

SPECTERS AND SPOOKS:
DEVELOPING A HAUNTOLOGY OF THE BLACK BODY

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ABSTRACT

Kashif Jerome Powell: Specters and Spooks: Developing a Hauntology of The Black Body
(Under the direction of Dr. Renee Alexander-Craft)

This dissertation utilizes theories of embodiment and performance to develop a “hauntology of *blackness*,” which investigates imaginative sites of death constructed through the historical, social, and performative facets of institutional slavery in the United States to theorize notions of *blackness* and *the black body*. I argue that the relationship between *the black body* and death have conjured a death-driven specter that manifest historically, performatively, visually, and phenomenally as *blackness*. The rise and continual return of this “specter of *blackness*” positions *the black body* in the United States as a body “haunted” by its own biological and phenotypical disposition. Placing the theory of Jacques Derrida and Frantz Fanon in conversation with scholars such as Avery Gordon, Saidiya Hartman, Toni Morrison, and others, I evoke the language of haunting to consider the profound effect the relationship between *the black body* and death has had on ontological, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological understandings of *blackness* within post-modernity.

To my mother and father, Kamaria, Kyi, K'ylah and Kameryn, my work beats with the eternal
pulse of your love and inspiration.
To my Renee and my mentors, you push me towards horizons I never knew existed.
To Bryanne, I couldn't have done this without you.

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When I was 9 years old, my mother urged me to memorize one of her favorite poems for the 3rd grade talent show: “If” by Rudyard Kipling. Wanting desperately to take home the first place prize, I memorized Kipling’s poem word for word. But on the day of the performance, I flailed in the limelight, stumbling over the words like upturned bricks. By the time I arrived home, my teeth and tongue were so tightly wound, I could barely speak. But I didn’t have to say a word, and neither did she. With the magic possessed only by a mother’s smile, she colored the horrors of my 9-year-old existence with the softest hues of compassion and love. Mom, everything I’ve done since that moment, every milestone I’ve reached, every failure I’ve managed to somehow transform into triumph, everything, has been because of that smile—thank you for coloring my world with its majesty. Thank you for always having faith in me, and for providing me with the means to have faith in myself.

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If you can fill the unforgiving minute/With sixty seconds' worth of distance run/Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it/And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son! Mom, Dad, Kamaria, Kyi, K'lyah, and Kameryn, you are my life. Kamaria, I am inspired by the woman I call lil' sis. I can only hope that as an artist and scholar, I grow into the immense compassion and

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PROLOGUE:

The end is in the beginning and lies far ahead.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*¹

The prologue of Ralph Ellison's classic novel descends deep into the catacombs beneath 1950s Manhattan, into the decrepit, not quite forgotten architectural remains upon which the city is built. We begin here: in the assumed darkness of the city beneath the City, in the hole-become-home that Ellison's fallen protagonist inhabits at the end of his journey through a world unconscious of his presence. In the settled dust of New York's sub-terrains, Ellison's anti-hero begins the Homeric recital of his journey. Through each episode of the novel, from witnessing his grandfather's final words,² to his the misadventure of the Golden Day Saloon, and his affiliations with the Brotherhood and Ras the Destroyer, Ellison's protagonist is enlivened, charged, by the kinesthetic force immanent within the body. Through a delicate scripting of that force, Ellison's narrates the experience of *blackness* as a tumultuous romance; an intimate and ongoing relationship in which a body marked by *blackness* circles around the vortex of nonexistence/non-presence, a recursive motion that dramatizes the ludic possibilities between presence and absence—a dance that places into crisis the underpinnings of Western metaphysics, the fetishization of pure presence and its opposite: pure absence. Through the politics and the poetics of invisibility, Ellison upturns metaphysics to expose myths of ontological realness, finding that which resonates between absence and presence and tracing that remainder upon the flesh. The body of Ellison's Invisible Man carries more than the visual signification of blackness—the materiality of pigmented flesh—rather his protagonist carries the weight of

blackness, a quality of Being that slips between the metaphysical dichotomies of presence and absence to call into question the structure of ontology and the arbitration of existence.

