Camilla Hawthorne and
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THE BLACK GEOGRAPHIC

PRAXIS, RESISTANCE, FUTURITY

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INTRODUCTION

Black Geographies

Material Praxis of Black Life and Study

CAMILLA HAWTHORNE AND JOVAN SCOTT LEWIS

Our current moment is a deeply urgent one. The global resurgence of the far right; the increased visibility of anti-Black violence in the United States and beyond; and configurations of racism, nationalism, and xenophobia are but a few examples of the deadly entanglements of white supremacy, capitalism, settler colonialism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity that mark this historical conjuncture. In response to the need for new analytical tools and political imaginaries, scholars and activists alike have (re)turned to the history of the Black radical tradition; questioned the "human" and other taken-for-granted categories of liberalism; and engaged in challenging conversations about new social movements, including the possibilities and perils of solidarity and transversal alliance. Just as our current moment is an urgent one, so is the need for a critical intervention into the epistemological frameworks of differentiation that have formed it.

These formulas for shaping our world have long been the same in disciplinary pursuits to understand it.[1] The emergence of geography as a discipline was intertwined with colonialism, enslavement, and imperialism, and this history continues to shape the ways that mainstream geography has engaged with questions of racism and race.[2] Although racism—and "scientific racism" in particular—is commonly understood to be rooted in now-discredited understandings of biological or body-based difference, geography in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also contributed to the production of racial essentialisms based on *place.* Since the Enlightenment, race has been understood in spatial terms, through "sedentarist metaphysics."[3] This approach roots individuals and groups in bounded place, classifies them according to their geographic locations, and arranges them in a spatiotemporal hierarchy.[4] Geography is thus implicated in the elaboration of racial theories that continue to animate colonialism, fascism, and violent nationalisms.[5] To put it succinctly, the production of *space* is tied to the production of *difference*.

Until relatively recently, mainstream accounts of disciplinary geography have tended to sweep this history under the rug. Textbooks about the history of geography typically emphasize a sharp break between Eurocentric Enlightenment and Victorian geographies (or, at least, bracket the racism of geographers like Kant as inconsequential to their philosophical production) on the one hand, and the interventions of radical Marxist geographers studying inequality in the twentieth century on the other.[6] This latter work is undoubtedly important and also provided some of the earlier disciplinary engagements with racial inequality in geography; in fact, this scholarship is one component of the intellectual scaffolding of Black Geographies. Yet these interventions are all too frequently heralded as part of a redemptionist narrative that seeks to purge geography of its racist history. It is true that by the mid-twentieth century, mainstream geography no longer centered *race* as a unit of analysis, and geographers gradually abandoned environmental determinisms in favor of studying the economic structures that produced inequality. In practice, however, this meant that race was often studied as an ex post facto justification for colonial dispossession, exploitation, and a global division of labor—the ideological superstructure atop the clanking material gears of capital's totalizing reach.[7] But in this process, the discipline of geography failed to develop the sorts of sophisticated theoretical tools necessary to engage with the ongoing production of race and racisms via the production of space.[8] Laura Pulido has described this as the difference

between research that documents racial differences and inequalities, and research that is fundamentally grounded in critical race theory.[9]

In this context, the field of Black Geographies has emerged as a rich site of both intellectual and political engagement. In *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* (the first published anthology of Black Geographies scholarship), Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods identify three central areas of intervention in the study of Black Geographies:

1 "... the ways in which essentialism situates black subjects and their geopolitical concerns as being elsewhere (on the margin, the underside, outside the normal), a spatial practice that conveniently props up the mythical norm and erases or obscures the daily struggles of particular communities."
2 "... how the lives of these subjects demonstrate that 'common-sense' workings of modernity and citizenship are worked out, and normalized, though geographies of exclusion ..."
3 "... the situated knowledge of these communities and their contributions to both real and imagined human geographies [as] significant political acts and expressions."[10]

This volume heeds the call of Woods and McKittrick, building on the profound intellectual labor of generations of scholars of Black Geographies to chart a path forward. As Black Geographies becomes a discipline and a broader process for studying, identifying, and analyzing Black life, this volume seeks to take the multitudinal spatial relations that Black Geographic analyses offer beyond the discipline of geography, as conventionally understood.

The chapters in this volume unpack the theoretical innovations of Black Geographies scholarship, which approach Blackness as neither singular nor universal but as always historically and geographically situated and produced through complex spatial processes and diasporic routes. They do this across many of the key sites of inquiry in Black Geographies—for instance, Black spatial imaginaries, modes of resistance to racial-spatial violence, the geographies of racial capitalism, and struggles over urban space. In their studies, the authors invoke a range of multidisciplinary methodologies that refuse any separation between the realms of the material and the poetic, drawing alternatively on practices such as ethnography, countercartography, creative forms of expression, and archival research (including Black feminist concerns with both archival presences *and* absences). These varied

methodological approaches share a fundamental epistemological concern that cuts across the study of Black Geographies—specifically, that all knowing is geographically situated, and that the very spatiality of knowing and knowledge production is a powerful starting point from which to theorize. Finally, the chapters collected here also make note of new directions for future research in Black Geographies as the field continues to grow and expand—from the importance of thinking beyond the North American context, especially via anti-imperial oceanic routes that include but are also in excess of Black Atlantic geographies, to the spaces of intersection wherein emergent Black Geographic disciplinary formations meet Native and Latinx geographies.

