



Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered about the Floor)

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FOOTNOTES (BOOKS AND PAPERS SCATTERED ABOUT THE FLOOR)

In 2015, I began scrolling images at my public talks. The image slides are on a continuous loop. The images are of ideas (in text, song, visual art, maps and places, objects, people) that have shaped my thinking. I started doing this because I was finding it difficult to track, within the context of a public talk, how I know what I know, where I know from, who I know from, and what I cannot possibly know. I try to make a new slideshow or film for each public talk, so I remember to revisit ideas before I give a presentation and think about them in a new context. I include these images because while I feel I know my research fields intimately, how I came to know these fields is fading, so I revisit and recontextualize. At the same time, this history, my memory, is overlaid by newer research questions, texts, images, events, places, people. Confidently and in my own specific and scattered way—to give an obvious example—I know well the tensions between modernity and race and gender and blackness. I found my way to this confidence by reading and rereading those who have studied and written about race, capitalism, and modernity. I found my way by sharing, talking, and writing about writers, scholars, and cultural producers I love to teach, read, reread, and read again. I found my way by reading and rereading work I do not agree with and by making my way through books and ideas I dislike. I sometimes show texts, such as images of music (scores, album cover art, musicians), because I adore music and it structures my life and work, but these ideas are not represented satisfactorily in my research. *The nonwordness of sounds*.¹

The subtitle of this story, “Books and Papers Scattered about the Floor,” is from Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (New York: Penguin, 1928), 13.

1. Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 101.

I show the images because I have increasingly noticed that some labor—specifically the exertion that lies within studying and writing and making and grooving—somehow seems to disappear after issuance. The exertion disappears.² The images are on a loop, and I add to this loop frequently. The images are not intended to carry clear meaning. They are looped, and the loop represents what I and what we cannot say or hear or see or remember just as it establishes a repetitive, circuitous, and circular but also inaccurate representation of coming to know. The loop is not intended to be meaning-making; the loop can only show fragments and moments of knowing. Shadows: *the interstices of the invisible and visible/residual elements may be articulated by and within new social practices, in effect, as a “new” emergent formation.*³ I show the images because I want to be as honest as I can about my intellectual history while also recognizing my dishonest memory. I show the images because I want to be honest about where my ideas come from while recognizing that this is also a process of forgetting. *My sadness sits around me.*⁴ So I read in-and-with black studies to honor those who have shared their intellectual and political energy with me—their effort—in myriad infrastructures, feelings, texts, stories, exchanges.⁵

This short story is about citations, endnotes, footnotes, notes, references, bibliographies, texts, narratives, parentheses, sources, and pages. It is a story, one of many, about what we do with books and ideas. It is a story about how we arrange and effectuate the ideas that make ideas. By observing how arranging, rearranging, and collecting ideas outside ourselves are processes that make our ideas our *own*, I think about how our ideas are bound up in stories, research, inquiries, that we do not (or should not claim we) own. This leads me to work through the ways black studies and academic research and writing—when we are doing our very best work—acknowledges the shared and collaborative intellectual praxis that

2. I have thought about this, often. The exertion she puts into her intellectual projects is ineffable. Her intellectual work cannot be tracked on the page. What she does to get there requires tremendous physiological and intellectual effort.

3. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 24; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 19.

4. June Jordan, “My Sadness Sits around Me,” in *The Black Poets*, ed. Dudley Randall (New York: Bantam, 1971), 248.

5. I do not know everywhere. My privilege is gaping. My geographic bias is obvious and objectionable. I will do better. I add slides weekly, monthly. I keep reading. I am ashamed. Adding more slides is shameful. Vulgar. This note, all notes, are vulgar.



makes our research what it is. This is, for me, especially important because our ideas, on the page or in the presentation, might suggest otherwise; sometimes our ideas imply that we arrived there, in that page or presentation, on our own, as the sole owners of our own ideas. *A property interest.*⁶

*Risking the sovereignty of our own stories.*⁷ What if the practice of referencing, sourcing, and crediting is always bursting with intellectual life and takes us outside ourselves? What if we read outside ourselves not for ourselves but to actively unknow ourselves, to unhinge, and thus come to know each other, intellectually, inside and outside the academy, as collaborators of collective and generous and capacious stories?⁸ Unknowing ourselves. The unhooking opens up a different conversation about why we do what we do, here, in this place, that despises us—not focusing on reparation of the self, alone, but instead sharing information and stories and resources to build the capacity for social change.⁹ *Alternative outcomes.*¹⁰ The unhooking, unknowing ourselves, opens up learning processes that are uninterested in a self that is economized by citations. And still, displacing the self, unknowing who we are, is awful: it is indeterminate and unpredictable and lonely. Togetherness can be difficult and lonely, too.¹¹

6. Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1715.

7. Dina Georgis, *A Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 73.

8. Here we can also reference referencing in black musics: See, for example, Betty Davis’s “They Say I’m Different,” from *They Say I’m Different* (Seattle: Light in the Attic Records, 1974): “I’m talkin’ bout Big Momma Thornton / Lightning Hopkins / Howling Wolf / Albert King / Chuck Berry / Chuck Berry / Chuck Berry.” See also Stevie Wonder, “Sir Duke,” from *Songs in the Key of Life* (Detroit: Tamla, 1976). On referencing place, see Murray Forman, “‘Represent’: Race, Space and Place in Rap Music,” in *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2011), 247–269. On referencing place, see Mark V. Campbell, “Connect the T. Dots—Remix Multiculturalism: After Caribbean-Canadian, Social Possibilities for Living Difference,” in *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada*, ed. Charmaine Nelson (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 254–276. On referencing, sampling, and mentions in hip-hop (thank you Mark Campbell for sharing this article), see Justin A. Williams, “Theoretical Approaches to Quotation in Hip-Hop Recordings,” *Contemporary Music Review* 33, no. 2 (2014): 188–209.

9. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28–29.

10. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

11. “If she wants to meet me that’s fine if she doesn’t / that is also fine.” Jackie Kay, “Chapter Five: The Tweed Hat Dream,” in *The Adoption Papers* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), 19.

The awfulness, though, opens up a conversation about why we do what we do and offers methods for living, here, in this place, that despises us. The unknowing brings together unexpected intellectual conversations that, together, resist dehumanization. The unknowing risks reading what we cannot bear and what we love too much. Unknowing ourselves.¹² Unknowing does not seek or provide answers: the steady focus is, instead, on working out how to share ideas relationally. Perhaps the function of communication, referencing, citation, is not to master knowing and centralize our knowingness, but to share *how we know*, and share how we came to know imperfect and sometimes unintelligible but always hopeful and practical ways to live this world as black.¹³ *The text passes from a dreamed-of transparency to the opacity produced in words.*¹⁴ The parentheses enfold and convey, the notes buttress, and they leave shadows.¹⁵ Citing is not easy. Referencing is hard.¹⁶

12. "In a way, the ethics and methodologies of encounters, anecdotes, conversations and storytelling I am invoking through radical vulnerability, strive to achieve in the realm of research praxis, a politics of indeterminacy, or a politics without guarantees." Richa Nagar, *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 13.

13. "Mastery is never complete. . . . We are always living in excess of what we know about our motives, our actions, and what we say we value." Dina Georgis, *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 106. "The different subjectivities and material conditions of those who produce and exchange knowledge continue to be erased under the sign of mastery. Yet these different conditions have everything to do with what knowledge is produced and how it is handled." Cindi Katz, "Towards Minor Theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (August 1996): 497.

14. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (1990; rpt., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 115.

15. See also Kobena Mercer, "Decolonization and Disappointment: Reading Fanon's Sexual Politics," in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 114–130.

16. In childhood development studies, referencing signals social engagement; it is a specific developmental milestone (typically achieved by neurotypical children when they are between eight and fourteen months old). The interaction is between a child and a parent/adult and an object (e.g., a ball): the parent shows interest in the ball and encourages the child to observe and to do the same; the reference is the child's nonverbal look to the adult, who is talking about, pointing to, providing information about the ball; the nonverbal look (the reference, which shows shared interest in the ball) and other cues (referencing the ball by following the finger that is pointing to the ball, or perhaps referencing by mimicking and also pointing to the ball) indicates that the child is watching and learning about the world. The adult will perhaps reinforce the interaction and referencing by narrating the activity ("Look! a ball!"). The child is referencing the adult/parent and learning

This is a story, one of many, about how we know, how we come to knowing, and how we share what we know. I am interested in how references, citations, and bibliographies are central to the project of black studies. I am also curious about effectuated and effectuating ideas and learning and knowing. I believe that bibliographies and endnotes and references and sources are alternative stories that can, in the most generous sense, centralize the practice of sharing ideas about liberation and resistance and writing against racial and sexual violence. *Alternative outcomes.*

about the world by showing an interest in what the adult/parent is interested in; the interaction is joined. The focus is not on the child, per se, but on the child receiving social and emotional attention from the interaction and learning from that attention (such as the adult's voice of encouragement or facial expressions); referencing is acknowledging the ball-as-a-shared-site-of-interest and, at the same time, recognizing that the social relationship (the connection between the parent and child) is meaningful and garners social and emotional attention. When a child does not reference, the assumption is that they are slower at developing social skills and/or are not "information seeking." Neurotypical children—who do not reference in the same way as neurotypical children—may find normative referencing very difficult. This does not mean, in my view, that these children are not adept at information seeking; rather, it means that they are seeking information (normative and nonnormative information) differently! The level of social engagement referencing demands is high; it takes some neuroatypical children outside of themselves, requiring they step onto a normative path (a path they may consider nonnormative), which is laborious. Some working in the field that studies autism spectrum disorders might say, then: referencing does *not* come *naturally* to neuroatypical kids . . . in the way it comes *so naturally* to normal kids. This developmental-milestone-skill perspective on referencing, for me, opens up an important challenge: what does it mean, and to whom are we signaling, when referencing (citation practices) comes *easy*? I am not, to be sure, conflating (neurotypical-neuroatypical) social referencing with academic citation practices; rather, I am underscoring how the term "referencing" carries in it the clinical normalization of referencing practices (developmental milestones, which are tracked biological, psychological, and emotional changes in children) that can provide a way for us to notice that, for some people inhabiting our worlds, referencing is tough and awfully hard. If we rotate the script, and understand the hardness not as unusual but as a way of living and a way of being and navigating our messed-up world that rewards all kinds of normativities, then we can learn that engaging with the materials we read to show *how we know* can be (ideally, I would argue) a painful undoing of who we think we are and, as well, how we come to share what we know differently. The neurotypical are *not*, throughout the referencing process, *becoming* neuroatypical or autistic of course; rather this example gives us a way to notice and engender conditions of relation wherein we refuse normative authenticating processes. Lauren Cornew, Karen R. Dobkins, Natacha Akshoomoff, Joseph P. McCleery, and Leslie J. Carver, "Atypical Social Referencing in Infant Siblings of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 42, no. 12 (December 2012): 2611–2621; Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Jonathan Alderson, *Challenging the Myths of Autism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2011).

