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DEMONIC GROUNDS

BLACK WOMEN AND THE CARTOGRAPHIES OF STRUGGLE

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Geographic Stories

I don't want no fucking country, here
or there and all the way back, I don't like it, none of it,
easy as that.

—DIONNE BRAND

When Dionne Brand writes, she writes the land. Her important collection of poetry *Land to Light On* is a map. But this map does not easily follow existing cartographic rules, borders, and lines. *Land to Light On* provides a different geographic story, one which allows pavement to answer questions, most of the world to be swallowed up by a woman's mouth, and Chatham, Buxton—Ontario sites haunted by the underground railroad—to be embedded with Uganda, Sri Lanka, slave castles, and the entries and exits of Sarah Vaughan's singing. And Brand gives up on land, too. She not only refuses a comfortable belonging to nation, or country, or a local street, she alters them by demonstrating that geography, the material world, is infused with sensations and distinct ways of knowing: rooms full of weeping, exhausted countries, a house that is only as safe as flesh. Brand's decision, to give up on land, to want no country, to disclose that geography is always human and that humanness is always geographic—blood, bones, hands, lips, wrists, this is your land, your planet, your road, your sea—suggests that her surroundings are speakable. And this speakability is not only communicated through the poet, allowing her to emphasize the alterability of space and place, to give up on land and imagine new geographic stories; in her work, geography holds in it the possibility to speak for itself. Brand's sense of place continually reminds me that human geography needs some philosophical attention; she reminds me that the earth is also skin and that a young girl can legitimately take possession of a street, or an entire city, albeit on different terms than we may be familiar with. So

this philosophical attention is not only needed because existing cartographic rules unjustly organize human hierarchies *in place* and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways. This attention is also needed because, if we trust Brand's insights, these rules are alterable and there exists a terrain through which different geographic stories can be and are told.

Demonic Grounds is, in its broadest sense, an interdisciplinary analysis of black women's geographies in the black diaspora. It seeks to consider what kinds of possibilities emerge when black studies encounters human geography. Drawing on creative, conceptual, and material geographies from Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean, I explore the interplay between geographies of domination (such as transatlantic slavery and racial-sexual displacement) and black women's geographies (such as their knowledges, negotiations, and experiences). This interplay interests me because it enables a way to think about the place of black subjects in a diasporic context that takes up spatial histories as they constitute our present geographic organization. The relationship between black populations and geography—and here I am referring to geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations—allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic. Black histories where, for example, progress, voyaging, and rationality meet violence and enslavement are worked out in geography, in space and place, in the physical world. Geography's and geographers well-known history in the Americas, of white masculine European mappings, explorations, conquests, is interlaced with a different sense of place, those populations and their attendant geographies that are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands. Let me give a telling example to outline the ways in which progress and exploration are entwined with a different sense of (black) place. The ships of transatlantic slavery moving across the middle passage, transporting humans for free labor into "newer worlds" do not only site modern technological progression, which materially moves diasporic subjects through space, that is, on and across the ocean, and on and across landmasses such as Canada, the United States, the Caribbean; these vessels also expose a very meaningful struggle for freedom *in place*. Technologies of transportation, in this case the ship,

while materially and ideologically enclosing black subjects—economic objects inside and often bound to the ship's walls—also contribute to the formation of an oppositional geography: the ship as a location of black subjectivity and human terror, black resistance, and in some cases, black possession.

But the landscape, our surroundings and our everyday places, the vessels of human violence, so often disguise these important black geographies; they can hide what Sylvia Wynter calls "the imperative of a perspective of struggle."[1] Geography's discursive attachment to stasis and physicality, the idea that space "just is," and that space and place are merely containers for human complexities and social relations, is terribly seductive: that which "just is" not only anchors our selfhood and feet to the ground, it seemingly calibrates and normalizes where, and therefore who, we are. The slave ship, as a materiality, contains and regulates; it hides black humanity because it "just is" and because those inside, bound to the walls, are neither seeable nor liberated subjects. As Olaudah Equiano writes, the ship was a location of suppression upheld, in part, by black grief and death; it hid and suffocated human cargo and curtailed resistances. His memories of the slave ship suggest that its materiality—above and below the deck—in part disguised human terror.[2] The imperative perspective of black struggle is undermined by the social processes and material three dimensionalities that contribute to the workings of the geographies of slavery: the walls of the ship, the process of economic expansion, human objectification, laboring and ungeographic bodies, human-cargo. The "where" of black geographies and black subjectivity, then, is often aligned with spatial processes that *apparently* fall back on seemingly predetermined stabilities, such as boundaries, color-lines, "proper" places, fixed and settled infrastructures and streets, oceanic containers. If space and place *appear* to be safely secure and unwavering, then what space and place make possible, outside and beyond tangible stabilities, and from the perspective of struggle, can potentially fade away.

Geography is not, however, secure and unwavering; we produce space, we produce its meanings, and we work very hard to make geography what it is. *Demonic Grounds* reveals that the interplay between domination and black women's geographies is underscored by the social production of space. Concealment, marginalization, boundaries are important social processes. We make concealment happen; it is not natural but rather names

and organizes where racial-sexual differentiation occurs. To return to my earlier example, the slave ship is not stable and unchanging; it is a site of violent subjugation that reveals, rather than conceals, the racial-sexual location of black cultures in the face of unfreedoms. The physicality of the slave ship, then, contributes to the *process* of social concealment and dehumanization but, importantly, black subjectivity is not swallowed up by the ship itself. Rather, the ship, its crew, black subjects, the ocean and ports, make geography what it is, a location through which a moving technology can create differential and contextual histories. To return to Equiano, the slave ship is not simply a container hiding his displacement. It is a location through which he articulates hardship and human cruelty, in part mapping and giving new meaning to the vessel itself.

