

INTRODUCTION

The Black Shoals

shoal, *n.* and *adj.*

n.

A place where the water is of little depth; a shallow, a sand-bank or bar.

adj.

of water, etc.: not deep; shallow

ex. The boat could not come to land the water was so shoale.

The year 1441 is a palindrome. The date's symmetry, doubling and mirroring, slows the eye's movement over it. Fourteen forty-one is also a temporal-spatial marker within Black diaspora studies that scholars use to chart the navigational routes of the Portuguese around the deadly reef-filled waters and rocky shoals of Cape Bojador to the shores of Guinea (Senegal).¹ Gomes Eannes de Azurara, who drafted "The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea," reported that in 1441 sailors — perhaps including Antham Gonçalves — brought back the first Negroes and "gold dust" to Portugal.² The date slows the easy and swift movement of colonial studies, settler colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and some tendencies within Native studies toward 1492 and the shores of the "Americas" as the accepted inaugural time-space of the modern mode and era of conquest. For a number of Black studies scholars, the 1440s mark the commencement of the Portuguese slave trade, as well as European voyages poised for the conquest of territory on the coast of West Africa.³ These errant and out-of-sync time and space coordinates of Black thought and study produce a shoaling effect — a disruption in the movement and flow — of

time and space reflected in and narrated by Western disciplinary formations and their seminal texts. Throughout *The Black Shoals*, Black thought, movement, aesthetics, resistance, and lived experience will be interpreted as a form of chafing and rubbing up against the normative flows of Western thought. Specifically, *The Black Shoals* will interrupt and slow the momentum of long-standing and contemporary modes and itineraries for theorizing New World violence, social relations, Indigeneity, and Blackness in the Western Hemisphere.⁴

Through the mid-nineteenth century, ship captains' nautical journals, logs, and maps revealed the deep anxiety that unexpectedly running into a shoal caused ships' crews. As a geological and oceanic formation, shoals force one to pause before proceeding. Prior to the 1860s, mariners and sailors lacked a scientific or systematic methodology for measuring depth to the ocean floor.⁵ Before the invention of bathymetry, the calculation of probability curves that estimated the latitude and longitude of shoals—rock formations, coral beds, and sandbars—were very difficult to map and, therefore, avoid.⁶ For captains, sailors, and others on board a ship, the perils of the sea included crashing into a shoal and the sinking of their vessel. The unexpected appearance of rocks or a change in sea level could force the ship to reroute, turn around, cancel its voyage, or even kill all of the passengers (and cargo).

The word “shoal” has a number of meanings. Geological sources define it as the area in which the sea or a body of water becomes shallow. As a process, it is the movement of the ocean from greater to shallower depths. It is not the shore; it is a formation before the shore or offshore. As a location and geological formation it is often described as a sandbar or a coral reef. It is an accumulation of granular materials (sand, rock, and other) that through sedimentation create a bar or barrier that is difficult to pass and, in fact, a “danger to navigation.”⁷ As a geological unit, it is a physical place, a shallower place in the ocean before one arrives at the shore.

When the ocean is at low tide, one might be able to wade from the shore beyond a break in the waves and into deeper water or a trough to then come upon very shallow water (or a place where the ocean floor surfaces), where one can finally stand on sand again. Many who fish find the shoal to be an ideal spot. A school, or gathering of fish, also sometimes described as a shoal, often gathers at the sandbar's edges to feed on vegetation. Thus, a shoal is a good spot for catching fish. While also used to describe nongeological matter such as a school of fish, the term is rarely used in humanistic terms, however. Declining in use after the eighteenth

century, the word “shoal” is generally used in the form of a verb to describe how a ship or vessel slows down to navigate a rocky or rough seabed that has risen toward the surface of the ocean. As the waters became shallow, a ship would shoal to avoid running aground.

Because these sedimentations of sand, rock, or coral were often imperceptible until they sank a vessel, the mysterious and shoal-filled ocean floor posed a problem for navigating the sea. As a sandbar, and a particularly shifty formation, a shoal can erode over time, drift, and eventually accumulate in another location. Its unpredictability exceeds full knowability/mappability and in some senses it is what Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick would call a “demonic” space.⁸ Because the shoal’s shape, expanse, and density change over time, the shoal is as much a dynamic and moving set of processes and ecological relations as it is a longitudinal and latitudinal coordinate that cartographers attempt to fix in time and space. It is a mobile, always changing and shifting state of flux. As an ecological space, it represents an errant and ecotonal location made of both water and not water. Ecotones are classified within environmental science as a combination or meeting of at least two distinct ecological zones.⁹ The shoal is liminal, indeterminate, and hard to map.

As elements of the ocean that not are stable or readily mappable and therefore knowable, shoals slow the movement of a vessel. They cause the ship’s velocity and momentum to change direction, to adjust, and on occasion they force the voyage to stop. The shoal is an impediment and a danger to navigation. Materially, it is a site where movement as usual cannot proceed. Within cultural studies, and more specifically performance studies, Michael LeVan invoked the nautical and geological term to elaborate on the productive tension created within the discipline due to the use of digital technologies.¹⁰ LeVan describes shoals as places, metaphors for contact and encounter, as well as emergent formations. Rising and falling with the tide, the shoal is an interstitial and emerging space of becoming:

Rather, than forming a boundary between land and water, shoals are spaces of contact, friction, and interaction among land and water (framed above, of course by another space of contact: air or atmosphere). The phenomenon of “shoaling” is a sign of this contact: when the surface waves approach a shoal, they slow down, their height increases, the distance between them decreases, and sometimes they are diffracted. Though not an absolute obstacle, a shoal transforms the qualities of the movement of water. Simultaneously, beneath the surface

the movement of water constantly remakes the topography of the shoal. With each give and take of the waves, the zone of contact and encounter is reformed. The encounter transforms each, and each is constituted in part by its transformations.¹¹

Like LeVan's interpretation, the Black shoal is certainly a moment of friction and the production of a new topography. *The Black Shoals*, as an analytical and a methodological location, constitutes a moment of convergence, gathering, reassembling, and coming together (or apart). The shoal, like Black thought, is a place where momentum and velocity as normal vectors are impeded. It is the place where an adjustment needs to be made. As an in-between, ecotonal, unexpected, and shifting space, the shoal requires new footing, different chords of embodied rhythms, and new conceptual tools to navigate its terrain. The shoal enables this book to shift its conceptual lens to a liminal space between the sea and the land.

At its surface, the shoal functions as a space of liminality, indeterminacy, and location of suture between two hermeneutical frames that have conventionally been understood as sealed off from each other. I offer the space of the shoal as simultaneously land and sea to fracture this notion that Black diaspora studies is overdetermined by rootlessness and only metaphorized by water and to disrupt the idea that Indigenous studies is solely rooted and fixed in imaginaries of land as territory.¹² Scholars in Black diaspora studies, giving specific attention to late twentieth-century scholars, have mobilized oceanic and water metaphors to theorize Black life, aesthetics, and decolonial politics as breaks with continental European discourse. Similarly positioning itself as a challenge to Western and colonial epistemes, Native studies has centered land at the fulcrum of its analytical, theoretical, and metaphorical maneuvers that challenge coloniality. The shoal creates a rupture and at the same time opens up analytical possibilities for thinking about Blackness as exceeding the metaphors and analytics of water and for thinking of Indigeneity as exceeding the symbol and analytic of land.

The genesis of the shoal in this project emerges from the larger project of Black diaspora studies. More specifically, the shoal gains its force from the traditions of Caribbean poetics and studies. Black diaspora studies as a project concerned with landscapes of domination and struggle has attended to and meditated on the sea and oceanic relations for some time. The Atlantic emerges as a central geographical body of the field, as well of as this project. During the late twentieth century and into the early

twenty-first century, the enduring metaphor and actual space of the ocean has pulsed through Black diasporic literature, criticism, art, and theory. The Middle Passage and “crossings” of African-descended people in particular has animated and served as an arterial through line in Anglo–African American, Anglo-Caribbean, and Black Canadian, as well as Hispanophone and Lusophone, traditions. Hard to escape, the ocean and its legacy has crested again and again in Hortense Spillers’s notion of the “oceanic,” Édouard Glissant’s “archipelagic thought,” Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic,” Kamau Brathwaite’s “tidalectics,” Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s “rhythm,” and Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley’s “Black Atlantic, queer Atlantic.”¹³ While often evoking a space of connection, transit, passage, and flow, the ocean has also functioned as a complex seascape and ecology within Black diaspora studies that ruptures normative thought and European discourse.

