Conversations *In Flux*

Visible Presence Unfolding In Time and Space

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Student Signature: Supervisor Signature:

This portfolio consists of a paper and an art installation, at The Lower Gallery, Toronto Centre for the arts, September 15 - October 9, 2015. Images of the work are included in the paper.

To my family
Michael, Julian and Mahalia Gilmore
who are smart and patient and
made my going back to school possible.

And to my sisters Sheryl, Michelle and Stephanie
who support me in countless ways and always find
space on their walls for my art.

I dedicate this work
to my mother Cynthia Lurch
who taught me to persevere and have hope.

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"Art allows us to linger between something and nothing, between nothing and everything… so we can understand the study of things"
(Moten, 2012).

Foreword

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
is Change.

God
is Change.

— Octavia E. Butler[1]

At a young age, I drew as a way to think about and understand the world around me. Recently, upon discovery of some old drawings, I found that I often drew people without faces. Reflecting on the matter, since there is evidence that I could draw faces, I wonder if, as a black child, I sensed my own invisibility. Was I aware of 'the gaze' that positioned me as both object and observer? Although I did not know it then, this sense of invisibility skipped alongside vivid-visibility, an idea that informs much of my art today.

I begin this project with hope in the idea of flux. Many before me have noted, black subjects are both invisible and hyper-visible, moving constantly between these conditions. Flux is the process of moving and changing. Thinking about it reminds me to think about my own journey to invisibility and hyper-visibility.

[1] Butler's (1993) verse from Parable of the Sower captures the notion of flux as change. Notions of change and mobility can be found throughout this Afrofuturist story.

When did that take place? How did I arrive here? As a black, female, artist, researcher who works with space this is a natural place to start. This space is not empty – it is liminal, and has agency and I think about new ways of using it.

Marking visibility and making art requires me to envision the black subject visible in time and space. Contrapuntal in design, this portfolio, – written, painted and crafted, – visualizes the black body and its presence as 'flux' itself. It envisions black populations inside and outside of hyper-visible and invisible states of blackness.

Flux is flow, continuous change, movement, fast or slow, fluidity; mapping points over time and space, a wave, malleable, re-placement of things and of bodies, emergence and erasure, points shifting, flittering, acting, re-forming.

Flux is how I understand the black subject's movement from the seen to the unseen. I explore this condition with thinkers and artists whose work can help me to better examine these ideas. Their arguments bring concrete and tactile evidence of black visibility and un-intelligible hyper-invisibility. I also examine this condition through the creation of works of art, which are represented by the three major installations that accompany this paper and together comprise my portfolio. As part of the overall display, older works placed between the three installations complete the narrative. Each piece is a meditation on the black subject in flux. For me, flux, simply put, is a way to think about hyper-visibility and invisibility of blackness with hope.

I include blueprints and photos of these installations placed on vellum between the typewritten pages. Some of the artwork in this paper overlays the text, creating a visual discourse of the material. The installations include the following:

1. *Blueprint for a Mobile and Visible Carriage*

In 1837 Thornton and Lucy Blackburn's taxicab was the first and only cab in Upper Canada (present day Southern Ontario). It made visible the Blackburn's lived experience in Toronto and stands as evidence of a people who were at the vanguard of society. The artwork created for this installation incorporates an aesthetic of the corporeal; erasure and emergence; visible and invisible through a silhouetted framework of wood and metal.

2. *Revisiting Sycorax*

Sycorax is the voiceless invisible black/indigenous woman in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This installation revisits Sycorax to bring her into view. This work, a construction of wire, contains space both inside and out. Sycorax as a tesseract stands as a metaphor defined in nature, her nature redefined. The figure poised, dynamic and static stands in the past and present, both rooted and in flux.

3. The Phenomenal Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks' story is that of a black woman whose cells were taken without consent. Designated *HeLa*, they have been used by the scientific community since the early 1950s in groundbreaking research. The cells of Henrietta Lacks are in a constant state of flux, moving invisibly, and changing our world in

countless ways. The visual work strives to intervene in the scientific discourse by inviting participation in an interactive acknowledgement of her humanity.

In this portfolio, I am concerned with the black subjects' visibility. This is a topic that has been well researched by a number of scholars and artists including Andrea Fatona (2006), Paul Gilroy (1993), Afua Cooper (2006) Kerry James Marshall, (2014) and Melinda Mollineaux (2007). Their works provide a number of perspectives on how black subjects maneuver between the points of hyper-visibility and invisibility – to get from one point to the other, you have to move. I am interested in the 'glimpses' between the points where I argue blackness becomes visible within flux. Exploring space and movement is central in my practice, as I produce 2-D and 3-D installation art. I suggest that it is the artist, the poet and perhaps even my wire bees that place me directly in the soil, move me across borders and spaces and allow me to think and construct a new imagery of society. I draw from my social location as a black woman and I include the LGBTQ and other communities as integral to the work of emancipation and the ability to dislodge complacency and envision futures.

Figure 2. *Movement in Space*

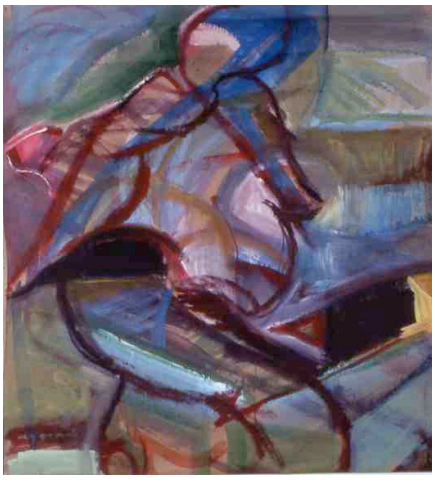
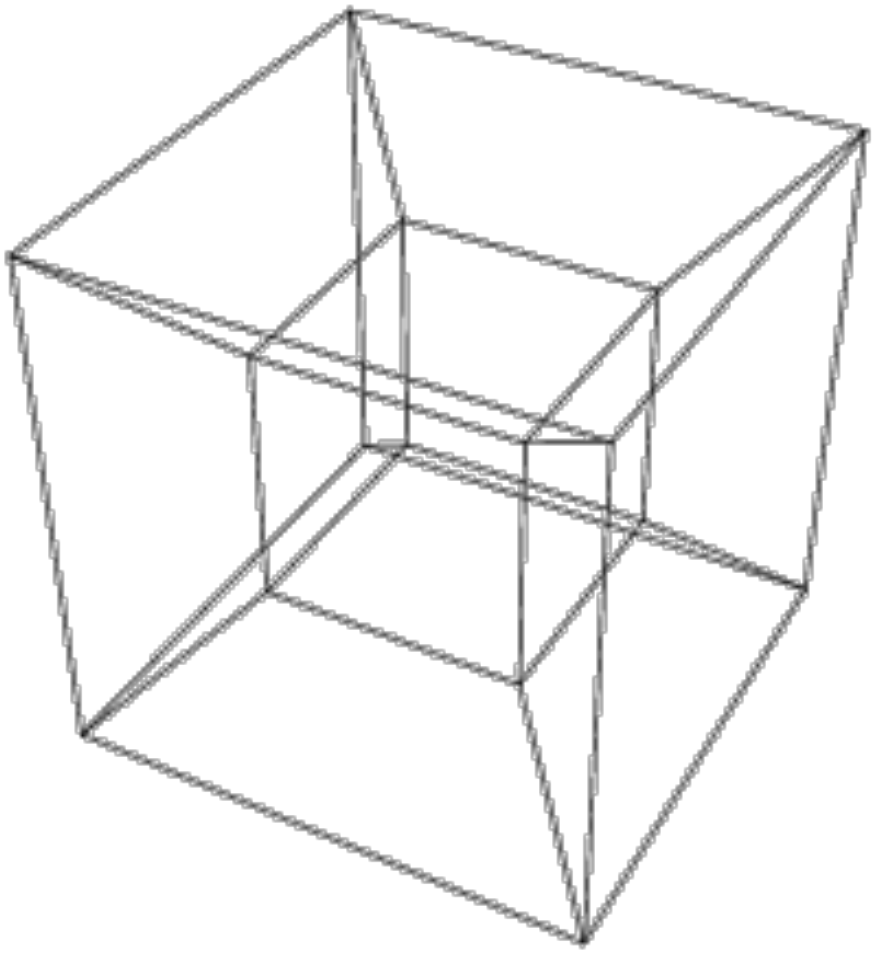


Figure 3. Tesseract



Note. From "Tesseract," by Weisstein, E. W. MathWorld (2015). Reprinted with permission.

