, Archie Singham; and one Black graduate student, Eddie Martin. Within a matter of weeks, however, the actual operations of the Committee expanded to include all of the Black graduate students and the one Chicano in residence. The only Black faculty member not included was Raymond Tanter, who has long worked for the Department of Defense and associated organizations on programs of oppression.

Working closely with the members of the Political Science Women's Caucus and with the interested white students and faculty members, the Committee drew up two proposals for change in the Department: one for curricular change, the other for the changing of the politics of [illegible] financial aids. Our intention was to deal with the question of undergraduates later.

¹³⁴ Travis Tatum, "Reflections on Black Marxism" *Race & Class*, Vol 47 No 2, 74

The curriculum proposal provided for the addition of a new sub-field for graduate study in the Department, that of Political Economy. There are no seven such sub-fields, in which graduate students may concentrate in work toward this doctorate. The Political Economy sub-field would have enabled students to acquire doctorates in Political Science with specialization in Political Economy, just as they can now secure doctorates in Political Science with specializations in Political Behavior, Political Theory, or any of five other subfields. The Political Economy sub-field would have included such courses on such topics as , imperialism and war, racism, and sexism. And the structure of social power in the United States and the world beyond. In short, the Political Economy curriculum was designed by students and faculty to deal with the question of how the oppressed, ourselves included, are to liberate themselves.

The admissions and financial aids proposal provided for new graduate classes that would over-represent Blacks an other peoples of color, and contain at least 50% women, correcting for discriminations of the past. The recommended emphasis in all recruitment was on working class students, whether Black, white, or brown, whether male or female. It contained other recommendations, including a plan for financing these persons.

.....[pg5]....If the Committee on Black Matters and its allies had proposed a programs of Black studies, oriented toward the celebration of Black culture and history, and toward programs of research that would in effect be espionage on the oppressed, the Department would have certainly accepted it. For such a program would have been reactionary. The celebration of Black culture without the concrete specific relationship to the struggle for Black liberation and to the world struggle for human liberation has no meaning. And espionage on the oppressed is obviously reactionary. But we went the other way, criticizing the profession and stating plainly that we are devoted to the quest for human liberation, and the Department jumped on us with both feet – an action that reveals more about the Department and the profession than about anything else.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Black Matters Committee, 5-7

Adding to Wynter's already firm commitments to socially transformative critical intellectual activity (which she took up with fervor in the West Indies during the 1960s along side the NWG, and students and faculty at UWI, Mona) was the BMC's overt criticisms of "the [academic] profession," along with its criticisms of the mainstreaming of "Black studies" as a field based purely on "the celebration of Black culture without the concrete specific relationship to the struggle for Black liberation and to the world struggle for human liberation." As a result of institutional push back, the BMC was dissolved by the 1980s. Nevertheless, the political vision behind the organization's genesis, its open discussions about antiracist/anticapitalist scholarship, along with the numerous guests lectures given by radical anti-imperialist and anticapitalist activist-intellectuals (including C.L.R. James, Robert F. Williams, James and Grace Boggs, and Sylvia Wynter) were to leave a lasting impression on students and faculty at the university.¹³⁶

The radical scholar-activism of the BMC and the students and faculty at the University of Michigan during this period was, furthermore, a significant moment in the continuing evolution of Wynter's critiques of the academy.

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¹³⁶ Darryl C. Thomas, "Black Studies and the Scholarship of Cedric Robinson," *Race & Class*(Vol. 47 No.2, October 2005) 1-22.

In 1974 Wynter left the University of Michigan upon receiving an invitation by Shirley Anne Williams to take up a lecturing position at the University of California, San Diego's (UCSD) newly formed "Third College" in 1974.¹³⁷ Founded in 1970 amidst calls by UCSD students and faculty for the creation of curriculum aimed at the critical study of the social histories and greater contexts of racially subordinated communities in the United States, Third College was one important venue where Wynter would continue to expand her critiques of the post-independence Caribbean experience to encompass the race and class contradictions of the post-civil rights United States, the Americas, and "the West" as a modern geocultural phenomenon.¹³⁸ Wynter recalls in a 2002

¹³⁷ "UCSB's Founded as Third College 1970 amid the student activism of the period, TMC's original aim was to help students understand their own community and the greater context of that community in the United States. However, with the swirling political changes of the late 1960s, the college of Clio and Rappaport was never to be. Once the controversy and battles among students, faculty, and administration commenced—featuring lively figures such as Herbert Schiller, Herbert Marcuse, and Angela Davis -- the future of Third College would be in a turmoil that didn't fully clear until it finally received its official name, Thurgood Marshall College, in 1993. At its inception, students pushed for the new college to be named "Lumumba-Zapata College" in honor of Patrice Lumumba and Emiliano Zapata in an attempt to honor these famous twentieth century revolutionaries. Unable to get approval for this name from UC Administration, the college remained unnamed and was referred to as Third College for more than two decades. A thorough review of active student newspapers during the time of Wynter's tenure at like Third World, Natty Dread, Ujima, and Prensa Popular were covering . Demetrius Eudell and Carolyn Allen ""Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity" 2.

¹³⁸ [check out the UCSD archive Mandeville Special Collections at UCSD presently and don't know if you've been here, but there is a decent amount of Wynter-related stuff here in the archives of the Literature and Society interdisciplinary major, based in the Thurgood Marshall College/Third College Provost's Records (Call # RSS 1130/Box 45)]

interview: "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."¹³⁹ For Wynter, the critical intellectual culture instituted by the Black Studies movement afforded a kind of freedom to further explore, as part of her everyday academic work, those questions about Western modernity, race, capitalism, and historical consciousness that she began in the Caribbean as a cultural critic. Wynter recalls, "That was going to be a wonderful period for me. The intellectual questioning of the sixties was still there, though it was to as quickly disappear. But in the hiatus, I was now able to design new courses to address the questions that I had no space in my teaching at UWI to address. That really began a new phase in my life."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Qtd. by Scott 2002: 174. While at UCSD Wynter also worked with Marxist cultural critic and colleague Frederick Jameson (English department 1977-), with whom she collaborated with in numerous conferences as well as in the originating 1978 editorial collective of the journal *Social Text*.

¹⁴⁰ Qtd by Scott 2002: 172.

One significant student organization that was at the height of its activity during the 1970s was the Lumumba-Zapata coalition, which was formed in 1969 by the Black Student Union and Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA), under the mentorship of literature professor Carlos Blanco and chemist, Joseph Watson. In 1969, as a way of holding the university accountable to its own purported mission to create a curriculum with relevance to student movements of the times, Lumumba-Zapata produced clear demands regarding the governance of the university itself:

- 1) the opening up of opportunities for the study the theory and practice of revolutions; economic systems; science and technology; health sciences and public health; urban and rural development; communications arts; foreign languages; cultural heritage; and white studies.

- 2) increased representation of Black and Brown students and faculty on matters concerning admissions, hiring, and governance.¹

In addition to their commitments to “criticism by action against institutionalized racism and sexism” and its dedication to “solving problems of the exploited and oppressed communities of San Diego,” Lumumba-Zapata also made appeals to have Third College named “Lumumba-Zapata College.” By the late 1970s the Lumumba-Zapata coalition was driven completely underground under the direction of Chancellor William David McElroy, who was recruited with the help of President Richard Nixon, and appointed in 1972 by Governor Ronald Reagan

and the UC Regents.¹⁴¹ Third College was consequently named “Thurgood Marshall College.”

The lectures delivered by Wynter at UCSD during the 1970s are an important record of the kinds of questions that motivated her work during this period. Examples of these lectures include, “Men, Literature & Ideas: The Problematic Nature of Fiction in the Americas,” “Literature, Marxism & The Invisible Man,” and an important debate with feminists at the 1979 “Women, Culture, and Theory Conference” in which Wynter delineated the ways in which the structurally reproduced norms of gender hierarchy, “middle-classness,” and Black inferiority were constituent features of modern, Western, liberal, bourgeois, capitalist, humanism.¹⁴² In addition to teaching courses on contemporary African, Afro-Caribbean and African American literature, Wynter also helped establish a new major for the college titled “Literature and Society in the Third World.”¹⁴³ A 1975 UCSD campus newsletter announcing the formation of the then relatively unprecedented course of study, Wynter explained the potential contribution of the major, “The mass migration of traditionally rural peoples

¹⁴¹ Vic Bloomberg and Montgomery Reed, “Why is the CIA at UCSD,” *The New Indicator*, Vol 4. Issue 15, May 15 - 28 1979, p 2 -3. Located in the UCSD Mandeville Collections.

¹⁴² Sarah Dufarge, “Women's Conference,” *The New Indicator*, Vol 4. Issue 15, May 15 - 28 1979, p 10. Located in the UCSD Mandeville Collections.