Glissant’s archipelagic thought in *Caribbean Discourse* that moves away from and out of sync with continental thought figures the ocean as a space that striates or interrupts the smooth flow of continental thought. More recently, Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake* and its wake work has reanimated Black studies’ capacity to ripple and disturb the surface of the ocean. While these diasporic currents all offer modes of intervention, what I intend to think more carefully with is Brathwaite’s conceptualization of tidalectics. I tarry with tidalectics because of the way that Brathwaite brings it into consciousness as a ritual enacted by Caribbean people with the sea and sand (and land). It is also important to note the ways that Brathwaite’s tidalectics function as a form of what McKittrick calls Glissant’s “poetics of landscape” that make space for Black geographical expressions of saying, feeling, writing, and imagining space.¹⁴ In 1995, Brathwaite and Nathaniel Mackey had a conversation about poetry and Brathwaite’s body of work. In the book *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, which records moments from the poets’ dialogue with each other, Brathwaite reconjures an image that helped him explain the arc of his poetic mediations on the question “What is Caribbean/the Caribbean?”¹⁵ Looking from a house on a sandy cliff, Brathwaite takes in the following image:

This is an ole yard, okay? and this old woman is
sweeping, sweeping the sand of her yard away
from her house. Traditional early morning old
woman of Caribbean history.¹⁶

The old woman is described as temporally belonging to the “early morning” and spatiotemporally as a “woman of Caribbean history.” She is en-

gaged in a peculiar dawn ritual that Brathwaite cannot fully understand the first time he views it. While Brathwaite can feel how the ritual is urged on by a compulsion to hold off impending collapse — specifically, the chaos that poverty can bring — he does not understand the “why” or the usefulness of the act of separating sand from sand. Why would the woman enact a ritual to sweep sand away from sand and a residue that will return before the next break of dawn? Brathwaite ponders:

She’s going on
like this every morning, sweeping this sand — of
all things! — away from . . . sand from sand
seen? . . . And I say Now what’s she doing?¹⁷

After another gander, Brathwaite realizes that “she is in fact performing a very important ritual which [he] cannot fully understand but which [he is] tirelessly trying to.”¹⁸ Initially, the woman’s movements and ritual were perplexing and opaque. He recalls waiting for another dawn to catch the woman’s silhouette moving against the “sparkling light.” When Brathwaite looks again, he says that it “seems” as if the woman’s

feet,
which all along I thought were
walking on the sand . . . were
really . . . walking on the wa-
ter . . . and she was tra-
velling across that middlepass
age constantly coming from wh-
ere she had come from — in her
case Africa — to this spot in
North Coast Jamaica where she
now lives.¹⁹

The movement of the woman — who “was always on this journey” — forward and then back again mimics the movement of the sea. There is more than a “sandy situation” at hand.²⁰ The woman is not just walking across the sand. The woman is also walking on water. Although Brathwaite uses “really” as a clarifying adverb, I do not interpret the “really” as a displacement of the sand. I see an interplay between the sand and the ocean. The ocean does not simply burst through and overwhelm the entire scene. The sand that will (always) return remains entangled with the ocean.²¹ I hold on to Brathwaite’s image of the sand — and ocean — to move with

it to his discussion of how his way of doing Caribbean poetics disrupts the time, meter, and rhythm of the colonial imposition of the pentameter on poetry and prose. Much like Brathwaite's poetics, the shoal also disrupts colonial geographies, scales, and measures that separate the sand and the sea.

To be able to attend to and write about this old Caribbean woman of history and her humble morning ritual, Brathwaite needed to write in a different meter. More specifically, for Brathwaite to see (and for me to see) "the sand between her toes" as she crosses the ocean, he will have to write toward a knowledge and understanding of the Caribbean through his poetry in another rhythm.²² "'They' (these imposed meters) could not allow me to write the sunlight under her feet—she walk on water and in the light, the sand between her toes, the ritual discourse of her morning broom."²³ Brathwaite's image of a morning ritual of survival, gratitude, and perpetual crossing of the "middlepass age" keeps the ebb and flow of the tides touching the shores of the continent of Africa and the coasts of the Caribbean.²⁴

Brathwaite writes of this ebb and flow as another errant movement that puts Caribbean life and history outside Western traditions such as Hegelian dialectics. Of the Caribbean people and their tidalectic movement against Western linearity and progress, Brathwaite writes: "Why is our psychology not dialectical—successfully dialectical—in how Western philosophy has assumed people's lives should be, but tidalectic, like our grandmother's—our nanna's—action, like the movement of the ocean she's walking on, coming from one continent/continuum, touching another, and then receding (reading) from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future."²⁵

Brathwaite's tidalectics resonate with the kinds of connections and disruptions that *The Black Shoals* attempts to achieve. First, tidalectics confound the binary and dialectical thinking that would separate ocean from land and render Black people and Indigenous people as an antagonism. Second, Brathwaite's meditation on the confounding movement and ritual of the old woman gestures toward a kind of life that is beyond transparency, a Black life that does not willingly show or give itself away to any observer and a penetrating gaze. Brathwaite's initial state of confusion summons Glissant's notion—or, rather, his "demand"—for "the right to opacity."²⁶ Glissant described his notion of opacity as an "irreducible singularity," writing, "The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced,

which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence.”²⁷ Elucidating on Glissant’s poetics of landscape as a challenge to traditional geographical formulations and their “familiar tools of maps, charts, official records, and figures,” McKittrick draws attention to the ways that Glissant’s language—and in this case, Brathwaite’s Caribbean and diasporic “poetic politics”—can conceptualize a kind of “uncharted” surroundings that are continually made, remade, or unmade by Black fugitives working with furtive Indigenous communities.²⁸ The Black shoals are a part of the “uncharted” and at times invisible geographies of everyday Black life and ritual.

The woman’s movement as something that could not be reduced to a daily ritual of moving/cleaning sand held deeper (and unknown) meanings for Brathwaite. This nonreducibility is an element of Black thought, Black life, and Black aesthetics that *The Black Shoals* desperately honors and protects. As a metaphor, the shoal cannot be reduced to the ocean, the shore, or an island. It always has the potential to be something else that cannot be known in advance. In addition, the shoal exceeds easy liquid metaphors. The shoal as a metaphor and an analytic can slow the reflex and compulsion to always anticipate that Blackness (people, aesthetics, symbols) will show up as liquidity, fluidity, and flow.²⁹ Liquidity as a totalizing metaphor for Blackness is not just an ethical problem for depictions of Black life and the Black radical (and political) imagination—it also effaces the generative conceptual problem of Blackness.³⁰ For instance, what happens—or needs to happen conceptually—when Black diasporic people, aesthetics, and politics land and encounter Native peoples’ cosmologies and resistance to conquest? In an attempt to register this shift, the shoal disrupts the nautical and oceanic coherence of Blackness as only liquid and enables other modes of thinking about Blackness that opens up other kinds of potentialities, materialities, and forms. Anna Reckin reads Brathwaite’s tidalectic as a “creative process” that brings various texts (struggles and experiences) together and creates new ones.³¹ Reckin writes of Brathwaite’s tidalectic as process, as gathering space and “Legba’s crossing.”³²

The shoal is an alternative space always in formation (expanding or eroding) and not already overwritten or captured by the conceptual constraints of the sea or the land. If we conceptualize the shoal as a geological, oceanic, and geographical place, we can also imagine it as an actual and metaphorical place of juncture or a crossroads. Shoals are often found a few hundred feet offshore. Sometimes as sandbars or, at times, limestone formations, shoals often prevented vessels from coming all the way to the

shore to anchor. When a vessel anchored offshore, small boats would travel up to the side of a ship to retrieve passengers and cargo to take to shore.³³ If a vessel could anchor near a sandbar — a shoal — offshore, crew, cargo, and captive slaves from the hold could stand, sit, and wait on the sandbar for a boat or could wade to shore themselves. For the members of the community/shoal that emerge from the ship's hold, it is perhaps the last shallow place to rest your feet before the last canoe ride or swim to shore. It is another in-between space other than the hold to temporarily squat and reassemble the self on new terms.

In the fifteenth century, for those who did not enter (or leave from) the arched threshold of the Door of No Return, sandbanks and shoals were the last spots of sand that an African embarking the slave vessel stepped on before being carried into the hold. The shoal was also a place just off the coast of the archipelagos of the Caribbean and the ports of the British Carolinas where the enslaved Africans arrived in the New World and took their first wobbly steps on a small bar of sand, where they stumbled forward, slipped, or crashed and were made to stand before wading into a shorter stretch of water that would finally bring them to the shore — a place where an adult could hoist a child higher on a hip to get a better grasp before wading to shore; a place that caused unsteady sea legs to slip beneath themselves into a tumble and tangle of coffles and iron banging together. At the beginning or end of other planned voyages, the sandbars could also present another opportunity to kill the ship's crew, seize the vessel, and head back to the sea in the other direction. Or, as in Paule Marshall's retelling of the story of Ibo Landing, the shoal could have been the place that Ibo decided they would turn around and walk past the boat back home.³⁴ The shoal is a small uncovered spot of sand, coral, or rock where one must quickly gather, lose oneself, or proceed in a manner and fashion not yet known. In a temporal sense, the shoal is also the location that offers a moment to reassemble the self as an amphibious and terrestrial subjectivity. Not just water (fluid, malleable, and fungible) but also a body landed. A place and time of liminality where one becomes an ecotone, a space of transition between distinct ecological systems and states. A place to come to terms with a changing terrain that demands that you both walk and swim to shore — and whatever the shore may bring.