The connections, across the seeable and unseeable, the geographic and the seemingly ungeographic, and the struggles that indicate that the material world is assessed and produced by subaltern communities, these shape my discussions. Geographic domination is a powerful process. However, if we pursue the links between practices of domination and black women's experiences in place, we see that black women's geographies are lived, possible, and imaginable. Black women's geographies open up a meaningful way to approach both the power and possibilities of geographic inquiry. I am not suggesting that the connections between black women and geography are anything new—indeed, I assume a legacy of black women's geographies and geographic knowledges. Rather, I am suggesting that the relationship between black women and geography opens up a conceptual arena through which more humanly workable geographies can be and are imagined. I am therefore interested in the kinds of historical and contemporary geographies that interest and impact upon black women and how, for some, existing arrangements do not work at all, "easy as that."[3]

GEOGRAPHIES OF DOMINATION, TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY, DIASPORA

Black matters are spatial matters. And while we all produce, know, and negotiate space—albeit on different terms—geographies in the diaspora are accentuated by racist paradigms of the past and their ongoing hierarchical patterns. I have turned to geography and black geographic subjects not to provide a corrective story, nor to "find" and "discover" lost geographies.

Rather, I want to suggest that space and place give black lives meaning in a world that has, for the most part, incorrectly deemed black populations and their attendant geographies as "ungeographic" and/or philosophically undeveloped. That black lives are necessarily geographic, but also struggle with discourses that erase and despatialize their sense of place, is where I begin to conceptualize geography. I therefore follow the insights of Kathleen Kirby, noting that the language and concreteness of geography—with its overlapping physical, metaphorical, theoretical, and experiential contours—must be conceptualized as always bringing into view material referents, external, three-dimensional spaces, and the actions taking place in space, as they overlap with subjectivities, imaginations, and stories.[4] I want to suggest that we take the language *and* the physicality of geography seriously, that is, as an "*imbrication* of material and metaphorical space,"[5] so that black lives and black histories can be conceptualized and talked about in new ways. And part of the work involved in thinking about black geographies is to recognize that the overlaps between materiality and language are long-standing in the diaspora, and that the legacy of racial displacement, or erasure, is in contradistinction to and therefore evidence of, an ongoing critique of both geography and the "ungeographic." Consequently, if there is a push to forge a conceptual connection between material or concrete spaces, language, and subjectivity, openings are made possible for envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world.

Geography, then, materially and discursively extends to cover three-dimensional spaces and places, the physical landscape and infrastructures, geographic imaginations, the practice of mapping, exploring, and seeing, and social relations in and across space. Geography is also Geography, an academic discipline and a set of theoretical concerns developed by human geographers, such as the importance of the ways in which material spaces and places underpin shifting and uneven (racial, sexual, economic) social relations. In order to examine black women's relationship to these diverse geographic conceptualizations, I have employed the term "traditional geography," which points to formulations that assume we can view, assess, and ethically organize the world from a stable (white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, classed) vantage point. While these formulations—cartographic, positivist, imperialist—have been retained and resisted within and beyond the discipline of human geography, they also clarify that black

women are negotiating a geographic landscape that is upheld by a legacy of exploitation, exploration, and conquest.[6] If we imagine that traditional geographies are upheld by their three-dimensionality, as well as a corresponding language of insides and outsides, borders and belongings, and inclusions and exclusions, we can expose domination as a visible spatial project that organizes, names, and sees social differences (such as black femininity) and determines *where* social order happens.

The history of black subjects in the diaspora is a geographic story that is, at least in part, a story of material and conceptual placements and displacements, segregations and integrations, margins and centers, and migrations and settlements. These spatial binaries, while certainly not complete or fully accurate, also underscore the classificatory *where* of race. Practices and locations of racial domination (for example, slave ships, racial-sexual violences) and practices of resistance (for example, ship coups, escape routes, imaginary and real respatializations) also importantly locate what Saidya Hartman calls "a striking contradiction," wherein objectification is coupled with black humanity/personhood.[7] In terms of geography, this contradiction maps the ties and tensions between material and ideological dominations and oppositional spatial practices. Black geographies and black women's geographies, then, signal alternative patterns that work alongside and across traditional geographies.

Indeed, black matters are spatial matters. The displacement of difference, geographic domination, transatlantic slavery, and the black Atlantic Ocean differently contribute to mapping out the real and imaginative geographies of black women; they are understood here as social processes that *make* geography a racial-sexual terrain. Hence, black women's lives and experiences become especially visible through these concepts and moments because they clarify that blackness is integral to the production of space.[8] To put it another way, social practices create landscapes and contribute to how we organize, build, and imagine our surroundings. Black subjects are not indifferent to these practices and landscapes; rather, they are connected to them due to crude racial-sexual hierarchies *and* due to their (often unacknowledged) status as geographic beings who have a stake in the production of space. Black women's histories, lives, and spaces must be understood as enmeshing with traditional geographic arrangements in order to identify a different way of knowing and writing the social world and to expand how the production of space is achieved across terrains of domination.