Visualizing and Drawing the In-between Spaces

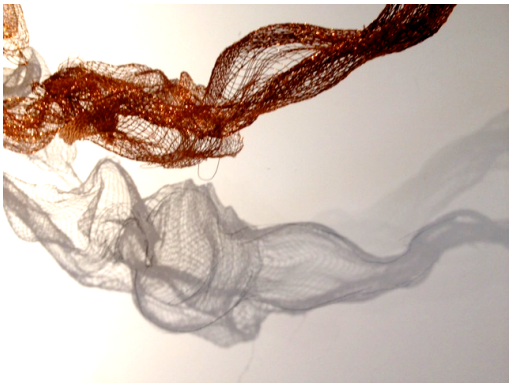
To examine this movement requires that you draw. Draw a dot, call this dot hyper-visibility point (a) and then draw another dot and call this invisibility point (b). To get from point (a) to point (b) we have to move, and to demonstrate that, we must draw a line between the two points. It is the movement in the space between these fixed points that I examine. We can erase the line and imagine the invisible space as a place where blackness can become visible. Further, we can explore the idea by drawing lines to propose a mathematical equation. By moving the lines in a number of directions we create 90-degree angles that make a 3-dimensional shape. In this way, we reason further and move out of the confines of space towards the analogy of the tesseract, which is described in physics as a 4-dimensional object in space. I imagine this movement into dimensions as flux, and as a space where we can assemble seemingly impossible alternatives to think ourselves differently positioned outside and inside the box.

In my artistic practice the notion of flux comes to me through my work with wire and paint, and through the ways in which wire moves us beyond the polarities of visible/invisible. Bent and shaped, wire and paint form these discussions into three-dimensional shapes. My larger than life bee sculptures, composed of wire, provide a way to imagine flux as practice. Like the tesseract that is never entirely visible, the image of this sculptural work changes depending on the angle from which it is seen. The tesseract extrapolates and draws from mathematical formulations based on one, two, and three dimensions. The tesseract is an analogy of capacity in relation to the black subject.

I have included a number of poets and visual artists who help me make sense of this work. It is important to my research that the artists and scholars I have encountered, remain visible as humans, in the milieu of other voices. These elements combined enable me to craft a more creative and complete argument for all of our voices to be heard. My approach is not linear; it mines past and present, stepping in and out of time and through a number of analytical sites to imagine a new 'uncommon' sense of humanity.

Can we move beyond conversations of hyper-visible and invisible? How do we interrupt the pattern of 'othering', erasure and un-acknowledgement? What must we do to challenge what we think we know? These are questions that I will examine in this paper.

Figure 4. A study in wire and shadows



Chapter 1: Mapping Movement in and Beyond Hyper-Visible/Invisible

"A Conversation *In* flux"

What is this veil that separates?
is it breath, relentlessly sustaining stone-faced Adonis
statues bury bodies under sheets thrown high
billowing, clearing, settling, covering
consciousness sublime.

Social constructs implanted in the mind
burn images – make hearts and eyes blind
opaque's ability to acknowledge
map (our) presence.

What is this veil?
mirrors reflecting cyborg mechanics, project words on screens,
semiotic ideals of the powerful infect the eyes of the marginalized
masks the violent gaze
of structure

Mark this visible invisibility,
draw guardians,
form eyes,
wake those who sleep,
paint visions.
makers – make hearts and minds open
unbind

A fluxable matrix shifts a terse complicated complacency,
moves gossamer sub atomic particle to interiors exterior
black humans marked by time
trace past, present and future intertwined.
Move from spectacle
imagine a new paradigm.

— Charmaine Lurch 2015

I begin with the scholars W. E. B. Du Bois (1903, 1940), Frantz Fanon (1961) and Sylvia Wynter (2001, 1990) who help us to locate the roots of a structure that mars vision and knowing. They point to signs and symbols of a black and human presence. Another scholar, Katherine McKittrick (2002), locates the black subject across a number of geographies and spatial coordinates. Tiffany King (2013), along with Frank Wilderson as cited in King, 2013) broaden notions of space with the introduction of the black female in flux, and fungibility in the clearing.[2] Artists such as Camille Turner (2014), Sandra Brewster (2015) and Mosa McNeilly (2015) use art as language. Their creative expressions help to elucidate some of the theories in this paper and are included in Appendix 2 (on page 61).

While these discussions map movement between hyper-invisibility and visibility, to understand why we move between these points, I look to scholarship to trouble the idea of the human. And to think about and create works of art that might enable us to know and recognize unjust epistemologies, find stories in the flux and finally to imagine from a different perspective.

In this section, I begin with Sylvia Wynter and her idea of the human. She enables me to think differently about being human by calling attention to some of the problems in dominant western thought. Her work is important to me because it helps me to understand how black subjects become other, invisible and inhuman.

[2] King (2013) pg. 1 in her discussion of the word "clearing" draws on Frank Wilderson III notion of the clearing as both a verb and a noun—a place of both settlement and genocide.

Wynter epitomizes the saying, "Words have users, but as well, users have words, and it's the users that establish the world's realities" (Baraka, 1963, p. 63). Wynter critically examines "our present culture's purely biological definition of what it is to be and therefore of what it is like to be human" (Wynter, 2001, p. 31). Her complex and layered theories build on ideas examined by Franz Fanon and W.E.B. Dubois and other scholars. These academics look at historically constructed ways of understanding humanness how this knowledge is produced and acted upon; and further, how this informs societal structures that place the black body as other, different and less than human (Wynter, 1990; Fanon, 1963).

In her conception of "Man vs. Human," Wynter questions human existence — who we are, what we are, and how the idea of race comes into place. Wynter's arguments point to two major shifts[3] in western epistemologies. The first shift is a move from the medieval/Christian idea of the world, which is tied to the voyages of Columbus and a second shift moved by Darwin's ideas of humans as reducible to a biological form. These ideas Wynter posits, frame our present day analysis of what it means to be human. This is a concept that expands my view and considerations of how black subjects come to be seen as less than human.

In *Caribbean Reasonings: After Man, Towards the Human* (2006), Bogues description of Wynter's work helped elucidate my understanding of two theories. The first is a review of Frantz Fanon's (1963) theory of sociogeny that argues that social factors, not purely biological definitions define the human

[3]A number of scholars such Katherine Mckittrick, (2015)Ferreira da Silva, (2015) chapter 3 and Karen, M Gagne (2007) describes these Wynter's ideas on the shifts in detail.

(p. 261). Second, Wynter advocates for a shift to a new poiesis, or autopoiesis[4] as a mode of knowledge production. This is described by Bogues (2006) as that which has at its core "behavior, knowledge, and self-making" (p. 319). I take it to mean that black people should re-design codes and symbols, based on cultural knowledge and creativity to present a new social imagery of the human. Bogues (2006) continues by calling our attention to another shift in Wynter's work in which she turns to earlier signs of humanism and locates these in continental Africa. He writes:

> Wynter makes an effort to escape the enchantment of western knowledge by working through a different narrative of origins. Instead, she locates the emergence of the human in Africa and notes how this emergence was accompanied by self-representations that are outside the terms of our present epistemological locus and its cultural universe (p.318).

Wynter moves the discussion on humanism from the Medieval/Darwinian arrangements to focus on earlier signs of human activity and culture as found in cave drawings in Southern African regions. By entering into conversation with anti-colonial African and Caribbean scholars such as, Frantz Fanon, and Aimé Césaire, Wynter builds on prior work and underscores the importance of cultural production. As a black person and an artist it is important to me that these important discussions about humanity are not lost.

Wynter brings black women into the discussion about the relationship between racism and the development of western thought. In her reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Wynter (1990) describes a rupture of the human

[4] Anthony Bogues give an extensive description of the term autopeiesis in *Caribbean Reasonings: After Man Towards the Human,* p. 319

Figure 5. **Installation #2**
Re-imagining Sycorax - studio work with wire

through the portrayal of Prospero as man or human and Caliban as other or a slave. Prospero, the colonizer representing man, on his arrival to the island, enslaves Caliban, the other. Caliban's mother Sycorax, who does not speak and is invisible throughout the play, acts as a metaphor for the black/indigenous presence on the island. Wynter examines how race and gender play out and probes the shift from a male/female to a male/race understanding of the world. In the play, whiteness subsumes gender. Miranda is inferior to her father Prospero but is still superior to the black Caliban and his group. The male/slave relationship becomes the dominant conversation.