I am indebted to the endnotes and footnotes prepared by the motley crew Richard Iton, Lisa Lowe, Sylvia Wynter, Vladimir Nabokov, and David Foster Wallace.¹⁷ The notes these authors include in their works, like many others, not only show the labor and effort that underpins research and writing; they also signal stories of other stories that direct you to a story and place connected to, but not of, the story you began. *Pale Fire*.

This is not, explicitly, a story about the metrics of citation practices or impact factors. I am, as I note below, cognizant of this important critique of white and patriarchal citation practices and how they can “justify ongoing forms of domination.”¹⁸ I am more interested in how referencing works in black studies and how this referencing uncovers a lesson that cannot be contained within the main text.¹⁹ What if citations offer advice? What if citations are suggestions for living differently?²⁰ What if some citations counsel how to refuse what they think we are?

17. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (New York: Vintage, 1989); David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest: A Novel* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); on Sylvia Wynter, see n. 25 in this story. See also Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

18. Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne, “Citation Matters: Mobilizing the Politics of Citation toward a Practice of ‘Conscientious Engagement,’” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 24, no. 7 (2017): 954–973; Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 40–41.

19. “In this respect, it is always interesting to carefully read Fanon’s footnotes. To begin with, *Black Skin, White Masks* contains more footnotes than any of Fanon’s later texts. Some of those footnotes run two or three pages. In *Black Skin, White Masks*’s footnotes, Fanon often engages himself in a conversation with an imagined opponent or appeals to personal memories and thus reveals more about his thoughts than he does in the text. Fanon’s footnotes are like the repressed, unconscious foundations of his text. Or, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, they are the marginalia of Fanon’s texts, his way of separating his public from his private self.” Françoise Vergès, “Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 582–583.

20. Worn Down (Fall 2017). NourbeSe Philip’s long-cycle-poem *Zong!* (2011) swirled in my head. I was alerted to the award-winning art installation by Rana Hamadeh (*The Ten Murders of Josephine and On Proxy Bodies: A Script in Progress*, Rotterdam, 2017), a piece that attends to the *Zong* massacre—specifically the *Gregson v. Gilbert* case—and ongoing (historically present) racial violences. I was curious about the ways in which the work of Philip was, for the most part, not present in the images, ideas, and theories Hamadeh used in her work (those I could access from afar, to be clear). From what I understand, Philip’s *Zong!* is given a nod within the exhibition (as “phonic substance”) and is also noted to be an “inspiration.” Reviewing the exhibition from afar, I wondered about how the intellectual effort of a

Sara Ahmed makes the very smart observation that citation practices are gendered and racialized. Citation decisions are a political project for Ahmed because, she argues, absenting white men (from our bibliographies, references, footnotes) reorganizes our feminist knowledge worlds. By excluding white men from her (our) bibliographies she (we) can gen-

black woman poet undergirds *The Ten Murders* yet is also, for the most part, removed from the visual and textual work that is presented. What is the work of citation here? And uncitation?

A scanning of an exhibition review, along with an interview, would lead one to think that perhaps the legal archives from the *Zong* massacre were sought out, reviewed, and studied by Hamadeh and then visually built into her installation. However, a trip to the archives is not required. *Gregson v. Gilbert* can be found within Philip's *Zong!* itself: it serves as the narrative through which her poetics emerges; the case is also reproduced within the book and is retold in the "Notanda." The legal case anchors Philip's 2008 long-cycle-poem and is intensified by the creative work she did with and to those legal narratives to produce *Zong!* in order to poetically express her political obligation to the black-unnamed who were murdered. In *Zong!* the fragments of the legal archive are reworded to reconceptualize the weight of unremembered loss. In *Zong!* the unnamed and the forgotten are named in trace. In *Zong!* poetics are the analytics of black life. With *Zong!* we learn to unread and reread unspeakability.

In 2017, just six weeks before the exhibition was launched, Hamadeh contacted Philip and requested permission and blessings to use *Zong!* in her installation. In addition to detailing how *Zong!* would be presented and archived in the exhibition, Hamadeh wrote to Philip explaining that the book, long in her hands, was "a daily ritual that grew slowly throughout my working process into becoming an important theoretical and affective scaffolding within the work." The artist intended to use Philip's work and ideas in the exhibition (and perhaps the work and ideas were already integrated before permission was requested, given that Philip was contacted only six weeks before the launch . . . of course, tracking time is always unhelpfully awful).

Philip did not provide permission. She did not agree with the conditions under which her work would be used and, as well, made clear that she was also very busy and worn out. Her sister was dying and needed care.

Without permission and sweeping aside Philip's care-work and mourning, it seems Hamadeh reimagined the work of *Zong* with scraps of *Zong!* The nod to Philip within the exhibition itself is coupled to the kind of documents many, in theory, have access to (e.g., the legal archives from the original case, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, available in *Zong!* as noted above). But in some ways this coupling—the nod and the archive that is already there—establishes a kind of alibi for rewriting and forgetting the creative-intellectual work Philip expresses in *Zong!* In one interview Hamadeh presents her engagement with the *Zong* massacre as her own intellectual work and theoretical intervention—Philip is not mentioned. Instead, she explains: "This archive of horror shall not be understood as the trace of the massacre, but rather as the fragmentary, unspoken, and unspeakable phonic materiality that is captured and trapped within the trace—that subsists *because of* and *despite of* that trace" and "I treat the *Gregson vs. Gilbert* document in the exhibition as a primary document that defines the notion of documentality as a whole." Hamadeh also includes her own poetics in her exhibition:

erate new ideas and chip away at, and possibly break down, the walls of patriarchy that have excluded and refuse feminist ways of knowing.²¹ Decentering the citations, and thus the experiences, of white men unmakes a scholarly system that champions and normalizes white patriarchal scholarly traditions. I struggle with the outcome of this citation project. I wonder

For, thought is made in the mouth. / Let's talk about the voice / of the record / as the record / Not of the captured, but of capture / Not of weight, but the modality of measure / The voice of the killer

The records, the mouth, the weights and measures, the voice. Bad made measure. Curious. It seems to me—from afar—that Hamadeh is, at least in part, working with and reworking the long-cycle-poem (not necessarily the original archival documents): scratching it out and scraping it up and remaking it into something else. In the process of rewriting, the creative labor of Philip—the intellectual effort of her monumental rehumanizing black studies project, *Zong!*—wears down.