Articulating *blackness* as that which is traced through both existence and nonexistence, Ellison renegotiates the relationship between time, space, and body to locate divergent possibilities of black life within the outer realms of visibility and aurality. He articulates *blackness* as an uncanny state of Being, one that dances on the edge of visibly and presence, riffing on the structure of ontology through harmonized yet extemporaneous expression and agency.

Specters and Spooks: Developing a Hauntology of the Black Body is conceived within the force of Ellison's riff. Charged by the kinetic tension that surges between the seemingly dialectical poles of presence and absence, this project investigates the ontology of *blackness* by dissecting the unyielding relationship between *the black body* and the history of death that I argue constitutes black existence. I engage critical race theory, phenomenology, and performance theory to address the deeply resonant affective ecologies constructed within historical, social, and performative facets of institutional slavery in the United States; ecologies that simultaneously consume and enliven figures of *blackness* with equal and opposite intensities of life and death, phenomenality and spectrality, beginnings and endings. Juxtaposing the vitality of existence—life, presence, beginnings, that which manifest through the performed resistance of the body³— to the sociohistorical and socioaesthetic negation/absence/death phenomenally experienced by black bodies, I hope to understand how *blackness* materializes, through visibility and performance, as the coalesced trace of existence and nonexistence in a singular form.

As such, *blackness* can be described in terms of ontology; the conceptual presence of *blackness* is materially and corporeally representable, and, through such manifestations and bodily possessions, is placed in intimate relation to the world. The presence of *blackness*,

however, its representation and relation to the world, is characterized by the dense absence of subjectivity lost in the midst of chattel slavery. This absence is continually made present through thousands of stories that work to reify the borders of *the black body*. *Blackness*, then, is ontological positioned as an incessant and immutable return to abject conditions of loss and absence. It is incomprehensible, perhaps even nonexistent, beyond its own phenomenon. As such, *blackness* cannot be described by ontology alone.

The chapters of *Specters and Spooks*, therefore, work in concert to develop, what I call, a “hauntology of *blackness*,” which follows the trace of *blackness* beyond limiting ontological conceptions, into the depths just beneath the surface of black facticity. Using hauntology as a theoretical guide, I invest in the metaphysics of both presence and absence to articulate *blackness* as the ever-evolving relationship between the flesh-and-blood body and slavery’s ecologies of death, which, once manifested through multiple bodies separated by space and time, is visually, performatively, and psychically condensed within a single, seemingly autonomous signifier: *blackness*. In investigating the phenomenal configurations of *blackness*, the ways by which the presence of a body makes manifest the affective ecologies of death, I turn to critical studies in performance, and its theoretical appetite for understanding and articulating the cyclical performativities that fashion the relationship between a body and the world. Critical performance theory questions not only the performative consequences of a body’s relationality to the world, but delves deeper to question the essential, perhaps ontological, constitutive elements of the relationship itself. And so, this project is concerned not only with the phenomenal manifestations of *blackness*, i.e. the techniques by which *blackness* is articulated onto bodies and subsequently performed in relation to the world, but it is concurrently invested in outlining the fundamental conditions of possibility that haunt those performativities.

I first became aware of the layered meaning that seemed to haunt my body as an undergraduate at Morehouse College, when six young men from Jena, Louisiana, similar in age and complexion, were arrested and unjustly charged with first-degree murder after assaulting a fellow student who referred to them as niggers. I felt immediately connected to those young men, having experienced the ease with which the utterance of *that* word, out of the *wrong* mouth, incites an unbridled rage within the most even-tempered individual. But as I continued to watch, that connection moved beyond empathy. The saga of these six young men encouraged me to unravel my own identity, and in doing so I found similarities in the underlying patterns between the Jena Six and my self that went beyond our individual personhood. Our mirrored orientations as black and male marked our bodies as products of the same genealogical arc, uniting our separate experiences through deep associations between our bodies and affective ecologies of death.⁴ Emerging from my experience of the Jena Six, *Specters and Spooks* unpacks *the black body* as the haunted confluence of life and death in a singular form by traversing the liminity between the matter of *blackness*, that is to say, the factic materiality of a black body, and the often-absented spatial and temporal conditions under which *blackness* as an exercise of power emerges.