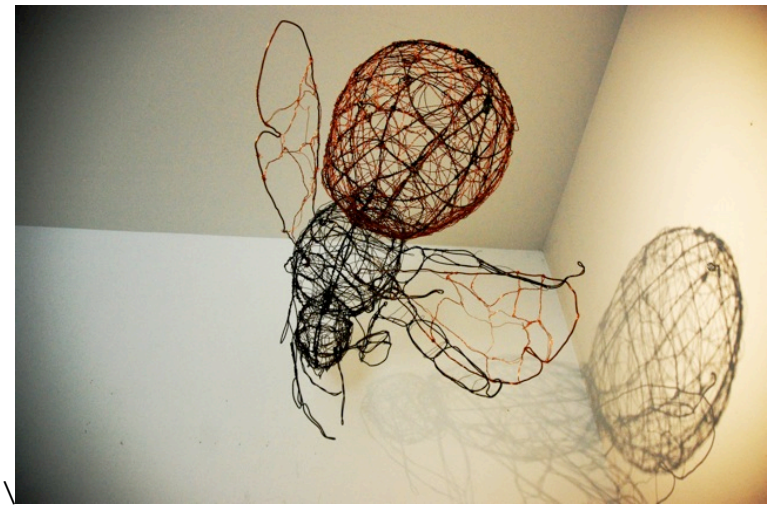
Wynter gives me a glimpse of Sycorax, a ghostly presence in *The Tempest*, Wynter brings forward the black woman, enabling (me) the black female reader, to engage with her text as a source of enlightenment. Out of this spiral, Wynter moves the story to me. This is flux! As the artist, I engage with these ideas moving and giving them a presence that Wynter may call a form of autopoiesis. I relate to Sycorax's tenuous situation from my position as an insider.[5] As a black/female/artist, the notion of Sycorax inspires me to create artwork that displays her humanity.

My installations mobilize invisibility and visibility through wire forms and shapes. They bring Sycorax's physical presence into view. Positioned in the liminal space, she is metaphor and magic, past and present in flux. This revisiting as other, scholars have noted, can give voice to black and indigenous women. In visualizing flux, I think about movement, space, time (past and present) and the people and animals that move through these landscapes.

[5] See Plumwood (2002) for an insightful analysis of the *insider* position.

Figure 6. Installation 4

Wire sculpture bee with shadow

\ 

I believe that we can image new ways that art and language can intertwine and form epistemological frameworks that move us beyond conversations of visible and hyper-visible.

My wire sculptures, depicting native (wild) bees, provide a new way to think about visibility/invisibility and movement in the landscape. Working closely with bee biologist Laurence Packer (who has generously shared his love of bees with me) has expanded my knowledge about bees and also in imagining how different bodies move through space. Creating the sculptures reveals the symbiotic relations between humans, animals and the environment. The bee's fast movements (which makes it hard to see) in space, captures the invisibility that I am examining. Concretely and metaphorically, bees help me imagine how to form my materials, shape things, play with wire and think about black visibility. I have a wire sculpture of a bee hanging in my studio. Maybe it was the wind or me who turned that bee one day, but the shadow that it created on the

wall was a very visible side profile of the bee shape. As the rotation continued, the shadow became foreshortened from end to end (head to bottom) where the wire overlaps itself. By observing the shadow, the concept of tesseract[6] becomes clear.

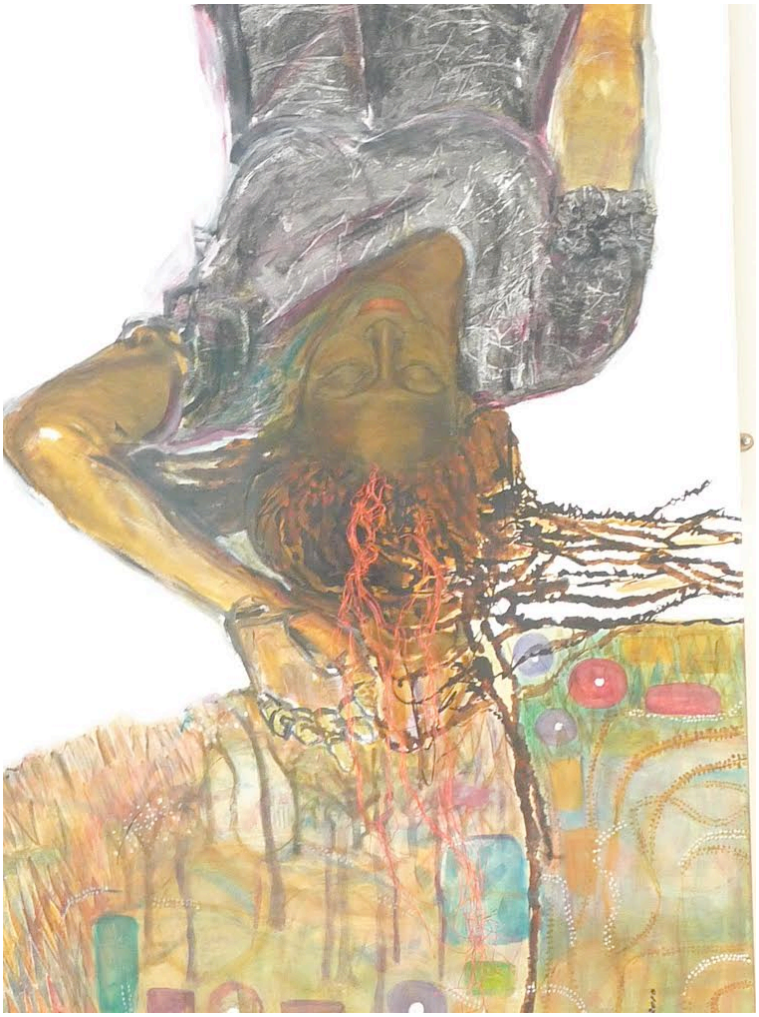
The shadow of the bee moved from very visible to unrecognizable. If you look at a moving image of the tesseract, you will see what I mean. For me, this is an apt metaphor for thinking about shifts between hyper-visibility to invisibility. In a futurist fashion I am already thinking of how to escape the shape towards what is outside of what we think we know.

I became interested in the tesseract as an object that moves in space. Thinking and manipulating objects that move has led to a number of works that examine these ideas. My painting titled "movement in space" attempts to relocate in 2-D a figure over time by capturing through a series of actions an implied sense of movement. This thinking has help me to see space in a new way.

I imagine that when people thought the world was flat it would have been impossible to conceive of it as round. By way of drawings, imagination and later, circumnavigation by Magellan and the 1492 Columbus expeditions, this belief was eventually displaced. I have come to think of the tesseract in this way. We understand three-dimensional space, and it is possible that a fourth dimension is on the horizon, and by extension hold possibilities of change towards a more just society.

[6] See Dina (2013) for more information on the fourth dimension and movement of the tesseract.

Figure 7. Mama Told Me — Painting, acrylic and wire on canvas



Artist Sketchbook Codes and Notes

From the pages: *take a different approach, an alternate perspective is required. survival is about finding one's own ways in spite of/away from a mother's entreaty— knowing that there no safety in keeping your heat in, your hat on. to move out of your head. create some kind of new encounter. hair connects blackness to community, a culture. hair as/ is the roots –seek ground, favorable and unfavorable – always shifting. moving through space and time, asleep, awake, conscious/unconscious. visible/invisible. the facing our fears. détournement, French for "rerouting", turning around capitalist systems. change.*

Chapter 2: Interrupting Patterns of Erasure

With this, the contemporariness of these corpses, the materiality of the cemetery, the rare setting of honoring the dead under bondage, and the willful memorialization of blackness push up against the science of taphonomy (the study of decay), necrology (the study of the death of an organism), and digenesis (the changes that take place after the final burial); this brings into the production of space and the cityscape, into the soil, the physical, chemical, and biological remains of blackness.