Still, despite the continued growth of Black Geographies and its consolidation as a field of inquiry, we must resist the temptation to label Black Geographies something "new"—a new frontier for epistemic colonization or a new line of specialization to make CVs more desirable in a competitive academic job market. The characterization of Black Geographies as "surprising," "trendy," or "novel" simply reinforces the flawed claim that spatial theory only happens within geography departments. As McKittrick observes, this "element of surprise is contained in the material, political, and social landscape that presumes—and fundamentally requires—that subaltern populations have no relationship to the production of space."[11] While the discipline of geography has historically posed structural barriers to entry for Black scholars and excluded Black knowledge from the canon, Black Geographic thought has existed (often under other names) for centuries—across formal academic environments, political struggles, and everyday practices of Black space-making. It simply has not always been legible to the discipline of geography. At the same time, it is worth acknowledging that Black Geographies has received growing *institutional* recognition—indeed, this is the condition of possibility for the present volume.[12]

The Geography of Blackness

From W. E. B. Du Bois to Frantz Fanon to Stuart Hall and the theorists between and beyond, the question of Blackness's relationality has been a constant source of debate, troubling analysis, and unending inquiry. The question of the nature of Blackness—its origins, operation, and modality—has produced insights that not only respond to the question's concern but also have done much to illuminate the nature of the modern, especially

Western, world for which Blackness has been a, if not the, core impetus. Some of the early debates, often advanced by non-Black scholars, queried the definition of Blackness through the notion of retention, constantly holding the continent of Africa as the storehouse of that which defined Blackness while simultaneously asserting that Black cultural production in the Americas was either a "Creole" creation or simply an appropriation of white American cultural practices and ethical orientations, first adopted in the plantation.

All along, Blackness, recognized, as with all forms of racialization, as a myth used to categorize and "fix" bodies to labor or other modes of social functionality, has been the intimate, collectivist apparatus on which individual and collective identity were established. Inconstant, policed, and recalibrated even within the Black community, the "floating signifier" of Black identification has served as an anchoring to place and that place to belonging. The long-standing, everyday emplacement of Blackness has nevertheless not ceased the continued searching for Blackness's meaning. Contemporary scholarly debates pick up on the same traditions as of those of the past, being either concerned with the quotidian operation and experience of Blackness in relation to other sociological and cultural phenomena or occupied with the semiotic relationality of Blackness to its multiple instantiations across milieu. Contemporary studies of Blackness tend to privilege the cultural formulations of their subject, pursuing Black meaning and value as demonstrated through phenomenological articulations that often reinforce the subjugated, or vulnerable, form of Black subjectivity. Driving this focus is the necessary referent of the body to Blackness and the experiential circumstances and circuits in which the Black body sits. The body as a Black referent is a complicated, often tenuous situation of Blackness that elicits the need for contestation and contextual qualification of "culture."

Black Geographies, while not eschewing these approaches, argues that beyond the body, Blackness requires a framework of relationality to alternative, perhaps even more material processes and phenomena. The spatial, territorial, and geographic analysis of Blackness yields an understanding that more comprehensively positions Blackness as not just a subjectivity that experiences, that is impacted by external means of definition and manipulation, but instead a situating force, a place-making apparatus that in every geographic context makes its location more meaningful, more substantial, more human. By vigorously arguing for the deep intimacy between Blackness and place, Black Geographies repositions the myth of Blackness

as a floating life of a sign that can only signal hardship or of life produced despite it. The geography of Blackness is a powerful frame of analysis that maps and charts the quality of Black life beyond, in an elsewhere that is proximate, co-generating meaning and purpose. Black Geographies therefore does not require a choice between the African continent and the multiple sites Blackness produced and continues to produce through multiple, "demonic" diasporic pathways.[13] It offers a capacious unframing by which disciplines have sought to understand but instead have constrained Blackness.

The Blackness of Geography

Black Geographies positions itself as an intervention not only into Black studies but also into the discipline of geography. But this does mean that Black Geographies is a liberal project of incorporating "Black" subjects and topics into the mainstream of geographic research, nor is it about "making visible" Black geographies and spaces that have been previously "hidden" or "overlooked." After all, traditional geography has long concerned itself with the empirical cataloging of Blackness—whether in the attempt to define and essentialize Blackness as a racial category through Enlightenment-era environmental determinisms, with the mapping and cataloging of African lands in conjunction with European imperial ventures, or—more recently—via "deficit-model" analyses of spatial segregation in urban Black communities.[14] In this sense, Blackness in traditional geography has been rendered both invisible (because Black practices of place-making are unacknowledged) or hypervisible (because Black spaces are deliberately or inadvertently represented as pathological, underserved, and otherwise *lacking*). Instead, Black Geographies foregrounds what Katherine McKittrick calls *a Black sense of place*: "a set of changing and differential perspectives that are illustrative of, and therefore remark upon, legacies of normalized racial violence that calcify, but do not guarantee, the denigration of black geographies and their inhabitants."[15] The sociospatial character of Black struggle, in other words, points to the mutual imbrication of race and the production of space.