I will not reproduce all of *Zong!* in order to provide textual proof of Hamadeh's rewording and revising of Philip's long-cycle-poem. I view this from afar. How Hamadeh understands and writes the *Zong* massacre is on her shoulders, as is Philip's clear, exhausted, unwillingness to be a part of the project. I ask, though, that we dwell on the politics of permission. I ask that we dwell on the politics of permission in relation to black women. And, I want to underscore and centralize and illuminate the effort Philip put into the long-cycle-poem. I was told to cite black women. We are told to cite black women. Sometimes the words and ideas of black women, when cited, become something else. Sometimes the ideas of black women wear out and wear down even though these narratives provide the clues and instructions to imagine the world anew. Often the words and ideas and brilliance of black women remain unread. The words and ideas of black women go uncited. The intellectual effort is unnoticed and stepped over and swept aside. Worn down, sometimes the intellectual work of black women is unmentionable. We must continue to cite their words and ideas well. We must read them well. I cite and site *Zong!* and NourbeSe Philip as brilliant intellectual effort. I want to engage this text as labor. It is not a nod, gesture, signal, or inspiration. It is poetic infrastructure—black women's work—that radically repoliticizes black life.

I viewed images of the exhibition that were shared by a colleague who saw it in Rotterdam in 2017. See <https://frieze.com/article/rana-hamadeh> and <http://moussmagazine.it/rana-hamadeh-carolina-rito-2017>. Other quotations are from an email correspondence between Philip and Hamadeh (emphasis in the original and permission granted by Philip) and my personal email communication with Philip (permission granted); "Bad made measure" is from M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2008), 5. See also Katherine McKittrick, "Diachronic Loops/Deadweight Tonnage/Bad Made Measure," *Cultural Geographies* (December 2015): 1–16.

21. Sara Ahmed, "White Men," *Feminist Killjoys* (blog), November 4, 2014, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men/>. In the above blog post, Ahmed is thoughtful about her citation practices before *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), noting her referential relationships with scholars such as Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

how it inadvertently turns on impossible foreclosures: What does it mean to read Jacques Derrida and abandon Derrida and retain Derrida's spirit (or specter!)? Do we unlearn whom we do not cite? And what of our teaching practice? Do we teach refusal? Can we not teach our students to engage with various authors and narratives, critically, while also asking them to raise up the work of black women and other scholars, writers, artists, interviewees, teachers, who go unrecognized? How do we teach each other to read (disapprove, evaluate, critique, use, forget, abandon, remember) "white men" or other powerful scholars? Or is the critique (uncitation) to enact erasure? The project of erasure, too, often unfolds as an affirmation of racial privilege: here I recall (mostly white) feminists sparkingly shouting with a kind of breathy desperation that they, too, have been overciting and venerating white male scholarship, and that Ahmed has discovered a brand-new way to recognize and credit and legitimize the ideas of the marginalized; this leads these breathy speakers to hail the work of—mostly nonblack, mostly white feminist, mostly academic—privileged scholars!²² That aside, Ahmed's citation project matters to me because it asks that we think about the epistemological grounds through which we theorize and imagine and name liberation in our referencing practices.

Citation points to method and how we come to write what we know. Citation is important because it frames and supports (legitimizes) our

22. Where and when do we cut those purveyors of dreadful feminism? When do we refuse to cite the bourgeois feminists, or the left-leaning feminists, or the Western feminists who write about Third World "culture" or who adore a two-sex system or who despise and abuse their black administrative assistants or who fail their black students or who publicly humiliate and threaten nonwhite women and men? How do we cite those who stole and steal our work, our ideas? When do we refuse to engage those feminist scholars who despise those who clean their homes and tend their gardens and care for their children? When do we refuse to cite or read or talk about dreadful awful brutal feminism? How do we cite the feminists who call other feminists "terrorists"? Where and when do we stop citing the nonwhite, including black, patriarchal scholars who, heckle, cut down, plagiarize, kick about, ignore, talk over, interrupt, demote, demean black women? (Suddenly, the unraveling: out with the nonwhite capitalists who smartly write of ecofeminism, out with the boring female identified white liberals who write of political theory and the saccharine promises of equality, be gone nonradical nonqueer nonanarchist nonfeminist women who write of community gardens.) "Dominant forms of feminism that fail to address the rapacious qualities of corporate capital or 'predatory capitalism' can be legitimately criticized for ideological limitations that render some feminisms complicit in dehumanizing systems and in mystifying the convergence of corporate wealth and repressive state policies." Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 182.

argument. This also shows that if we *begin* with Michel Foucault as our primary methodological and theoretical frame—if Foucault is our referential scaffolding—we *will, most certainly, draw Foucauldian conclusions*. There is nothing at all wrong with a Foucauldian project and Foucauldian conclusions, of course—to suggest so would be remiss and skirt around the work of citations I am seeking to address. This example simply centralizes the importance of how referential beginnings and referential scaffoldings shape conclusions.