— Katherine McKittrick[7]

While Wynter enables us to think about how raced bodies become inhuman and hyper-visible within the genealogy of dominant Western knowledge production over time, Katherine McKittrick considers everyday erasures of blackness in the North American geographies. Her work alerts us to the ways in which blackness, and by extension, black struggles are made hyper-visible and simultaneously invisible. Mckittrick's work enables me to think of the displacement of black bodies in the context of the Canadian nation.

In the above quote, McKittrick (2013, p. 2) captures the essence and the elements of both the erased and the resolute black body. She describes more present Canadian erasures in her essay ""*Their Blood is There and They Can't Throw It Out": Honoring Black Canadian Geographies*" (2002) by addressing another 'disappearance' of black bodies. She describes the disappearance of the entire township of Africville in Nova Scotia and the renaming of Negro Creek

[7] See McKittrick, 2013 describing The New York African Burial Ground Memorial, which was unveiled in 2005.

Road in Holland Township, Ontario. She uses these as examples of how a black presence has been removed from the Canadian landscape (McKittrick, 2002, p. 27). These erasures, she posits, re-enforce ideas about space and place, in regards to who belongs and who doesn't. "Gender, race, class, and sexuality are experienced geographically through the ways communities develop, infrastructure is erected, and sites such as ghettos, workplaces, homes, entertainment venues, are sustained and eradicated" (McKittrick, 2002, p. 28).

The examples of Africville and Negro Creek Road show us that the lived experience of black people in these areas still survives in the land, bones and memories. For me, these examples are concrete evidence that speak to my arguments about flux and space. I keep coming back to the question, when and how do these memories emerge? We don't know. Sometimes it is by accident; sometimes it is by purposeful searching. What I do know is when they emerge, we can pull them forward and move and build on that knowledge.

The Case of the Sir George Williams Affair[8] is a vivid example of how black agency and action become invisible, are threatened with disappearance and then slowly re-emerge into resistant and resilient memory through knowledge of the incident. This historic episode reclaims an important moment in Canadian, Caribbean and transnational history that for the most part has been forgotten in the "archives and repertoire" (Taylor, 2003) of the nation. Further, it makes visible, a consistent black presence in Canadian Universities and underlines the ongoing struggle for black voices to be heard within our present institutions.

[8] David Austin gives a full account and analysis of the incident in his 2013 book, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security In Sixties Montreal*.

The Sir George Williams Affair, the largest student occupation in Canadian History, provides an important example of how erasure can operate on a national scale. In 1968, a group of black students from Sir George Williams University accused a white professor of racism after he unfairly failed all the black students in his class. The charges against the professor were dropped in 1969. This resulted in a sit-in and peaceful protest staged by the students, who were met with police aggression. Among the occupiers were the future Prime Minister of Dominica, Roosevelt Douglas and current Canadian Senator Anne Cools. Also involved were Dr. Cheddi Jagan Jr., son of Guyana's prime minister and Walter Rodney, a prominent Guyanese scholar, historian and activist.
David Austin's book *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (2013) and Dennis Forsythe in *Let The Niggers Burn: The Sir George Williams University affair and its Caribbean aftermath* (1971) provide insight into the "politically charged atmosphere" (Austin, 2013, p. 528) of Montreal in 1969.

When I first learned of this incident in 2012 when filmmaker Imara Rolston invited me to respond to a preliminary version of his film, *An (Other Antilles)*[9]. His invitation served as both a point of entry to this moment in history and to my own research. Presenting alongside thinkers and activists from across Canada, Africa and the Caribbean, I had the opportunity to learn from and engage with multiple notions of black empowerment and consciousness, which I would not otherwise have encountered. Sifting the language of the story by re-telling is crucial in a context of erasure. Austin (2013), Forsythe (1971), Rolston (2013) and Shum, (2015) provide insight and help us to know of the scholars and activists

[9] Imara Ajani Rolston is an emerging filmmaker and doctoral student. His film *An(Other Antilles)* is in production.

who intervened in the national discourse surrounding this incident, making public the history of black struggle in Canada.

> In certain circles, the Congress of Black Writers of 1968 and the Sir George Williams Affair of 1969 are starting to be increasingly remembered. David Austin and others have conducted very important historical work in this regard. However, I find it disappointing that in the long and detailed histories that the Quebec student movement produced about past struggles in Quebec, the Sir George Williams incident is rarely mentioned (Christoff, 2013).

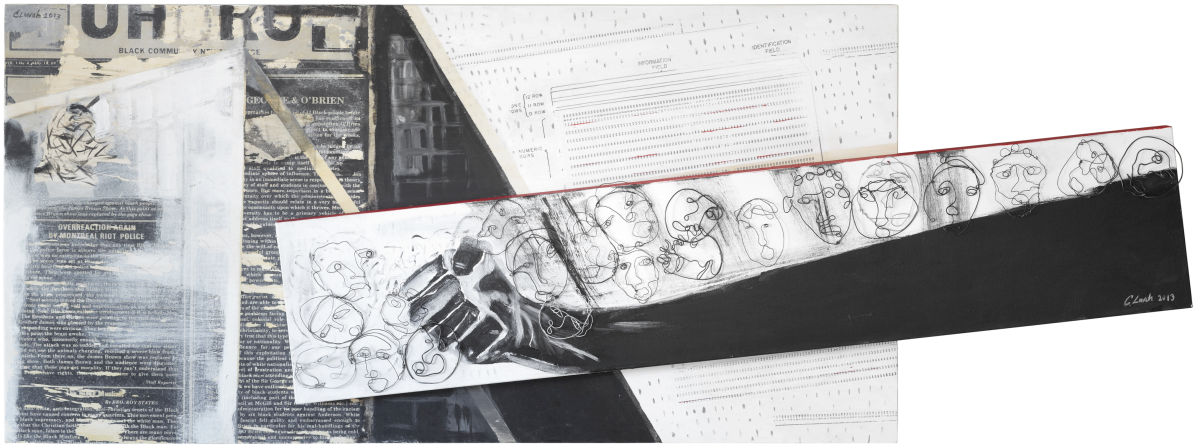
Presenting on the Sir George Affair at the 2013 Caribbean In Transit Symposium in Trinidad provided me the opportunity to meet with Trinidadian artist and curator, Christopher Cozier (2013). After the presentation he posed the question, "Why do memories emerge when they do?" This question made me think about not only when they emerge, but how and why these important stories disappear.

In a personal investigation about why this event has been erased, I sought out oral testimonies about the Sir George Williams Affair. In an intimate conversation, Jackie Thomas (personal conversation, October 16, 2013) spoke to me about her experience as a black student in Montreal in 1967 and about her encounters with racially motivated police harassment. She told me that such experiences often went unreported.

When I prodded my own parents, who lived in Toronto during the riots, they finally spoke about hearing of the incident on the news. I asked my mother why she didn't tell me about this, and her initial response was that she thought I was

too young to understand. She shared with me that she was glad when the situation died down. Her impression from media accounts was that the students were "vandals" and "militants" as reported in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1969. She also said that as new immigrants, they were trying to understand the system and working to make a living. Their silence in the face of witnessing difficult moments can be seen as a tactic for survival, but it could also prevent a community from remembering and passing on memories.

Figure 8. *1960's Affair* – Acrylic paint, wire, wood



The translation through visual means makes visible the concrete evidence but also endeavors to capture 'invisible' underlying discourses. Here the artist's hand/body is positioned as an iconography, to engage minds and heart in making visible stories critical to the 'national imagery' and social fabric of society. The work strives to intervene in the discourse on ethics and aesthetics, and looks at alternative forms of knowledge making that defines black presence in Canada. My work is an example of how artist can take memories, such as the Sir George Williams Affair, and move them forward so they can be shared.

A Visible Presence in Nature

"The city and Nature are poetry in motion and we are caught up in its rhythm whether we like it or not."

— Carolyn Finney[10]

Making black presence and agency knowable and visible in the natural landscape and spaces in the North America, is a topic that poets and scholars such as Dionne Brand (1977), Camille T. Dungy (2009) and Carolyn Finney (2014, 2015) have been advocating for some time. This activism counters accepted unintelligible notions of the black subject as unfamiliar and disconnected from the conversations on environmentalism, and relationship to nature.

