

Welcome to our headquarters for group study of the work of **Sylvia Wynter**, hosted by the Los Angeles Nomadic Division and Los Angeles Contemporary Archive and facilitated by manuel arturo abreu. Here, you'll find all the material you need to engage. Thanks for studying together!

Summary

- In philosophy, literature, and theater, Jamaican thinker and artist Sylvia Wynter wants to unsettle the colonial roots of the Enlightenment human. In the lineage of Caribbean thinkers like Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Wilson Harris, Wynter embarks on a multidisciplinary project of reimagining cognition, western science, and the development of modernity. She investigates and develops alternative 'genres' of homo sapiens which European rationalist materialism has attempted to overwrite. Resisting the "mechanization of the world" to material causes (guns, germs, and steel, we might say), Wynter instead builds on Fanon's notion of sociogeny, which proposes social, spiritual, and immaterial causes that underly the materialist colonial project at least since the Enlightenment. Like those already mentioned in the lineage, Wynter catalyzes an interdisciplinary Black Study and performative myth-making to rewrite the Caribbean as central to modernity and its eventual sunset. In four sessions every [other] week, we come together for two to three hours consider Wynter's analysis of how the European foisted itself as 'the Human,' and cast others as subhuman; we then engage her approach to both decolonize and, in her words, "re-enchant" the human. We mistook the map, got trapped (Week 2); in the horizon of Man, we need to "unsettle the colonality of being, power, truth, and freedom" (Week 3). In our final week, we explore Wynter's monumental unpublished manuscript *Black Metamorphosis*, thinking and writing together along the wavelength of what Katherine McKittrick calls "Rebellion/ Invention / Groove" to transform ourselves— to explore the other of the homo sapiens written within and between us (Week 4).

Week 1: No Humans Involved / The Big Pride

Reading

- Wynter, Sylvia. 1994. [No Humans Involved: A Letter to My Colleagues](#). Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the 21st Century. vol. 1, no. 1, Fall 1994, pp. 42-73.
 - [Audio version](#) (1'20", courtesy Decoloniality London, 2015)

Viewing

- [The Big Pride](#) (57", 1961). Written by Sylvia Wynter and Jan Carew, directed by Herbert Wise. [Film is free to watch but only available to watch in UK; currently working on getting the file]

Nadia Cattouse and Johnny Sekka in *The Big Pride* (1961)

Week 2: On How We Mistook the Map

Reading

- Wynter, Sylvia. [On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Desêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project](#). In Gordon, Jane Anna & Gordon, Lewis (eds.), *A Companion to African-American Studies*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, pp. 107-118.
 - [Audio version](#) (43'59", courtesy Decoloniality London, 2015)

Viewing

- [Sylvia Wynter's concept "genres of being human"](#) (18'26", Kelsey Chatlosh, 2020)

Week 3: Unsettling the Colonial

Reading

- Wynter, Sylvia. 2003. [Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument](#). CR: The New Centennial Review, Volume 3, Number 3, Fall 2003, pp. 257-337.

Viewing

- [Lecture](#) (33'29", manuel arturo abreu, 2020)

Week 4: Thinking With *Black Metamorphosis*

Reading

- McKittrick, Katherine. 2016. [Rebellion/Invention/Groove](#). *small axe* 49, March 2016, pp. 79-91.
- [Black Metamorphosis](#). Unpublished manuscript.

Viewing

- [Anthony Bogues - On Sylvia Wynter: The Making of Black Metamorphosis](#) (1'59")

Cover image: Photograph of actors on stage from *Maskerade* (1994), written by Sylvia Wynter and scored by Olive Lewin. From the Cochrane Theatre performance, London, 9 December 1994. V&A Theatre Collections Repository: Talawa Theatre Company Archive (TTC).