*Theory is absence, obscure and propitious.*²³ Working with scholars like Sylvia Wynter, Édouard Glissant, and Frantz Fanon, I read and re-read their work, to observe their complex analytical and methodological worlds. These scholars, it seems to me, are much more interested in *how* we know, and how we come to know, than in *who* we know. They tell us that there is no beginning through which firm conclusions can be made. They tell us beginnings-to-ends and questions with knowable answers are ineffective analytical equations. They tell us that liberation cannot, in any way, be a formulated answer to how we resolve the troubling awful world we inhabit if it is posed as a subsequent counterreaction to that troubling awful world—for that end-answer all too often demands a beginning-question framed within the perimeters of, and thus invested in the systemic replication of, our awful world. Anxiety to convey meaning often results in overemphasis, and emphasis as a way of conveying meaning means that you are unconsciously holding on to meaning and limiting it.²⁴

Sylvia Wynter taught me to recognize how radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge. Sylvia Wynter taught me that radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge. Sylvia Wynter taught me that radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge and that this place, outside (demonic grounds), is inhabited by those who are brilliantly and intimately aware of existing systems of knowledge. Sylvia Wynter taught me that radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge and that this place, outside (demonic grounds), is inhabited by those who are brilliantly and intimately aware of existing systems of knowledge (as self-replicating). Sylvia Wynter taught me that radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge and that this place,

23. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 129.

24. M. NourbeSe Philip, “Lessons for the Voice (1),” in *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (Charlottetown, Canada: Ragweed Press, 1989), 72.

outside (demonic grounds), is inhabited by those who are brilliantly and intimately aware of and connected to existing systems of knowledge (as self-replicating) and that this awareness provides theoretical insights and projections of humanity that imagine a totally new way of being. Sylvia Wynter taught me that radical theory-making takes place outside existing systems of knowledge and that this place, outside (demonic grounds), is inhabited by those who are brilliantly and intimately aware of and connected to existing systems of knowledge (as self-replicating) and that this awareness provides theoretical insights and projections of humanity that imagine a totally new way of being that observes how our present mode of being functions unjustly and cannot sustain itself ethically.²⁵ Sylvia Wyn-

25. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57; Sylvia Wynter, "Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man," in *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*, ed. June Givanni (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 25–76; Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" in *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 355–372; Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis," in *C. L. R. James's Caribbean*, ed. Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 63–91; Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 637–647; Sylvia Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics," *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* 2, no. 2 (1976): 78–94; Sylvia Wynter, "New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas: Part One," *Jamaica Journal* 17, no. 2 (May 1984): 25–32; Sylvia Wynter, "New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas: Part Two," *Jamaica Journal* 17, no. 3 (August–October 1984): 46–55; Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95–102; Sylvia Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 432–469; Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes towards a Deciphering Practice," in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 238–279; Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," *boundary 2* 12, no. 3, and 13, no. 1 (Spring/Fall 1984): 19–70; Sylvia Wynter, "The Eye of the Other," in *Blacks in Hispanic Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. Miriam DeCosta (New York: Kennikat, 1977), 8–19; Sylvia Wynter, "The Pope Must Have Been Drunk, the King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality and the Caribbean Rethinking of Modernity," in *Reordering of Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada in the Hood*, ed. Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995), 17–41; Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience," in *National*

ter taught me that black women are radical theory makers and that black women inhabit demonic ground.²⁶

The sharing of ideas (no beginnings, no ends) enables a terrain of struggle, through which different futures are imagined. In this instance, we must ask how the cited works of some black scholars enable a new humanism, planetary humanism, radical theories of liberation, poetics of relation, a new worldview, and therefore refuse the crude capital economization of collated names standing in as ideas.²⁷ I do not believe that ci-

Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America, ed. Mercedes F. Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30–66; Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 257–337.

26. Wynter, “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings,” 365.

27. As well and at the same time some citation practices show how black intellectuals and other social theorists are differentially sourced (through erasure, through quick and fast and understudied referencing, through detailed and thorough engagements, and so on) in the (economic and otherwise) production of academic knowledge. Excised from, and despised within. The academy needs the figure of the black: we are the analytical sites, the data, the experiment, the security guards, the cleaners, the administrative assistants, the nonnormative teachers, through which so much scholarship moves. In books and articles, the figure of the black moves in tandem with citations that are, at times, animated by desperation: if I/we cite Claudia Rankin, if I/we cite Frantz Fanon, if I/we cite James (C. L. R., Joy, Baldwin . . .), I/we are, theoretically, “doing” race and blackness.

The desperation, exasperated, often goes sideways.

To do race I will cite . . .

Gloria Anzúdua.

Toni Morrison.

Zadie Smith.

Buchi Emecheta.

Donna Haraway on situated knowledge which is built on the words of Buchi Emecheta.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Borderlands.

The bookend to this is citation advice. Pages and pages. I have noticed that each year our graduate students present their thesis proposals, during the question and answer period, only the black students are asked if they have read *x* or *y* or *z*. The nonblack students are asked about their research and the black students are given reading lists. This happens to me, this happens to us, too. Have you read [insert name of theorist] on animals? Oh! You must. You need this. Your project on black things will suffer if you have not read what I have read. Here is a list of what I have read and what I *know* you have not read. Here is a list of what

tation, as a practice that includes or excludes, is useful. I am not interested in citations as quotable value.²⁸ I want to reference other possibilities such as, citations as learning, as counsel, as sharing. I say this because, after many years of thinking about referencing practices, I am pretty certain that much of the work in black studies does not cite books and articles and ideas and music and art in order to quickly and uncritically authorize the author's project. Much of black studies is not written for the impact factor. Much of black studies baffles the scientometric index. I believe, instead, that referencing in black studies is a lesson in living. To put it another way, referencing and citation in black studies are what Carmen Kynard calls "vernacular insurrections": narratives that are "not only counterhege-

you do not know. Here is a list of what I am reading for you and your book on black things. Look! Look!