In addition to rethinking Black epistemologies and conceptual ecologies, I also use the shoal as a way of moving Black diaspora studies to reconceptualizing Indigenous people as also connected to water and the oceanic. Vincente Diaz, a scholar of Pacific Island communities that consti-

tute Oceania, works within seafaring epistemologies (ocean travel, chant, moving islands) to honor the ways that “land, sea and humans are mutually constitutive of one another.”³⁵ Taking into consideration the “very long history of geo and oceanographic dispersal” and travel, Diaz’s work, as well as other Pacific Islander Indigenous scholars, challenge notions of Indigenous “rootedness” in static time and space.³⁶ Thinking with Indigenous mobilities, migrations, and relationships to the sea, I hope to engage an important proposition that Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman poses. More specifically, Goeman asks, what might “forms of analysis or action” that center “indigenous conceptions of land as connected, rather than land as disaggregate parcels at various European-conceived scales” of accumulation look like?³⁷ Colonial European scales disaggregate space into reservations, nation-states, continents, hemispheres, and water. Goeman offers that we “position land and water as always connected.”³⁸ Goeman asks, “what if we think of waterways in the way my Pacific Islander colleagues, particularly Vincente Diaz and Alice Te Punga Somerville, have positioned waters as connected with the currents rather than water as that which divides continents, islands, and land?”³⁹ For Goeman, Somerville, and Diaz, “the binding of land and water to the political, cultural and social life of indigenous peoples requires an ethics of care and responsibility.”⁴⁰ *The Black Shoals* is a site where Black studies connects land and water. The shoals also represent an analytical and geographical site where Black studies attempts to engage Native studies on ethical terms that unfold in new spaces.

This project tracks where and how Blackness interrupted the linear and smooth flow of modern and postmodern thought on the questions of slavery and genocide. Ultimately, this book asks, What changes does the Black shoal require of normative routes and knowledge systems that consider the ways that Black presence in the Americas casts a shadow on and informs the projects of genocide, settlement, and the remaking of “the human” under ongoing relations of conquest? As an accumulation of Black thought, aesthetics, and politics, the shoals of this project halt the all too smooth logics of White settler colonial studies. More specifically, *The Black Shoals* arrests settler colonialism’s tendency to resuscitate older liberal humanist modes of thought to create new poststructural and postmodern forms of violent humanisms that feed off Indigenous genocide and Black social death. The shoals as the analytical, theoretical, and methodological sandbars in this book place White settler colonial studies, as well as certain tendencies within Indigenous/Native studies (and Black studies) that align with White humanist thought, under stress. *The Black Shoals* forces

a tarrying within hemispheric Black studies' discourse of conquest and its traditions of interrogating the terms on which the human comes into formation through Black and Indigenous death in the Western hemisphere.

At this contemporary juncture, many Black and Indigenous people in this hemisphere experience the current political moment as one marked by mass carnage. Everyday life is marked by grotesque interludes with Black and Indigenous death in the streets or in the plains. Even as Black and Indigenous people and the world bear live witness — on the street, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook — to the real-time murder of their kin and relations, liberal political commentary, the academy, and the White left continue to use a form of speech that refuses to name the quotidian spectacle of death as conquest.

THEORETICAL SHOALS

The way that shoals slow the movement and momentum of vessels acts as the organizing metaphor that structures the theoretical frame of the book. The Black shoal functions as a critique of normative discourses within colonial, settler colonial, and postcolonial studies that narrowly posit land and labor as the primary frames from which to theorize coloniality, anti-Indigenism, and anti-Black racism. *The Black Shoals* introduces an alternative reading practice and an analytical suture or thoroughfare that reveals the ways that Blackness mediates the relations of conquest in the Western Hemisphere. *The Black Shoals* works to disrupt the movement of modern thought, time, and space to enable something else to form, coalesce, and emerge.

An essential analytical move that shapes the theoretical contributions of *The Black Shoals* is how the book uses a hemispheric approach that exceeds conventional Black diasporic analytics and spaces. Throughout the book, the space of the hemisphere, which includes the westernmost coast of Africa and the Americas, functions as the landscape in which the practice of enslaving Black people and making them fungible and accumulable symbols of spatial expansion happens alongside and in relationship to Indigenous genocide. Very much as Brathwaite's "tidalectics" as performed in Caribbean and Black diaspora literature moved between the experiences of dispersal and landing, the analytical approach of this book traces the relationship and dialogic traffic between Black and Indigenous thought in the hemisphere.⁴¹ Brathwaite's tidalectics, which lap up against Glissant's archipelagic thought and poetics of landscape, produce what Mc-

Kittrick identifies as “different sets of geographic tools . . . which are anchored, primarily in nonlinearity, contradictory histories, dispossession, and an infinite variety of landscapes.”⁴² Tidalectics as a mediation between the sea and land tends to privilege geographies and analytical sites such as the dock, stelling, and liminal spaces that are an intermediary location between ocean and shore. It is also an analytical location that forecloses settlement and permanent landing on its always shifting and dissolving terrains. Rather than read these ruptures, dissolving and ephemeral spaces suspiciously, I encourage the reader to engage the nontraditional geographies (visible, uncharted, and invisible) that connect Indigenous and Black diasporic thought reparatively.⁴³

The theoretical frame of the book gathers, much like shoals gather, disparate granules of sand, rock, and coral to make new and varied theoretical formations within Black diaspora studies. While some of the theoretical pairings may seem disparate and sound dissonant, their placement in conversation with one another produces a generative friction. More important, the scholarly voices that I have curated for this project all ask important questions about how the human — or its apex, Man — is defined in relationship to Black and Indigenous people. In the theoretical formation that is the Black shoals, readers will recognize the sand mounds and coral patterns of Wynter, Spillers, and McKittrick, as well as Saidiya Hartman, Frank Wilderson, and Denise Ferreira da Silva. Their bodies of work contribute to a lineage and legacy of scholarship that arrests the normative epistemic flow and the violence of the narrativity of humanist (or what Wynter calls “monohumanist”) thought. While the book recognizes that the authors and the respective traditions from which they are a part and help form (Caribbean studies, Black and African diaspora studies, U.S. Black studies, Black Canadian studies, Afro-Latin American and Brazilian studies) address specific and unique challenges that arise at the level of the nation-state and supranational regions, the book refuses to silo or treat the intellectual traditions as bounded. Black studies in its Caribbean, Canadian, U.S, Brazilian, North American, and Latin American iterations all shift and respond to one another (albeit unequally) like living shoals that are connected to one another like an archipelago.

Rather than conflate distinct intellectual formations, traditions, and practices of study, I trace the nerves of a gathering or shoaling (however fleeting and temporary that it may be) of a Black diasporic and hemispheric conversation about middle passages, geographies, rootless relations to nation-states, and encounters with Indigenous peoples amid the violence

of New World modernity. I attend to the violence of conquest in Anglo imperial regimes and nation-states that connect Black people in the Western Hemisphere. I also attend to the ways that Black people who are subject to the legacy of this violence have always been trying to communicate with Indigenous people.

Each tradition and practice of Black study has its own approach to configuring and enflashing the spaces and cracks where Black and Indigenous life caress each other. In the Anglo North American academy, Black Canadian studies — which continues to demand institutional resources and recognition — has sustained the most explicit and intentional exchange with Indigenous people, genocide, and the discourse of settler colonialism as evidenced by their scholarly imprint. Canadian racial discourses prioritize the settler-Indigenous binary and subordinate — erase — the nation's own history of slavery and anti-Black racism through a Canadian project of multiculturalism that focuses on assimilating (Black) immigrants into its national project.⁴⁴ Because of the way that the Canadian nation-state organizes and narrates its racial conflict and reconciliation along settler and Indigenous lines, Black Canadian studies has a long and established record of theorizing racial violence and through a triadic European-Native-Black frame. Further, the influence of Black diaspora studies, particularly a practice inflected by Anglo-Caribbean Studies in Toronto, privileges an Afro-diasporic tradition with a long history of studying and critiquing coloniality. The influence of Caribbean philosopher Wynter is evident in the work of Black Canadian scholars like Rinaldo Walcott, whose essay “The Problem of the Human: Black Ontologies and ‘the Coloniality of Our Being’” (2014) limns the limits of a settler colonial critique in the face of anti-Black racism. In “The Problem of the Human,” Walcott draws on the Wynterian tradition of studying the violent enclosures of the human in order to elaborate the ways that the Canadian nation-state's project of multiculturalism expands to incorporate modes of Indigenous representation into its notion of the human/Man at the expense of Black subjects in Canada.⁴⁵

In comparison, U.S. Black studies' engagement with Native studies and Indigenous sovereignty as a political and intellectual project, while longer, has been less even and consistent. U.S. racial discourse tends to be organized by a White-Black paradigmatic frame that often erases Indigenous peoples. When U.S. Black studies has engaged Indigenous thought and politics, the field has been less likely to articulate Black-Indigenous relations through a discourse of settler colonial relations until recent, twenty-first-century scholarship.⁴⁶ Tracking the history of Black popular and scholarly

treatments of the subject of Native America, scholar Arika Easley-Houser has discovered an antebellum African American print culture in which Native Americans figured centrally in the nineteenth-century African American imagination.⁴⁷ These print cultures ranged from those that sought to explore alliances with Native peoples to comparative projects that tried to prove African American superiority to Native peoples, as well as those that investigated Native practices of enslavement.⁴⁸ Shortly after founding the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in 1915, Carter G. Woodson published his article “The Relations of Negroes and Indians in Massachusetts” in the *Journal of Negro History* in 1920. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first Black studies programs producing scholarship at the nexus of Black activism and the development of academic departments created fertile ground for conversations between Black and Native scholars and activists. With the establishment of Black studies departments, a noticeable uptick in scholarship by Black scholars on Black and Native American relations emerged after Powhatan-Renape scholar Jack D. Forbes’s *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* was published in 1993.