If critical human geography is oriented around the relationship between space, place, and power and coheres disciplinarily around "a shared commitment to a broadly conceived emancipatory politics, progressive social change," then this must necessarily include a Black sense of place.[16] Marxian analyses of the relationship between capitalism and the produc-

tion of space in particular are a mainstay of critical human geography. Black Geographies scholarship builds on these concerns by putting them into conversation with analyses of racial capitalism stemming from what Cedric Robinson famously called the Black radical tradition.[17] Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin have described the Black radical tradition as "a tradition of resistance honed by the history of racialized, permanent, hereditary, and chattel slavery that formed the contours of civic and social life in the Americas, Europe, and Arica. Grounded in a Black resistance more than five centuries in the making, this practice produced an enduring vision of a shared future whose principal promise is the abolition of all forms of oppression."[18] Black Geographies shares critical human geography's emphasis on what is alternatively referred to as the "structural" or the "material"; however, it resituates this mode of analysis from a unidirectional teleology of capitalist diffusion out of Europe and into its peripheries, to a much more complex geographic "boomerang" in which racial domination, enslavement, and colonialism are central to the emergence and development of Western, capitalist modernity.[19] In *Development Arrested*, for instance, Woods subtly provincializes Karl Marx himself, describing him simply as "one observer of US capitalism during the 1850s" who happened to be preoccupied with the grafting of slavery onto capitalism.[20] Beginning with plantation slavery in this way troubles the very categories of labor, value, and property that are so central to classical Marxian analysis, revealing that the dynamics of capitalism are—and have always been—racial.

Black Geographies thus builds on the Black radical tradition by foregrounding the *spatialities* of racial capitalism—that the capitalist production of space is also the production of *racial difference*, and so struggles over space are also anticapitalist, abolitionist struggles for racial justice. As George Lipsitz argues, space is not merely an empty canvas on which the dynamics of racial capitalism unfold; rather, race is spatialized and space is racialized.[21] Race is central to the ways in which particular spaces (and, by extension, the bodies that have been "fixed" to or "contained" in those spaces) are constructed as empty, passive, immobile, or expendable or as exploitable sites of accumulation. We can see this, for instance, in Ruth Wilson Gilmore's understanding of the prison as a racialized "spatial fix" for the surpluses generated by capitalism's internal contradictions, in Bobby Wilson's exploration of the relationship between slavery and industrial capitalism in Birmingham, or in Woods's analysis of the centrality of racial domination to the plantation development bloc's hegemony in the Mississippi Delta.[22]

But why is *Blackness* specifically a particularly privileged location from which to develop such an analysis? After all, Robinson contended that "the Irish were negatively racialized, even before the Africans, in the European imagination. We were simply a lob to occupy a category already established."[23] He did suggest that the first racial subjects were located *inside* Europe.[24] Nevertheless, the transatlantic slave trade ultimately fixed Blackness as a central site of violent extraction and dispossession.[25] Thus, the construction of Blackness was integral to the consolidation of a white supremacist world order predicated on colonization, dispossession, and dehumanization. This is because Blackness, as Sarah Banet-Weiser, Roopali Mukherjee, and Herman Gray note, "anchors and signifies as a site of social excess, value extraction and threat."[26] In other words, it is not only the case that Black lives are inherently spatial but also that hegemonic notions of Blackness are integral to dominant modes of spatial organization. And precisely *because* the racialized and spatialized social hierarchies that characterize our world have been at least partly "recycled" from slavery, Blackness and Black struggles against geographies of domination constitute a point of revolutionary departure. As Johnson and Lubin put it, "Black freedom is freedom for all."[27]

Still, despite these common threads, there remains a rich multivocality in the emergent Black Geographies scholarship. One key point of debate, for instance, is how precisely to make sense of the afterlives of slavery, or "plantation futures."[28] To what extent (and in what specific ways) do the transatlantic slave trade and plantation capitalism produce a sociospatial template for Black life today? And what of spaces that fall outside the frame of the Middle Passage?[29] For instance, many Black communities in Europe understand their "origins and histories" through the epistemological frames of colonialism, migration, and—as Michelle Wright argues—the experiences of World War II.[30] If Black Geographies scholarship thus far has been primarily focused on North America, how can the legacies of the Black Atlantic be extended to other sites of Blackness without simply imposing a new set of abstract universalisms? Robinson argued, for instance, that the Mediterranean Sea was actually a laboratory within which technologies of plantation production and unfree labor were developed before they were subsequently exported across the Atlantic.[31] In that case, how might an analysis of the relationship between Blackness and racial capitalism be transformed if, for instance, we were to reorient our analyses on a Black *Mediterranean*?[32] This sort of approach refuses any linear or totalizing logics for theorizing Blackness on a global scale; instead, it points to

the importance of attending to differently sedimented histories, as well as their multifarious global, world-historical interconnections and articulations.