De temps à autre, on a envie de s'arrêter.

From time to time you feel like giving up.

From time to time one would like to stop.

Sometimes citation practices do not take the time to feel and recognize liberation. Sometimes referencing signals allusion rather than study. "Doing race" is not the same as undoing racism. Citations are economized. Some citations are unfreeing. *Some citations objectify black people.* Works cited are not always about the work in which the works cited appears.

See Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 145; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (1952; rpt., New York: Grove, 2008), 116, 136. Many thanks to Yasmine Djerbal for assistance with translations (English-toward-French and French-toward-English).

See also Analogue University, "Control, Resistance, and the 'Data University': Towards a Third Wave Critique," *Antipode Interventions*, March 31, 2017, <https://antipodefoundation.org/2017/03/31/control-resistance-and-the-data-university/>.

"But suddenly racism and 'women of colour' appear as phrases or topics thrown into books as chapters, producing tight little breathless paragraphs or footnotes . . ." Himani Bannerji, "Returning the Gaze: An Introduction," in *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism, and Politics*, ed. Himani Bannerji (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1993), xiv. Thank you, Elyn Walker.

See also Katherine McKittrick, "bell hooks," in *Key Contemporary Theorists on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine (London: Sage, 2004), 189–194; and Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 154, 146.

28. "Did you ever read my words, or did you merely finger through them for quotations which you thought might valuably support an already conceived idea concerning some old and distorted connection between us?" Audre Lorde, "Letter to Mary Daly," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984; rpt., Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 68.

monic, but also affirmative of new, constantly mutating languages, identities, political methodologies, and social understandings that communities form in and of themselves both inwardly and outwardly . . . not merely the bits and pieces chipped off or chipping away at dominant culture, but a whole new emergence.”²⁹ The notes, the citations, the books, the references have, to borrow again from Kynard, “black freedom-inspired purpose.”³⁰

Ahmed—to get back on track—*incompletely continues* the work of many black feminists and black scholars. Black thinkers have always turned to each other to generate ideas and develop a body of scholarship that calls out and responds to the overarching biocentric and colonial knowledge system that cannot, in any way, honor black intellectual life. Ida B. Wells. *Red Record*.³¹ Turning to each other is not, though, an inward-looking project that requires exclusion.³² This scholarship delineates worldviews outside and across white supremacist and colonial ways of knowing. Part of this work has involved subverting and rehistoricizing existing knowledge systems by sharing black ways of knowing and living. Black ways of knowing and living. *Red Record. Southern Horrors*. This sharing practice—passing on what we know and how we know it and how to read, reread, and unread—reorganizes our knowledge worlds by providing textual and methodological (verbal, nonverbal, written, unwritten) confirmations of black life as struggle. Citation could, then, perhaps be considered one fulcrum of black studies: in a world that despises blackness the bibliography—written or sung or whispered or remembered or dreamed or forgotten—ushers in, or initiates, or teaches, or affirms. This is the praxis of being black and human as struggle. This cites and sites a genre of humanness that emerged from but is *not solely* defined by plan-tocratic logics of dispossession: the works cited, what we tell each other about what we know and how to know, contain *how to* refuse practices of

29. Carmen Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-Literacies Studies* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 10–11.

30. Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections*, 18.

31. Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1996).

32. “The intellectual and cultural achievements of the black Atlantic populations exist partly inside and not always against the grand narrative of Enlightenment and its operational principals.” Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 48.

dehumanization.³³ The works cited untangle systems of oppression and talk about resisting racist violence. The works cited are many and various divergent and overlapping texts, images, songs, and ideas that may not normally be read together.³⁴ The works cited, all of them, when understood as *in conversation* with each other, demonstrate an interconnected story that resists oppression. We do not have to agree with all the works in the works cited. We do not have to like all of the works in the works cited. We do have to trust that the works in the works cited are helping us understand and talk about and theorize how to know the world differently. The praxis, then, is not about who belongs and who does not belong in the index or the endnotes; rather, it is about how we, collectively, are working against racial apartheid and different kinds and types of violence.³⁵

While many black scholars certainly cite white men, when we read their work closely we can notice that they are anticipating and, a priori, politically moving beyond Ahmed's project by producing intellectual narratives that envision renewed liberatory infrastructures that are stitched together *not* by specific names, but by the *practice of sharing ideas* about how we might and can resist multiscalar injustices. Hortense Spillers. Carole Boyce Davies. Joy James. Maya Angelou. Zora Neale Hurston. Barbara Christian. Barbara Smith. Paula Giddings. *When and Where I Enter*. Thus, we might recognize black studies not as a citational project of naming and unname, but instead as sharing ideas about how to struggle against oppression. This has less to do with white men as embodied knowers and more to do with *doing the work of liberation*. This is not, to be clear, a refutation of the politics of naming (#sayhername) but noticing that naming and citing black life (#sayhername) is *not* simply an act

33. "And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. That we not hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own. For instance, 'I can't possibly teach Black women's writing—their experience is so different from mine.' Yet how many years have you spent teaching Plato and Shakespeare and Proust? Or another: 'She's a white woman and what could she possibly have to say to me?' Or, 'She's a lesbian what would my husband say, or my chairman?' Or again: 'This woman writes of her sons and I have no children.' And all the other endless ways we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other." Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 44.

34. "No matter how many studies and references we accumulate (though it is our profession to carry out such things), we will never reach the end of such a volume; knowing this in advance makes it possible for us to dwell there." Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 154.