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, scholars began to pay particular attention to the practice of slavery among the Five Civilized Tribes. In 2006, Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland coedited the anthology *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. The contributors to the collection used a variety of interdisciplinary methods and rooted their work in primary sources, archival records, and Black and Native literary traditions that told stories of Black and Native relations in North America. In the wake of Miles and Holland’s *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds*, Frank B. Wilderson authored one of the first interdisciplinary Black studies texts that introduced a theoretical frame for elaborating the complex structural and ontological — political economic and libidinal — positions of Black and Native people in the United States.

Caribbean and Latin American studies’ attention to complicated processes of racialization and identity formation like creolization and *mezizaje* refract Blackness and Indigeneity differently from Black North American racial frameworks. Blackness and Indigeneity do not function as frequently as bounded ancestries, identities, or ontological positions. However, Anglo-Caribbean scholars such as Shona Jackson and Melanie Newton have noted that in the Anglo Caribbean, anticolonial and postcolonial national origin stories often erase Amerindian presence through a Calibanesque tradition that indigenizes African-descended people.⁴⁹

However, Black and African diaspora scholarship that emerges from the Caribbean and from Central and South America directly engages questions of coloniality from theoretical and experiential perspectives. For example, Sylvia Wynter's body of work, which traces the "epistemic revolutions" of Western humanism, attends to the ways that Black (Niggers) and Indigenous (Indios) identities are made and remade as a perpetual limit point or outside to the boundaries of Man across various colonial formations. Wynter's critique of humanism and its systems of overrepresentation has functioned as a crucial pivot point in Black studies that has enabled the emergence of a shared critique to emerge between Black and Native Studies. A Black studies reading practice that attends to African diaspora studies as they unfold in the Caribbean and South America has the conceptual space to acknowledge philosophical, literary, and historical traditions that can attend to histories of both enslavement and colonialism. Despite these different and, at times, divergent tendencies in each respective Black tradition of study, factions within each tradition have sustained unique and meaningful conversations with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous/Native studies on their own terms.

As a way of eroding (while attending to specificities of) nation-bound approaches for tracking Black and Indigenous dialogue, I turn to Black diasporic methods. More specifically, I rely on Gilroy's analytic of the Black Atlantic as a way to track mobile and shifting diasporic thought, activism, and aesthetics that engage Indigenous people.⁵⁰ At times, the diasporic movement will travel with and identify Black and Indigenous dialogue at the level of the nation, the region, the hemisphere, or imagined spaces that exceed all of these geographical scales. Diasporic itineraries and thought act as methods and practices of study that present other frames for attending to Black diaspora people's engagement with Indigenous people.

BLACK NOTES ON WESTERN HUMANISM

Humanism is generally defined as a philosophy or worldview that puts the human at the center of the world. This point of view displaces God (and the clergy) as the center and puts the rational (man with reason) there, emerging during the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into what we know as the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A more recent form of humanism that stretches into the contemporary moment is liberal humanism, which privileges the bourgeois individual as a self-contained and competitive economic subject

within the capitalist system. The Caribbean philosopher Sylvia Wynter is far more surgical in her schematic of humanism, particularly in the ways she maps its shifts and epistemic ruptures and the areas in which there is overlap between, or residue (a transmutation) that carries over into, different forms of humanism. For example, during the period of Renaissance humanism, there was shift from a religious or God-centered paradigm to a more secular and reason-oriented paradigm. As this shift occurred, due to a particular population (the laity) overturning a hegemonic cognitive or system of knowledge, some elements of Christianity persisted. In a conversation with David Scott, Wynter explains that Columbus was a millennial Christian, which was an “underground form” of the Christian humanism of the time.⁵¹ While he was not as radical as the lay/secular humanists who challenged the “orthodox theocentric conception of the Christian God,” he did want to be free of the constraints of a theocentric absolutism that held on to the social structures that benefited what Wynter calls the “hegemonic medieval-aristocratic order.”⁵² Overthrowing certain aspects of the social hierarchies within Christian humanism allowed for a “lowly born mapmaker-cum-merchant” to rise through the ranks and build the Spanish state, as well as his own personal wealth, through imperial conquest. Columbus’s humanism is a hybrid form in which the residual ideologies of the religious order that place the Christian over the heathen (evil, unbaptized) still linger and influence the newly emerging form of secular humanism. During this shift, the former heathens (pagans, enemies of Christ, idolaters) were being transformed into secular forms of human otherness (irrational, lack, symbolic death). From the end of the fifteenth century into the sixteenth century when Christian explorers traveled, Africans and Amerindian peoples were turned into the human others called Negroes and Indians. Rational “Man,” or the ideal version of the human, was being invented through the construction of the sensuous and irrational Negro and Indian as “a category of otherness or of symbolic death.”⁵³ Western European men wrote and represented themselves (through cultural production such as Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*) as conquerors in this era. This form of conquistador humanism and its view of the Native and Black Other — as a space of death — produced and sustained a genocidal violence and brutal system of enslavement that relegated Niggers and Indios to the bottom ranks of the human order. This ranking system, though revised, still positions Indigenous and Black people at its bottom rungs. I argue in this book that this form of conquistador humanism, which requires Black and Indigenous dehumanization (as death bound), continues to this day.

In the human's overrepresentation of itself as Man (Wynter), the ideal and proper human remains an exclusive category.

Wynter argues that even when the boundaries of the category have expanded and changed over time, how the human is culturally depicted (for Wynter, overrepresented) always produces other humans or less than fully human figures. Wynter and other Black decolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire have argued that there are multiple, competing, and non-European forms of humanism that seek to overturn this conception of Man and its hierarchies. For instance, Marxist and feminist versions of humanism have emerged to expand who can be considered a subject worthy of dignity, rights, and a place within the universal narrative of the struggle for human progress.⁵⁴ However, finding them insufficient, Fanon and decolonial scholars have called for more just or new humanisms. A part of anticolonial and decolonial projects has been the reinvention of the human and humanism on more just terms. Wynter has cautioned the anticolonial male subject and the Native Caribbean and Black American womanist subject that their versions of humanism should also be subjected to scrutiny. The Caribbean scholar Tonya Hayes has argued that Wynter was “critical of the attempts of Black nationalists” to create the African or Antillean Man as the norm.⁵⁵ Wynter urges a disruption of the very order that creates a norm and, inevitably, an “Other.” In “Whose Time Is It,” Michelle V. Rowley has argued that Fanon’s new humanism largely reconfigures the human in ways that expand to include the Black man but not to incorporate Black women unless they can fit under the sign of the maternal, heterosexual, Black, subaltern women committed to the Black man and nation in the Caribbean. While this stretching of the category of the human in the Caribbean includes some women, its reorganization around the concept, or “code,” of gender leaves other subjects and bodies out.⁵⁶ Alongside Wynter, Rowley argues that new and evolving humanisms “coincide with the empirical reality” in which we live.⁵⁷ Wynter argues that we continue to revise what it means to be human and keep the human an open question that can never be resolved in advance.

One of the places that one might feel some theoretical tension, I argue, is where Wynter and Frank Wilderson meet. While Wynter argues that Black and Indigenous people occupy a degraded position on the bottom rung of the human chain — the missing link between human and animal — Black people are nonetheless a part of the human-biological species. Black and Indigenous people represent other kinds of humans. Wilderson, by contrast, argues at a more extreme — or less orthodox — end of Fanon’s

notion of the zone of nonbeing that the Black is nonhuman. In fact, the Black must be rendered nonhuman for White subjects to know their own humanity. Although Wynter can argue for a continual reworking of the human, and Wilderson argues for a destruction of the human as an epistemic system, both scholars argue that the current conception of humanity is anti-Black and, to a large degree, anti-Indigenous. Further, they proffer a triad (Indian-European-Negro or Red-White-Black) model to explain the modern ruptures and antagonisms that order the world. They subvert the prosaic colonial dyad of settler and Native that structures most colonial discourses, including settler colonial studies.

A crucial theoretical intervention that Wynter, Spillers, and Wilderson introduce are discourses of Black conquest that rupture and break with the humanist tradition and hegemonic hold of White settler colonial studies. Like an unexpected rock formation, Wynter's and Spillers's reorganization of the traditional spatial and temporal frames used to talk about conquest function as a shoal for White settler colonial studies and some tendencies within Indigenous and Native studies. By starting on the shores of what is today's Senegal and extending the inaugural moments of conquest back half a century to 1441, Wynter and Spillers push back the curtains and position Blackness, which was previously positioned just offstage, directly under the spotlight of the epic drama of conquest. According to Wynter, the invention of Blackness — as heathen under the fifteenth-century Christian humanism of Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda — and Black lands as *terra nullius* (or torrid and inhabitable) are required to establish the terms of conquest. Further, the epistemological revolution of Enlightenment's Man requires the presence of the Negro as an irrational and sensual human Other. Because Wynter insists on a "triadic model" (White-Native-Black) rather than a dyadic model (White-Native) to understand the sets of relations and conflict that would bring forth the notion of the modern human and inform conquest, her work is essential to the Black errancy of *The Black Shoals*.⁵⁸ Particularly important in guiding the theoretical interventions of the book are four of Wynter's theoretical contributions: her "European-Negro-Indian" triad; the notion of Man as a concept under constant revision; her adaptation of C. L. R. James's *pieza* consciousness as a critique of political-economic reason/criticism; and her notion of ceremony.