The chapters of *Specters and Spooks* uncoil, in the light of inspirations such as Della Pollock, Renee Alexander-Craft, and the lineage of theorists whose writings perform their polemic, as an investment in the written word that performatively (de)constructs my experience of, what I identify as, the deep personal and political hauntings of *blackness*.⁵ The text follows a poetic logic; I employ metaphor and tightly compacted imagery and language to emulate, what I call, the specter of *blackness*, a brooding figure that lies buried beneath the surface, and through quiet irruption, seizes possession of the word/flesh to layer it with a meaning that exceeds its

own facticity. This engagement with the performative body, both as written text and as flesh, seeks to dissect the emergent conditions of *blackness* within slavery's ecologies of death to expose the embryonic possibilities of the haunted state of *blackness*. This possibility of phenomenal reconstitution is woven throughout the text of *Specters and Spooks*; it is the backward-reaching end that structures the beginning, the impulse that voices the body's ludic potentialities—the cadence of Ellison's song, and the key to which *Specters and Spooks* is written.

CHAPTER 1: THE H(A)UNTING OF *BLACKNESS*, AN AMERICAN TRADITION

Death cut the strings that gave me life,
And handed me to Sorrow,
The only kind of middle wife
My folks could beg or borrow.

Countee Cullen, *Saturday's Child*⁶

Introduction and Primary Argument

A specter is haunting America—the specter of *blackness*.⁷ Realized through the shared tragedy of chattel slavery, and carrying the burden of that institution's socio-political, socioaesthetic, and imaginative resonance, the ecologies of life and death inherent to this opening statement structures the premise of *Specters and Spooks*. But this is not a story of death, but rather of the overwhelming force of life forged through white-hot cinders of nonexistence. It is a story of the children of Saturday, subjectivities birthed through tropes of darkness and abjection; a story buried in the flesh of bodies consumed by the aftermath of that conception—a ghost story. Investing in haunting not simply as a return of those long dead, the story details the maturation of affective forces made present through the muted intensity of bodies carrying the dead's spectral weight.

Articulating the continuation of the ontological associations between figures of *blackness* and death, I argue that *blackness* operates as the spectral form of the (almost) unknowable and (nearly) intangible force of violence and death that was enacted against black, enslaved bodies

within what anthropologist Michael Taussig refers to as, “space of death;” a space in which human subjectivity is formed through a culture of terror and torture—a violence that lingers and will not go away.⁸ Outlining its multifaceted tradition, Taussig explains, “The space of death is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness ... these spaces of death blend as a common pool of key signifiers or caption points binding the culture of the conqueror with that of the conquered. The space of death is pre-eminently a space of transformation: through the experience of death, life; through fear, loss of self and conformity to a new reality...”⁹ Creating a phenotypical exception that existed both within and beyond the category of human—the *black body*—slavery necessarily shifted the ontological terrain of humanity. The epistemological and ontological configurations of the institution of slavery transformed *blackness* from a phenotypical signifier to an inescapable marker of death; *blackness* signified a body politically and socially devoid of lineage, and lacking the ontological capacity for life.