35. Listen to Ella Fitzgerald, "My Happiness," Brunswick, 1958.

of identification-designation but also a code for sharing one method that helps us, collectively, understand and navigate and perhaps undo the wrongness of the world. How do we notice that the named and unnamed can, together, teach us about liberation? How do our questions change if we are not interested in exclusion? Makeda Silvera. *Silenced*.³⁶ The work of citation, for black feminists specifically, has always been one of compiling and sharing bibliographies and syllabi and stories and memories that map long-standing conversations about how we know what we know and how we share our livingness.³⁷ Rememory. Recall the headings on pages 221–378 of *But Some of Us Are Brave*. The headings are: bibliographies, bibliographic essays, nonprint material, *doing the work*, selected course syllabi.

Sonia Sanchez.

The Black Woman.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Black Studies.

Spring 1975.³⁸

While I brokenheartedly abandoned feminism many years ago, I did not abandon black feminist thought. What is important about Ahmed's refusal of white male citations, for me, is that it inadvertently historicizes the citational politics that have *always* informed black feminist thought and black studies. The groundbreaking work by black women intellectuals, inside and outside the academy, provided and continues to provide an outlook wherein *doing the work* necessitates—has always necessitated—what VèVè Clark calls “diaspora literacy”: the ability to read and comprehend multifarious and overlapping discourses of the black diaspora from an informed and learned perspective.³⁹ What Clark so brilliantly shows is that black intellectual life has always required highly skilled citation

36. Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks with Working Class West Indian Women about Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1989).

37. I will not attempt to list all the syllabi for freedom produced from about 2012 onward. Teaching Trayvon; Ferguson Syllabus; Discussion Guide: Justice for Colten Boushie; Waller County Syllabus . . .

38. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), 349.

39. VèVè Clark, “Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé’s *Hérémak-honon*,” in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 303–319.

knowledge and citation practices. Bigger Thomas. We all know Bigger Thomas. If we do not know Bigger Thomas and someone mentions Bigger Thomas, we go research Bigger Thomas and read and reread *Native Son* and read those essays on *Native Son* and then we read James Baldwin's take and also *White Man Listen!*, *Eight Men*, *Black Boy*, after which we maybe look over a few of those essays on Bigger Thomas and Biggie Smalls. We then ask everyone we know about Bigger Thomas—what they like, what they don't like, what they thought of Wright's portrayal of masculinity, political economy, racism. *He walked home with a mounting feeling of fear.*⁴⁰ We know who Bigger Thomas is. Gayl Jones. *Queen Bee. Eva's Man*. Work It. Queen B. We know. Walking through the perfumed things honeybees loved. She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze . . .⁴¹ Charmaine Lurch's giant wire bees. The wires hold exoskeletons and chitin together. The wires cast shadow. Wire hymenoptera, wrapped.⁴² Charmaine's wires.

I am suggesting, then, that many black citation practices are not about inclusion and exclusion; this approach is wrongheaded because, in my view, it derails what Angela Y. Davis calls the “serious theory of black liberation” and what is clearly and succinctly stated in *But Some of Us Are Brave* as “doing the work.”⁴³ Black studies engenders, shares, and demands diasporic literacy; black studies theorizes black liberation not through categories (identity) but from the perspective of struggle (struggle is entangled with identities-places-embodiments-infrastructures-narratives-feeling). In this sense, citations are tasked to resist racial and gendered violence through the sharing of ideas. To repeat, this does not mean names do not matter; it means, instead, that naming is enveloped in the practice of sharing how we live this world and live this world differently (#sayhername is an *unfolding method* of struggling against racial violence, #sayhername punctuates hu-

40. Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Signet, 1940), 37.

41. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Plume, 1987), 226; Gayl Jones, *Eva's Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1976); Missy Elliott, “Work It (Official Video),” YouTube video, 4:25, posted October 26, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjlvu7e6Wq8>; Lil' Kim, “Big Momma Thang,” *Hard Core*, Big Beat/Atlantic, 1996; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937; rpt., New York: Perennial, 1990), 11. “Picnics swarmed those summers as fervidly as bees”: John Keene, *Annotations* (New York: New Directions, 1995), 25.

42. Charmaine Lurch, *Through the Material Landscape*, art exhibition at Daniels Spectrum Gallery, February 8–March 12, 2017.

43. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 152.

man being as praxis).⁴⁴ These references are not so much about who is or who is not relevant to the work we do as about how we radically reimagine liberation collectively. *Playing in the Dark*. Naming demands that we ask about the unnamed and honor the unnameable.

Books and papers scattered about the floor, fragile stockings and
underthings and the startling green and gold negligee . . . ⁴⁵

Once you have approached the mountains of cases in order to mine
the books from them and bring them into the light of day—or,
rather, of night—what memories crowd upon you!⁴⁶

She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks.

June Jordan.

Patternmaster. Again.

The Wretched of the Earth.

Demeure faite de défaites
demeure faite de carènes vives
demeure faite de passiflore
demeure cent fois faite et défaite . . . ⁴⁷

Song of Solomon. Inventory. Édouard Glissant.

Out of the Kumbula. The Black Fantastic.

Relation. I spend the final portion of this story returning to a comment I made earlier: when we are doing our very best work, we are acknowledging the shared and collaborative intellectual praxis that makes our research what it is. Here I turn to Édouard Glissant to figure through how books and sources and footnotes and referencing generate textual narratives that are at once opaque and liberatory. As we know, *Poetics of Rela-*

44. Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations,” in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

45. Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (New York: Penguin, 1928), 13.

46. Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library,” in *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 59–67. See also Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006); Dionne Brand, *Ossuaries: Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2010); Dionne Brand, *Land to Light On* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997).