Equally essential to this intervention, Spillers reorganizes the geotemporal dimensions of conquest in ways that expand their spatial and temporal frames beyond the conventional time-space coordinates of 1492

and the New World by locating conquest on the shores of Guinea. When Spillers turns to the archive in the essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” she finds Gomes Eannes de Azurara’s *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, 1441–1448* and says that “we learn that the Portuguese probably gain the dubious distinction of having introduced Black Africans to the European market of servitude.”⁵⁹ For both Wynter and Spillers, conquest begins before Columbus with the landing of the Portuguese on the shores of western Africa.⁶⁰ In this hemispherical treatment of the relations of conquest, the coasts of western Africa—the reefs, rocks, and fog of Cape Bojador—function as shoals to Western and normative theorizations of the geography and temporality of New World conquest. Wynter’s and Spiller’s theoretical disfigurement of time-space represents a tradition of Black studies’ ability to shoal the linear and normative treatment of conquest in the Americas.

The coast of West Africa works not so much to displace the horrors and legacies of Indigenous genocide in the Americas as to insert the invention of Blackness as a crucial line of demarcation for the thinking and writing of the human as Man. I also use the shoal as a peripheral point or location off the shore—or offshore—of the Americas to bring home the full force of this intellectual and political intervention. Rather than place Black studies at the “center” of the discourse of settler colonial studies, *The Black Shoals* pulls settler colonial studies offshore—and away from its position as a discursive center—to make it contend with Black thought. *The Black Shoals* puts Black studies into a productive friction with settler colonial studies. The discourse of conquest within Black studies is something that “settler colonial studies” must bump into and adjust for before it comes ashore and lands. *The Black Shoals* tests the navigational skills of settler colonial studies, as well as other humanist critical theories, as they attempt to cross the terrain of Black life, thought, pain, pleasure, and modes of resistance and expression in the hemisphere. Settler colonial studies breaks open when crashing into the rock, coral, and sandbank of the shoal and must contend with the ways that its own discourse of settler and settlement disavows the violent ways that settler human self-actualization depends on the most violent forms of Black and Indigenous death.

Scholars of the British Empire and colonial studies marked a shift in the discursive paradigms used to invoke and describe Indigenous genocide, racial (Black) slavery, imperial expansion, and colonial rule in the eighteenth century. Carole Pateman and Anuradha Gobin have argued that, in an attempt to create distance from the violence of Spanish conquest and

disavow Britain's own brutal practices of genocide and slavery, British parlance, visual art, maps, and other discursive performances of power shifted from using the term "conquest" to employing terms such as "settlement" and "plantation."⁶¹ These words were the preferred terms and syntax for the active and brutal process of British and Anglo forms of imperial domination in the eighteenth century. For example, the British, French, and Dutch began to distinguish their brand of colonialism from the "Black Legend,"⁶² or the barbarism and gratuitous violence of the Spanish Empire, which was temporally marked as a sixteenth-century phenomenon and relegated to the practices of the Spanish and Portuguese. In the eighteenth century, British and, soon after, Anglo American modes of colonialism began to describe and name their form of colonialism as settler colonialism or a form "that implied alteration of the land only through planting."⁶³

In "Red, White and Black," Wilderson also tracks this grammatical shift in the language of White civil society to hide the violence that White human life requires as its condition of possibility. Wilderson helps us think about the kind of discursive and material violence that occurs within what he calls the "Settler/Master/Human's grammatical structure."⁶⁴ Within this grammatical structure, he argues, there is a disavowal of the violence of genocide in how the settler narrates the formation of the United States. On one level, the disavowal occurs through the settler's preferred part of speech. For example, "clearing" is spoken of only as a noun in the Settler/Master/Human's grammatical structure and never used as a verb. Wilderson draws our attention to its use: "*Clearing*, in the Settler/'Savage' relation, has two grammatical structures, one [as] a noun and the other as a verb. . . . But prior to the clearing's fragile infancy, that is before its cinematic legacy as a newborn place name, it labored not *across* the land as a noun but as a verb *on* the body of the 'Savage.'"⁶⁵

The Black Shoals halts the ways that invocations of settlement, land, clearing, and territory efface the violence of conquest. The eighteenth-century and contemporary discourse of "settler colonialism," particularly as deployed by White settler colonial studies, continental theory, and some strands of ethnic studies, continues to disavow the gratuitous violence that is ongoing and, in fact, necessary for the "human" to continue to self-actualize without sufficient scrutiny as a category of Whiteness. More specifically, the "human" as an exclusive category demands an outside and requires the death of Indigenous and Black people. For the human to continue to evolve as an unfettered form of self-actualizing (and expanding) form of Whiteness, Black and Indigenous people must die or be

transformed into lesser forms of humanity—and, in some cases, become nonhuman altogether. *The Black Shoals* traces the ways that Black studies, as well as Black thought, expressive culture, social movements, and alternative modes of life, illumine the ways that White humanity and its self-actualization require Black and Native death as its condition of possibility.

In chapter 1, Wynter's, Spillers's and Wilderson's theorizations of conquest interface with Native and Indigenous studies' theorizations of conquest and imperialism. I put Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Almanac of the Dead*, Huanani-Kay Trask's *Notes from a Native Daughter*, Joanne Barker's theorization of imperialism, and Andrea Smith's *Conquest* in conversation with Wynter, Spillers, Wilderson, and other Black literary artists to trace the contours of a shared speech. Silko, Trask, Barker, and Smith establish intellectual and political traditions within Native and Native feminist studies that provide unflinching accounts of the ways that Indigenous genocide and the violence of colonization make White and human world-making possible. Silko, Trask, Barker, and Smith use a particular grammar of violence that exposes the ways that White settler colonial discourse avoids explicit discussions of how Native death ensures White settler life and self-actualization. I name conquest as a lingua franca or shared dialogic space to articulate genocide and slavery as forms of violence that are essential to the emergence of conquistador humanism or what Wynter names "Man1." In this way, *The Black Shoals* posits a new kind of speech. Conquest as a grammar represents a form of Black and Native speech that contests the ways that White settler colonial studies attempts to constrain Black and Native thought and speech. Further, conquest as a dialect resists the ways that White settler colonial studies currently mediates dialogues between Black and Indigenous people. Discursively, Black and Native grammars of conquest attempt to speak into existence a dialogic space less mediated by White settler colonial studies and other liberal humanist communicative acts.

THE SHOALS OF FUNGIBILITY

Perhaps the most important theoretical intervention of *The Black Shoals* is how it searches for utterance and grammar outside of what Black studies calls the narrativity of the liberal subject or human. While not situating itself as an Afro-pessimistic text, *The Black Shoals* does take Wilderson's claims seriously when he argues that the "grammar of suffering," or theory of violence articulated by liberal humanists, Marxists, feminists, and queer

and trans subjects, does not have the capacity to speak for how Black people experience violence in the world.⁶⁶ While at times positioned as an optimist vis-à-vis Wilderson's work, Fred Moten on a number of occasions cites Wilderson's contention that Black thought and what Moten would call Black sociality does in fact emerge from "the hold of the ship."⁶⁷ Black life and expression is an utterance or moan that emerges from the hold of the ship and continues on the plantation, like Aunt Hester's scream.⁶⁸ Black thought and theory break with normative modes of narrativity and intelligibility. *The Black Shoals* therefore stages an extended rumination on the theoretical, methodological, creative, and ethical potential of Black fungibility as a way of articulating a world-altering mode of existence.

Hartman's theorization of fungibility represents a Black mode of expression, screaming, or utterance that exceeds the narrow humanist and settler grammars of labor (and land as property). Jared Sexton has argued that the theoretical intervention of settler colonial studies—and its critique of colonial studies—while changing the terms of engagement to settlers, settlement, invasion, and occupation, still relies on humanist epistemes and units of analysis of "the body in relation to land, labor, language, lineage" to ask its "most pertinent" questions about settler decolonization.⁶⁹ Hartman's theorization of fungibility, as well as Afro-pessimist critiques of Marxism, challenge the notion that White revolutions (reforms) often fail Black subjects and fall short of abolition's aspirations. While not thoroughly rejecting Marx's theoretical contributions, Hartman does challenge the overriding logic of labor in his formulations of value and questions its applicability for the Black enslaved person. Thinking with (and against) Marx's notion of primitive accumulation, Hartman theorizes racialization, accumulation, and domination rather than labor as the primary mode of Black subjectification.⁷⁰ In the first chapter of *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman establishes the role of enjoyment in the economy of chattel slavery and identifies the overriding value of the slave as the "figurative capacities of blackness."⁷¹ She goes on to elaborate the figurative capacities of Blackness as fungibility. Hartman states her intentions this way: "I contend that the value of blackness resided in its metaphorical aptitude, whether literally understood as the fungibility of the commodity or understood as the imaginative surface upon which the master and the nation came to understand themselves."⁷² I situate Hartman's theorization of Black fungibility within the genealogy of Spillers's explication of Black enslaved flesh in the essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" as unanchored, malleable, and open signs.