The production of space is caught up in, but does not guarantee, long-standing geographic frameworks that materially and philosophically arrange the planet according to a seemingly stable white, heterosexual, classed vantage point. If prevailing geographic distributions and interactions are racially, sexually and economically hierarchical, these hierarchies are naturalized by repetitively spatializing "difference." That is, "*plac[ing]* the world within an ideological order," unevenly.[9] Practices of domination, sustained by a unitary vantage point, naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups "naturally" belong. This is, for the most part, accomplished through economic, ideological, social, and political processes that see and position the racial-sexual body within what seem like predetermined, or appropriate, places and assume that this arrangement is commonsensical. This naturalization of "difference" is, in part, bolstered by the ideological weight of transparent space, the idea that space "just is," and the illusion that the external world is readily knowable and not in need of evaluation, and that what we see is true. If *who* we see is tied up with *where* we see through truthful, commonsensical narratives, then the placement of subaltern bodies deceptively hardens spatial binaries, in turn suggesting that some bodies belong, some bodies do not belong, and some bodies are out of place. For black women, then, geographic domination is worked out through reading and managing their specific racial-sexual bodies. This management effectively, but not completely, displaces black geographic knowledge by assuming that black femininity is altogether knowable, unknowing, and expendable: she is seemingly in place by being out of place.

The simultaneous naturalization of bodies and places must be disclosed, and therefore called into question, if we want to think about alternative spatial practices and more humanly workable geographies. Borrowing from Ruth Wilson Gilmore, I want to suggest that geographies of domination be understood as "the displacement of difference," wherein "particular kinds of bodies, one by one, are materially (if not always visibly) configured by racism into a hierarchy of human and inhuman persons that in sum form the category of 'human being.'"[10] Gilmore highlights the ways in which human and spatial differentiations are connected to the process of making place. The displacement of difference does not *describe* human hierarchies but rather demonstrates the ways in which these hierarchies are critical categories of social and spatial struggle. Thus, practices of domination are necessarily caught up in a different way of knowing and writing

the social world, which foregrounds the "geographical imperatives," that lie "at the heart of every struggle for social justice."[11] This material spatialization of "difference"—for my purposes, the spatialization of the racial-sexual black subject—in various times and locations in turn makes visible new, or unacknowledged, strategies of social struggle. Geographic domination, then, is conceptually and materially bound up with racial-sexual displacement and the knowledge-power of a unitary vantage point. It is not a finished or immovable act, but it does signal unjust spatial practices; it is not a natural system, but rather a working system that manages the social world. It is meant to recognize the hierarchies of human and inhuman persons and reveal how this social categorization is also a contested geographic project.

I draw on the history of transatlantic slavery to illustrate that black women are both shaped by, and challenge, traditional geographic arrangements. My discussions are underwritten by transatlantic slavery because this history heightens the meanings of traditional arrangements, which rest on a crucial geographic paradigm, human captivity. Transatlantic slavery profited from black enslavement by exacting material and philosophical black subordinations. A vast project, the practice of slavery differently impacted upon black diaspora populations in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Canada, the United States, and various parts of Europe, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Slavery differed markedly in different locations. For example, periods of institution and abolishment, the scale of the trade, and uses of slave labor all produce unique time-space differentiations. At the same time, the particularity of slaves' lives and selves—gender, age, labor tasks, phenotype, ethnicity, language, time, place—fracture the meanings of slavery even further. As histories, recollections, and narratives of slavery clearly demonstrate, different slaves negotiated bondage in very different ways.[12] While it is not within the scope of this introduction or project to particularize and spatialize all geographies of transatlantic slavery, I sketch out below the central ideas that have shaped my analysis.

What I feel is important to outline in terms of the geographies of transatlantic slavery and my larger discussion on black women's geographies is not so much the vast and differential processes of captivity. Instead, I turn to slavery, through memories, writings, theories, and geographies, to address the idea that locations of captivity initiate a different

sense of place through which black women can manipulate the categories and sites that constrain them. Of course the technologies and violences of slavery, as they are spatialized, do not disappear when black women assert their sense of place. But black women also *inhabited* what Jenny Sharpe calls "the crevices of power" necessary to enslavement, and from this location some were able to manipulate and recast the meanings of slavery's geographic terrain.[13] Their different practices of spatial manipulation make possible a way to analyze four interrelated processes that identify the social production of space: the naturalization of identity and place, discussed above; the ways in which geographic enslavement is developed through the constructs of black womanhood and femininity; the spatial practices black women employ across and beyond domination; and the ways in which geography, although seemingly static, is an alterable terrain.

I have drawn on the legacy of transatlantic slavery to advance a discussion of black women's geographic options as they are, often crudely, aligned with historically present racial-sexual categorizations. More specifically, transatlantic slavery incited meaningful geographic processes that were interconnected with the category of "black woman": this category not only visually and socially represented a particular kind of gendered servitude, it was embedded in the landscape. Geographically, the category of "black woman" evidenced human/inhuman and masculine/feminine racial organization. The classification of black femininity was therefore also a process of *placing* her within the broader system of servitude—as an inhuman racial-sexual worker, as an objectified body, as a site through which sex, violence, and reproduction can be imagined and enacted, and as a captive human. Her classificatory racial-sexual body, then, determined her whereabouts in relation to her humanity.