Black Geographies, Racism, and Resistance

In "Life after Death," Woods issued a powerful and prescient warning that scholars of race and Blackness in geography not inadvertently become "academic coroners": "Have the tools of theory, method, instruction, and social responsibility become so rusted that they can only be used for autopsies? Does our research in any way reflect the experiences, viewpoints, and needs of the residents of these dying communities? On the other hand, is the patient really dead? What role are scholars playing in this social triage?"[33] Katherine McKittrick put it another way: racism "[shapes], but [does] not wholly define, Black worlds."[34] This is to say that Black Geographies is not merely the cataloging of the spatialities of anti-Black racial violence. And, when Black Geographies *is* concerned with spatial dimensions of racism, it does so with a particular theoretical conceptualization of racism itself—one that is oriented toward the conservation of Black resistance rather than the mere description of Black abjection. The work of retracing practices of racist spatial domination thus reveals opportunities for the undoing of this very same violence, through histories and practices of Black world-making. From Gilmore's understanding of the prison as a relational space through which radically coalitional abolition movements can unfold, to McKittrick's analysis of the auction block as a "site through which black women can sometimes radically disrupt an otherwise rigid site of racialization and sexualization," to Rashad Shabazz's description of urban gardens as sites for the ground-up transformation of carceral landscapes in Chicago, Black Geographies consistently foregrounds the "loopholes of retreat" through which geographies of domination and the imperial, cartographic gaze are subverted and challenged.[35] This approach is profoundly generative because rather than a closed system of domination, it shows that present colonial, anti-Black, capitalist, heterosexist spatial configurations are (to paraphrase Stuart Hall) "without guarantees."[36]

Any analysis of racism whose end point is merely the accumulation of evidence of spatial violence and violation against "Black bodies" actually risks reproducing the very same anti-Blackness it seeks to remedy, by positing Black geographies as already dead and dying.[37] Indeed, McKittrick's meditations on Édouard Glissant's spatial poetics and Sylvia Wynter's re-

conceptualization of the "human" point to the liberatory political possibilities of work that begins from a fundamental recognition of Black *livingness* and *humanness*.[38] This is why, rather than a simple binary of oppression and resistance, Black Geographies adopts a *relational* understanding of Blackness and space.[39] And it does this through a powerful respatialization of the metaphor of "margins": putatively marginal subjects and spaces, from Harriet Jacobs's garret to the modern prison as sites from which the workings of power writ large can be analyzed and denaturalized.[40] In other words, Blackness does not represent an incommensurable "outside" to systems of spatial domination.[41] Rather, because Blackness itself was so central to the articulation of racist, colonial spatial imaginaries and practices, it is also a privileged analytical location from which to challenge them and articulate different modes of living.

Black Geographic Praxis

A Black Geographic praxis is a means of holding in concert the political, intellectual, and lived potential of emplaced study of Blackness as well as the Black study of emplacement. Despite the disciplinary and methodological breadth of Black Geographies scholarship, the work shares a commitment to peeling back the layered histories embedded in place, challenging the allure of "transparent space"—of present spatial arrangements as natural, inevitable, and immediately discernible by the normatively white, masculinist cartographic gaze. As a conceptual foundation, then, we advance that Black Geographic praxes center the following commitments:

1. The nonsingularity and nonuniversality of Blackness;
2. Blackness as locally and globally produced and reproduced through processes (technologies, policies, theories) of circulation and diasporic routes;
3. Blackness as always historically and geographically situated;
4. The questioning of ontological claims and of *ontologizing* processes;
5. An attention to the interplay of material and poetic processes.

In understanding how Blackness is lived, constructed, and transformed, Black Geographies makes several important methodological interventions. Black Geographies is rooted in a practice of deep study that challenges arborescent understandings of intellectual lineage and looks instead to metaphors of queerings, rhizomes, undercommons, Sankofas, provincializations,

and call-and-response.[42] These alternative and profoundly nonhierarchical modes of study necessarily entail an attentive and reparative citational politics that consciously privileges those thinkers who have been historically marginalized or deemed insufficiently scholarly.[43] They also cultivate powerful forms of what VéVé Clarke calls "diaspora literacy."[44] This involves a commitment to reading across national borders and engaging in the often messy work of translation (including linguistic translation and its relation to the translation of lived experience and political practices across geographically distinct yet interconnected diasporic contexts), taking seriously the commonalities and disjunctures across global Blacknesses.

Because of the extractivist and exploitative history of academic research in and on Black communities, the project of Black Geographies is also committed to questions of research ethics and, more important, justice. In other words, the theoretical and political interventions of Black Geographies are inseparable from the material *practice* of research itself. For instance, the politics of ethnographic research "about Blackness" is deeply fraught (prompting radical ethnographers, for instance, to envision the possibilities of an "abolitionist anthropology").[45] Some scholars of Black Geographies, though, have sought to address these concerns by undertaking various forms of community-engaged and/or participatory research.[46] Importantly, these projects do not rely on an idealized notion of a homogeneous or authentic Black community (or, alternatively, community representatives who are appointed as brokers, designated to "speak for" their constituents).[47] However, they do share an understanding that research undertaken in the name of racial-spatial justice must be held primarily accountable not merely to academic institutions, tenure committees, and research funders but to a much wider set of collaborators, stakeholders, and political communities.