¹⁴³ Her public lectures include a 1975 talk entitled “Musings on a Jamaican Heritage” and a 1976 “Jamaican Stirs Her Culture In U.S. 'Ferment.”

across both time and space, bringing them into the cities and the Twentieth Century, is perhaps the single most important process of the second half of this century...It gives rise to a literature which chronicles the anxieties, struggles and alienations of large masses of peoples...This kind of literature, while inheriting established devices and forms from Western literature, makes use of these devices in complex new ways to record a new experience. A study of this literature demands an interdisciplinary approach and that is what the Literature and Society major is all about." Also in the release, committee member Sherley Anne Williams (then assistant professor of Literature at UCSD and chairman of the planning committee which established the major) explained: "We call our major 'Literature and Society' because each course will blend an interpretation of the literary text with an appreciation of the cultural and historical milieu in which it was created," she said. "Much traditional literary study, particularly at the undergraduate level, emphasizes the study of the text and leaves out all other factors which influence its creation. Unless a student majors in one of the early periods of literature, his course of study does little to involve him in the complex social, cultural, historical and political factors which very often have significance for the interpretation of the text."¹⁴⁴ In a 1975 position paper, "Where do we go

¹⁴⁴ For full release see <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/historyofucsd/newsreleases/1975/19750124a.html>

from here?," Wynter reflects on the challenges faced by Literature & Society and the various other "new studies" that were founded in response to the Black/Ethnic Studies movements of the late 1960s:

All programs which were the results of the activist movements of the sixties, i.e. Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women Studies, etc. now experience...a process in which they remain peripheral to the normative academic structure; in which in fact they are simply not there. It is a paradox that the Literature and Society Program was conceived among other aims to put an end to this marginalization; and also, to avoid the ghettoization implicit in confining Black Literature, for example, to a Black Studies Program. The value of the experience of the Literature and Society Program is that it has made clear the fact, that like all attempts to come to terms with the problem of "ethnic" studies, the incorporation of the Program into the Department of Literature was an incorporation which was also at the same time, a form of exclusion...

As far as the university is concerned, the concrete if limited change made by the movements of the Sixties was the transformation of the racial composition of what was formerly a normatively Anglo-California university elite stratum, into a broader based, multi-ethnic university elite stratum. Increasingly then a multi-ethnic university population, students, staff, and faculty is physically there; or at least in the process of being there. Increasingly the non-white petty bourgeoisie is being incorporated into the prevailing system. This change in the physical composition of the student body and faculty calls necessarily for a change in perspective; a change in the perspective of what is being studied...

[S]ince the process of a colonization was a mutual experience between colonizer and colonized, the process of decolonization must be equally so. The non-West, as it discovers itself, its own identity, forces upon the West the task of rediscovering itself...

I believe that this Program should be spearheaded by those specialists involved in the Third World experience, primarily

because, as I argued before – I believe the Third World perspective is necessarily global perspective. As far as literature is concerned, Third World modern literature – but internal and external – emerged and continues to emerge as a literature struggling against, yet absorbing, reacting against, yet responding to the literatures of the West; in a parallel, if more sharply conflictual manner to that in which the Western European literatures arose as response, contradiction, and continuity with the classical literatures of Greece and Rome...

At the moment, the Literature and Society Program serves primarily as the place where the “not-quite-real” literature, i.e. the literature of the internal Third World, --- i.e. Black, Chicano, Asian-American, Native American, and of the external Third World-Africa, Asia (in English) is taught, primarily in self-contained units...

For to perceive and to define literature as property, privately possessed by any group, Anglo, Black, Chicano, is to negate the very meaning of literature; the very intention of literary studies. I throw out here for further discussion the idea that the Literature and Society Program as a Program of both the Third and the First World – and for that matter, the Second – could provide the structural framework which could embody both an interdisciplinary – a transdisciplinary approach. Since literature is the most “totalizing” of disciplines, the Department of Literature, through the Literature and Society Program could be the coordinating centre for interdisciplinary studies...

I believe that given the kind of world we live in today, the flexibility of the imagination, its capacity to put itself in other people's skins, is of primary importance. In this respect the study of literature is of contemporary relevance. It is only literature which cuts through the abstract constructs that we make of each other.¹⁴⁵

While at UCSD Wynter established important relationships with colleagues such as Shirley Anne Williams, Herbert Marcuse and Frederick Jameson. Wynter's

¹⁴⁵ Sylvia Wynter, “Where do we go from here,” 1975, pp 1-15, located in the Mandeville Special Collection, Box 45, Folder 1. My emphasis.

involvement in the founding of two journals, *Social Text* and *Alcheringa*, was a product of these relationships; they furthermore were a channel by which she made important advances regarding her own thinking on the coloniality of late-twentieth century state politics, educational institutions, and liberal humanism. In 1979 Wynter joined Jameson and a small group of Marxist intellectuals who sought to create an open forum for establishing radical frameworks for understanding freedom and liberation. They soon after founded *Social Text*, a journal devoted to leftist social/cultural criticism. Among the major political events that prompted the journal's founding was the socialist revolution in Grenada, which arrived two decades after the Cuban Revolution.¹⁴⁶ Wynter's essay 'Sambos and Minstrels' and Jameson's 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' were featured in the first issue of the journal. The formation of *Social Text* was an important juncture in the course of Wynter's gradual disidentification as a Marxist theorist. The rejection of Stalinism and totalitarian Marxist theories by the *Social Text* collective, along with their commitments to dialectical thinking as a central tool of analysis undoubtedly pushed Wynter to further expand on the kinds of limitations she first began reflecting upon during the 1960s in the post-independence West Indies.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Roberts 172.

¹⁴⁷ A 1991 lecture delivered by Wynter at Wellesly College, titled, "After the New Class: James,

Wynter's essay for Boston University's short-lived ethnopoetics journal *Aleheringa*, "Ethno or Sociopoetics?" is another example of the ways in which she used the academy as a means of exploring questions that she had begun confronting as a result of the contradictions of the decolonial moment of her youth and young adulthood. The essay furthermore demonstrates how Wynter continued to expand on the relevance of these questions to the neocolonial/neoliberal racial order that characterized the post-1960s world:

This talk, although based on certain initial assumptions, has also developed as a response to certain ideas thrown out in the course of this conference. But time, in the Western sense of the Western world in which we live, is short-and now that I write up the talk as a paper, space is limited. I shall therefore develop the context of my argument as a set of bald propositions, anchored by specific references in the notes of the written paper. The main argument of my talk hinges on the assertion that Ethnopoetics can only have validity, if it is explored in a context of sociopoetics where the socio firmly places the ethnos in its concrete historical particularity.¹⁴⁸

Les Damnés and the Autonomy of Human Cognition," is demonstrative of the kinds of interventions that she would make as a result of her participation in Marxist intellectual communities like the Social Text collective. Neil Roberts identifies "liminal dialectics" as the foundation of what he describes as Wynter's "heretical" conception of freedom. Roberts 172.

¹⁴⁸ "Ethno or Sociopoetics," *Aleheringa* (Boston University: 1976) 78.

Evident in “Ethno or Sociopoetics?” are concerns with the normalization of modern, White, Western and bourgeois conceptions of human social normalcy that . “Ethnopoetics” as if it was a particular social practice of communities to be distinguished from the poetics of Western, bourgeois, liberal, capitalist civilization. The point Wynter makes in this essay is a precursor to her later inquiries into the epistemological and political history behind the institution of modern, Western, bourgeois conceptions of human individual and social normalcy (Man) “as if it were the human itself.” The core idea that to study Western humanism as an ethnopoetics is to reiterate that its conception of “the human” is an enterprise that has historically sought to institute . In “Ethno or Sociopoetics” (1976) Wynter argues that “poetics or poesis is so important not as some narrow, literary affair but because it tends to signify all these repressed or stigmatized orders of cognition, ones which differ profoundly from our now orthodox, linear modes of thinking or theorizing.” (words of Greg Thomas, from Proud flesh interview).¹⁴⁹

In collaboration with Jameson and Black Studies scholars Acklyn Lynch and Saint Claire Drake, Wynter spent much of the 1970s giving public lectures and organizing seminars on race, modernity, and Afro-Caribbean culture at

¹⁴⁹ Documentation of Wynter's activities at UCSD are available in the archives of the Literature and Society interdisciplinary major, based in the Thurgood Marshall College/Third College Provost's Records (Call # RSS 1130/Box 45).

college campuses throughout the country. Her activity as a scholar, teacher, and critical intellectual were nevertheless not limited to the university. Outside of the campuses where she found employment and opportunities to engage in the kind of socially transformative academic culture that she first encountered at the UWI, Wynter also found intellectual allies in organizations and movements such as the Institute of the Black World (IBW), and, what would by the 1980s and 90s be known as a highpoint in radical Black feminist culture in the U.S.

* * *

Social historian Derrick White has observed that much of the scholarship on the conceptual origins of Black Studies' has typically focused on the struggles to institutionalize the field as a mainstream academic discipline beginning in 1968 with student movements at San Francisco State University and the wave of similar struggles that swept across college campuses during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This traditional narrative, as White puts it, "only tells part of the story."¹⁵⁰ Two key organizational models for Black Studies programs of the 1960s and 1970s emerged from the segregated and self-determined spaces formed by twentieth-century Black scholars and public intellectuals: namely, W.E.B. Du Bois'

¹⁵⁰ White "An Independent Approach to Black Studies." *Journal of African American Studies* (2011) 1.

Atlanta University Conferences and reports that began in 1895, and Carter G. Woodson's Association of the Study of the Negro Life and History.¹⁵¹

Incidentally, some of the most important shifts in Wynter's writings in the 1970s occurred in correspondence with the Black Studies initiatives of an independent research organization, which is gaining recognition in the early twenty-first century: the Institute of the Black World (IBW).