As some black feminists have suggested, the category of "black woman" during transatlantic slavery affects—but does not necessarily twin—our contemporary understandings of human normalcy.[14] Further, our present landscape is both haunted *and* developed by old and new hierarchies of humanness. If past human categorization was spatialized, in ships and on plantations, in homes, communities, nations, islands, and regions, it also evidences the ways in which some of the impressions of transatlantic slavery leak into the future, in essence recycling the displacement of difference. Of course, much has changed in the natural and social environment, but our historical geographies, and the ways in which we make and know

space now, are connected; they are held together by what Carole Boyce Davies and Monica Jardine describe as "a series of remapping exercises in which various land spaces are located within an orbit of control."[15] I am not suggesting that the violence of transatlantic slavery is an ongoing, unchanging, unopposed practice, but rather that it is a legacy that carries with it—for black and nonblack peoples—"living effects, seething and lingering, of what *seems* over and done with."[16]

I want to suggest that the category of black woman is intimately connected with past and present spatial organization and that black femininity and black women's humanness are bound up in an ongoing geographic struggle. While black womanhood is not static and ahistoric, the continuities, contexts, and ruptures that contribute to the construction of black femininity shed light on how black women have situated themselves in a world that profits from their specific displacements of difference. Identifying black women as viable contributors to an ongoing geographic struggle, rather than, for example, solely through the constructs of "race" or race/class/gender/sexuality is critical to my argument: I want to emphasize that contextual spatial analyses do not relegate black women to the margins or insist that the spatialization of black femininity "just was" and "just is." While I have suggested that geography—through and beyond practices of domination—is an alterable terrain through which black women can assert their sense of place, questions of "race," or race/class/gender/sexuality, are contributors to the where of blackness, rather than the sole indicators of identity/experience.

So, what philosophical work can geography actually do for us, as readers and occupiers of space and place, if it is recognizably alterable? What is at stake in the legacy of exploration, conquest, and stable vantage points if we insist that past and present geographies are connective sites of struggle, which have *always* called into question the very *appearance* of safely secure and unwavering locations? And what do black women's geographies make possible if they are not conceptualized as simply subordinate, or buried, or lost, but rather are indicative of an unresolved story?

I am emphasizing here that racism and sexism are not simply bodily or identity based; racism and sexism are also spatial acts and illustrate black women's geographic experiences and knowledges as they are made possible through domination. Thus, black women's geographies push up against the seemingly natural spaces and places of subjugation, disclosing, sometimes

radically, how geography is socially produced and therefore an available site through which various forms of blackness can be understood and asserted. I do not seek to devalue the ongoing unjustness of racism and sexism by privileging geography; rather I want to stress that if practices of subjugation are also spatial acts, then the ways in which black women think, write, and negotiate their surroundings are intermingled with place-based critiques, or, respatializations. I suggest, then, that one way to contend with unjust and uneven human/inhuman categorizations is to think about, and perhaps employ, the alternative geographic formulations that subaltern communities advance. Geographies of domination, from transatlantic slavery and beyond, hold in them both the marking and the contestation of old and new social hierarchies. If these hierarchies are spatial expressions of racism and sexism, the interrogations and remappings provided by black diaspora populations can incite new, or different, and perhaps more just, geographic stories. That is, the sites/citations of struggle indicate that traditional geographies, and their attendant hierarchical categories of humanness, cannot do the emancipatory work some subjects demand. And part of this work, in our historical present, is linked up with recognizing both "the where" of alterity *and* the geographical imperatives in the struggle for social justice.

Spatial acts can take on many forms and can be identified through expressions, resistances, and naturalizations. Importantly, these acts take place and have a place. One of the underlying geographic themes and "places" in this work is the black diaspora and the black Atlantic. Discussions draw on the work, ideas, and experiences advanced by theorists, writers, and poets from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean. I have not drawn on these diasporic locations to reify a monolithic "black space," but rather to examine how practices of and resistances to racial domination across different borders bring into focus black women's complex relationship with geography. I cite/site several diasporic texts in order to consider where geopolitical strategies take place in the face of racial dominations. This conceptual framing of black diaspora geographies is in part inspired by Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.*

Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* has allowed me to think about black populations as part, but not completely, of geography. The text focuses on alternative geographies, countercultural positions, which are simultaneously deemed ungeographic yet hold in them long-standing spatial negotiations.

And this positionality—in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean—is inextricably linked to a discourse of modernity wherein questions of progress are underwritten by the terrors of slavery, the living memories of slavery, and diasporic migrations. Further, the idea of "belonging" in and to place—whether it be a particular nation, a specific community, real/imagined Africa, homelands—is incomplete, premised on a struggle toward some kind of sociospatial liberation. Importantly, this struggle can go several ways at once: it might be developed through the language of nation-purity, or desired reconciled belongings that reiterate hetero-patriarchal norms; it might be formulated as Pan-Africanism, or through "outernational" musical exchanges and cultural borrowings; it might draw on European thought, Afrocentric philosophies, or both; it might foresee black nations, in Liberia, Ethiopia; it might involve crossing borders or enforced, chosen, temporary, or permanent, exiles. Black Atlantic populations, then, inhabit place in a unique way, which is, in part, upheld by geographic yearnings and movements that demonstrate "various struggles toward emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship" and a reexamination of "the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory."[17] *The Black Atlantic* works to loosen the naturalization of (black) identities and place, arguing for the ways in which a different sense of place, and different geographic landmarks, might fit into our historically present spatial organization. And while his critique of transparent space is not explicit, Gilroy does provide some tools through which we might reconsider the terms of place, belonging, and unfulfilled liberties. That is, he sites black geographies through a terrain of struggle.