Frantz Fanon details this ontologization through the analogy of collapse, a giving away of the body schema to a historized racial epidermal schema. But I use the word specter as derived from its Derridian roots, as “the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone other.”¹⁰ Recognized through its fleeting presence, *blackness* flashes up and then recedes at the moment just before its full recognition, leaving a material yet unspeakable trace of death not only within the space and time between bodies, but within bodies themselves. It is this re/markable presence of material and historical death/absence that, I argue, persists in the film and fiber of post-modernity, haunting bodies placed in relation to its specter as it leaves a corporeal and subliminal trace. The goal of this project is to demonstrate how bodies are simultaneously inhabited by and exceed the visual, aural, and phenomenal

materializations of death. Within this ontological quarry, these bodies are forced to live without full knowledge of what it is they are haunted by, the specters of *blackness*.

Theory and Methods

Specters and Spooks probes historical narratives of death and dismay, visual discourses of *the black body*, and theories of haunting and performance to deconstruct the regimes of race that frame contemporary understandings of the deathly presence we have come to know as *blackness*. It mobilizes the phenomenological methods of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Judith Butler, the psychoanalytic inquiries of Fanon and Julia Kristeva, and contemporary critical race theory forwarded by Afro-Pessimists and Afro-Optimist, namely Saidiya Hartman and Fred Moten. I place these thinkers in conversation to theorize the interstitial space between bodies steeped in histories of chattel slavery, not only as connective tissue, but as flesh epidermalized into blackness and animated by death: *blackness*. The lingering affect of this process of epidermalization, I argue, continues to haunt not only the imaginaries of post-modernity, but also the bodies phenomenally and pathologically constituted within the material contours of those imaginaries. This project juxtaposes ontological, phenomenological, and psychoanalytic questions of embodiment with the aim of, in the lineage of Saidiya Hartman, articulating how the haunting presence of chattel slavery continues to frame the contours of our bodies, both in life and in death.

For me, the recognition of this haunting was most felt in the wake of the 2006 Jena Six incident. However, it outlines the realities of the 1991 police beating of Rodney King; the dragging death of James Byrd on June 7, 1998 in Jasper, Texas; Amadou Bailo Diallo, the 23-year-old Guinean man shot to death by New York police on February 4, 1999; the 23-year-old Oscar Grant III who was fatally shot in the back by Oakland police at 2:15am on New Year's

Day in 2009; Millton Hall, the 49-year-old mentally disabled panhandler shot 46 times by police in Saginaw, Michigan on July 1, 2012; Chavis Carter, the 21-year-old black male in Jonesboro, Arkansas who was found dead on July 29, 2012 from a fatal gunshot to the head while handcuffed in the back of a police cruiser. Perhaps the most public call of the specter was voiced through the body of Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old victim of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law, killed by George Zimmerman, a self-appointed neighborhood watch coordinator. Martin's death and the subsequent "not-guilty" verdict rendered to Zimmerman undoubtedly conjures memories of the 14 year-old Emmett Till and his acquitted executioners, Roy Bryant and his half-brother John William Milam.

Inexhaustible in number, the deaths of these figures have afterlives through living bodies through a process Joseph Roach calls surrogation. The need to fill the unoccupiable space left open by the loss of Martin, Till, and others is continually encoded and decoded through a range of representational performative practices. In this way, these figures assume a life-in-death. As Roach explains, the "...histories of private life, histories of death, or histories of memory itself—attend especially to those performative practices that maintain (and invent) human continuities, leaving their traces in diversified media, including the living bodies of the successive generations that sustain different social and cultural identities."¹¹ The absence of Martin and Till, as well as the multitude of black bodies subjected to dense ecologies of nonexistence and death, not only manifest into outward performative expressions, but are (almost) imperceptibly sedimented into the bodies of those continuing to live within the conscious or unconscious memory of the unfillable absence that constitutes their presence.