In North America, black presence is more commonly accepted as belonging in urban spaces. The common images we receive of black subjects in rural spaces is often limited to an aesthetic of poverty and toil. And it is this narrow vision of the raced body that displaces it from the natural world. The case of the Sir George Williams affair and its disappearance from public memory highlights the fact that even in the cityscapes where black communities have agency and experiences they remain unacknowledged in the education system and in the national conscience.

Black people's complex connection and belonging in nature is marked in both urban and rural landscapes through the signs and symbols that make up

[10] C. Finney. (2013) Ode to New York: A Performance Piece. This piece was a response to the question "How is nature critical to a 21st century urban ethic?"

everyday living in the spaces they inhabit. However, this marking in natural spaces is often underrepresented and is difficult to find in the images and language that advertise environmental sustainability and the great outdoors (Finney, 2013, 2014). How are black bodies unknowable in these conversations, especially regarding nature? And why are there so few images from North America that display the signs of racialized bodies, of black, indigenous, brown folks in the beautiful spaces that we come to know as natural?

Carolyn Finney is an academic, writer and cultural geographer who address these questions and make visible, the black voice and the black subject care and connection to the land through her work. In *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (2014) Finney draws from personal experiences and research on culture, history and the environment to discuss underrepresentation in the media and lack of physical signs that connect black subjects to the environment and to environmentalism. She argues for the need to expose systems that continue to separate blackness from nature. This separation she notes equates black bodies with placelessness and statelessness (Finney 2014).

Mary Douglas perhaps can help us understand what happens when the black body is displaced form the social and physical space to which it is often confined. In *Purity and Danger* (1988) Douglas argued that separating particular bodies and objects and ordering them in distinct spaces and categories is about meaning and social order. Both meaning and order depend on establishing and maintaining boundaries. When these boundaries between the pure and impure are threatened, spatial order is disturbed and matter is out of place. Danger is

thought to be at hand and society is under threat. Douglas' ideas help us to think about what happens when black bodies undertake everyday leisure activities in nature in predominantly white societies. For the dominant groups, they are seen as threatening or dangerous because they are 'out of place' having transgressed the socially designated order.

Poets provide a way to rupture and re-place and trouble negative serotypes of the black in relation to the natural world. Camille T. Dungy edits a series of poems in *Black Nature* (2009) and makes the point that for years the voices of black eco-poets have long sounded the call for "broader inclusiveness in conversations about eco-criticism and ecopoetics…" (p. xxi).[11] Dungy writes that these poets capture the African American connection to landscapes, past and present, through words that move from cityscapes to wilderness. These poems and stories can serve as a means of representation and affect our conceptual maps (Hall, 1973) making it possible to visualize the black subject in nature.

Writers such as W.E.B. Du Bois have long pushed against the absurd boundaries which make it taboo for black people to be seen as part of the conversation about nature. It took me some time to come across W.E. B. Bois' book *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (1920). This work is comprised of a series of short stories and poems in which Du Bois looks at the issues of race, class and gender, which intersect with nature. In the poem, "Of Beauty and Death" (1920) Du Bois calls attention to the 'naturalized whiteness' of Maine's Acadia National Park, while travelling on a train in 'Jim Crow's Car' (Du Bois, p. 174-5). He

[11] Michael Bennet in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism.* pg. 195 gives a description of ecocriticism through his account in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave.*

describes the wonders of nature as he enters the picturesque and colourful landscape between the Rocky Mountains and the sea. This poem adds to the chorus of voices that know and see blackness but also bring to the fore visible signs that acknowledge the black people's living, thinking and presence. Du Bois (1940) tells us:

> Not only do white men but also colored men forget the facts of the Negro's double environment. The negro American has not only the white surrounding world, but usually, and touching him much more nearly and compellingly, is the environment furnished by his own colored group.
>
> (*Darkwater*, p. 173).

Du Bois' writings on racial and environmental justice issues have very much shaped the way I think about land, both in a physical and metaphorical sense. In his compelling autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), he uses double consciousness as a theoretical model for understanding the psychological and social dimensions of anti-black racism in American society. In the same work he also speaks of a double environment, a concept that layers double consciousness with environment. Here Du Bois' poetics makes visible other ways that the black subject enters the hyper-visible or invisible landscapes.

Beyond Du Bois' seminal texts, a number of other artists and writers allow me to examine invisibility/visibility from different perspectives. Artist Kerry James Marshall's (2014) work explores the presence and absence of black figures in art history and credits Ralph Ellison's book *Invisible Man* (1947) as his main inspiration. In *Invisible Man*, the protagonist is an unnamed black man who thinks of himself as socially invisible. Faced with American society's refusal to see him, the invisible man makes the choice to go underground and live in a

secret basement, where he steals electricity and listens to Louis Armstrong in order to write the story of his invisibility. In a video presentation, Marshall explains, "[Ellison's] description of Black people as it relates to invisibility is not the retinal invisibility where you can't be seen, but the psychological invisibility that is imposed by a culture that doesn't particularly care to see you." Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) argues that "'double consciousness' both afflicts and transfigures the black soul; dividing its experience and self-awareness, 'interjecting' racism into the racially oppressed self, and also affording that self with some means of defense against racial oppression" (as cited in Winant, 2004, p.1). The 'black soul,' faced with such oppression, can become invisible to itself, while at the same time aware of its ability to act against systems of oppression.

To look further for visibility, in regards to black people and landscape, I draw on the work of the poet Dionne Brand (1997). Brand engages in topography of the mind in spaces. She crisscrosses multiple sites—from highways; through bodies of water; making landfalls between shores; moving timelessly and inscribing stories. I follow the insights of Katherine Mckittrick (2006) and apply and artistic lens to think about this work.

Brand's concept of 'giving up on land', has a way of making us more conscious in a visceral way about the land and our relationship to it. She reminds us of our familiarity and investment in time and space in birth and death. Mining our movement, she maps both rootedness and displacement. Brand's language locates us in space – we are lulled by nature into a sense of belonging, and within seconds eviscerated from the landscape with scripts of un-belonging

Figure 9.

Excerpt from *Land to Light On*

V v

I'm giving up on land to light on, slowly, it isn't land,
It is the same as fog and mist and figures and lines
and toilets and front door mats and typewriter shops,
cards with your name and clothing that come undone,
skin that doesn't fasten and spills and shoes. It's paper,
paper, maps. Maps that get wet and rinse out, in my hand
anyway. I'm giving up what was always shifting, mutable
cities' fluorescences, limbs, chalk curdled blackboards
and carbon copies, wretching water, cunning walls. Books
to set it right. Look. What I know is this. I'm giving up.
No offence. I was never committed. Not ever, to offices
or islands, continents, graphs, whole cloth, these sequences
or even footsteps.

Dionne Brand (1997)

discharged from passing cars, misrecognized as part of the fabric of the nation. Her constructions are metaphors that straddle the social and political conditions and afflict and create a condition of hyper-visibility and invisibility. Brand draws on terrain and brings visceral symbols to minds that record the simultaneous belonging and un-belonging. This poet writes 'inside of the 'human' from a deep place that "allow[s] her to emphasize the alterability of space and place, to give up on land and imagine new geographic stories…" (McKittrick, 2006, p. ix) Brand's poetry helps us recognize the ground, and the black and visible body in space. She gives us a sense of how un-belonging and belonging can be mobilized, can create poetry and can make us think and produce our own symbols. Wynter's call for a new poetics might well be found here. Brand's language is not new, but it creates new spaces to think about black landscapes and other landings.

These works point to a number of ways that blackness becomes a signifier in both natural and man-made spaces. Du Bois' discussions on double consciousness and double environment relays how black subjects perceive and are perceived in the environment; Brand's expressions expose belonging and un-belonging in visceral and tactile ways; eco-poets and cultural geographers like Finney articulate the underrepresentation of racialized bodies in relation to and in conversations on nature. These thinkers enable me to craft visual arguments that reveal the critical connections that black people have to social, physical and natural landscapes.

Figure 10.

Chapter 3: Challenging the Known and Unknown

> And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out and read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives.[12]
>
> — Audre Lorde

Brand gives me a sense of what it means to be poised between belonging and un-belonging, to be eviscerated from space, but also how to transform this state of flux through creative means. In this section I choose to use spoken words to portray this sense flux and visibility. In this spirit, chapter 3 presents two living conversations, the first with scholar Tiffany King (2013) whose work on land and black women's bodies urge me to move beyond mourning the loss of absolute belonging and to consider what is to be learned from the state of flux itself. The second conversation builds upon the first and synthesizes how I understand the black body in flux.