What I continue to like about Gilroy's text is the way he develops these ideas alongside geographic materialities. His work is not often examined for his invocation of three-dimensionalities, which correspond with how we can understand the space of the black subject.[18] Of course, *The Black Atlantic* is not a forthright spatial investigation; indeed, criticism includes Joan Dayan's discussion of what she describes as Gilroy's slave ship and middle passage metaphors, symbols which, she argues, produce a deterritorialized "cartography of celebratory journeys."[19] But I want to read *The Black Atlantic,* and the black Atlantic, differently: as an "imbrication of material and metaphorical space,"[20] in part because the text is so noticeably underscored by a very important black geography, the Atlantic Ocean, through which the production of space can be imagined on diasporic

terms. In fact, I would suggest that it is precisely because Gilroy draws on real, imagined, historical, and contemporary *geographies,* that Dayan can imagine and document the materialities, the landscapes, he elides in this work. That is, metaphors of the middle passage or the Atlantic Ocean are never simply symbolic renditions of placelessness and vanishing histories—this is too easy and, in my view, reinforces the idea that black scholars and writers are ungeographic, trapped in metaphors that seemingly have no physical resonance. Coupling Gilroy's insights into modernity and intellectual histories with his decision to position black cultures in relation to the Atlantic Ocean and other physical geographies helps to explicate where the terrain of political struggle fits into black cultural lives. I suggest that if *The Black Atlantic* is also read through the material sites that hold together and anchor the text—the middle passage, the Atlantic Ocean, black travelers in Europe, Canada, and elsewhere, the slave ship, the plantation, shared outernational musics, fictional and autobiographical geographies, nationalisms—it clarifies that there are genealogical connections between dispossession, transparent space, and black subjectivities. Historical and contemporary black geographies surface and centralize the notion that black diaspora populations have told and are telling how their surroundings have shaped their lives. These connections flag, for example, the middle passage, expressive cultures, and the plantation on historio-experiential terms, spatializing black histories and lives, which are underwritten by the displacement of difference. It is important, then, to recognize that black Atlantic cultures have always had an intimate relationship with geography, which arises out of diasporic populations existing "partly inside and not always against the grand narrative of Enlightenment and its organizing principles";[21] principles that include the naturalization of identity and place, the spatialization of racial hierarchies, the displacement of difference, ghettos, prisons, crossed borders, and sites of resistance and community.

THE POETICS OF LANDSCAPE

Édouard Glissant's "poetics of landscape" brings attention to geographic expression, specifically, saying, theorizing, feeling, knowing, writing, and imagining space and place. For Glissant, poetics are both written and unwritten, and neither process can be claimed as superior or more legitimate than the

other. The poetics of landscape, in Glissant's terms, "awakens" language, offering intelligible and visible black struggles. The spatial undertones are obvious, found both in Glissant's choice of terminology and in his deeper concerns with his immediate environment, the landscapes and topography of Martinique and the Caribbean: the Other America, perpetual concealment, somber greens, which the roads still do not penetrate, mahogany trees supported by blue beaches on a human scale, the salt of the sea, beaches up for grabs, "our landscape is our only monument: its meaning can only be traced on the underside."[22] Glissant's complex sense of place, his poetics of landscape, creates a way to enter into, and challenge, traditional geographic formulations without the familiar tools of maps, charts, official records, and figures; he enters, through his voice-language, a poetic-politics, and conceptualizes his surroundings as "uncharted," and inextricably connected to his selfhood and a local community history. The poetics of landscape discloses the underside, unapparent histories and stories that name the world and black personhood. Sylvia Wynter, in discussing Glissant specifically, describes his poetics as a "counterconcept," which contests, as she puts it, "Man," purveyor of "*universal généralisant*": unquestionable reason, value, and authority.[23]

I work with this counterconcept because it gives emphasis to the oppositional speaker/community vis-à-vis their inevitable—although sometimes vexed—connection to the outer world and, to continue with Wynter's terminology, "Man's" geographies. Poetics of landscape constitute narrative acts, delineating a "relationship with the land, one that is even more threatened because the community is alienated from the land. . . . Describing the landscape is not enough. The individual, the community, the land are inextricable in the process of creating history."[24] In discussing written and oral histories, Glissant remarks that the relationship between the writer/speaker and the landscape in fact makes history and brings the subject into being. In a way, Glissant reconciles the black subject to geography, arguing that expressive acts, particularly the naming of place—regardless of expressive method and technique—is also a process of self-assertion and humanization, a naming of inevitable black geographic presence. To put it another way, naming place is also an act of naming the self and self-histories. Insisting that different kinds of expression are multifariously even, that is, not hierarchically constituted as, for example, "written" over "oral," and that the landscape does not simply function as a decorative

background, opens up the possibility for thinking about the production of space as unfinished, a poetics of questioning.[25]

What is striking here, and very useful in terms of black women's geographies, is that the poetics of landscape are not derived from the desire for socioeconomic possession. Nor are they derived from a unitary vantage point. Indeed, Glissant suggests that there are different sets of geographic tools available, which are anchored, primarily, in nonlinearity, contradictory histories, dispossession, and an "infinite variety" of landscapes.[26] The claim to place should not be naturally followed by material ownership and black repossession but rather by a grammar of liberation, through which ethical *human*-geographies can be recognized and expressed. Arguably, then, while the displacement of difference outlines processes of human and inhuman classification, it also draws attention to subaltern spatial practices, which are written into and expressed through the poetics of landscape.