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s the IBW brought together within an institutional framework an exceptional cohort of scholars, activists, and public intellectuals from the United States, Caribbean, and Africa who were interested in putting forward definitive statements about the political relevance of Black Studies scholarship to present and future movements for antiracist social justice.¹⁵² Although Wynter's critical intellectual life within and on the margins of the IBW constitutes yet another brief moment in her early intellectual life, it sheds light on the profound impact that radical Black Studies communities had in reinforcing her already firm stance on the socially transformative relevance of critical intellectual labor for the political struggles modernity's structurally

¹⁵¹ Characterized by White as “a tremendous oversight,” the scholarly inattention to the theoretical linkages between the Black Studies movement and foundational educational struggles at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and from independent Black political-intellectual organizations is one that presently beckons for further research. Ibid 1.

¹⁵² Bogue's “Black Power, Decolonization, and Caribbean Politics” 134.

marginalized peoples. The IBW was established in Atlanta in 1969 when historian, theologian, and Spelman College professor Vincent Harding joined with literary critic and Morehouse College professor Stephen Henderson to reflect on the potential relevance of Black Studies to the Black Power movement and broader national struggles for anti-racist social transformation in the post-civil rights U.S.¹⁵³ Originally formed as part of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Center in 1969, the IBW eventually became an independent activist think tank in the summer of 1970.¹⁵⁴ This split was specifically a result of the King Center's assessment that the organization's nationalism, no matter how pragmatic, did not focus enough attention on the nonviolent and integrationist aspects of King's legacy, was not proactive about the inclusion of White scholars, and as a result weakened the Center's fundraising abilities.¹⁵⁵ From its establishment as an independent political organization the IBW set out to serve as a "gathering of Black scholar/activists" with the goal of joining the emerging academic discipline of Black Studies with the post-civil rights/post-Black Power

¹⁵³ See Figure 3.

¹⁵⁴ For more on Black struggles against U.S. "apartheid structures" in Atlanta during the 1960 and 1970s, see Winston A. Grady-Willis' *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960 – 1977* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁵⁵ Derrick White. "An Independent Approach to Black Studies" *Journal of African American Studies*. March 2011.

political agendas of progressive Black political cadres.¹⁵⁶ Seeking to create a “black agenda network,” the institute brought together a group of one hundred artists, scholars, and activists who went on to produce position papers on Black cultural and political issues, as well as guidelines for socially transformative Black research. A grant proposal, circa 1970, shows that the IBW' sought to distinguish itself from the majority of other Black intellectual organizations of the time, like the Center for Black Education and the McKissick School, which were primarily focused on issues surrounding teaching.¹⁵⁷

In 1971, soon after the IBW's break from the King Center, its associates clarified the purpose of their research agenda in relation to the Black Freedom Movement: “We are intellectuals and we do intellectual work. That is neither a cause for shame or celebration. We have a role to play in the struggle. Our duty is to ascertain that role then play it.”¹⁵⁸ Drawing from Fanon's assertion “we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a

¹⁵⁶ See Derrick White's *The Challenge of Blackness: The Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s*. The IBW was among a number of Black revolutionary political organizations subjected to U.S. government surveillance and political repression instituted by conservative state and cultural forces in the 1970s. This context of repression led to the IBW's restructuring from an activist think tank to educational resource center in 1975.

¹⁵⁷ Fabio Rojas *From Black Power to Black Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2007) 153.

¹⁵⁸ W. Strickland Qtd. by White in “An Independent Approach to Black Studies.” Originally from “Notes from Jamaica” Vincent Harding papers, Box 13, Folder 8.

new man.” Harding redirected the IBW's focus towards creating a political agenda for the vocation of the Black scholar. “Throughout the IBW's decade-long existence, associates used Black Studies as a theoretical and institutional foundation to rethink the world.”¹⁵⁹ The independent approach to Black studies envisioned by the IBW during the 1970s hinged on “the development of creative models for the kinds of Black studies programs which will not be pallatives, but significant pathways to the redefinition of American education and of the Black Experience.”¹⁶⁰ Throughout the 1970s the IBW brought together some of the most preeminent Black activist intellectuals in post-World War II America, and this collection of activist intellectuals composed a vibrant think tank that produced research and analysis for activist communities, rather than solely for politicians and/or policymakers.¹⁶¹

Wynter's involvement with the IBW began in 1971 when she worked with Vincent Harding in Jamaica to produce a series of radio broadcasts on political struggles faced throughout the Black diaspora.¹⁶² Over the course of the 1970s

¹⁵⁹ White 197.

¹⁶⁰ IBW. (1969) “An Approach to Black Studies.” BW Papers – IBW at the King Center Series.

¹⁶¹ White “An Independent Approach to Black Studies: The Institute of the Black World & Its Evaluation and Support of Black studies” *Journal of African American Studies* () 2-3.

¹⁶² Derrick White “Black Metamorphosis,” *The C.L.R. James Journal* (Vol 16, No 1, Fall 2010) 128.

Wynter went on to contribute to important debates among the IBW's members regarding their collective vision of social transformative research and scholarship. Wynter's participation in important Black feminist debates and conversations during the late 1970s were key to the development of her view that race, class, and gender oppression could be “genre.” This dimension of her intellectual genealogy is often overshadowed by her privileging of the anticolonial/decolonial as opposed to “feminist” contours of her later essays. Along with the IBW's several Black feminist associates – including Toni Cade Bambara, Barbara Sizemore, and Pat Daly – Wynter pushed the IBW to integrate an analysis of gender oppression in its developing discourse on Black cultural and political issues. In 1977 the IBW hosted a conference, “Role Alternatives for Black Women: Where to go From Here in the Black Freedom Struggle.” The conference did not completely rectify the marginalization of gender in the IBW's analysis, but it started to address a profound weakness characteristic of the IBW and other post-civil rights left political organizations.¹⁶³ The expansion of these concerns is evident in a 1983 conference at the Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, when Wynter joined Audre Lorde, Gloria Watkins, and Pat Parker for a week long program, “Four Black Women Writers on Racism and

¹⁶³ Derrick White. *The Challenge of Blackness: The Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011. 168.

Sexism,” where she delivered a lecture titled, “The Rhetorics of Race and the Politics of Domination.”

Soon after her first meeting with Harding Wynter began writing several manuscripts for the IBW, including “Black Metamorphosis: Natives in A New World,” a project that began in 1971 as a thirty page essay titled “Natives in the New World: The African Transformation in the Americas,” and by decades end had turned into a nearly thousand page manuscript, written while she was teaching in Southern California, which represents one of the most significant preludes to her later theories on the human.¹⁶⁴ While the nationalist, Black capitalist, and Marxist discourses of the Black Power movement found some agreement in challenging mainstream liberal civil rights frameworks, the contradictions of these various political visions caused considerable analytical confusion regarding the direction of the Black Freedom Struggle. This confusion nonetheless served as the impetus for the IBW's efforts to develop synthetic analytical frames and perspectives that would clarify and propose solutions to the structural obstacles faced by Black communities in late twentieth century

¹⁶⁴ See Figure 5. A copy of “Natives in a New World: An African Transformation in the Americas” is located in Box 48, Folder 18 of the Vincent Harding Papers at Emory University, and includes holograph revisions, notes and TLS from Wynter. A copy of “Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World” is located in the IBW Papers at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, Box (Sylvia Wynter).

America:¹⁶⁵ Joining Harding and the IBW's general philosophy of the need for Black scholars to create "new concepts, for a new man," with C.L.R. James' contention in 1969 that "Black studies is the study of Western civilization," Wynter's "Black Metamorphosis" takes up many of the most pressing concerns faced by radical Black scholars in the 1970s.

As the product of Wynter efforts to contribute to the IBW's political project, "Black Metamorphosis" put forth arguments about the limitations of liberal, Marxist, and nationalist Black revolutionary theories, arriving at the conclusion that:

For the [hierarchical] mode of relations to continue by and through the interrelationship that constitute the social reality, there must be a generally accepted ideology which persuade the differing subjects too be constituted slave, serf, wage-worker. [Or] for that matter, as white and Negro. This generally accepted belief system is carried by the hegemony Symbolic Order of the society; and the acceptance of this Symbolic Order is determined by the extent to which the dominant groups control the means of socialization.... For it is not the expropriation of labor-power that is the primary act, but the expropriation of the power to define the self that marks the difference between the ruler and ruled. Its is the hegemony of a group's ruling consciousness that constitutes it central strategy of power.¹⁶⁶

Among the key features of "Black Metamorphosis" was Wynter's argument that

¹⁶⁵ IBW. "Institute of the Black World: Statement of Purpose and Program". *Negro Digest*. 19, 19-23.

¹⁶⁶ Qtd. by White from *Black Metamorphosis* 771.

the abolition of the epistemic systems and cultural codes that reproduce racial-capitalist modes of governance required not only a radical transformation of dominant modes of economic production, but also in the radical transformation of dominant modes of intellectual production. Serving less as a statement on how antiracist, anticolonial, and anticapitalist systemic transformation was to be accomplished organizationally, and more as a reiteration that “there can be no revolutionary praxis without revolutionary counter representation,” “Black Metamorphosis” was a key precedent to Wynter's subsequent inquiries into the epistemic legacies of modern Western humanism as well as her critique of the modern Humanities.¹⁶⁷ She also elaborates the historical potential of Black Studies”, the legacy of the socio-cultural movements of the Sixties must now become the site of a revolution in the American cultural and mental structures, those structures which as Baudrillard argues are the ideological bastions of a social order whose extraordinary economic achievements have now outlived their usefulness. The scientific racism of much of the new white scholarship is not so much reactionary as provincial and out of date. Yet they are non the less dangerous for all that.”¹⁶⁸ “Sylvia Wynter's early analysis of Black Studies and

¹⁶⁷ *Black Metamorphosis* 917, 819-861.

