

## Pip Day

*We are never alone in politics, which is why my politics are never mine only.*  
—Sarah Pierce, after Hannah Arendt, *Practices of Negation*, 2017

In *On Being Human as Praxis* (2015), writer Sylvia Wynter traces important transitions in historical knowledge systems—among others, the sixteenth-century shift away from a theology-based system, via Copernicus' then-radical claim that the Earth is not the centre of the universe but actually *moves*—and is careful to note that while each transition represents a radical rupture for its time, what she calls our current *oeconomicus* absolute order of knowledge is steeped in the same old patriarchal, racist, classist, and colonial Euro-American order.

As Wynter's analysis of historical changes demonstrates, though, absolute orders of knowledge can also *cease* to exist and, as she declares, "We must now collectively undertake a rewriting of knowledge as we know it" (18). For that, though, a new conception of humanness is needed, one that takes into account the beyond-biological that makes us unique—what Wynter calls the storytelling capacity of human beings. In short, we need to tell ourselves a new story.

Bringing objects, ideas, bodies, text, matters of concern, and political orientations into close relation is, of course, a form of storytelling. Museums and exhibitions have long been employed in propping up stories founded on patriarchal, racist, classist, and colonial legacies—as incisively displayed in the opening museum scene of Ryan Coogler's film *Black Panther* (2018)—but they have also established themselves as spaces

for discursivity, thus enabling the establishment of *otherwise* relationality between those objects, ideas, bodies, text, matters of concern, and political orientations. Common ground can be established through exhibitions, or conversely, space can be held for incommensurable narratives and experiences; both results can be fruitful, if sometimes painful.

Wynter points out that the widespread emancipatory movements of the 1960s—fueled by earlier, anticolonial struggles all over the world—actually began "*all together*" to undo the existing *oeconomicus* knowledge system and conception of "Man" and his power over all things (23). She laments the later fracturing of those radical movements and the ensuing stall of the potential for dismantling the capitalist system that she saw emerging back then. We can lament with Wynter, but we can also posit that the force of our predecessors' collective labour had perhaps begun to *move* Earth again. As cultural workers, we must harness the inertia of this movement, supporting the increasingly rapturous and rupturous radical storytelling woven by artists and activists working today, causing much-needed structural impact on both curatorial and institutional processes and engendering presents and futures in which we want to take part. ¶

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