The combination of material and imagined geographies is intended to unfix black women's geographies from their "natural" places and spaces by bringing into focus the "sayability" of geography. Acts of expressing and saying place are central to understanding what kinds of geographies are available to black women. Because black women's geographies are bound up with practices of spatial domination, saying space and place is understood as one of the more crucial ways geography can work for black women. The poetics of landscape, then, comprises theories, poems, dramatic plays, and historical narratives that disclose black women's spaces and places. They comprise an interdisciplinary and diasporic analytical opening, which advances creative acts that influence and undermine existing spatial arrangements. I take this inextricable combination of real-imagined geographies seriously throughout the project in order to argue that the poetics of landscape, whether expressed through theoretical, fictional, poetic, musical, or dramatic texts, can also be understood as real responses to real spatial inequalities. The poetics of landscape allow black women to critique the boundaries of transatlantic slavery, rewrite national narratives, respatialize feminism, and develop new pathways across traditional geographic arrangements; they also offer several reconceptualizations of space and place, positioning black women as geographic subjects who provide spatial clues as to how more humanly workable geographies might be imagined.

Produced alongside and through practices of domination, black women's

expressive acts spatialize the imperative of a perspective of struggle. Within this work, I attempt to locate black women's geographies in space without situating these geographies firmly inside an official story or history. Rather than attempting to complete black women's geographies by "finding" them or "discovering" them, I am emphasizing that geography and black women have *always* functioned together and that this interrelated process is a new way to "enter" into space (conceptually and materially), one that uncovers a geographic story predicated on an ongoing struggle (to assert humanness and more humanly workable geographies). In this way, the displacement of difference, geographies of domination, transatlantic slavery, the black diaspora, and the poetics of landscape, throughout the study, are used to indicate the ways in which unofficial or oppositional geographies—which are so often displaced, disguised, or relocated by practices of domination—are socially produced indicators of the imaginative and real work geography can do.

READING THE DEMONIC

Etymologically, demonic is defined as spirits—most likely the devil, demons, or deities—capable of possessing a human being. It is attributed to the human or the object through which the spirit makes itself known, rather than the demon itself, thus identifying unusual, frenzied, fierce, cruel human behaviors. While demons, devils, and deities, and the behavioral energies they pass on to others, are unquestionably wrapped up in religious hierarchies and the supernatural, the demonic has also been understood in terms that are less ecclesiastical. In mathematics, physics, and computer science, the demonic connotes a working system that cannot have a determined, or knowable, outcome. The demonic, then, is a nondeterministic schema; it is a process that is hinged on uncertainty and nonlinearity because the organizing principle cannot predict the future. This schema, this way of producing or desiring an outcome, calls into question "the always non-arbitrary pre-prescribed" parameters of sequential and classificatory linearity.[27] With this in mind, the demonic invites a slightly different conceptual pathway—while retaining its supernatural etymology—and acts to identify a system (social, geographic, technological) that can only unfold and produce an outcome if uncertainty, or (dis)organization, or something supernaturally demonic, is integral to the methodology.

In her essay, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'," Sylvia Wynter develops the demonic in two ways. First, she works with the schema outlined above, specifically drawing on the theories forwarded by physicists, to suggest that a demonic model conceptualizes vantage points "outside the space-time orientation of the humunucular observer."[28] This vantage point makes possible her analysis of our historically present world-human organization, the "order-field" wherein "race" functions to distinguish Man from his human (black, native, female) others. Her analysis does not lead her to discuss Man verses other, however. Rather, her demonic model serves to locate what Wynter calls cognition *outside* "the always non-arbitrary pre-prescribed," which underscores the ways in which subaltern lives are not marginal/other to regulatory classificatory systems, but instead integral to them. This cognition, or demonic model, if we return to the nondeterministic schema described above, makes possible a different unfolding, one that does not *replace* or override or remain subordinate to the vantage point of "Man" but instead parallels his constitution and his master narratives of humanness. It is this conception of humanness that I read as Wynter's contribution to re-presenting the grounds from which we can imagine the world and more humanly workable geographies.

In developing a second, but related, use of demonic, Wynter describes "the grounds" as the absented presence of black womanhood. "Beyond Miranda's Meanings" is one of Wynter's more thorough and explicit analyses of black feminism.[29] For those familiar with William Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* the demonic here connotes a geographical, ontological, and historical lack, the missing racial-sexual character in the play: Caliban's potential mate through whom the reproduction of his race might occur, who Wynter suggests is absent, and demonic, precisely because she is outside the bounds of reason, "too alien to comprehend," as Audre Lorde wrote.[30] Wynter asks, then, what would happen to our understanding and conception of race and humanness if black women legitimately inhabited our world and made their needs known? And how does her silence, absence, and missing desired and desirable body, figure into the production of selfhood? What does her nondeterministic impossibility add to our conceptualization of humanness? Demonic grounds, then, is a very different geography; one which is genealogically wrapped up in the historical spatial unrepresentability of black femininity and, to return to the demonic

model above, one that thinks about the ways in which black women necessarily contribute to a re-presentation of human geography.[31]

I want to encourage reading *Demonic Grounds* in the spirit of Sylvia Wynter's writings because her philosophies aim to identify a transition *toward* a new epistemology. That is, the grounds of Wynter's project contribute to what David Scott describes as a "revisioned humanism," which is fashioned as a "direction, a *telos*."[32] Of course this present work, *Demonic Grounds,* does not pretend to twin Wynter's extraordinary and intricate contributions to metaphysics and humanism! However, I use her work to clarify what the tenets of geography make possible, not just in the areas of mapping domination and subordination, but also in the areas of working toward more just conceptualizations of space and place. Importantly, then, the demonic grounds outlined by Wynter in "Beyond Miranda's Meanings" are not simply identifying categories of difference, absence, and the places and voices of black women and/or black feminism; they also outline the ways in which this place is an unfinished and therefore transformative human geography story; thus, Wynter works toward "a new science of human discourse."[33]