¹⁶⁸ *Black Metamorphosis* 931.

her theory of the human emerge from her work at the IBW. In total, the IBW was a great example of what historian Manning Marable describes as 'transformative Black studies,' or 'the collective efforts of black people neither to integrate or self-segregate but to transform the existing power relationships and the racist institutions of the state, economy and society.'¹⁶⁹ Her work on "Black Metamorphosis" along with her other activities within and in the periphery of the radical Black Studies movement of the 1970s led Wynter to face the last decades of the twentieth-century with the understanding that "[t]he task of Black scholarship of the Eighties [and beyond] will be to continue the theoretical delegitimation of the cultural universe of the bourgeoisie, of its, representation of reality, of its control of the way we view reality."¹⁷⁰

Recognizing the potential contribution of Wynter's study to both the IBW's envisioned agenda for the future of critical Black studies scholarship, Harding expressed to Wynter in a 1974 correspondence, "If we did not think your work was so seminal, we would surely have given up by now, partly to relieve your conscience. But we cannot do that. Too much is at stake."¹⁷¹ Described by IBW

¹⁶⁹ White 2011: 197.

¹⁷⁰ Vincent Harding "the Vocation of the Black Scholar" *Education & Black Struggle: Notes from the Colonized World*. 23.

¹⁷¹ From an unprocessed 1974 letter located in the IBW papers of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center.

members as “a masterpiece” as early as 1973, Wynter's manuscript was so valued by the IBW that Harding would leave an open offer throughout the 1970s to secure Wynter appointments to teach in schools closer to the organization's headquarters in Atlanta.¹⁷² *Black Metamorphosis* was to be published by the IBW (as part of its “Black Papers” series) and the Center for Afro-American Studies at University of California, Los Angeles, however, due to the financial difficulties, the project was never completed. Weakened by difficulties in securing a steady source of funding due to its political leanings, the burglarization of its main offices in 1974, and the repression and disintegration of the broader network of Black Power era political organizations, the IBW was forced to shut down its operations in 1983. Had the organization survived Wynter's manuscript could have generated serious debate within the IBW precisely because it could have directed the institute's focus on research, towards the project of developing a new conceptual framework beyond the limitations of dominant liberal, marxist, and nationalist political ideologies of the time.¹⁷³ Her work with the IBW,

¹⁷² From an unprocessed 1973 letter located in the IBW papers of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center.

¹⁷³ Derrick White “New Concepts for a New Man,” dissertation, 227. Prior to publishing her landmark essay on “The Ceremony Must be Found,” Wynter wrote “Beyond Liberal and Marxist Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference.” This essay reflects Wynter's critical engagement with feminist social criticism . [Wynter, Sylvia. *Beyond Liberal and Marxist Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference*. San Francisco: Institute for Research on Women and Gender, 1982.]

nevertheless, deserves recognition as part of a generation of post-colonial/post-civil rights era radical Black women whose philosophies on freedom and liberation persistently aimed towards the abolition of the modernity's entire matrix of systems of racial and economic oppression and domination.

* * *

Wynter's early life as a public intellectual in the post-independence West Indies and post-civil rights era United States coincided with the thriving of decolonial cultures that opened up new terrains of critical social inquiry, as well as vibrant spaces for collective and collaborative political thinking aimed at radical antiracist, anticapitalist, and anticolonial social transformation. This “decolonial moment” (as described by Anthony Bogues) is an essential point of departure for Wynter's work from the mid-1980s to the early twenty-first century. Although Wynter left the Caribbean in 1971, her commitments to critical intellectual labor would persist in the U.S.. They were most readily evident in the way that she approached her duties as a university professor. The Fanonist critique of modern, liberal professional-intellectual classes of early neocolonial modernity is a vein that runs strongly through her work as a scholar-activist, as a

teacher, as a public lecturer, and essayist. The radicalism of the campus movements, critical academic cultures, and independent collaborative scholarship that defined Wynter's intellectual life in the U.S. during the 1970s, is a significant backdrop for the critiques of the neutralization of the original and radical visions behind the founding and institutionalization of Black and Ethnic Studies (along with the other “new studies” that paralleled them). In later essays as “The Ceremony Must be Found,” Wynter's critiques of the mainstreaming of specific forms of Black and Ethnic Studies paradigms carry along with them her historical memory of the systematic repression of student-faculty organizations like the BMC and Lumumba-Zapata Coalition, along with the infrastructural difficulties faced by independent think tanks like the IBW.

Just as Wynter witnessed and experienced decolonial intellectual cultures in the postindependence Caribbean stagger from the counterrevolutionary political, cultural, and social forces of neocolonial governance, so too did she experience the effects of post-Civil Rights movement “law and order” regime on the critical intellectual cultures that emerged in the wake of historic social movements that sought to create new institutions, new concepts, and new visions of human social potential. Wynter's involvement in the Black Studies movement's early radical articulations in the 1970s is in fact elemental to the

development of her most well-known essays on the “rewriting of knowledge.” Evoking Harold Cruise, Wynter points “to the control of the cultural apparatus, to the manipulation of ideas and images, in other words to the total social power of those who control the modern means of communication/socialization.”¹⁷⁴

This period of Wynter's early intellectual life paints a portrait of the inception of Black and Ethnic studies as more than just an academic turn mobilized by radical scholars of color. For Wynter and many other black radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, decolonial political cultures in the post-independence West Indies and Black freedom struggles in the United States represented a high point in modern world history. As Wynter would argue throughout her critical essays and lectures in the Caribbean and U.S. during this period, these struggles were the basis for the emergence of a profound wave of social inquiry and intellectual questioning within the West, which would lead Wynter to develop what Joyce King and other scholars have referred to as the “Black studies alterity perspective” that served as the theoretical framework for much of her writings in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷⁵ Spanning across the western and eastern shores of the U.S., as well as among college campuses, the offices of independent grassroots

¹⁷⁴ *Black Metamorphosis* 931.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the IBW see Derrick White, Winston A. Grady-Willis' *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*

organizations, and across the various peripheral spaces of late twentieth-century American empire, many radical Black and Ethnic studies advocates saw in their work the possibility of issuing in new conceptions of human collective potential beyond the logics of capital, White supremacy, imperial nation-building, and anti-Black/anti-Native governance, and creating in its place, what the IBW referred to as “new concepts for a new man.”

Wynter's work as a Black studies professor forced her “to learn about something of the complexity of the society of the United States itself,” and, at the same time, they also proved crucial to the shifts that were taking place in Wynter thought. At this juncture of her life as a critical intellectual, the Caribbean context would begin to appear less and less as her specific preoccupation, and more as a key instance of a larger problem within the geohistorical canvas of modernity. The decolonial perspective on Western modernity that she established in the Caribbean in the 1960s would begin to take an important transcultural turn. Wynter arrived in the U.S. in the midst of what appeared to be the successful institutionalization of the demands of student of color movements that coincided with the radically democratic and social justice oriented visions of the early post Civil Rights era. But these times also marked the beginning of a new strategy of hegemony, which centered on the promotion

of initiatives to represent American ethnic and cultural diversity within the managerial bureaucracies of the American state and ruling-classes' various political, economic, and social institutions.

Chapter IV

A Theory of Everything

Given the contemporary global crises which confronts the human species as a whole, the question that we pose is, "what is the connection between these crises and our system of education?" For, unlike present day discourse on education which focuses on the type of education that our present world-system needs – i.e., a "multicultural" education for a "multicultural" world, or the "back-to-basics" approach to prepare a workforce to compete in the technological age – the question that we pose is not "what type of education our world needs," but more profoundly, what type of world does our education (including the "multicultural" and "back-to-basics" approach) create?¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Qtd. By Joyce E. King. *After Man, Towards the Human*. 48. From unpublished manuscript, Institute NHI, "What is Wrong with our Education" (1994).

In her studies in London the question of “What are the origins of modern, Western, liberal humanism – or, Man?” would direct her to examine the literature of the early period. Golden Age Spanish literature. Her work as a fiction writer and actress participate in a broader trans-Atlantic wave of 20th century Afro-diasporic literature and art that historicizes the structural and epistemological othering of Black/Native subjects as an *essential* (rather than incidental) part of the experience of “modernity.” What distinguishes Wynter's intellectual labors from the 1960s onward is the way in which her focus shifts towards bringing into focus a scale of critical social analysis that situates “the human” - its thresholds of normality and its “others” - as a fundamental site of contestation throughout the intellectual, social, and political history of modernity. The goal of Wynter's theory of the Human is to reinvigorate the importance of the Word and the historical role of “heresy” in the overthrow of past wide-reaching epistemological models.

From 1980 to 1997, the National Humanities Center produced the national radio show *Soundings*, which offered weekly interviews with professors in the humanities and sciences, journalists, poets, novelists, filmmakers, musicians, politicians, and inventors. Sylvia Wynter was invited by *Soundings* producer and host Wayne Pond in 1981 to elaborate on new advances in her interdisciplinary

research on “the human.” In the interview Wynter discussed the political motivations for her novel research on the cultural-historical backdrop for the proliferation of purely “bioeconomic” and “ethno-class” conceptions of the normatively “human”:

The most fundamental thing that I've stumbled on this year, is that there have been extraordinary advances in biological knowledge, and the greatest discovery, the discovery about how the gene work[s], that the gene, the building block of what makes us humans and all living animals, is really a coded set of instructions...Cultures are coded sets of instructions for us, how to behave as a group, how to identify, how to recognize each other [Pond: Oh that's pretty grim to look around at our society and say well its hopeless its kinda deterministic] No, no, because you see *we* make these. [Pond: Ah.] *We create these and we can uncreate them. That is where human freedom is.* Where the sociobiologists are right is that, I think Marx once said that man makes his own history, but he always makes it in conditions that are given to him. Where the sociobiologists are right is that there are certain biological tendencies which we inherit, but **where the freedom comes in is that man is coded by a nature to make his symbols rather than being coded by chemicals in order to respond...we are coded to make our symbols, and we can make them and unmake them**, and this is where we come to politics, because depending on the kind of social order you have, than those are the kinds of symbols you have...