But fieldwork does not constitute the only "archive" for Black Geographies research. Black Geographies also takes seriously alternative forms of knowledge production from outside the academy, embracing genres from poetry to speculative fiction to music. In this sense, Black Geographies is also influenced by insights from the Birmingham School of cultural analysis—and particularly the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy—for the way it expanded narrow definitions of the "political" to include culture as a potential site of struggle and political transformation. In the work of Clyde Woods, for instance, the blues was not only an aesthetic form but also an epistemology and ontology: a way of theorizing the world as it is and conveying images of an alternative future.[48] In other words, these various forms of Black poetics present alternative, multivocal narratives that push back

against a "single story" of Blackness as represented by an accumulation of evidence of death, suffering, and violation.[49]

Ultimately, Black Geographies permits a multidirectional analysis where Blackness is not restricted to being merely the subject of analysis but also the means by which we understand a range of related phenomena. Yet, for this reason, there is often a productive tension in the emerging scholarship on Black Geographies between Blackness as an analytical frame and Blackness as subjectivity and lived geographic experience. After all, to borrow Gurminder Bhambra's critique of the study of race in sociology, Blackness is not only a matter of (individual or collective) *identity*; it is also a question of *system* and *structure*.[50] This raises the question of how these two approaches can and should be held together. Particularly in the context of a discipline that has had a fraught relationship to Blackness, as described earlier, scholars must ensure that Blackness is not rendered an "absented presence"—one visible only through the conspicuous absence of Black *people*—within Black Geographies itself.[51]

Organization of the Volume

The Black Geographic is organized around three main themes: praxis, resistance, and futurity. Part I, "Praxis," considers the epistemological challenges posed by Black Geographic thought to foundational categories such as space, scale, science, politics, and empire. But beyond elucidating and thinking past the limitations of those categories, the volume's attention to praxis offers newer considerations of methodological and theoretical practice that emerges from the complex process of Black life. In other words, by focusing on the poetic, the material, and the affective inputs and products of the Black lived experience, our contributors offer a means, a praxis, of exploring the geographic condition of Blackness, and the world that it shapes and occupies. Finally, chapters in this part consider the implications of Black Geographies' epistemological provocations in terms of both alternative research methodologies and transgressive forms of social action.

In "Call Us Alive Someplace: Du Boisian Methods and Living Black Geographies," Danielle Purifoy turns to W. E. B. Du Bois's research in Lowndes County, Alabama, as a model for interdisciplinary inquiry that weaves together narrative, art, and science. In the summer of 1906, Du Bois traveled to Lowndes County to study the political economy of Black labor in the Cotton Belt for the US Department of Agriculture; he was

also commissioned to write a social novel based in that region. That novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (the only surviving text from his Lowndes research) employs rigorous scientific empiricism to craft a speculative fantasy of Black place-making in which land is no longer considered property and cotton symbolizes liberation. Purifoy, along with Black conceptual artist and abstract painter Torkwase Dyson, drew on Du Bois's epistemological framework in *Silver Fleece* (which weaves together social science, history, and fiction to craft alternative worlds) as the inspiration for their exhibition *In Conditions of Fresh Water*—a project that is similarly grounded in Lowndes County and weaves together social scientific and poetic approaches. Rather than rehearsing an inventory of Black death and deprivation, Purifoy and Dyson track the ways Black residents and community leaders in Lowndes continue to build their freedom dreams in the Black Belt, working toward the fulfillment of Du Bois's speculative fantasy of land, labor, and place even in the face of a global capitalist regime that accumulates through Black dispossession and death. Purifoy ultimately argues that Du Bois's undisciplined approach provides a model of a Black Geographic praxis that attends to both the political economic and the poetic to reject social death as the central feature of Black place-making.

Judith Madera's "Shaking the Basemap" shows how Black Geographic praxis mobilizes Black life across the movements of culture and capital through discursive narratives, memories, and projections. Madera focuses on three spheres of advocacy from the "long epoch of abolition": the development of critical literacies in Black women's civics, strategies against commodification from within colonial-capitalist systems, and the expression of Black political geographies through literature. In different ways, these Black abolitionist geographies questioned colonial basemaps (the supposedly stable spatial referents that undergird white supremacy) to reveal obscured agencies and fissures in systems of power that could become sites of struggle and resistance. Through these powerful examples, Madera makes two important claims about Black Geographic method. First, that archives—riddled with silences and structured by racist hierarchies—must be read against the grain to reveal the networks of Black social organization and resistance that exist at the edges of official history. And second, that Black literary texts and narrative-based cognitive maps are critical sites of geographic meaning-making, as they allow us to understand the relationship between the material organization of place and discursive practices in order to undo colonial-capitalist spatial epistemologies and chart alternative futures.

In "'My Bad Attitude toward the Pastoral': Race, Place, and Allusion in the Poetry of C. S. Giscombe," Chiyuma Elliott offers an exploration of the role played by race in shaping relationships to urban and rural spaces, through an analysis of C. S. Giscombe's long poem *Here.* Elliott argues that Giscombe's poem anticipates McKittrick's definition of a "black sense of place," as it articulates the ways "racial violences . . . shape, but do not wholly define, black worlds."[52] As such, it also offers a productive alternative to characterizations of the US South as an undifferentiated landscape of little more than unrelenting anti-Blackness. Giscombe's spatial poetic praxis is uniquely able to conjure the emotional or affective dimensions of living within a complex geographic landscape characterized by danger and ambiguity, as well as moments of quiet reprieve. Elliott's careful analysis of *Home* also provides a model of the kinds of close reading practices that can lead to a more systematic (rather than gestural) engagement with the geographic insights that can be derived from the language of songs and poetry.