Spillers's notion of Black flesh is an important touchstone because of how it helps this book elaborate that Black fungible flesh is a "[territory] of cultural and political maneuver" that can be arranged and rearranged infinitely under relations of conquest in the Americas.⁷³ As a Black fleshy analytic, I argue, Black fungibility can denote and connote pure flux, process, and potential. To be rendered Black and fungible under conquest is to be rendered porous, undulating, fluttering, sensuous, and in a space and state at-the-edge and outside of normative configurations of sex, gender, sexuality, space, and time to stabilize and fix the human category. Black fungibility is an expression of the gratuitous violence of conquest and slavery whose repertoire has no limits or bounds. It operates both materially on the body and produces Blackness (as idea and symbol) as a discursive space of open possibility.

Similar to Hartman, I argue that Black fungibility — rather than labor — defines and organizes Black value within relations of conquest. Black fungible bodies index the imagined (surfaces) and actual sites of colonial spatial expansion and, in turn, the space of Indigenous genocide. While Hartman's and Wilderson's critiques of labor are not achieved in conversation with Native studies, this project identifies critiques of labor within both fields as a possible shoal and shared terrain that interrupts Lockean and Marxian valorizations of labor.

Since the emergence of Native studies, a number of scholars, from Vine Deloria to more contemporary scholars, such as Mishuana Goeman, have critiqued the Lockean ethos of labor. More recently, Goeman has argued that "property, as has been argued by Indigenous scholars and their allies, is distinctly a European notion that locks together (pun intended) labor, land, and conquest. Without labor to tame the land, it is closely assigned the designation 'nature' or 'wilderness.'" ⁷⁴ Within this Lockean formulation, Indigenous subjects who do not labor across the land fail to turn the land into property and thus fail to turn themselves into proper human subjects. In *Red Skins, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard, in a fashion similar to Hartman, interrogates the usefulness of Marx's liberal humanist tendencies that reify the laborer as the paradigmatic subject of suffering and agency. Coulthard also stretches the potential of Marx's notion of primitive accumulation rather than labor to rethink Indigenous people's relationship to settler states. Plumbing the usefulness of primitive accumulation, he argues that "the history and experience of dispossession, not proletarianization, has been the dominant structure shaping the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian [and U.S.] state."⁷⁵ On the

way toward a larger project of articulating and affirming Indigenous politics of resurgence that do not capitulate to statist modes of recognition, Coulthard finds it necessary to jettison the deterministic and recognizable rubric and nomenclature of labor.

This challenge to the overriding frame of labor that appears in Hartman's and Coulthard's work is also explored by Shona Jackson as a potential onto-epistemic rupture that both Black creole subjects and Indigenous subjects in the Caribbean can embrace. In *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean*, Jackson argues that "the modern teleology of labor" simultaneously locks the Black creole subject and Indigenous subjects into European notions of progress and modernity that at once enslave and turn the Black subject into a civilized subject while negating Indigenous subjects and marking them for death. Jackson asks that certain modes of Caribbean philosophy and political thought that tend to overvalorize labor reconsider the consequences. She makes a distinction between jettisoning labor and rethinking a particular attachment to it when she argues, "I am not suggesting that to be truly postmodern the Caribbean must move beyond labor, but rather to truly exit modernity it must reject the metaphysics of labor deployed in the opposition of the 'Creole' self to the 'native' other."⁷⁶ Further, Wynter's reclamation of C. L. R. James's "pieza framework" challenges labor's determinism to expose the multiple and intersecting modes of oppression that shape the violence of coloniality and, subsequently, the lives of Black diasporic people.⁷⁷

In this project, Black fungibility — rather than Black labor — represents the unfettered use of Black bodies for the self-actualization of the human and for the attendant humanist project of the production and expansion of space. As a project of human and geographical possibility, the invention of Blackness (material and symbolic bodies) in the New World has certainly enabled the human to self-actualize as an expression of unfettered spatial expansion and human potential. The invention of Blackness as the conceptual fodder for the rhizomatic imagination of the conquistador figures the Black body as an open space of possibility.

Just as Black fungibility is a form of gratuitous violence that is unending and unpredictable, Black struggle's resistance to and maneuvering within fungibility is as unpredictable and uncontainable. As a Black mode of critique, it elaborates and gives texture to various forms of violence while also revealing unexpected and ever emerging modes of freedom — or a "loop-hole of retreat."⁷⁸ Following C. Riley Snorton's argument in *Black on Both Sides* that under enslavement "fungibility and fugitivity figured two sides of

a Janus-faced coin, in which the same logic that figured blackness as immanently interchangeable would also engender its flow,” this book argues that Black fungibility resists conventional understandings and deployments of fungibility as solely a space of Black death, accumulation, dereliction, and limits.⁷⁹ In *The Black Shoals*, Black fungibility also represents a space of alterity and possibility, or what Snorton calls “fungible fugitivity.”⁸⁰

While fungibility is a key concept in the book, it is not the animating analytic, theory, or metaphor. The shoal is an expansive analytic of disruption and becoming that includes and puts fungibility into play as one of several ways to elaborate how Black studies disrupts Western humanist thought. For example, fungibility as theorized by Hartman and Wilderson critiques the hegemonic and totalizing regime of labor within political economic theory. Fungibility is but one intervention that constitutes the disruptive force of the shoal. As a capacious metaphor of slowing, becoming, merging, formation, and indeterminacy, the shoal animates and shapes how fungibility is construed and elaborated as unknowability and unpredictability. Much like the Wynterian and McKittrickian notion of the “demonic,” fungibility evades capture.⁸¹

Further, fungibility elaborated through the space of the shoal turns into a confounding, liminal, and shifting space that cannot be reduced to water. As the shoal is a space in the ocean that is both water and other (rock, sand, etc.), fungibility is a concept that exceeds the metaphor of liquidity, as well as neat categorization. Fungibility is a formation that emerges in response to power, its particular form (rupture, destabilization, materiality) cannot be predicted in advance. It is more elusive than liquid and its mapped states (vapor, solid, liquid). This indeterminacy distinguishes it from water and liquid metaphors.

While fungibility as theorized by Hartman and Wilderson emerges from a place of unfettered domination and marks “Blackness” as an open space of figurative and material exchange, I argue that fungibility is, in fact, a product of White anxiety and representation, an attempt to “get in front of” or anticipate Black fugitive movement. In chapter 2, I argue that the ever present threat in the eighteenth century of Black rebellion required the production and projection of errant, unpredictable, and uncontainable movement onto Black enslaved bodies. In chapter 2, I read the cartographic depiction of Black bodies as fungible — open, exchangeable, shifting, and ever in flux — as a failed attempt by British settlers to control Black movement through representation. Subverting the logic of fungibility as an unfettered form of the one-directional flow of White domination, I rewrite

fungibility and fugitivity as the product of a dialectical relationship. In very much the same ways that Black fugitivity morphs and changes according to the vicissitudes of power, fungibility and its modes of manipulating Blackness respond to Black fugitivity. Reclaiming fungibility as a resource for Black enslaved people rather than an impediment to Black practices of— or, as Snorton argues “for” —freedom stretches Blackness’s terrain. Black “fungible fugitivity” as an expansive and unwieldy concept also interfaces with Indigeneity in resourceful and unpredictable ways.⁸²

The final theoretical intervention that the book stages is a reimagination of Black and Indigenous ethics. Through a discussion of Black and Indigenous erotics in chapter 4, the project argues that a shared Black and Indigenous erotics that is oriented toward Black and Indigenous futures introduces an ethical frame that addresses some of the shortcomings of “coalition.” My working understanding of ethics emerges primarily from Black feminist notions of the term. More specifically, my notion of ethics is inspired by what I heard Black queer women and femmes who are members of the Black Lives Matter Atlanta chapter express as an ethics of “we leave no one behind.” This coincides with other Black feminist and womanist conceptions of ethics. For example, the womanist theologian Katie Cannon has argued that oppression and the “real-lived texture of black life requires a moral agency that may run contrary to the ethical boundaries of Protestantism.”⁸³ Normative notions of ethics that align with Protestantism value and conflate ethical action with activities related to “economic success, self-reliance, frugality and industry.”⁸⁴ Cannon also argues that normative notions of ethics assume that a subject is free and unconstrained and experiences reality as offering a “wide range of choices.” Anti-Black racism creates conditions of oppression and constraint that force Black people to “create and cultivate values and virtues on their own terms.”⁸⁵ As there is no one Black community, and no one experience with anti-Black racism, I limit my discussion of ethics to a frame for thinking about how Black people in the Americas can work toward Black and Indigenous peoples’ futurity. The ethical orbits around a notion of mutual care. Ethical acts in this project also complement Audre Lorde’s notion and elaboration of the erotic in *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* (1978) and later in her essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (1983).⁸⁶ The Lordean notions of the erotic that this project extends draw inspiration from Lorde’s positing of the erotic in 1978 as a “power that rises from our deepest and non rational knowledge”; “a provocative force of revelation”; and a “measure between the beginnings of our sense of ourselves and

the chaos of our strongest feeling.”⁸⁷ In chapter 4, I draw on these notions of the erotic to read moments in which Black and Indigenous subjects in two novels “share deeply” with each other and give each other access to an erotic form of knowledge that acts as a “bridge which connects them.”⁸⁸