I would discard the word conditioned because I think this tends to make us feel as if we are just programmed...Our identity is always symbolic it is never biological, even when the sociobiologists say it is “natural” that is a symbolic concept of “the natural” and we all are impelled to live up to our identity...To see how the bourgeois or the middle classes were able to change the culture order of the aristocracy is one of the most exciting things that I've been studying this year. The moment you see that you realize what the 60s were

about, the 60s where really about a transformation of the 'inner eyes' with which we see reality and this is the most far reaching revolution.¹⁷⁷

By the early 1980s the focus of Wynter's critical writings turned nearly exclusively towards excavating the cultural-symbolic-narrative legacy of the development of modern, Western, bourgeois, liberal, anti-Black/anti-Native, "ethno-class" humanism, along side the history of modern Western nationbuilding, colonialism, capitalist expansion, and imperialism. Three primary threads of inquiry that appear prominently in Wynter's work beginning in the early 1980s are: 1) her fascination with the emerging field of biosociology, 2) her research into Western epistemological shifts and movements that coincide with the conquest of the Americas (including the history of scientific revolutions), and 3) her historical memory of the decolonizing Black/World intellectual movements that emerged in the Atlantic world between the 1950s and 1970s. In her writings during this period she frequently reflects on the global significance of Black critical intellectual cultures in the post-independence Caribbean and post-Civil Rights United States. Wynter also establishes what Joyce E. King calls a "Black studies alterity perspective," which not only "transcends a vindicationist perspective that seeks to relativize or rectify the

¹⁷⁷ Soundings radio show, Nov 1981. The full audio archive of the *Soundings* radio show is available at <http://www.soundingsproject.org/>

chauvinism of Eurocentric knowledge claims and delusions of superiority," but also demonstrates "the necessity and the possibility" of alternative ways of interpreting and constructing social realities beyond the logics and grammars of whiteness, capital, heteropatriarchy, and liberalism.¹⁷⁸

What was Wynter's perspective on the world-historical significance of these struggles? Moreover, what role did Wynter's memory of these struggles play in her early articulations of her Theory of the Human? Wynter has described the early 1980s as a period in which she became the most "heretical." All told, the 1980s and 1990s are a period in which Wynter's inquiries into the past, present, and future (un)making of modernity's purely bioeconomic conceptions of "the human" crystallized into a distinctly "Wynterian" approach to political/cultural/historical criticism and praxis. Representing a total synthesis of those questions that guided her work from the 1960s to the early twenty-first century, Wynter's collection of writings and public lectures during the 1980s and 1990s are the foundation for the metadisciplinary, radical anticolonial, and abolitionist critical intellectual fervor, which are the elemental features of Wynterian humanism. Among the aims of this project of intellectual history has been to place Sylvia Wynter's critical thought and writings within a broader

¹⁷⁸ Joyce. E. King. "Perceiving Reality in a New Way: Rethinking the Black/White Duality of Our Time." *After Man, Toward the Human* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2006) 27.

twentieth-century history of decolonizing intellectual activity and social movements. This chapter elaborates on a critical period in Wynter's life and work in which her longstanding commitments to anticolonial global transformation merged with her concerns with the (neo)coloniality of late twentieth-century modernity, as well as with major theoretical advances in her fascination with the history and prospects of epistemic revolution in the modern world.¹⁷⁹

* * *

The counterdissident nature of the Atlantic's postcolonial/post-Civil Rights movement political geographies reinforced Wynter's commitments as a scholar-activist, cultural critic, and professor throughout the late-twentieth century. In the United States, state initiatives to represent ethnic and cultural diversity in major political, economic, and cultural institutions (including the university), coincided with the rise of large-scale state regimes of domestic policing, and imprisonment of the poor, the unemployed, and other “narratively condemned” communities.¹⁸⁰ Institutional cultural shifts at American universities and college

¹⁷⁹ Qtd. Thomas. “Proudflesh Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter,” *Proudflesh: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*: Issue 4, 2006. 20.

¹⁸⁰ A thorough analysis of the anti-Black/anti-immigrant public policies behind British domestic policing practices in 1970s is elaborated in The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' anthology, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 1970s Britain* (London: Routledge, 1982). For a global analysis of late twentieth century racial regimes see also Ruth Wilson Gilmore's “Globalisation and Prison Growth: From military Keynesianism to post-Keynesian

campuses throughout the U.S. during the late 1970s and 1980s placed Wynter in the midst of important grassroots struggles by students who sought to transform the university as a means of participating in the transformation of world itself.

Wynter was appointed the second director of the Program of African and African-American Studies (AAAS) at Stanford University from 1976 to 1979 - following Dr. St. Clair Drake, the first director of AAAS from 1969 to 1976, and Thom Rue, interim director from 1974 to 1976.¹⁸¹ AAAS became both the first ethnic studies program at Stanford, and the first degree granting program of its sort at a private university in the U.S. AAAS was an interdisciplinary program established in 1968 by a committee headed by anthropology professor James L. Gibbs, Jr., as a direct result of campus actions led by the Black Student Union (BSU) to transform the university's curriculum to reflect the histories, experiences, and contemporary social justice issues of communities throughout the African diaspora and the Third World. Four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, members of the Black Student Union

Militarism" (*Race & Class*, Vol. 40 Issue 2/3, 1998-99) and, also, "Race and Globalization" (R.J. Johnston, Peter Taylor and Michael Watts, eds. *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 261). By the 1980s, the largest prison building project in history was beginning to gain momentum in the U.S. as a solution for the dismantling of postwar social welfare programs; the impact of this "prison-industrial complex" was especially evident in California, where Wynter settled after leaving the West Indies in the early 1970s. Whereas only 12 prisons were constructed from 1852 to 1968, over 33 prisons were constructed from 1982 to 2005.

¹⁸¹ Wynter also served as a professor in the department of Spanish and Portuguese.

(BSU) interrupted a public address by provost Richard Lyman at a university wide convocation entitled "Colloquium and Plan for Action: Stanford's Response to White Racism," and issued ten demands to the university: namely surrounding the hiring of faculty members from historically underrepresented minority groups, the democratization of university governance, and, the creation of curriculum with relevance to the histories, experiences, and contemporary social justice issues relevant to Black students. Above all, the BSU's ultimate goal was to facilitate a complete transformation of the intellectual, social, and administrative culture of the university.¹⁸² Wynter was instrumental in upholding the spirit of the original demands of the BSU during the first decade of the programs existence. During her tenure Wynter brought the Committee on Black Performing Arts under the umbrella of AAAS, introduced numerous additional courses into the AAAS curriculum, organized various public lectures and roundtable discussions. As the chairman of AAAS Wynter's scholarship took a major turn, and was characterized by her return to the beginnings of Western modernity with the conquest of the New World; a period of early modern history that she was first drawn to during her studies of Spanish Golden Age literature in London in the 1950s.

¹⁸² http://www.stanford.edu/dept/AAAS/aaas_online/aboutaaas/history.html

Although Wynter's activities as a writer and public intellectual from the early 1970s onward were primarily supported through her employment as an academic, the target of her interrogations of the racial contours of late modernity continued to be transnationalist in scope. This was a period in which Wynter laid the foundations for her more directed critiques of the "overrepresentation" of liberal, bourgeois, capitalist, anti-Black/anti-Native, and bioeconomic conceptions of "the human" (i.e. "Man"), and, moreover, a period where she solidified her stance on the role of scholars, activists, and cultural workers in laying the foundations for facilitating the "heretical leaps" necessary to move beyond these conceptions. Whether in her contributions as a political critic in the Jamaican press, her activities as the director of Stanford's African & African American Studies Program, her public presentations in conferences throughout the U.S., or her critical essays and scholarly research, the historical possibility and necessity of epistemic revolution in the early 21st century Atlantic world remained the central focus of Wynter's inquiries.