I think, then, Wynter gives us a new place to go, a "direction," as David Scott puts it, in human geographic inquiry. In terms of reading *Demonic Grounds,* I hope that my discussions cite and site at least a small part, or "a piece of the way," in this debate.[34] My argument is not intended to be a corrective discussion—or a new map—but a contribution to the connections between justness and place, difference and geography, and new spatial possibilities. The chapters that follow are intended to raise questions about the ground beneath our feet, how we are all implicated in the production of space, and how geography—in its various formations—is integral to social struggles. *Demonic Grounds* is not meant to be read as a text that finds, discovers, and surveys the places black women inhabit; rather, it begins what I hope will be a discussion about what black women's historical-contextual locations bring to bear on our present geographic organization. *Demonic Grounds* seeks to consider the ways in which practices of domination are in close contact with alternative geographic perspectives and spatial matters that may not necessarily replicate what we think we know, or have been taught, about our surroundings. So the conceptual work of my discussions is quite simple: how do geography and blackness work together to advance a different way of knowing and imagining the world?

Can these different knowledges and imaginations perhaps call into question the limits of existing spatial paradigms and put forth more humanly workable geographies?

I use these questions as a thematic through which my discussions can be read. I begin with what I consider to be the key debates and problems in geographic inquiry. However, rather than building my argument around questions of absences (for example, who, what is missing from the discipline of human geography?), I consider what happens, conceptually and materially, when black studies encounters the discipline of geography, and blackness is imagined through specific geographic inquiries. I note that while there is a wide disciplinary gap between human geography, black experiences, and black studies, it is not indicative of a black sense of place. In chapter 1, then, I argue for what black geographies have always made possible—materially, theoretically, imaginatively. The geographic relationship between the past and the present and racial geographies is crucial here, as it works to examine the ways in which understanding blackness has been twinned by the practice of *placing* blackness *and* rendering body-space integral to the production of space. Equally important are the ways in which the material and conceptual possibilities geography offers also raise a new set of concerns for black subjects, beyond and through what is considered the given, knowable, and profitable perimeters of space and place. This paradox underscores my interdisciplinary methodological approach, which is to combine different conceptualizations of space and place and demonstrate that while traditional spatial formulations are powerful, geography is also a terrain through which blackness makes itself known. Drawing on Toni Morrison, W. E. B. Du Bois, Neil Smith, Édouard Glissant, Frantz Fanon, and Dionne Brand, I explore traditional geographies, bodily-spatial struggles, and a "different sense of place." I argue that a close examination of black geographies simultaneously points to cycles of racial-sexual domination and oppositional geographic practices, which in turn offer what Marlene Nourbese Philip calls "a *public* genealogy of resistance": histories, names and places of black pain, language, and opposition, which are "spoken with the whole body" and present to the world, to our geography, other rhythms, other times, other spaces.[35]

What kind of philosophical and spatial work can a public genealogy of resistance do if it sites blackness, black femininity, and the body as speaking

to and across the world? In chapter 2 I think about this question in relation to bodily captivity, enslavement, and emancipation, which I believe heighten the paradox of black women's geographies. Specifically, as noted above, I am interested in the ways in which black women inhabited "the crevices of power" necessary to enslavement, and through which some were able to manipulate and recast the meanings of slavery's geographic terrain. I therefore read a moment in Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* in order to examine the ways in which a black sense of place communicates the terms of captivity. In her narrative, Jacobs (as Linda Brent) describes the seven years she spent in her grandmother's tiny garret, a retreat she was forced to take in order to save her life and her children's lives. The garret highlights how geography is transformed by Jacobs/Brent into a usable and paradoxical space. More than this, the garret is situated in and amongst the violent geographies of slavery; Jacobs's/Brent's position in the garret allows her to witness and say these geographies "from the last place they thought of," not on the margins, or from a publicly subordinated position, but from the disabling confines of a different slave space, what she describes as her "loophole of retreat."

What interests me, in addition to geographic possibilities of the garret that Jacobs/Brent discloses, are the ways in which her racial-sexual body, and the naming of her (unprotected) body, underwrite other diasporic feminisms. That is, Jacobs/Brent names the body as a location of struggle. Throughout the narrative, skin, hair, arms, legs, feet, eyes, hands, muscles, corporeal sexual differences—these physical attributes, of Jacobs/Brent, her family, and her lovers, contribute to the possibilities and limitations of space. I follow my discussion of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by analyzing the conceptual threads between black women's enslaved bodies, the garret, and Marlene Nourbese Philip's poetics. I make these connections not to present an ahistorical reading of black femininity, but rather to address the ways in which the contributions of second-wave black feminism are diasporic precisely because the body, and the legacy of racial-sexual discrimination, have forced a respatialization of white Euro-American feminisms. I then discuss the geographic underpinnings of black feminism because this politics can also be understood as a struggle over space and place, within the academy, in theory and activism, and across women's literatures. In what ways are these body-identity politics showing the alterability of space and black women's long-standing geographic contributions,

but also perhaps reifying the margin and "garreting" black femininity? Is the garret a continuous assertion of black politics, conceptually and experientially reframed as the margin? What kinds of metaphoric and material demands does the margin make on how we politicize difference? Or, can the margin be recast in less geographically constrictive terms, perhaps evidencing a part of an enlarged story field?