47. Aimé Césaire, “Demeure I,” from *Solar Throat Slashed*, ed. and trans. A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 36.

tion begins with the slave ship and the chapter titled “The Open Boat”: the cramped suffocating space, the mess of vomit and lice, the weight of death, the vertigo and the dizziness.⁴⁸ *Whenever a fleet of ships gave chase to slave ships, it was easiest just to lighten the boat by throwing cargo overboard.*⁴⁹ My sadness sits around me.⁵⁰ Glissant’s text is, for me, brilliant for the way it offers us the nonworld as one (but perhaps not *the only*) beginning of blackness. In *Poetics of Relation* the Middle Passage forecloses the normative ties between identity and place, the blood and land. Filial geographies are unkind and harmful. Filial geographies are unkind. Black geographies are unhinged from territory and its attendant juridical requirements. The Middle Passage is rupture. The Middle Passage annihilates land claims. The Middle Passage is unspeakable. The Middle Passage is a nonworld. The nonworld is too awful to pass on but it does not expire. The nonworld produces a set of restless geographic knowledges that “cannot be ‘proved’ . . . but can be imagined, conceivable, in transport of thought.”⁵¹ Suspended, undifferentiated identity, removed, not-yet, without names, nowhere at all, unmade, unknown, unclaimed richness of possibility.⁵²

Glissant refuses all modes of geographic belonging that are tied to racist and colonial knowledge systems. Glissant shows that one of the most brutal of racial geographies—the Middle Passage—produces conditions of black defiance and disobedience.⁵³ He uproots and discards ancestry. He gives us unconscious fugitive memories and errantry and relation and opacity.⁵⁴ The enslaved, including those lost on the Middle Passage, are tasked to inhabit the world differently. Enslaved and postslave subjects are tasked to imagine and live the world differently. Glissant’s analytical move is, in my view, profound. The consequences of the Middle Passage

48. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 5–6.

49. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6.

50. June Jordan, “My Sadness Sits around Me,” in *The Black Poets*, ed. Dudley Randall (New York: Bantam, 1971), 248.

51. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 174.

52. Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics*, 17, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 72.

53. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 8.

54. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7. Is this boat sailing into eternity toward the edges of a nonworld that no ancestor will haunt . . . “Je te salue, vieil Ocean!” You still preserve on your crests the silent boat of our births, your chasms are our own unconscious, furrowed with fugitive memories.

rupture, the outcome of annihilation, is a way of knowing and belonging capaciously and generously. The nonworld and its inhabitants are not beholden to the taxonomic proof that swirls around them, defines them, objectifies them. We are not beholden to the taxonomic proof that swirls around us. Instead, the nonworld engenders the urgent praxis of unwriting racial taxonomies and its attendant spatial violences. This is the referential work of black studies. The nonworld produces a referential knowledge system that is committed to sharing black ways of knowing and living. The nonworld produces a knowledge system that cannot be proved. The nonworld produces a lesson that cannot be contained in the main text.

One important key to think about is, of course, geography: colonial and positivist geographies necessitate authentication, and authentication authenticates belonging on colonial and positivist terms. Knowledge systems that value transparency authenticate these geographies. The purveyors of colonial and positivist geographies, those empowered by racial capitalism, authenticate these spaces by valuing and economizing normative reading-citation practices that require racial subordination. Derek Gregory draws attention to the ways the production of space is tied to “the materiality of intellectual inquiry.”⁵⁵ Avery Gordon, in a slightly different way, thinks about “the materiality of institutional storytelling.”⁵⁶ We can thus acknowledge that references and citations are concretized, that colonialism and positivism have referential consequences, that references concretize inequity, and that referencing is a spatial project. The reference notes are like map legends and cartographic keys that further explain how we read the plot, the cartogram, the borders, the diagrammatic data. We can also notice, at the same time, that citations in black studies—when cast as doing the work of liberation rather than calculating names (whether through studied excision or crunching numbers)—provide concrete clues about how to live this world differently. The materiality of intellectual inquiry—the ideas we share, the counsel we give each other—is an ongoing referential conversation about black humanity. The materiality of intellectual inquiry is a conversation that knows and believes in and does not have to be convinced of black humanity. The materiality of intellectual inquiry—the ideas we share—is a referential conversation that begins from black livingness.

55. Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 14.

56. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 40.

A referential beginning (of colonial and plantocratic geographies) that is driven by a logic of accumulation, dispossession, exclusion, and dehumanization cannot, therefore, capture a black sense of place. Glissant, keenly aware of these constraining and brutal processes, turns geography on its head by refusing the lawlike systems that underwrite the production of space; instead he argues that the production of space, for black subjects, holds in it the possibility of a nonworld that unravels, in postslave contexts, as a totally different system of geographic knowledge that cannot replicate subordination precisely because it is born of and holds on to the unknowable. He gives us, to return to my earlier point, unknowing as a way of being, and, perhaps most importantly, as we wade through *Poetics of Relation*, he shows us that the citational politics are inexhaustible enunciations of ideas that cannot be systematized yet resonate together. He reads James Joyce beside Bob Marley beside the architecture of Chicago beside the shantytown.⁵⁷ Glissant gives us everything and nothing all at once: diasporic literacy emerges from our collective (opaque relational) knowledge of the open boat; the open boat necessitates black freedom-inspired purpose as a lesson; the lessons cite and site how we might live black outside the taxonomies that swirl around us. Referencing is hard: we share our lessons of unknowing ourselves and, in this, refuse what they want us to be; we risk reading what we cannot bear and what we love too much and then we let it go, revise, and read it again.

57. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 93.