Part II, "Resistances," highlights the processes and politics by which Black subjects engage with the resistances they encounter in navigating the circumstances that make up the contours of Black life, especially where structural adversity is the central experience. It also engages the modes of resistance that those subjects produce to mitigate those challenges. Moreover, those resistant practices become a modality for thinking and reasoning. As such, the idea of resistance becomes less of a narrative of reactive survival and more so a practice of strategic intellectualism. Therefore, when resistant lives of Black subjects are studied, their experiences offer themselves as theoretically core to Black Geographic thought.

In "Blackness Out of Place and In Between in the Sahara," Ampson Hagan considers the ways that West African migrants in the Maghreb subvert a "state-humanitarian" antimigration apparatus founded on white supremacist spatial logics. Colonial practices regulating and restricting Black mobility are today also being reproduced by majority-Black nation-states (in the case of Hagan's ethnography, Niger), in collaboration with the European Union and international nongovernmental organizations, against other Black migrants. In response, Black migrants have found creative ways to resist blocked movement and state surveillance—from the shadow mapping of countergeographies, to their own sousveillance of the state. These practices craft spaces of in-betweenness where unauthorized Black migrants live in the interstices of the state and the humanitarian migration apparatus. Hagan's contribution is also noteworthy for the way it complicates singular or universalizing portrayals of Blackness. He traces the

ways Nigerien state officials invoke a range of markers beyond skin color (i.e., bodily movements, sartorial choices, hairstyles, or perceived physical differences) to identify "Blackness out of place"—a form of what Simone Browne calls "racializing surveillance" that, in this particular case, seeks to differentiate Nigeriens from unauthorized West African migrants.[53]

Diana Negrín considers another form of resistance in her chapter, "Words Re(en)visioned: Black and Indigenous Languages for Autonomy." Through a critical dialogue between Black Geographic thought and Mesoamerican Indigenous languages, she argues that language and orality are central to decolonial and autonomist possibilities. Drawing on theorists such as Katherine McKittrick, Clyde Woods, Sylvia Wynter, and Édouard Glissant, Negrín's work is part of a new wave of critical geographic scholarship that considers the political possibilities that exist at the convergence of Black and Indigenous scholarship. This convergence, she argues, has the potential to interrupt hegemonic and colonial structures of space and belonging. Language (in its spoken, written, and even sung forms) is significant because it can create spaces of cognitive autonomy, conjure cultural and political possibility, and craft new worlds that provide radical alternatives to the centuries of violence waged on Black and Indigenous geographies.

In "Blackness in the (Post)Colonial African City," Jordanna Matlon considers the various ways Blackness has been incorporated into the global racial capitalist system—from slave, to forced laborer, to interlocutor in colonial civilizing missions—and the different expressions of labor, race, and gender that have emerged in relation to these modalities. Matlon begins with the vestiges of the French empire and its *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission), which conflated culture with race, and race with space, to articulate a narrowly defined and racialized conception of the right to the city. Focusing on two sites—the colonial municipalities of the Four Communes in Senegal and the postcolonial city of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire—her chapter argues that urban belonging in the African city was and continues to be linked to deeply racialized notions of labor, consumption, and economic productivity—and, more broadly, differential insertion within the global capitalist economy. Matlon draws on urban theorist AbdouMaliq Simone's notion of "black urbanism" to chart Black African *extralives*—ambiguous practices of economic survival that exist in excess of the capitalist world system.[54] These precarious practices, she argues, seek to reject racialized dispossession and denigration in order to articulate alternative claims to the city.

Concluding part II, Solange Muñoz examines the spatiality of power and representation among Black and brown women in politics through an analysis of Marielle Franco's life, death, and legacy. Her chapter, "Marielle Franco and Black Spatial Imaginaries," uses the concepts of racialized spaces and imaginaries to examine the ways Black women occupy public positions of political power in the face of white supremacist violence by individuals and institutions that want to exclude them from these spaces and keep them "in their place." Muñoz asks why the presence of Black women in positions of political power is so often considered an aberration, and what potential spaces and collective subjectivities are produced by Black women when they occupy these positions. While focusing specifically on Franco, a queer Black woman and *favelada* who was assassinated after her election to the Rio de Janeiro city council, Muñoz's approach is explicitly transnational and hemispheric. She argues that analyses of racism, oppression, and white supremacy must extend beyond bounded local or national enframings and, in doing so, places Brazil in relation with the United States through interconnected histories of transatlantic slavery, fascist resurgence, and Black resistance.