Attempting to understand this confluence of the corporeal and spectral, I catalyze phenomenology both as a method and as a heuristic analytic of the lived body. I specifically turn

to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, which engages phenomenology not only as a methodology, but as the ontological grounding of human reality that is pronounced through an intimate "belonging-together," the inescapable co-presence of human subjectivity that orients knowledge production and consciousness.¹² Things and others of the world are marked in relation to the lived body, with the space and time between them remaining held-open for (re)imagination, (re)signification, and (re)articulation. According to Merleau-Ponty, a crucial component to the lived experience of the body, as well as phenomenology as a whole, is intentionality, or what has been termed meaning-direction. He explains that the things and others that we encounter are imbued with spatial and temporal lines of flight that direct my experience of them. However, the meaning-directions of objects and others are highly ambiguous, not in the sense of vague or indifferent, but rather meaning-directions are open to a multiplicity of possibilities. Consequently, the lived body is grounded in this same sense of perceptual ambiguity. Merleau-Ponty defines the body as the fabric interwoven throughout all things. The body therefore develops an intentional arc, a particular display of the fabric's pattern as woven by our everyday existence. In short, the intentionality of one's body becomes the crux of consciousness and embodiment.

Not only does the intentional arc thrust the body toward an imaginative ambiguity, it also imbues the body with affective charges. In 1982 Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, highlights the relationship between affect and the body by forwarding the notion of abjection as seminal to the configuration of the psychoanalytic self. She posits that the subject is characterized by intense, affective relationships to the objects that it encounters; it is, in fact, through this object-subject relation that the self is formed. If the body is the fabric woven through all things, then affect is the thread. In this way, the self/consciousness is oriented by the

body, which operates within an affective and ambiguous intentionality that allows the world to constantly appear through multiple and varied expressive possibilities.

Understanding the pathology of the self as constituted through the orientation of the body brings to the forefront of this project a multitude of questions that bare great significance: If a body is spatially directed by a shared inhabitation of the world with things and others, what are the implications of this process of orientation for a body phenomenally perceived through the visual and aural registers of *blackness*? More specifically, how does the epistemological and ontological location of *blackness* outside the purview of “the human” influence the events of consciousness-raising for bodies phenomenally marked as *black*? What “consciousness” is “produced” in response to the affective charges of a body’s phenomenological orientation within Taussig’s space of death? And how are these events of consciousness-raising reproduced within multiple bodies through both the accumulation, as well as the diachronic and synchronic transferal of those affective charges?

I employ phenomenological theory and methods to address these questions by understanding how the lived body dwells in space, and is in constant negotiation of how it relates to the contours of the space it inhabits. Phenomenology suggests that the body operates within a regime of reciprocity; if objects reach the body through perpetual experience, then the body reaches back to them by “tending toward” these same objects. As explained by Sarah Ahmed, “[our bodies] move toward and away from objects depending on how we are moved by them.”¹³ The affect objects carry direct our bodies to a space that is familiar and allows our body to become orientated. Space necessitates that the body is orientated by these affective and perceptual lines of meaning that serve as the link between the object and the self—the thread to our bodily fabric—thus making the space we inhabit sensational and affective.

Space is a matter of how objects impress on the body by the presence of what is perceived, as well as the absence of what is “behind” the object, or what was necessary for the object’s arrival, but remains unseen or unfelt. Through this relational constitution, the object makes the self and the self makes the object; we are hailed into subjectivity by the lines of meaning available to the experience of our body. The intimacy between the body and its dwelling place positions space not simply as a container for the body, but as a functional operation of the body itself. As bodies move through space, that movement shapes not only the intentional arc of the body, but the space itself. Bodies are the spaces they take up; they are the directions they face, the lines of meaning they follow, the objects they tend toward, and the affect they carry.¹⁴