Conversation I: Encountering the Clearing

I had the opportunity to meet King personally when she invited me to speak with her about how I responded to her dissertation through art, specifically how I use flux and fungibility in my work. King opens our conversation by attributing her understandings of land to her relationship with indigenous peoples. King participated in a black and an Anishinaabe women's group As part of her

[12] Lorde (1984), in *Sister Outsider reminds us to do the necessary work of making the invisible visible.*

research on "Black female gender formation at the intersection of slavery and settler colonialism" (2013). She learned first-hand how genocide and the on-going violence of colonialism impacts the everyday lives of indigenous peoples. Listening to her talk, I am reminded of reading and responding to Leanne Simpson's book *Islands of Decolonial Love* (2013):

I am a black woman reading a "Nishnaabeg" decolonial love story. It resonates with me in ways that I do not fully comprehend. My understanding comes from a different space, and can only depend on perceptions that emerge from the words and from things known and unknown, so I am mindful of how I tread amongst the words. Longing and belonging and difference emerge in this space. Though perched atop a city hill I am drawn into and feel the beauty of northern Ontario landscapes rising between dammed rivers and cottage decks. Nature takes hold on the page as Simpson weaves the islands together with voices that create narrative that expose wanton disregard and call attention to state sponsored genocide and desecration of sacred spaces and the ways that it is resisted (Lurch, 2014).

This excerpt in a similar way, reminds me of Kings work in drawing attention on the need for accountability to indigenous people while doing the work on black studies. I am also attracted to Kings discussions on the 'clearing' that draws from Frank Wilderson arguments that there is as an ongoing process of violence that happens every day in this space (as cited in King 2013). 'The clearing, in white literature,' King posits, is a static inert kind of place where the violence has passed and it becomes an open space to be developed with no consideration of the language or cosmology of the space. King speaks to the many ways in which indigenous and black women navigate in the trauma of 'clearing' "and being cleared"' while charting possibilities for healing. This helps us understand how

black bodies move in time and space. As the body moves in flux and is fungible, in the clearing each recognizes the other's existence.

King reflects on the early stages of her writing and in particular, on her desire to tease out a theory of blackness as space. Her notion of fungibility was first examined through the lens of Afro-pessimism – that is, a belief that black people function outside of white social and civil liberties, thus blackness as a space of fungibility and assimilation. Fungibility is for her the process by which black women are marked as replaceable chattel. Citing Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997) and Hortense Spiller's essay *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe* (1987), she begins to understand blackness simultaneously as a system of subjection, and a place of pliability and malleability. In this vein, blackness is both a material and imaginative space. King tells me she is reframing her thinking on fungibility, to conceive of it as a resource with an agentive kind of quality.

As our conversation continues, King revisits Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), turning to three very powerful words: "God is Change". Embedded in these words is the spirit of flux; and an acknowledgement that the space of changeability is filled with immense possibilities for liberation. I agree with King and observe that the unsettling quality of the space is one that black people have had to live with, and turn into a resource.

King sees movement as a way of creating life and flux as having open capacity that doesn't always connote death—but rather, as a liberating kind of space for our work, that is, in the way those past stories emerge, gain new life in the

present and move forward in the telling to the future. This is a place where she believes we can think through each other's work.

I am interested in King's question and answer: "What relationship does the slave have to the Settler/Master, the Native and the land?" (p. 112). She writes that both native and black people are dehumanized in the settling of the plantation. Settling requires that both the genocide of the native and black bodies to be fungible, and in "a pure state of flux" (p.112); and that this creates the Settler-Master-human. King elucidates this further by revisiting Black Matriarch Nana Peazant in *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash, 1991). King posits that Peazant bears witness to the genocide of the Native and the clearing of the land and makes "the transformation of the body of the slave into non-human lives visible" (p.42). King's work elucidates how Dash's character stands between slavery and settlement, through lived experience of the transport of Black bodies and knowledge to the settlement. Watching *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash, 1991) left me with fragments of beauty, pain and images of racialized bodies at home and on lands by the sea. It wasn't until I read Tiffany King's (2013) analysis of the film that I became conscious of the dehumanizing process of wringing indigo from the indigo plant, moving bodies into close connection with plants and land, and relegating the black woman to "a liminal space or void—not human or plant" (p. 56), but a hybrid flux-able woman.

This motion can be imagined as an attempt to move away from what Frank Wilderson, cited in King, calls "fixed-flux" – bodies, both Native and Black, "are fixed and rooted in a place of elimination and expanding use for the Settler's unending pursuit of self-actualization" (p. 92).

King observes that Jennifer Morgan in *Laboring Women* (2011), "enables the black female figure to briefly cross the stage of colonial settlement long enough for [us] to catch a glimpse of her during the clearing of the Native and the land" (p. 7). She notes that this 'glimpse' provides a way to understand the black female body in everyday space-making during the time of settlement.

This crossing is movement, is mobility, is flux. Though it can be difficult to see this as a creative space where stories are forged, the 'glimpse' becomes a point in flux where stories are revealed. Daughters of the Dust (Dash, 1991) along with other sightings, allow me to envision blackness as agentive and from this point I can imagine and re-present these stories through my art.

Toward the end of our interview, King makes an important point—in coming together in 'communion', stories and ideas move as points that we can glimpse and perhaps hold on to and in this way begin to move forward. Embracing un-belonging and claiming a space of flux happens in moments of ceremony and in experiencing the sacred (2013). The sacred emerges in moments when you are "without reason" and find yourself able to be gracious in your responses to others (p.179). "These connections", King argues, "disrupt time and space and move you to re-imagine [their] relationship to one another, the land, settler colonial nation-states and de-colonial politics" (p.180).

Flux as an embodiment of continuous motion doesn't at first seem to be conceivable in terms of single points but you can however; identify a point along a motion. The stories of Thornton and Lucy Blackburn Henrietta Lacks I suggest

are intelligible stories that give us a place to pause and reflect on the emergence of a black and visible presence.

Figure 11. **Installation #1**
Blueprint for a Mobile and Visible Carriage - Plan/drawings

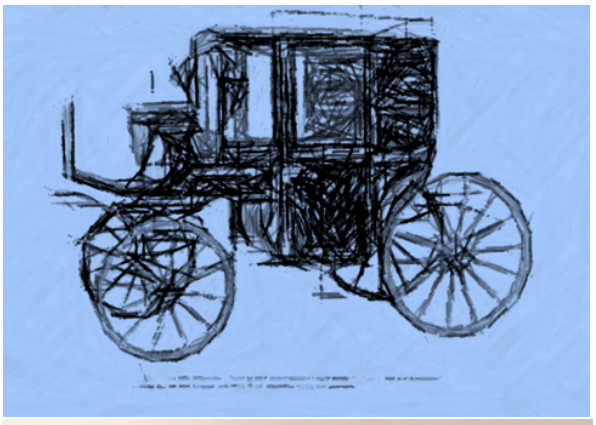
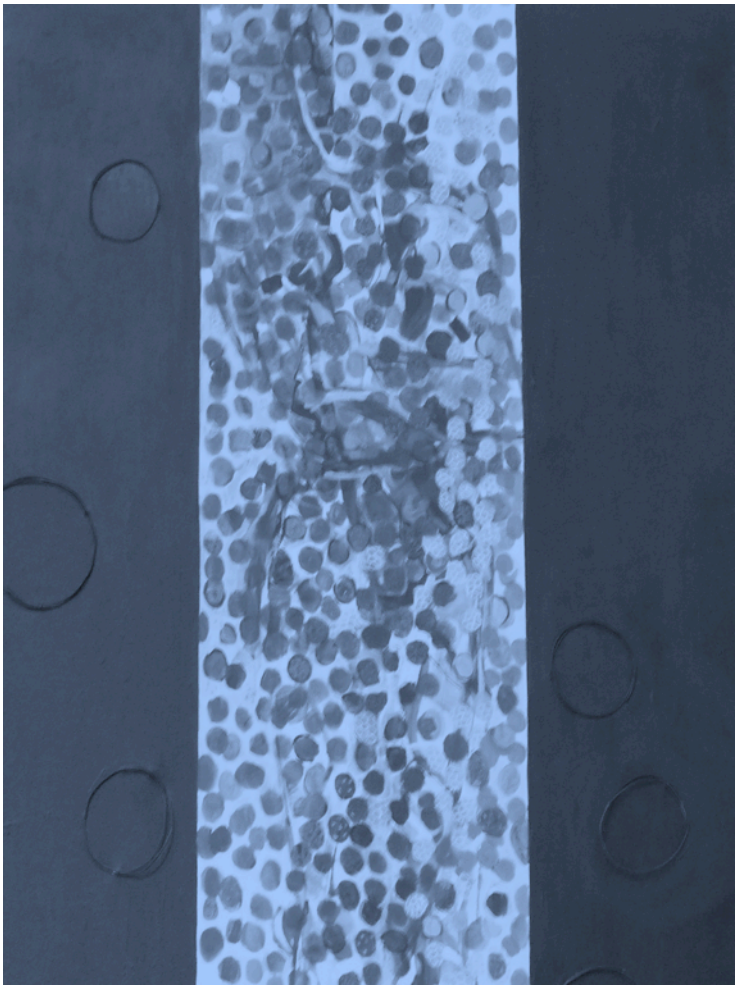