I honor and expand Lorde’s notion of the erotic to reimagine it as a state of ecstasy—or a coming undone and moving outside of oneself—that moves an individual into the liminal space of the “measure between the beginnings” of the self and a kind of chaos that opens them up to their own and another’s deepest feelings, wants, and desires. The Cree poet and scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt similarly writes about sex, and what I also interpret as the erotic, as having the capacity to unmoor individuals. For Belcourt, “Sex talk makes us talk about states of fragility” in ways that transcend the capacity and ethics of “political speak.”⁸⁹ According to Belcourt, unlike sovereignty, sex “engenders a discourse about the future that hinges on the tenuousness of being beholden to others in determining one’s sense of a livable life.”⁹⁰ Belcourt’s meditation on sex and the “erotic,” which draws from queer Native studies and politics, shares deep resonances with Lorde’s notions of the erotic. Within queer Native studies, the erotic is a form of Two Spirit and a queer source of knowledge, one that challenges the biopolitical and colonial discourse of “sexuality.”⁹¹ Rather than subject Native bodies to the violence of biopolitical knowledge production around sexuality, this notion of the erotic invokes a relationship to “bodies and pleasures” that can displace the power of sexuality.⁹² The erotic becomes a source of power and information that is crucial for decolonial resistance. This feminist, Two Spirit, queer, and errant form of critique also compels decolonizing movements to move outside of dominant logics and narratives of “nation.”⁹³ I situate and discuss the erotic as a site of Black and Indigenous gathering (shoaling) or coming together. These instances of coming together gesture toward an otherwise mode of being human that holds space for one another’s well-being, joy, and future.

METHODOLOGICAL SHOALS

This book’s methodological approach is a practice in listening for, feeling for, and noticing where things have come into formation together, or where they are one. The methodological capaciousness of the shoal has helped me avoid reproducing what I have called elsewhere “discovery narratives.”⁹⁴ What I mean by this is that, in the important work that Black and Native studies has developed to better understand how the lives of Black

and Native peoples in the Americas intersect, there is often an attempt to uncover and or prove the existence of histories of Black and Native contact, coexistence, intermarriage, alliance and collision, or conflict.⁹⁵ This archival, historical, literary, and sociological work that historicizes and theorizes the ways that Black and Native lives are intertwined in the Western Hemisphere is essential and provides the conditions of possibility for my work. However, my use of the shoal attempts to overcome the analytical constraints of looking for connection and encounter in ways that reproduce regimes of representation that make Black people and Native people appear as if they are isolated, bounded, and discrete communities and historical processes that come together only after their separate and respective emergences. The formation and methodology of the shoal works to challenge forms of what I am calling “applied intersectional frames” that attempt to discover, connect, or wrangle together experiences and power dynamics that are conceived as emerging independently of one another.⁹⁶ The conceptual tools of “discovery” assume a binary that must be overcome or discrete phenomenon that must be connected in ways that occlude their co-constitution or oneness. Part of the methodological contribution of *The Black Shoals* is its attunement to and disruption of the binaries and chasms that are overrepresented as an epistemological truth. Methodologically, the shoal functions as a site that introduces new formations, alternative grammar and vocabularies, and new analytical sites that reveal the ways that some aspects of Black and Indigenous life have always already been a site of co-constitution. The book in some cases revisits older analytical sites, such as Christopher Columbus’s humanism, and in other cases it develops new analytical sites, such as composite maps of indigo processing—an overlay of eighteenth-century and twentieth-century depictions of indigo processing to illustrate where anti-Black and anti-Indigenous resistance emerged simultaneously. More important, the book attempts to show where Black and Indigenous death, resistance, and life have appeared simultaneously.

Materially and conceptually, the shoal—as simultaneously water and land—presents a site of conceptual difficulty. The shoal represents a process, formation, and space that exists beyond binary thinking. Chapters in the book attend to where Black and Indigenous speech and grammar share the same tongue; where Black and Indigenous resistance disrupt the master codes and cartographic representations of Man on an eighteenth-century map; where Black porous bodies tell histories of Black and Indigenous survival in “uninhabitable zones,” where Black and Indigenous erotics force

an unmooring of the self; and where decolonial aesthetic practices sculpt new epistemologies and sensibilities that shape the contours of humanness in more expansive ways. The shoal offers an analytical site where multiple things can be perceived and experienced simultaneously.

Because sites where the simultaneity of Black and Indigenous life, or anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence, do not always come into view, this book at times must create these spaces or create the conditions of possibility for them to emerge. This act of creating analytical sites and new primary sources expresses itself most vividly in chapter 3. For example, to disrupt the iconicity of the Black laboring body as the paradigmatic violence that orders slavery and conquest, I combine two disparate and conflicting primary sources—Julie Dash’s blue-handed slaves and an eighteenth-century map’s cartouche depicting indigo processing—and read them through each other in a way that creates a composite speculative map. This new map creates a speculative bricolage that renders Blackness as porous representations of Black embodiment on indigo plantations to trouble—or shoal—the iconicity of the laboring Black body on plantation landscapes. Further, the usual momentum and demarcations of a book that moves neatly from one source to the next and from one chapter to the next are interrupted. For example, the book carries with an analysis of an eighteenth-century map in chapters 2 and 3. Similarly, the work of the filmmaker and novelist Julie Dash is discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Some sites and objects of analysis are stretched, pulled, and linked to one another from chapter to chapter in ways that make the reader aware of their relationship to and palimpsestic indent on other sites.

Black women’s films, historiographies, and novels are also read and treated as primary sources in a different way. For instance, I approach and treat Dash’s and Tiya Miles’s bodies of work that attempt to address, grapple with, or resolve a particular problem or question raised in a past work in a newer work and through a different genre as a compendium. Reading Dash’s novel (and sequel to her film) *Daughters of the Dust: A Novel* and Miles’s *The Cherokee Rose: A Novel of Garden and Ghosts* in the context of their attempts to work out questions and obsessions that emerged in former iterations of their work, I treat their practices of manipulating the porosity of the archive and using speculation as forms of what Hartman calls “critical fabulation.”⁹⁷ Their labor to wrestle with an enduring question over time and shift form and genre when necessary become particularly apparent in both authors’ attempts to confront Black and Indigenous relations. I read the love affairs and the erotic encounters be-

tween Dash's and Miles's Black and Indigenous (Cherokee, specifically) characters as longer sagas that reappear from text to text (and performance to performance) in ways that present themselves as important and enduring ethical questions that deserve attention.

Finally, throughout each chapter—and, more explicitly, in the second chapter of the book—I attempt to make my eye softer and more supple to attend to what McKittrick terms a “noticing” or attention to (and for) “black Atlantic livingness.”⁹⁸ Evolving within her body of work after the publication of *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006), McKittrick urges Black studies scholars to move beyond simply theorizing or “analytically reprising” anti-Black violence.⁹⁹ For McKittrick, naming violence has never been the only, or the most important task, of Black studies projects. Recognizing that it is difficult to sift through an overwhelming archive and contemporary landscape shaped by anti-Black violence, McKittrick attempts in more recent essays, such as “Mathematics Black Life” (2014) and “Diachronic Loops/Deadweight Tonnage/Bad Made Measure” (2016), to create a methodology, ethics of care, and way of “noticing” the “other possibilities” in the midst of Black death and Black degradation.¹⁰⁰

While there is no methodological formula for developing this awareness and capacity to notice “Black livingness,” part of the effort involves reading intertextually.¹⁰¹ By assembling, shoaling, and rubbing disparate texts against one another, unexpected openings emerge where different voices are brought into relationship. As new relationships among texts and voices are made, new and “transgressive ground[s] of understanding” emerge where one can begin to notice where rupture and “momentary dislodgings” reveal that the archive is not a closed system that contains only one story.¹⁰² McKittrick argues that it is in these moments of rupture that we can—and must dare to—betray the archive of violence to look, listen, and feel for “what else happened.”¹⁰³

McKittrick argues that within the historical and contemporary records of anti-Black violence there remains a surplus or pulse of Black resistance and “Black livingness.”¹⁰⁴ In chapter 2, I adopt this practice and desire to notice Black and Indigenous livingness as I read an eighteenth-century map that intends to mark Black people and Native people as natural and sensuous bodies and spaces marked for death. Rather than read the map as primarily a scene of horror and violence, I develop a Black geographical reading practice that mines it for where Black and Indigenous signs of life bleed through the surface to disrupt a single narrative of Black and

Indigenous death. I use this practice of noticing and caring for Black and Indigenous life throughout the chapters and analytical sites of the book. McKittrick's method and noticing of Black life functions as a crucial intervention that shoals and disrupts the current impulse and tendency within the academy that seems to focus on and find Black death wherever it looks.