The repression of radical activists, politicians, and public intellectuals throughout the 1970s and 1980s was a key motivating factor for Wynter's late twentieth century work. A particularly significant event for Wynter was the 1980 assassination of Guyanese political activist and historian Walter Rodney, whom

Wynter first encountered as a lecturer at the UWI-Mona campus in the 1960s. Due to the radicalism of his scholarship, his critical interventions as an educator and public intellectual, and his unflinching advocacy of panethnic worker's revolution in the Caribbean, Rodney was seen as a heretical figure in the eyes of the region's leading political factions. Rodney's assassination was among other major events that reinforced Wynter's belief that the terms of order instituted by the intersecting histories of modern Western nation-building, colonialism, capitalism, and anti-Black/anti-Native humanism remained firm in spite of the achievement of nominal sovereignty.¹⁸³ Wynter maintained an active voice in the Jamaican press in the early 1980s and made an especially powerful statement during the summer of 1980, when she produced a series of "open letters" to the Jamaican intelligentsia. Published by the Jamaican newspaper the *Daily Gleaner* the objective of the letters was to reinvigorate the project of systemic/epistemic decolonization among the Jamaican intelligentsia, who in her assessment the colonial and post/neocolonial state had "distributed so unequally that cognitive surplus and knowledge power which is central to all of man's transformations of his natural, social, political, cultural and intellectual environment." In Wynter's

¹⁸³ The collapse of the socialist revolution in Grenada and subsequent invasion by U.S. military forces in 1983 was another key turning point in Wynter's relationship to Marxism because of the lack of outcry among Caribbean Marxist intellectuals.

view, the quest for “freedom from the dogma of dead worn-out ideas” remained a task that was “linked both to Jamaica's survival – and to the planet's.”¹⁸⁴ Placing the problem of the decolonization of the Caribbean at the fore of the late 20th and early 21st century radical left political agenda, Wynter's appeal harkens to that formative period in her critical intellectual life between the 1950s and 1970s in which social movements by the poor and working-class against racist state violence, colonialism, and imperialism were seen by many radical left Black/Third World/Marxist intellectuals as the key struggle in the revolutionary democratization of the modern planet's large-scale economic, political, and social systems.

While Wynter sought to reclaim the importance of the decolonizing intellectual labor in Jamaican politics (which she would later extend to “her colleagues” in Black studies in 1992), she was also beginning to incorporate the critiques put forth by radical Black feminist writers and thinkers within a larger revolutionary project of epistemic decolonization. Throughout the early 1980s Wynter collaborated with an important generation of Black feminist writers and public intellectuals, including: Alice Walker, Adrienne Rich, Pat

¹⁸⁴ (*Daily Gleaner* July 7 1980). Wynter further proclaims, in an earlier part of this series of articles, published on July 4th 1980, “the thought systems and economic-cultural models of liberal capitalism and of Marxism Leninism are as dead as the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution that gave birth to them.”

Parker, Audre Lorde, Gloria Watkins (Bell Hooks), Chinosole, Joyce Salisbury, Debra Cook, and Angela Davis. The assemblage of ideas about the critical intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality that formed during these conversations was instrumental in inspiring Wynter's 1982 lecture, "Beyond Feminism and Marxism," delivered at the annual American Sociological Association conference in San Francisco, in which she merged her criticisms of the limitations of racial analysis in both mainstream (white, liberal) feminism and left/progressive political organizing. In 1983 Wynter took part in a free public conference titled, "Black Women Writers on Racism & Sexism." The conference was held in Eugene, Oregon and organized by The Sojourners, a small contingent of Black feminist writers.¹⁸⁵ Wynter joined Pat Parker, Audre Lorde, and Gloria Watkins in the four day conference, and delivered a lecture, "The Rhetoric of Race and the Politics of Domination."¹⁸⁶

The insistence of this important generation of radical Black feminist thinkers on the intersectional and mutually constitutive relationship between the

¹⁸⁵ See Figure 7. For more on information about a major literary event entitled "Black Women Writers on Racism & Sexism" on January 23, 1983. Audre Lorde, Gloria Watkins, Sylvia Wynter, and Pat Warner spoke at the Hult Center for Performing Arts. See Box 1/Folder 14 [Black Women Writers on] Racism & Sexism 1983 of the Willamette Writers Guild Records, 1976-1986 (A-046), Lane Community College Archives, Eugene, Oregon.

¹⁸⁶ One year after this conference, Wynter extended her arguments in an article published on May 29 1984 in Jamaica's *the Gleaner*, "Professor Sylvia Wynter Throws Out Challenge to Jamaican Women."

institutionalized modern classificatory systems of race, class, and gender difference, is something that echoes in her essays and interviews throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Resonating with the visions of revolutionary social transformation as put forth by organizations such as the Combahee River Collective, Wynter's arguments about the larger structural-epistemic relevance of struggles against gender inequality place her squarely within a radical Black/Third World feminist tradition of political critique. Her criticisms of mainstream (liberal) feminisms are most clearly articulated, in a 2006 interview, "It is not that I am against feminism: I'm appalled at what it became. Originally, there was nothing wrong with my seeing myself as a feminist; I thought it was adding to how we were going to understand this world. If you think about the origins of the modern world, because gender was always there, how did we institute ourselves as humans; why was gender a function of that? I'd just like to make a point here that is very important. Although I use the term 'race,' and I have to use the term 'race,' 'race' itself is a function of something else which is much closer to 'gender.'" ¹⁸⁷

During her nearly two decade tenure at Stanford, between 1977 and 1995, Wynter published a number of essays that are the bedrock for a late 20th and

¹⁸⁷ PROUD FLESH Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter - Greg Thomas (2006)

early 21st century body of critical writings that are the assemblages of a distinctly “Wynterian” mode of humanist criticism. These essays joined Wynter's dual interests in twentieth-century anticolonial intellectual movements and the Western history of epistemic revolutions. The “real breakthrough” of this period, in Wynter's assessment, was her 1984 essay “The Ceremony Must be Found.” She recollects in a 2006 interview with Greg Thomas, “At the time I was actually beginning to use a computer, a PC! I remember one day I sat back and realized that I was crossing a frontier. Have you ever had that?...Things would never be quite the same. In that essay [“The Ceremony Must be Found”] I think you can see where the crossing begins.”¹⁸⁸ “The Ceremony Must be Found” is the cornerstone for Wynter's twentieth and early twenty-first century writings on Humanism, the Humanities, and “the human.” Wynter's early rehearsals of the kinds of proposals she makes in “The Ceremony” are evident in her 1981 interview on *Soundings*, in which Wynter lays out the concerns that guided her research and commitments to activist-scholarship during this period:¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Qtd. Thomas. “Proudflesh Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter,” *Proudflesh: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*: Issue 4, 2006. 20.

¹⁸⁹ From 1980 to 1997, the National Humanities Center produced the popular weekly radio show *Soundings*. *Soundings* featured interviews with scholars and writers in the humanities. 862 half-hour episodes aired on more than 350 radio stations throughout the country and were broadcast internationally on the stations of the Armed Forces Radio Network. Among those interviewed by *Soundings* host Wayne Pond were university professors in the humanities and sciences, journalists, poets, novelists, documentary film makers, musicians, state governors, members of congress, parliamentary members of European nations, and leaders of

The year that I've had here has been very fortunate for me, in being able to clarify in my own mind what it is that can be known from an Afroamerican perspective that cannot be known from the other perspectives that are at present established in the University. And it enabled me to try and put into perspective what had really happened in the 60s, and I'm arguing that Afroamerican studies is part of an intellectual reformation which included women's studies, chicano studies, but also included interdisciplinary studies which surged to the fore, I see this reformation as being as important for our knowledge of the human social order as the puritan reformation was for the establishment of the natural sciences, I am arguing that what we are really about and involved in is an intellectual revolution of quite frankly a very unprecedented magnitude. It really is a way of knowing the world that is different from that way in which we have known the world. No it doesn't displace the other forms of knowledge, it is complementary and exists, that is stay AfroAmerican studies only exists because it engaged in a dialogue with knowledge about the black as in the present it exists.¹⁹⁰

What defines "The Ceremony Must be Found" as an anchor for Wynter's subsequent work is its groundedness in the historical experience of twentieth century colonialism/anticolonialism/neocolonization, as well as the metadisciplinary relevance of its calls for an epistemic upheaval of modernity's

technological innovation. The microphone captured the voices of world-class scholars and others speaking passionately about their work in the arts, classics, education, ethics, Southern literature, religion, world histories, politics, music, philosophy, and more. As a collection, the *Soundings* episodes comprise a rich document of intellectual history of the latter half of the 20th century. Off the air since 1997, *Soundings* remains one of the most innovative, insightful, and scholarly radio shows ever produced. Now, through a partnership with the libraries at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Renaissance Computing Institute, the National Humanities Center is once again able to share *Soundings* with the public (<http://soundingsproject.org/>)

¹⁹⁰ (Soundings radio show, Nov 1981)

overrepresented conceptualizations of being, power, truth and freedom. The historical narrative that drives “The Ceremony” is one in which those global movements against the terms of order instituted by the intersecting histories of modern Western nation-building, colonialism, racial-capitalist hegemony, and empire constitute a heretical tradition in the making. This is a heretical tradition whose historical importance, Wynter argues, parallels the development of liberal, secular humanism and humanistic studies in the West:

The heresy of the discourse of Humanism and of the *Studia* lay in their deconstruction of this principle or systemic code, by the *Studia's* very coming into being as an alternative system of learning whose referential authority was no longer that of Christian theology. The heresy was not anti-chrsitian as Kristeller points out. Many, like Erasmus, only wanted to get back to a reading of the original text, uncontaminated by some of the later interpretations, back to the simple piety of the early father and to the original Greek texts believed to be able to elucidate pristine meanings. Yet it was here that a mutation occurred in that a reversal had taken place. Instead of subordinating the lay activity of learning to the authority of theology, theology was now being submitted to the authority of the lay activity of textual and philological scrutiny in the name of the accuracy of historical meaning. The category of the celestial was being submitted to the activity of the *humanista*, bearers of the inferior mode of knowledge, a mode which had now begun to constitute itself as a new *ordo* or *studium*.