Figure 12. **Inatallation #3**
The Phenomenal Henrietta Lacks – Petri dishes, metal, paint, wire



My feet is my only carriage,

So I've got to push on through.
But while I'm gone, I mean,

No, woman, no cry,
No, woman, no cry.

Excerpt. (1974). No Woman no Cry [Recorded by Bob Marley]

The notion of flux can be seen in the almost forgotten story of Thornton and Lucy Blackburn. The story was unearthed 1985 when of a group archaeologists and schoolchildren excavated the site of the Blackburn's home. Karolyn Smardz Frost's book, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land*, (2008) revelations of the Blackburn's entrance into Canada and their subsequent building of the first taxi business uncovers a vibrant black history in Toronto. Thornton and Lucy Blackburn incorporate an aesthetic of the corporeal; memory and erasure; visible and invisible. Their mobility is actualized through the carriage as both a material object and a conveyance of memory. They move black Toronto's past, collapse time, and allow us to imagine black contribution and belonging in the present.

Henrietta Lacks also embodies flux. In death, she was reduced to the single cells of her body and designated HeLa, a contraction of Henrietta Lacks. In 1951, her cells, without the prior consent of Ms. Lacks or her relatives, were used in groundbreaking research that contributed to medical discoveries such as the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization and more (Skloot, 2010). The story of Henrietta Lacks is one of a black woman who suffered under the oppression of poverty, class, race, gender and poor health issues that permeated her everyday life. But the irony is that in death she became a force of

nature, the stuff of futurist fantasies, hopes and dreams, of scientific discovery and wonder. In remembering, we can be moved to tell our own stories of, and towards, progress.

Conversation 2: Concerning Flux

In the following dialogue, I elaborate on these ideas and explain the notion of flux in a personal conversation with Michael Gilmore, who has watched this work unfold. This discussion is a synthesis of my process. The conversation itself became a performance in flux, a dialogic exercise that served as a strategy for clarifying my ideas. So, it is with his permission that I move through the words of our conversation, by designating initials to who said what.

M. G. What is it that is in flux?

C. L. The way the bodies of the Blackburns move from past to present, differently. That's a kind of flux, the way that their memory comes up when it does.

M. G. Then isn't the story about everything in the past in flux as it moves from then, to us now?

C. L. The stories of Harriet Tubman or maybe Hannibal have moved to us through time and are visible, but they are not black stories. The usual stories are ones that render black people invisible, as not belonging, or as hyper-visible.

Think about how often black folks are made visible in processes of arrest and conviction, tried in the public eye, before proper investigation. Criminalized into oblivion. Flux can and sometimes does move from invisibility toward positive visibility as in the case of Henrietta Lacks. This allows the taking up of blackness, the telling of black stories so there is a possibility for change. It helps me to imagine a way forward, as not stuck in this space, but able to creatively move through it. I am specifically connected to black stories from the point of visibility and invisibility.

M. G. If this project is about flux are you talking about movement over time?

C. L. Yes. You pinpoint, as Wynter did, the point when the human, became hyper-visibility and invisible— I'm talking about flux— I'm talking about black people moving between the two points. There are three ways I can talk about the movement of the Blackburns between these two points. First of all, in the 19th century, because of their colour, the Blackburns moved back and forth between invisibility and visibility. Over time they were in flux, that is invisible and lost in the archives. Karolyn Smardz Frost (2008) through her book and personal conversations has generously shared her knowledge of them with me. Now, they move into my view, as visible in the 21st century.

When and why do things become visible over time? Who is to say?

M. G. So you are saying in the lived experience they become hyper-visible and invisible, because they are black they move from seen to unseen. And through history, from past to present, they move from invisible to visible, maybe…

I see invisible in the conditions tied to slavery in society when it was time to get jobs or help in some way— and visible when it was time to sweep the floors or do the clearing. As well as their stories of triumph despite those conditions that become visible in their time.

C. L. And now visible (to some) as a present example of the temporal component of hyper-invisibility and invisibility

M.G. I was having a hard time understanding this through-time thing.

C. L. Every history coming to me is in flux because it is in motion from somewhere else, but some things that don't get here are rendered invisible, on purpose and in this case, yes because of the conditions of enslavement. I think about it this way —In my exhibition, there are three main installations that are representations of the Blackburns, Sycorax, and Henrietta Lacks— they are my stickpins in a map, viewed from the point of where I stand—along time, but also as the viewer/observer—of these memories. Finally it's also a position from which I keep moving and thinking about changing the path of invisibility. It's not quite clear even as I say this.

I think about Henrietta Lacks, how she moves through time and space differently but also how she was purposely invisible because of her skin, but moves invisibly still, in space in the petri dishes and in our lives.

M.G. I don't understand!

C. L. Well, she is of cells and light - it is another level of layering. Her cells are moving in the world. She is/was a black woman whose cells continue to move and proliferate in the world long after she has gone. I remember her to think of other ways to move, (you don't have to die of course); there are other ways that blackness moves through the world invisibly that we can't fully comprehend. The motion I'm talking about is the flux between conditions.

M. G. Do black people want to move from condition to condition in flux?

C. L. I am not arguing whether they want to move or not. Rather, I want to examine that movement, to think on, and deepen the discussion of flux and move away from fixed notions of what it means to be in flux. I want to think about the space between points, and poles.

M.G. For me, I just want to stop the flux and just be visible and accountable. I want always to be visible, always human. I don't want to move to that invisible place. I don't want to be in flux. I know what invisibility feels like, and I know what hyper-visibility feels like - give me a concrete example of the space in between, the place you want to examine.

C. L. That brings me back to Wynter and being human – when we can be ourselves, when no one is putting a mask of hyper or invisibility on us, when you are with family, in church, in communion with each other, talking and giving, maybe then we are in flux. But because we are so often hyper-visible, I want to think about how we move beyond that, to just being human. Again back to Wynter.

M.G. But if you just stop the flux—then changes come from that point, and you just get to the human – first just stop the flux.

C.L. I think flux allows for change and we are forever moving but maybe we can find a way to move differently—move between those conditions and if those conditions change you then move between these changed positions.

M.G. How are you going to make those conditions change?

C.L. I am able to do this by talking about them together, through thinking, by recognizing the conditions through my art. When we become conscious of these things, then there is a possibility to change how we know what we know.
I come back to Octavia Butler's words again, "all that you change changes you." That is why I also invoke that mythology of the tesseract; I/we am/are not there yet but know that possibility exists. The idea of the tesseract is outside of flux, it offers other possibilities that we don't know. So for me that is important to consider.

We can't see it yet, can't see possibilities because we are still working through that flux, but I have hope that it will come. I have to believe that something else will cause a change. The tesseract embodies all the conditions at the same time although you just can't see the constant movement and change. It is visible and invisible though never completely visible or invisible. Perhaps when we are able to pause, we can understand the analogy of the tesseract. That is, to find a new perspective from which spaces revealed can imagine a common humanity.

Conclusion

Conversations (work in progress)

The seen un-seen black subject
moves as a hyper-visible /invisible dichotomy.
Fanon and Wynter shift Columbus and Darwin
to reveal the human
split

Oceans reveal the tempest Sycorax,
sculpted back to form, finds life
in McKittrick's Northern erasures.
No homecoming only bones that tell of black lives
ucovered through stories of Holland Landing.