"Futurity" is the thematic concern of part III. Black Geographies, this volume argues, is not simply a descriptive project, noting the how and where of Black life, but temporally ties the Black experience to a comprehensive notion and general quality of life and humanity, understood through intimate and meaningful material relationships. When considering the geographic relations of Blackness, the notions of the past and the present figure as dominant lenses, whether through an accounting of the locales of dispossession, or where Black people *have* been. Or, alternatively, how the experiential and structural determinant of that past shapes the current conjuncture of Blackness. And while the "Afro-futurism" turn in Black Studies has given much consideration to what the future of Blackness, as experience and condition, might look like, what is missed in these analyses are the (earthly) spatial dimensions of that Black life. Building on the work of Black Geographic envisioning of the future, such as the concepts of a "Black sense of place," or the blues model of development, and Black spatial imaginaries, contributors consider Black Geographic futures through questions of liberation and humanness as understood through the practices of planning, and through ideations of future spaces of belonging. The field of Black Geographies has had a strong orientation toward questions related to race, cities, and urban planning. As such, this part of the book focuses in particular on contestations over urban space and the racial politics of urban

renewal to reveal how attention to Black geographies and a Black sense of place is central to crafting just and liberatory urban futures.

In an analysis of the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP), in Oakland, California, C.N.E. Corbin examines the visual dimensions of planning frameworks to understand how Oakland's future is envisioned as it transforms from a "chocolate city" into a green city. In "Rendering Gentrification and Erasing Race: Sustainable Development and the (Re)Visioning of Oakland, California, as a Green City," Corbin argues that the narratives and images contained in the WOSP, approved by the Oakland Planning Commission in 2014, depict a "green" and "sustainable" urban future for Oakland that relies on the displacement and removal of Black residents from a historically Black neighborhood. Drawing on environmental criticism, critical race theory, and visual media studies, this chapter shows that municipal planning documents like WOSP have become important tools of gentrification that envision and help to enact futures in which "undesirable" populations are removed from the landscape in the service of racialized, anti-Black environmentalisms.

In tracing the spatiality of leisure among Black millennials, Matthew Jordan-Miller Kenyatta, in his chapter "Need Black Joy? Mapping an Afrotechtonics of Gathering in Los Angeles," offers a transdisciplinary study of Black cultural and economic geographies in South Los Angeles that charts relationships between race, place, and taste to show how Blackness travels as a cultural identity that is embodied, commodified, consumed, and reproduced through interactions between digital technologies and physical spaces. Miller focuses in particular on cultural gatherings marketed toward Black millennials and digital natives in Los Angeles, through which he develops a theory of Black joy as urban practice. Black joyful space-making, he argues, is an oppositional practice of Black love in the face of systematic disregard for Black dreams and desires, one that subverts racialized capitalist economies and builds toward futures of cultural self-determination, economic justice, and the liberation of digital commons.

In "The San Francisco Blues," Lindsey Dillon invokes the legacy of Clyde Woods to argue that the West Coast blues provide a way to understand Black struggles over redevelopment in the Bayview–Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco, California. Clyde Woods famously argued that Black Americans in the Mississippi Delta region used the cultural form of the blues both to diagnose the racism and economic exploitation of the plantation system and to articulate alternative practices of just development. Dillon argues that the vision Black activists in the 1960s and

1970s articulated for a "new Hunters Point" by and for Black residents, with affordable homes designed by Black architects and built by Black workers, stems from a branch of the blues epistemology Woods identified in the delta. Reworked in relation to the racial politics and political-economic landscape of the US West, the San Francisco blues expressed a development theory and practice that contested a market economy that deploys racism to differentially devalue people and places. Dillon shows how these struggles, both cultural and material, constitute an important moment in the unfolding of Black San Francisco futures.

Finally, in "Today Like Yesterday, Tomorrow Like Today: Black Geographies in the Breaks of the Fourth Dimension," Anna Livia Brand considers the ways in which Black residents of post-Katrina New Orleans continue to counter Cartesian spatial epistemologies that displace Blackness, articulating alternative development agendas and geographic formations. Planning and design, Brand explains, are inherently future-oriented; however, they are also sites through which racial logics are naturalized and racial oppression is reproduced. Nonetheless, the alternative to the white supremacy of planning—especially as it pertains to post-Katrina redevelopment—is not merely an enumeration of all the ways planning produces Black death, displacement, and erasure. Rather, Brand argues that the practice of imagining abolitionist and liberatory futures entails attending to the *always present* and multiple ways Black residents of New Orleans have been destabilizing white spatial imaginaries.[55]

The volume concludes with "A Black Geographic Reverie & Reckoning in Ink and Form" by Sharita Towne, an artist who approaches art as a container for Black collective inquiry into relationships with land, air, and sky. Her mixed-process collage print *Black Life & Black Spatial Imaginaries, Glimpses across Time & Space: A Visual Bibliography, 2018–2019*; the corresponding book, *Alluvium*; and the digitized film *5th St. Imaginary: A Family, a Geography* all draw together intimate archiving, conversation, and art to map the everyday geographies of Black activists and families. In this way, Towne provides an inspiring example of art and experimental research as key modes of a Black Geographic praxis.

Taken together, these chapters—and their methodological, theoretical, historical, and geographic breadth—represent a powerful set of approaches for analyzing Blackness, apprehending the spatiality of power, and imagining abolitionist and liberatory futures.

Notes

1 Livingstone, *Geographical Tradition*; Kobayashi, "Dialectic of Race and the Discipline of Geography."

2 For a longer discussion of the evolution of Black Geographies scholarship in relation to the history of the discipline of geography, see Hawthorne, "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters"; on the connections between geography and slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, see Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference"; and Pulido, "Reflections on a White Discipline."