I add to these queries through a different study when I consider the slave auction block. In a sense, the slave auction block reorients how space and place are communicated through the category of black femininity. This historical-contextual site not only adds to the complexities of paradoxical space, but also delineates how intimate physical attributes—skin, hair, arms, legs, feet, eyes, hands, muscles, corporeal sexual differences—can also shape external geographies, those scales that exist outside the body proper. By focusing on "the moment of sale," a concept borrowed from historian Walter Johnson, chapter 3 looks at three interconnected ways the slave auction block simultaneously marks the unfree body and the spaces outside of it: through displaying and exhibiting difference and the seeable body in terms of human/inhuman; through marking the differences between *kinds* of places (such as the body, the auction block, the plantation, the region, the nation); and through demonstrating how differences between kinds of places are not enclosed but rather entwined, and arguably sustained, by the moment of sale (the body for sale on the auction block, for example, bolsters the local economy and expresses racial differences in place).

These connections and differences suggest, however, that the slave auction block is not an unalterable materiality. Instead, the slave auction block is part of a social process that situates and localizes the moment of human sale, and in turn enables the objectification of black women and the repetitive naturalization of race-sex. But because the slave auction block is wrapped up in the "striking contradiction" of black objectification-humanity, it follows that it is necessarily a location of unresolved struggle. Building on the displacement of difference, I also suggest that the auction block opens up the possibility of human and bodily contestation: it creates a space through which black women can sometimes radically disrupt an otherwise rigid site of racialization and sexualization. I then read an excerpt from Robbie McCauley's play *Sally's Rape* as evidence of the historically present meaning of the auction block. Through the poetics of

landscape, McCauley considers the auction block as a viable site of dramatic re-visitation and re-presentation: in *Sally's Rape,* the auction block is evidence of our pasts, and of a historically specific geography that exacted subordinations; but it is also a way for McCauley to question how this legacy puts demands on our contemporary geographic arrangements.

An important aspect of my argument is the illumination of the seeable and unseeable—black subjects hidden and on display. Black Canada offers a different way to think through the seeable and the unseeable. In chapter 4, I study the ways in which the absented presences of black peoples in the nation assert a different, less familiar national story. I introduce the concepts of "surprise" and "wonder" in order to conceptualize Canada as a feasible site of blackness. That is, while existing debates in Black Canadian Studies about the past and present places of black Canadians focus on absences, absented presences, and black Canadian marginality, they also embed these subjects within the nation-space. Specifically, these debates are also a way to insist that black Canadian populations are bound up in how we understand Canada-nation. It is suggested, then, that blackness is an unexpected but long-standing presence within Canada. I then position Canadian slave Marie-Joseph Angélique as a historical figure whose contestable presence makes black Canada believable. Angélique was accused of and executed for burning down most of Montreal, New France, in 1734. I suggest that Angélique's geographies—the difference she made to the nation and Montreal spatially and philosophically—have created other spaces through which black Canada can be articulated. That is, her alleged arson is a geographic opposition that needs to be (but is not necessarily) believable in order to help verify the presence of black Canada.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, the garret, Marlene Nourbese Philip's poetics, the slave auction block, *Sally's Rape,* Marie-Joseph Angélique, absented presences and black Canada, differently challenge how we have come to know geography; these texts, memories, women, and locations are just some of the ways to imagine and talk about black geographic struggles in the material, theoretical, and imaginative landscapes we occupy and express. Chapter 5 develops ways to present these spatialities through the work of Sylvia Wynter. I present Sylvia Wynter's ideas in relation to black geographies, showing that her unique understanding of space and place can perhaps direct us toward more humanly workable geographies. This chapter speaks to earlier chapters, arguing for a less descriptive

presentation of black geographies and a turn to an interhuman reading of the production of space. Wynter makes possible a different approach to geography, one that is not marginal or subordinate or even developed across existing spatial patterns; her enlarged understanding of race, racism, geography, and displacement tells the story of interhuman geographies as evidence of struggles that put new demands on our historically present planet.

Demonic Grounds is a study of connections. It connects black studies, human geography, and black feminism. The textual sources connect literature, theory, poetry, drama, remembrances, images, and maps. These connections and expressions are not intended to name what/who is missing—from black studies, human geography, black feminism, or our historically present geographic landscapes. They are, instead, intended to illustrate the ways in which human geographies are, as a result of connections, made alterable. The combination of diverse theories, literatures, and material geographies works to displace "disciplinary" motives and demonstrate that the varying places of black women are connected to multiple material and textual landscapes and ways of knowing. These discussions are also about geographic stories. Places and spaces of blackness and black femininity are employed to uncover otherwise concealed or expendable human geographies. Because these geographic stories are predicated on struggle, and examine the interplay between geographies of domination and black women's geographies, they are not conclusive or finished. I hope to make clear that the ongoing geographic struggle of and by black women is not simply indicative of the adverse effects of geographic domination, but that geography is entwined with strategic and meaningful languages, acts, expressions, and experiences. What I am trying to illustrate are the powerful connections among race, sex, gender, and displacement, and the oppositional implications of saying, thinking, living, and writing black geographies. These connections, I think, make clear how the livability of the world is bound up with a human geography story that is not presently just, yet geography discloses a workable terrain through which respatialization can be and is imagined and achieved.