How do stories emerge?
George Williams
tells, Austin
of forgotten students' riot

Brand gives up on land,
makes visible lives while
Du Bois sees double,
conscious of the environment
riding the train to Maine.

King moves us through the
clearing
re- tracing Native/Black
presence
Is flux and fungibility we see
in women who clear perspective,
draw new dimension
and make us know.

I place this poem here so that the reader might reflect on the nature of this work. It is also the nature of the 2-D and 3-D work that is my art. I speak of movement of black bodies in space—in landscapes and imaginations. The portfolio is presented as 'flux.' Ideas are glimpses or points that bring blackness into view. The visuals presented are examples of fields of vision that move the viewer in and out, receding and advancing in a flow of events in a ceaseless but ever-changing flux. We are stuff of constant change and motion and I see the possibilities as I move forward in this space. The theory lays in the ability to imagine other spaces and recreate a mythology, not out of nothing, but by grasping the moments that come into view and holding on to these stories of black lives to build an inner story that can move and create a solid model from a new perspective.

McKittrick during a workshop titled *DearScienceAnd: rejoicing the black creative sciences (2014)* asked: "How might we utilize black creative works to politicize the enjoined workings of science, race and art and, consequently, demand new academic questions of ourselves?" Reflecting on this important question allows me to consider how space, black studies, and science come together in my work. They conjoin in the notion of the tesseract, and in the objects and images that are part of this portfolio. This is the canvas from which my art can be theorized and shaped, as object, as language, as animator. How they move out into the spaces, to the observer participant only time will tell.

Moving forward, this portfolio, as a vision unfolding over time, looks to those who share common values and who are tuned, as Iton (2008) suggests, towards a black fantastic. In the end, I start as I begin — with hope, art and ideas.

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Appendix 1

Work by Charmaine Lurch

Figure 1. Revisiting Sycorax - plan/drawing
Figure 2. *Movement in Space*- acrylic paint on paper
Figure 3. Tesseract – drawing
Figure 4. A study in wire and shadows
Figure 5. **Installation #2** *Re-imagining Sycorax* - studio work with wire
Figure 6. **Installation #4***Wire sculpture bee with shadow* – bumble Bee - photograph
Figure 7. *Mama Told Me* - paint, acrylic wire on canvas
Figure 8. *1960's Affair* – Acrylic paint, wire, wood
Figure 9. Excerpt from poem (section *Vv*) *Land to Light On* - Dionne Brand
Figure 10. *Outlook* – family photograph
Figure 11. **Installation #1** *Blueprint for a Mobile and Visible Carriage* - plan drawings
Figure 12. **Inatallation #3** *The Phenomenal Henrietta Lacks* - paint, wire metal, dish

Figure 1.

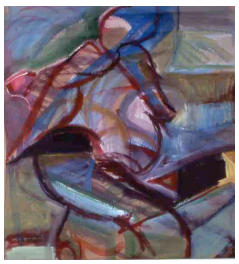


Figure 2.

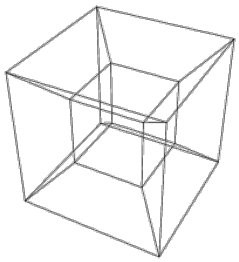


Figure 3

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

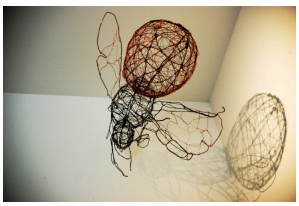


Figure 6.

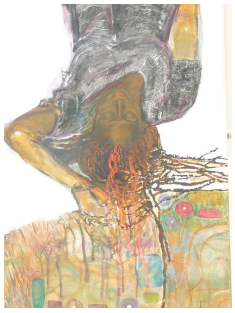


Figure 7.

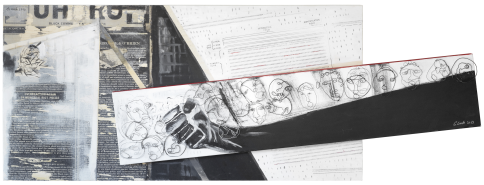


Figure 8.

Dionne Brand

Excerpt from Vv

Land to Light On

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

Figure 11.

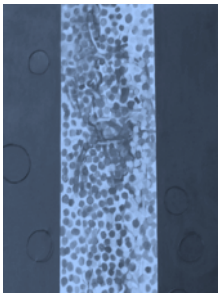


Figure 12.

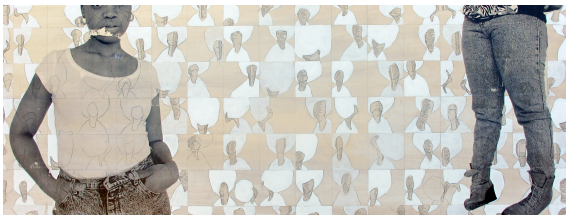
Appendix 2

Work by Other Artists

A number of artists add a necessary and critical vision and visual discourse to this portfolio. These artists help me to think through theory as practice. They provoke thought and interrogate invisibility/visibility and provide insights into these issues. Together our works display how artistic means can be a site for revealing and intervening in a discourse that brings black diasporic presence into view. As such they are critical in challenging social structures and accepted stereotypes and move us to imagine other way of seeing and being in the world.

Andrea Fatona (2002) writes that, "Melinda Mollineaux is at once agent and instrument in the re-construction, re-narration, and making of history. Although her body is visually absent from the work, it continues to reside as a presence by virtue of the traces she leaves behind in the photograph." Mollineaux's Cadboro Bay images, for me, construct a visual of how the seen and unseen subject can be used to capture forgotten histories and to re-imagine black presence.

Sandra Brewster *Plain Black 2, 2012*



Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster (2015) writes of her Smith Series above that "the surname Smith takes up the largest section of a Western telephone directory. Its volume conjures up ideas of sameness, commonality and invisibility, as there are so many. Mocking the notion of monolithic racialized communities, my simply rendered characters don afros and carry bodies shaped like a blob." It is Brewster's ability to capture glimpses, which conjure up for me a sense of liminal space and bodies in flux.

Roshini Kempadoo (2014) Photo-based / digital screen-based installation art also works with shifts and movement. Though our means and materials are vastly different we both examine cultural identity and the notion of the 'in between' in our work. Kempadoo traces the movement of diasporic subjects between past and present creating work both from the archive and from imagined landscapes to intervene in conventional and formulaic ideas about the Caribbean.

Charles Campbell *Night Object*

Charles Campbell's (2014) describes his construction of fractals as opening up 'space between' the visual and the underlying story. He creates mandalas on geodesic domes based on historical figures to examine politics, space, ethics and aesthetics. His 3-dimensional forms are an example of how objects both take up and contain space.

I find resonance in Lynette Yiadom Boakye's (2015) paintings on identity and cultural narrative set within landscapes that appear both natural and surreal. Yiadom Boakye figurative works are set within abstracted landscapes where they shift you beyond the gaze and move you into unknown environments where it is not clear if the figures are creating their own realities or just stepping into space. Her rich colours enable you to imagine spaces that are all at once lush and dry. Her work captures a sense of space and timelessness that set it inside and outside of time and space.

Camille Turner *The Final Frontier*

Camille Turner (2014) is a digital media and performance artist. She examines the systemic absenting of black individuals and poulations from the archives and every day places in the Canadian landscapes. Her work evokes the hidden black presence; moves the past to the present and annimates an Afrofuturist re-mapping of Toronto's Black geographies. This kind of mapping can make stories like that of Thronton and Lucy Blackburn visible.

Refusing the image of Fungability: The black female body in Flux is a collaborative work produced by Mosa McNeilly and myself in May 2015. This work both troubles and embraces notions of flux. Our presentation draws from Tiffany King's (2014) dissertation that maps the presence of the black female subject in space, in relation to the Settler's need for expansion, and the removal of Native bodies from the land. Examining perceptions that position the black female subject as fungible, without roots in North American society, this project, informed by our arts/performance based practice utilizes art as a means to analyze and also re-imagine the black female figure as visible in flux.

The work of the artists discussed for me captures the notion of flux. They suspend and reveal the black subject through poetry, in play in picture—reframing the image, refusing fungibility.