3 Malkki, "National Geographic."

4 Massey, *For Space*.

5 Bassin, "Imperialism and the Nation State"; Godlewska and Smith, *Geography and Empire*.

6 Hawthorne and Meché, "Making Room for Black Feminist Praxis in Geography."

7 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Oswin, "Planetary Urbanization."

8 Domosh, "Why Is Our Geography Curriculum So White?"; Domosh, "Genealogies of Race, Gender, and Place."

9 Pulido, "Reflections on a White Discipline."

10 McKittrick and Woods, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, 4.

11 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 92.

12 At the 2013 annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers, LaToya Eaves organized a panel entitled "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters," which would ultimately lay the groundwork for the institutionalization of Black Geographies. The Black Geographies Specialty Group of the AAG was formed in 2017 under the leadership of Dr. Eaves and Jovan Scott Lewis. Black Geographies was subsequently recognized as an official theme of the 2018 AAG annual meeting. The Berkeley Black Geographies Project, started by Jovan Scott Lewis in 2016, which led to the Berkeley Black Geographies Symposium held at UC Berkeley in 2017, represented a watershed moment for Black Geographies, gaining it national and ultimately international recognition. Over the next several years, the field will also see the publication of dozens of texts on Black Geographies and Black ecologies. The Duke University Press series Errantries (edited by Simone Browne, Deborah Cowen, and Katherine McKittrick) is another exciting locus of scholarly production focused on geographies of race.

13 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*.

14 For a critique of "deficit-model" analyses of Black spaces, see Reese, *Black Food Geographies.*

15 McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," 950.

16 Berg, "Critical Human Geography," 617.

17 Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

18 Johnson and Lubin, "Introduction," 10.

19 Arendt, *Imperialism*, 155; Chari, "The Blues and the Damned"; Bledsoe and Wright, "Anti-Blackness of Global Capital."

20 Woods, *Development Arrested*, 6.

21 Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*, 6.

22 Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Wilson, *America's Johannesburg*; Woods, *Development Arrested*.

23 Robinson and Robinson, "Preface."

24 Kelley, "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?"; Kelley, "Foreword"; Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

25 Cedric Robinson's emphasis on the nondetermined character of racialization and racial subjection is significant because it challenges the idea that anti-Blackness is inevitable. As he wrote, "It became the impression that the category had always been ours, always been ours, exclusively. That simply isn't how human affairs have been conducted" (Robinson and Robinson, "Preface," 7).

26 Banet-Weiser, Mukherjee, and Gray, "Introduction," 12.

27 Banet-Weiser, Mukherjee, and Gray, "Introduction," 12; Johnson and Lubin, "Introduction," 13.

28 McKittrick, "Plantation Futures."

29 Wright, *Physics of Blackness*.

30 Wright, "Postwar Blackness and the World of Europe."

31 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 16.

32 Kelley, "Foreword," xiv; Black Mediterranean Collective, *Black Mediterranean*.

33 Woods, "Life after Death," 63.

34 McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," 947.

35 Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxix; Shabazz, *Spatializing Blackness*. The expression "loopholes of retreat" is from McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 37.

36 Hall, "Problem of Ideology."

37 McKittrick, "Diachronic Loops," 6.

38 McKittrick, "Commentary."

39 McKittrick, "Commentary," 4.

40 McKittrick, "Commentary," 4; Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," 958.

41 Hawthorne, "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters," 4.

42 For the undercommons, see Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*; for Sankofas, see Benjamin, *People's Science*; for call-and-response, see Hawthorne and Heitz, "A Seat at the Table?," 150.

43 See Lewis, "Releasing a Tradition."

44 Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy and Marasa Consciousness."

45 Shange, *Progressive Dystopia*.

46 Vasudevan, "Performance and Proximity." In their project "This Is a Black Spatial Imaginary," for instance, Lisa K. Bates and Sharita Towne brought together artists, scholars, and local residents to explore the possibilities of Black life in Portland, Oregon. In a similar vein, Romi Morrison and Treva Ellison used artistic, interactive maps in their project "Decoding Possibilities" to disrupt geographies of redlining and encourage participants to map their own experiences and subversions of racist landscapes.

47 For a powerful critique of "racial authenticity," see Jackson, *Real Black*.

48 In a continuation of this Woodsian legacy, Lynnée Denise has approached record stores in her work as archives, and she describes the practice of DJing as a way to narrate the diasporic roots and routes of transnational Black social movements (Denise, "Afro-Digital Migration"). Also, the untimely death of Prince in 2016 prompted scholars such as Rashad Shabazz to consider the geographies of his distinctive "Minneapolis sound" as the product of layered histories of race, displacement, and resistance (Shabazz, "How Prince Introduced Us to the 'Minneapolis Sound'"; #PurpleSyllabus website, accessed December 12, 2018, http://editions.lib.umn.edu/purplesyllabus/).

49 Adichie, "Danger of a Single Story"; McKittrick, "Diachronic Loops," 13, 15.

50 Bhambra, "Postcolonial Reflections on Sociology."

51 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 33.

52 McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," 947.

53 Browne, *Dark Matters*, 16.

54 Simone, *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar*, 307–8.

55 Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*.

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