Even more, a new higher sanction system, one based on the self-correcting process of human knowledge was here being proposed and put in place, in the contest of a normative knowledge whose axiom, as Waterston points out, had been that God had ordered the world according to certain principles, and the role of fallen man was merely to decipher these principles and abide by them, but not seek to question and have knowledge of things

celestial which, unaided, his corrupted human knowledge could not encompass. Indeed, according to the axiom, fallen man could not hope to know the laws by which God had ordered his Creation...The word *humanista* coincided on the model of *legista* (since the study of law based on the revised Justinian codes had been the first order of knowledge to begin to claim autonomy from the referential authority of theology) was therefore itself the expression of this heretical violation of the earlier code of value, in which knowledge of the Works of Natural unregenerate Man was, relatively, the “chaos” to the true knowledge or the knowledge of the Divine. The rewriting of knowledge of the *Studia* was therefore a counter-writing to the order of knowledge of the clergy, the new knowledge whose context a new template of identity, that of Natural Man, was being brought into existence in the new narrative representations of Renaissance Europe. In whatever forms, whether humanist or platonic, the common thrust was directed towards the valorization of the new emerging sense of self, of that which defined itself no longer as Spirit but as Natural Reason carefully cultivated. Hence the motif of the “dignity of Man” as a counter to the motif of fallen man, and the valorization by the original humanists of the practice of rhetorics and of their worship of style, the style by which the new secular mode was writing itself into being.¹⁹¹

Expanding upon Frantz Fanon's final call in *The Wretched of the Earth* that, “we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man,” Wynter's essays from “The Ceremony” onward invites “profound meditation upon the ways in which power through its various historical incarnations has created “Man” but failed to create the human.”¹⁹² They furthermore call upon scholars within those

¹⁹¹ Wynter “the Ceremony Must be Found” 28-30.

¹⁹² Bogues 2010: xi. Frantz Fanon's radical humanist philosophy stemmed from his view that the holistic treatment of the collective psyche of colonized and oppressed peoples entailed critical reckoning with the material and ontological legacies of modern Western humanism's logic of

“New Studies” that were institutionalized in the 1960 and 1970s (including Black & Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Gay & Lesbian Studies) to participate in laying the intellectual groundwork for propelling a “heretical leap” in both how the human is studied, and, in the ways that artists, activists and scholars (the “grammarians” of our terms of order) have defined what it means to be “normally human.” Wynter's main proposal in “The Ceremony” is that movements in the 1960s and 1970s for the revolutionary democratization of society, and for the creation of new areas/programs of studies represented a moment of possibility for precisely the kind of heretical leap, “counter-exertion,” or Jester's heresy that Humanism was a the condition of possibility for moving towards what Aime Césaire described in 1960 as “a humanism made to the measure of the world.” Wynter's critical writings from “The Ceremony Must be Found” onward insist on the historical necessity of an epistemic revolution in those conceptions of human biosocial normlacy that govern modernity's leading political and economic systems, as well as within the disciplinary division of the study of the human that constitutes the modern Humanities. They, moreover,

mass *dehumanization*. According to Fanon all human problems must be cast in a definite socio-historical and cultural context. The press and gravity of lived human travails imbued in him a keen sense of urgency and passion particularly as a result of his direct involvement and support of the Algerian liberation movement as wells as other Third World liberation struggles (See Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan's *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*).

displace historical narratives of modernity as a “European coming of age story known as Humanism,” with a narrative of history that interarticulates, as a political tradition, the seemingly episodic transgressions of modernity's (neo)colonized populations against the terms of order instituted by modern states and ruling-classes.

Yet another important feature of Wynter's approach to the decolonial humanities is her specific advocacy for a decolonizing project within Black Studies, which Joyce E. King describes as the “Wynterian Black Studies Alterity Perspective.” From the early-1980s to the early 1990s the emphasis of Wynter's writings on the historical necessity of “rewriting of knowledge” drew upon geopolitical events such as: the ascent of a mass imprisonment and an intensified military policing regime in the U.S., the height of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the global impact of neoliberal economic policies. One particular event that fueled Wynter's critical writing during this period was the 1992 mass urban uprising in Los Angeles that resulted due to frustrations with the disproportionately high arrest/incarceration rates and incidents of police brutality against the poor/working-class and African American residents of the city. The watershed moment in these 1992 urban uprisings was the acquittal of police officers in the videotaped beating of South L.A. resident and commuter

Rodney King. The publication of Wynter's essay "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues" in the Fall of 1992 responded to the lack of outcry among academics when it was disclosed to the public that the term "NHI" (or "no humans involved") was a standard designation used by police departments in Southern California throughout the 1980s to categorize assaults against and/or deaths of individuals regarded as "unworthy of personhood." Among those included under the N.H.I. category were gang members, poor and working-class African-Americans and Latinos, sex workers, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and the homeless. The central plea that Wynter issues in this "letter to her colleagues" resonates with similar appeals that she would make in previous decades – to the West Indian intelligentsia, to anticolonial cultural critics/artists/scholars, and to faculty and student comrades involved in the radical Black/Ethnic Studies movement:

So what are we to do as the grammarians by means of whose rigorous elaboration of the "prescriptive categories" of our present epistemological order, and therefore of our "local culture," "inner eyes," the collective behaviours which bring the present nation-state order of the United States into being as such a specific order of reality are oriented, now that we are confronted with the price paid for the putting in place of this order of reality?¹⁹³

Calling on intellectuals to "marry their thought" to the global human crisis of the

¹⁹³ Wynter, Sylvia. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Forum H.H.I. Knowledge for the 21st Century 1.1* (Fall 1994): 42-73.

early twenty-first century, Wynter concludes her letter with a charge to her colleagues:

The starving fellow, (or the jobless inner city NHI, the global New Poor or *les damnés*), Fanon pointed out, does not have to *inquire into the truth*. He *is*, they are, the Truth. It is we who institute this "Truth." We must now undo their narratively condemned status.¹⁹⁴

The impact of "No Humans Involved" on Wynter's immediate intellectual community at Stanford was profound. Soon after its publication a group of Wynter's students organized a study group named after the essay. The chief organizers of the study group were interdisciplinary group of student-activists with representing a variety of fields and disciplines, including, African-American and Euro-American History, creative writing, feminist studies, and the history of science and medicine. Among the key organizers of the group were Carmen Kynard (Stanford '93), Jason Ambroise (Stanford '94), and Jason Glenn (Stanford '96). Referring to themselves as the "Institute NHI," this cohort of students set out to take up Wynter's charge for scholars to attend to the critical role of the University and the Humanities as a site of intellectual both acquiescence and resistance to the terms of order of late modernity. Soon after forming, Institute NHI wrote, printed, and distributed a reader and a journal, *Forum NHI*, which

¹⁹⁴ Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Voices of the African Diaspora* Vol. 8, 2 (Fall 1992): 16.

took up the theme “Knowledge on Trial” and includes Wynter's original letter in the first issue. Echoing Wynter's concerns in her letter to her colleagues, the reader opens by calling attention to the relationship between global-systemic crises of the early twenty-first century and the modern Western education system.

Coinciding with the release of *Forum NHI*, Wynter delivered a lecture in October of 1994 at New York's Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture. Written one year before retiring as a university professor, the lecture, titled, “A Black Studies Manifesto,” issued a set of “Hypotheses Towards a Culture-Systemic Counter Model” to her colleagues, which reiterated the role that the “academicians of our present Western, bourgeois epistemological order” must play in creating in the 21st century, as Aime Cesaire put it in 1952, a “humanism made to the measure of the world”:

That although *being human* is implemented by the physiological processes of the body – how else? - being human is not itself a property of these processes. Rather, being human, including our model of being human, *Man*, in its present Western bourgeois or ethno-class conception, is a property of the narratively instituted governing codes of symbolic *life* and *death* or *sociogenic principle* enacting of our human forms of life as a third level of hybridly *bios* and *logos* existence. *Being human* can therefore not pre-exist the cultural systems and institutional mechanisms, including the institution of knowledge, by means of which we are socialized *to be human....*

That the elaboration and the guardianship of these governing codes and of their founding narratives are carried out, in all human orders, by the *grammarians* or *intellectuals* of each order – from the diviners of Africa, the shamans of Mesoamerica, the priest-scholars of ancient Egypt, the philosophers of Greece, the theologians of the feudal Clergy, to ourselves, the academicians of our present Western bourgeois epistemological order...

That therefore, both the “misery of the poor,” and of the homeless in general, the ongoing degradation of the lives of people in the inner cities, their everyday dying in the streets, as well as the ongoing degradation of the planetary environment, are only possible because of the lawlikely motivated ensemble of our collective behaviors that are made to seem just and legitimate by our present order of knowledge: by the sense of right and reasons of the economic and the aesthetic that we ourselves elaborate. (So much for our canons, literary and economic!). That our continued complicity with this order of knowledge entails our continued complicity with its *truths of power* - whether in its mainstream form or in the now proposed “multicultural” sub-variants...

That our present disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences must therefore guard and elaborate the truths of power structuring of our present order as the condition of its stable replication as such an order; that as a result, the fact that Black Americans were not included in the canon of *American Fiction* before the Sixties, as David Bradley pointed out in 1982, was a lawlike non-inclusion whose function was to positively mark the White America as the *real* American, and the *normal* human, and the Black as the Lack, or symbolic *death*, of the *real* American, of the *normal* human. Therefore any attempt to claim a canon of our own, or a “multicultural” paradigm, whilst it will incorporate the Black middle-class with the White middle-class (even if as a secondary middle-class), also serves to shift the weight of negative marking from the Black American population group *as a whole* to the population group of the inner city jobless – whether the now criminalized Black male or the now stigmatized “welfare Mom.”