Throughout the book, the reader will notice that the shoal functions theoretically as a disruptive mechanism that interrupts and slows normative thought and violent knowledge production. The theoretical shoal is primarily one of disruption and displacement where necessary. As a methodological practice and approach, the shoal functions as a process and space where boundaries and binaries constructed between sea and land, Black and Native, aesthetics and theory, and human and nonhuman are blurred. Each chapter engages the shoal on its own, unique terms and at different theoretical and methodological registers. Ultimately, the theoretical and methodological shoals bring the reader to new and, at times, "unthought" terrain from which to reconsider the relational and ethical spaces of Black and Indigenous scholarship and the liberatory practices of abolition and decolonization.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The shoal as a place, a site of disruption, a slowing of momentum, and a process of rearrangement takes on various forms throughout each chapter of the book. Chapter 1 focuses on the defacing of a statue of Christopher Columbus on the Boston waterfront in 2015 by allegedly "Black actors" in the name of the Black Lives Matter movement. The chapter focuses on the ways that this act of Black rebellion functions as a defilement of the aesthetic practice and ongoing monumentalization of the overrepresentation of the human in the form of the conquistador human Christopher Columbus.¹⁰⁵ The incidents of beheading and defacement of the Columbus statue by Black and Indigenous activists function as the conceptual shoal that disrupts the modernist and postmodernist humanist logics of White settler colonial studies that tend to read power through political economic rubrics of land, labor, and settlement.

The chapter returns to a discourse of conquest in both Black studies and Native studies to exhume and render visible contemporary modes of violent White/human self-making that settler colonial studies often invisibilizes through discourses of settlement. The discourse of conquest acts as a discursive and theoretical shoal that exposes the ways that discourses of

“settler colonial relations” function as a ruse and cover up ongoing, gratuitous anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence. Chapter 1 slows the momentum of White settler colonial studies and, for that matter, continental theory as forms of conceptual and analytical common sense. The defacements and beheadings of the statue in Boston demonstrate the ways that contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter, along with Indigenous women’s organizing under the hashtag #MMIW to highlight the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, are still trying to stop the often unspeakable violence required to make the human in the image of Man.

Chapter 2 introduces and reinterprets William Gerard de Brahm’s eighteenth-century map of the coast of South Carolina and Georgia as an active process of cartographically writing the human through the spatial and orthographic negation of Native and Black people. The map reflects the ways that the British settlers attempted to represent Black and Indigenous embodiment as regions and spaces of what Denise da Silva calls “affectability,” or overdetermined by nature and exteriority. In contrast to Black fluidity and fungibility and wild Native anaspaces, British humanity writes itself on the map as a symbol of logocentric order and rationality that materializes what da Silva also calls the interior or “transparent I.”¹⁰⁶ As a Cartesian subject, the “transparent I” (and transcendent I) both invents and masters space and exterior, affectable bodies.¹⁰⁷

By conducting what I call a Black geographical reading practice that is informed by McKittrick’s notion of noticing “black Atlantic livingness,” chapter 2 also maps the ways that Black and Indigenous resistance to conquest frustrate British attempts to settle in the Low Country and write themselves as human through dominating Black and Indigenous people.¹⁰⁸ Looking closely at the map for Black and Indigenous livingness, I read de Brahm’s map that was intended to facilitate projects of genocide and enslavement as an incomplete project frustrated time and time again by Black and Indigenous rebellion. What McKittrick calls the “what else happened” of Black and Indigenous life amid violence erupts onto the surface of the map and forces de Brahm and British subjects to adjust to Cherokee resistance and Black slave rebellions.¹⁰⁹ By reading the map alongside archives such as Eliza Lucas Pinckney’s letter book and her accounts of absconding slaves and Native assaults on frontierspeople, I read the making of the map within a context of British fear and anxiety about Black fugitivity and Cherokee aggression. Reading the map this way, Black and Indigenous life

rises up to shoal the momentum of British conquest and settlement in the Low Country.

In chapter 3, images of Black porous figures destabilize the iconicity of Black laboring bodies on plantations. The Black porous figure and the plantation depicted in the cartouche of de Brahm's map and in Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* reconfigure the plantation and the bodies on it as a process in motion. By conducting a visual analysis that attends to Blackness as a dynamic state of transition and flux, I reread renderings of Black slaves on indigo plantation landscapes as states of flux that exceed the regime of labor. Theoretically and conceptually, Black porosity, much like Black fungibility, slows down the tempo of the homogenizing force of humanist and Marxian regimes of labor. Black theoretics of porosity and fungibility align with Indigenous critiques of labor and function as another shoal or gathering space that unsettles normative Lockean and Marxist notions of the laborer as a modern and civilized human who masters the land and the bodies on it. By rejecting what Shona Jackson refers to as the onto-epistemology of labor and its modernizing telos that disciplines Indigenous and Black subjects, I posit porosity, fungibility, and fugitivity as other ways to discuss human relations to the land and nonhuman life forms.

More specifically, the chapter pairs Dash's more than human depictions of the formerly enslaved's indigo-stained hands with the eighteenth-century map's cartouche to establish a composite visual of Black bodies and indigo as a punctum point that transforms bodies into chemical processes (hands merging with indigo plants) and disrupts the visual regime of labor. Rather than simply overwrite Blackness as vegetation and a state of abjection, the Black bodies stained indigo that appear coterminous with nature transform the laboring body into indigo flesh that represents forms of Black alterity and pleasure. Black porosity also collapses distinctions between bodies and plants in ways that resonate with Indigenous notions of human and nonhuman relationality. Further, thinking with Spillers's notion of the "flesh," Black indigo-stained pores contest Western notions of gender differentiation and challenge queer theory's genital-anus complex as the primary site of penetrability, self-annihilation, or pleasure. The Black pore becomes a place to reimagine Black embodiment as a space of transit for conceptions and revisions of the human on more ethical terms.¹¹⁰ Gathering and reading de Brahm's map and Dash's cinematic images in relation to, in friction with, and through one another (re)presents Black life

as a vibrant space where porosity and open-endedness can offer generative sites of reinvention.

In chapter 4, a strange branch on the ancestral tree and lineage of a Cherokee and Black family disfigures the notion of Victorian erotics and reveals the ways that Black and Native sexualities under conquest both trouble and exceed queer theoretical impulses toward antisocial (i.e., Leo Bersani) and queer futureless (i.e., Lee Edelman) sociality.¹¹¹ Chapter 4 returns to Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* compendium (film, novel, and other cultural productions) to examine the Black and Native erotics performed by the characters Iona Peazant and St. Julien Lastchild as nonnormative sexual subjectivities that simultaneously mark spaces of death and new forms of life. The chapter also explores Miles's depiction of Ruth Coleman and Jennifer/Jinx Micco's love affair in *The Cherokee Rose* to explore how Black and Native erotics can open portals to intergenerational healing. Dash's and Miles's Black decolonial imaginaries rework Black and Native death as sites of futurity for alternative modes of Black and Indigenous life.

The chapter also expands on the work of Native feminist and queer thought, such as Qwo-Li Driskill's and Daniel Heath Justice's theorizations of Cherokee queer subjectivity to illumine the ways that decolonial notions of the erotic contain their own critiques of heteronormative kinship structures that undergird anti-Black racism and nationalist notions of sovereignty. Chapter 4 concludes with an exploration of how Cherokee-descended characters such as St. Julien Lastchild and Jinx Micco rework Native masculinities in ways that make space for Blackness within Cherokee and Creek notions of sovereignty and communities.

Chapter 5 uses "Revisiting Sycorax," a sculpture by the Black Canadian painter, sculptor, and educator Charmaine Lurch, as a point of departure. Lurch's sculptures attempt to take up Wynter's notion of the demonic through the manipulation of wire to produce a fifth (and other) dimension(s) that Lurch calls the "tesseract."¹¹² I argue that "Revisiting Sycorax" creates a Black errant dimension of aesthetic space. Further, Lurch's Black diasporic aesthetic, which uses the tesseract, represents a break in the spatial and narrative conventions that attempt to represent Black and Indigenous relations on Turtle Island and on its archipelagos (in the Caribbean). "Revisiting Sycorax" is a multidimensional and porous black and copper wire sculpture that produces positive and negative space as it configures the Black and Native female figure (body form) in a state of flux and change in relationship to each other.

Throughout the chapter, Sycorax operates as conceptual and aesthetic

shoal that indexes a space of flux, change, and indeterminacy. On a representational level, the intertwining of Black and Indigenous “flesh” represented by the black and copper wire makes the viewer contend with the twoness and edgelessness of the sculpture. Lurch’s “Revisiting Sycorax” enables those who encounter it to think about the distinct world and subject-making violence of slavery (and its afterlife) and Indigenous genocide as unique and irreducible social relations without producing hard borders and edges around them. Her craftsmanship and interpretive and curatorial practices work to slow down, and perhaps even rearrange, normative modes of looking, reading, thinking, and feeling about Blackness and Indigeneity. Furthermore, Lurch’s Black diasporic “Canadian” aesthetic reassembles Black diasporic expressive culture in ways that disrupt easy movement to Black nationalisms or Black politics dictated by Black U.S. hegemonies. Echoing Dionne Brand’s refrain, “I don’t want no country, none of it,” Lurch’s sculpture “evokes a kind of Black exilic relationship to the nation and narrow notions of Black and Indigeneity.”¹¹³ Lurch’s wiry sculptures and aesthetics wrinkle the smooth surface of the time space of Black diaspora studies.

Overall, *The Black Shoals* aims to create an alternative site of engagement to discuss Indigenous genocide, anti-Black racism, and the politics of Black and Native studies. Within the academy and in some activist circles, Black and Indigenous dialogue continues to be mediated by White modes of speech and liberal humanist protocols for understanding, theorizing, and addressing genocide and the afterlife of slavery. *The Black Shoals* locates a space off the shores of White academic and political discourse to continue ongoing conversations, and create new ones, among Black and Native peoples within and outside the academy.