To define liberation in terms of a canon or the multiculturalization of knowledge therefore simply serves to continue our ongoing destruction as a population group. “It's the Black ones that are dying,” as Sistah Souljah pointed out. Their death is the “price of our ticket,” our canon, of our treason as intellectuals.”¹⁹⁵

Not long before her retirement from the academy, in 1995, Wynter and the Institute hosted a symposium, “The Two Reservations: Western Thought, The Colour Line, and *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, Revisited.” Along with a renewal of Harold Cruse's call in 1967 for “Cultural Revolution” the symposium centered on Wynter's directive to participants to reflect on “our hitherto inability, as the intelligentsia of the Black, the Red, the Latino and the 'native' peoples of the world to elaborate a *native radical theory* of social transformation based on the singularity of our *peculiar racial development in the Western world, and therefore of a new conception of human freedom.*”¹⁹⁶

By Wynter's retirement from Stanford University, in 1995, the foundation was laid for her distinctly “Wynterian” approach to exploring the historical origins and biosocial mechanisms for the cultural-epistemic reproduction (and disruption) of modern, bourgeois, liberal, anti-Black/anti-Native and purely bioeconomic forms of humanism. This Wynterian mode of decolonial humanities hinges on her rigorous examinations of the cultural-symbolic

¹⁹⁵ “A Black Studies Manifesto.” 6-9.

¹⁹⁶ Symposium: “Major Themes/Questions for Discussion.”

consequences of major “heretical shifts” in modern Western intellectual history (from the Copernican Revolution to the Fanonian Revolution), as well as on her advocacy for a revolutionary-Fanonian approach to the emergent field of biosociology.

* * *

Throughout her early twenty-first century writings, Wynter consistently laments the yet to be fully realized rebellion within the Humanities whose historical possibility and necessity was no better signaled than by the revolutionary calls for “New Studies” throughout the American education system in the 1960s and 1970s; a rebellion that she reiterates is already evident in the past, present, and imminent struggles of the poor, the jobless, the narratively condemned, and the liminal in their collective and collaborative efforts to institute new conceptions of human social potential beyond the governing sociologies of liberalism, Whiteness, empire and capital. The radical intellectual histories that drive Wynter's life as a critical intellectual are the basis for the questions that she has chosen to ask from the 1960s to the early 21st century. Wynter's anticolonial humanism is directed at upending Colonialism as a

modern *epistemic regime* rather than as a historically contingent political-economic system and geopolitical arrangement.

The distinctly *Wynterian* humanism that this period of Wynter's intellectual life shores up the intellectual histories and geographies that are the foundation for Wynter's critical thought and writings are the basis for the heretical leaps present in her corpus of essays. These various moments in which "the order was shaken" by the poor, the jobless, the homeless, the colonized, and criminalized were the contexts for the radical political imaginations of Wynter and generation of artists, activists, and scholars since the dawn of the post-Civil Rights, post-independence era, neocolonial era in the 1970s and 1980s. The context for Wynter's migrations across the colonies and metropolises of the Atlantic World draws critical attention to the ways in which colonized and systematically subordinated peoples in the Americas have issued into existence forms of critical intellectual community that directly challenge the "epistemological imperialism" that has accompanied racial-capitalist, anti-Black/anti-Native, and bourgeois visions of human individual and social normalcy. At its core, this *Wynterian* critique advocates a politicohistorical consciousness that interarticulates the multitude of decolonial intellectual traditions that have emerged in response to the story of mass dehumanization

that has persistently paralleled what David Scott has referred to as “the European coming of age story known as humanism.”

Conclusion

Since Sylvia once said that she would like to write the way Aretha sounds – whether in “theory,” drama, fiction, or even dance, we could spend spend ages thinking through the significance of such a statement in this “intellectual struggles” of ours. What we will learn about the expressive tradition of Black song, our Ancestors, African cosmologies, the sacred and the secular, our entire historical experience as well as the new order of knowledge which must be written in order for a new humanity to be conceived, born, delivered. Sylvia, supernova scholar of our people, Pan-Africa’s Black Radical Tradition, the planet and the species.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Greg Thomas. Tribute to Sylvia Wynter. “Institute N.H.I.” . 50.

Since the 1980s the central injunction of Wynter's critical thought and writings has been on the task of "rewriting of knowledge" in order to move beyond the categories, discourses, sociologies, and conceptions of human social normalcy reproduced by Man.¹⁹⁸ The interdisciplinary means by which Wynter explores in her early twenty-first century writings the central question, "What is the human?" is described by Anthony Bogues describes as a "bricolage" that draws from critical theory, the relatively new field of biosociology, the history of science and scientific revolutions, and the revolutionary aspirations of the radical Black/Third World anticolonial tradition.¹⁹⁹ The inclusion of Wynter's corpus of writings and intellectual biography in studies of radical twentieth-century intellectual history point not only to the relevance of radical Black intellectual tradition to contemporary left political theory, but also to the ongoing legacies of the questions put forth by movements for social transformation instituted by the decolonial moment. Wynter is a contemporary radical intellectual who has repeatedly identified the decolonial moment as the originating impetus for her life as a critical intellectual.

¹⁹⁸ Karen Gagne, "On the Obsolescence of the Disciplines," *Human Architecture* (Summer 2007) 253

¹⁹⁹ Bogues 2006: xv.

My interest in Wynter's intellectual life stems mainly from its resonance with a broader generation of late twentieth-century radical scholars, activists, artists, and public intellectuals, and also its interconnectedness with global-historical social movements whose political legacies are still being discovered in the early twenty-first century. From her youth onward Wynter witnessed the flows of labour and capital and the systemic condemnation of Third World peoples to dehumanizing standards of living and terms of political order. In the footsteps of pioneering Caribbean (and West African women) who went to Britain as university students, Wynter found herself amidst political communities that were integral to the development of Black internationalism.²⁰⁰ The decolonial intellectual communities she participated in during her life in Britain, Jamaica, and the United States from the 1950s to the 1990s are in their respective ways participants in a Decolonial Atlantic tradition in which those at the “underside of modernity” have grappled with the experience of anti-Black/anti-Native humanism and neocolonialism in the post-World War II transatlantic world. Whether in her fiction writing and literary criticism in the 1960s Caribbean, or her participation in radical Black studies initiatives in the 1970s, Wynter's subsequent and more well known writings on “the human” from the

²⁰⁰ Matera dissertation.

1980s to the early twenty-first century originate in the epistemic ruptures initiated by the historic political, cultural, and intellectual insurgencies of Western racial-capitalist modernity's structurally subordinated and “narratively condemned” populations. Ultimately, the relevance of her critical humanist perspectives to the 21st century, speaks also to relevance of those radical social movements within which she arrived at the questions that she has been asking for nearly the past six decades.

By and large, Wynter's critical intellectual labor from the 1960s to the early twenty-first century has reckoned with the social consequences of modern Western (capitalist) expansion (globalization), the accompanying impact of the imperialist conquest of people/land/resources, the systematic targeting of native populations for conversion (and exclusion) from Western bourgeois conceptions of “civilization,” and since World War II, the militarized enforcement of (neo)liberal economic policies and “human rights.” A common feature of those decolonial intellectual communities that shaped Wynter's early critical intellectual life is that they posed significant and unprecedented challenges to Western thought and also declined amidst the political and cultural forces of neocolonial and neoliberal capitalist restructuring. Wynter's radical humanism articulates the decolonial reasonings of critical intellectual communities spanning

from England to the Caribbean and the United States that each insisted on the historical possibility and necessity of imagining new visions of human social potential. It arrives at the question of what it means 'to be human' within the sociologies of modern white liberal bourgeois capitalist humanism from the perspective of late Western modernity's "narratively condemned" global communities.

Future engagements with Wynter's body of work will benefit by acknowledging the origins of her critical thought in distinct twentieth century decolonial intellectual movements that have yet to be fully examined for their relevance to contemporary radical political theory. The recolonization of the Caribbean overshadows the questions regarding historical knowledge posited by Wynter and other anticolonial Caribbean writers between the 1950s and 1970s. Recent debates about the need to conceptualize a "new humanism" for the Humanities might proceed by exploring the often marginalized radical histories of thought, critical cultural production, and political struggle that are observable in the biographies of individuals like Sylvia Wynter. Intellectual biography in this instance might serve more than just to draw scholarly attention to the relatively understudied thought and literature of heretical intellectuals like Wynter, but also towards a the ongoing project of "restorying" the history of

modernity from the perspective of the “narratively condemned.” The coloniality of the modern Caribbean experience has presented an especially significant impetus for Wynter's corpus of writings on epistemic decolonization, and her recent inquiries into the ontoepistemological foundations of the conceptions of “Being/Power/Truth/Freedom” that remain at work in the sociologies of contemporary states and ruling-classes.

The making of Wynter's heretical vision of a new humanism is a story of everyday people challenging the dominant terms of order, experimenting, and stretching beyond the social imagination instituted by capitalism, liberalism, and white supremacy, and towards the discovery of new visions of human collective social potential, and, as it were, profoundly new ways of being human. Through the study of Wynter's life as a critical intellectual this dissertation participates in a broader project of mapping a decolonial Atlantic world (and tradition) whose heretical interrogations of modern states' and ruling-classes' definitions of “the human” remain as relevant in the early twenty-first century, as they were in the twentieth, the nineteenth, and beyond.

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