The lived body, however, is not only spatially oriented, but configured through temporal orientations as well. Phenomenology expounds upon the ways our bodies are shaped by the histories of objects, and how those histories are performed on and through the body. Ahmed refers to such an investigation as an “ethnography of things,” where one considers how an object is brought forth through particular conditions of emergence, and how the body responds to that historically-oriented appearance.¹⁵ Arguing against Heidegger’s notion of thrownness, Ahmed urges that objects do not simply appear in the world, but matriculate through time. Offering a précis of the temporal considerations of the phenomenological method Ahmed explains, “The object could even be described as a transformation of time into form...”¹⁶ carrying with it the history of its conditioning. The question the “ethnographer” must ask is then “what historical work goes into the making of an object?” To answer this question, the “ethnographer” must turn to Marx and Engels who argue that an individual, “...[must] see how the sensuous world around him [sic] is, not a thing given direct for all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of

industry, and of the state of society...the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the proceeding one.”¹⁷

Taking the Marxist approach to phenomenology further, Ahmed turns to Marx’s model of commodity fetishism to explain how the body’s sensuous experience of an object is also grounded in that object’s history of labor. As Marx explains, a commodity (what we have termed an “object”) is comprised of two things: matter and labor, where the commodity is brought forth through the labor of converting matter to form. The labor of changing matter to form imbues the object with a level of use value, as well as exchange value. A body directed toward a particular object extends into the space it inhabits, more or less, depending on the use value of that particular object. The body’s relationship to space, as well as ways in which the body can be extended through the temporally-constructed value of an object, demonstrates how bodies that are orientated toward objects of greater value are granted agency to extend further into the space it inhabits.¹⁸ A phenomenological approach to subjectivity apprehends how objects are shaped by the temporality of what precedes it, and how bodies extend into space by extracting the history of value contained within the body’s intended/perceived object; a history that is often lost in the “hereness” of the object’s spatial orientation. As Ahmed, by way of Marx, suggests, an object is the transformation of time into form, therefore phenomenology accounts for the emergent conditions of a body through its reciprocal relation to objects.

This relationship produces a bodily knowledge that is often revealed through habit, the performance of a remembered history that emerges in the “hereness” of the body. The habitual, however, is not simply understood as the repetition of tending toward an object. Rather habits “involve the incorporation of that which is ‘tended toward’ into the body. These objects” Ahmed continues, “extend the body by extending what it can reach. Reachability is hence an effect of the

habitual, in the sense that what is reachable depends on what bodies ‘take in’ as objects that extend their bodily motility, becoming like second skin.”¹⁹ This “second skin” is the body’s consumption, and subsequent performance of the historical knowledge(s) of the object. This consumption allows for a body to articulate the self through those same historical knowledge(s). In turn, the body becomes a site of living memory, a performative manifestation of uniquely oriented living archive of the objects it incorporates. Investigating the performative confluence of memory, history, and the phenomenal body, Roach elucidates how “performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions—those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded.”²⁰ The lived body “lives” in the forgotten memory of history, in the substitutions that have become invisibly sedimented in the body; the curves of our feet, the etched lines in our hands, the hue of our shoulders all carry significant historical presence that is performed at every turn.

With this theoretical foundation, *Specters and Spooks* investigates the lived body as it is expressed through the phenomenal experience we have come to understand as *blackness*. As such, this project is firmly rooted in, what Roach has identified as, a “genealogy of performance,” which “document—and suspect—the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations” that are amassed and sedimented in the body.²¹ This project excavates the history that, I argue, has been lost in the “hereness” of the lived *black body*, an object manufactured through the process of transforming of time into form. Providing a detailed definitional offering, Roach explains,

Genealogies of performance attend not only to “the body,” as Foucault suggests, but also to bodies—to the reciprocal reflections they make on one another’s surfaces as they foreground their capacities for interaction. Genealogies of performance also attend to “counter-memories,” or the disparities between history as it is

discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences.”²²

Bodies “blackened” through the transformational process of commodity fetishism most certainly bear the consequences of the disparities between sociopolitical and socioaesthetic articulations of *black* performance and the histories in which those bodies are steeped.

This genealogy of performance takes the presence of *the black body* as a specter that is lost in the hereness of the lived body, and attempts to uncover the specter’s conditions of emergence, investigate the means by which the spectral affect is sedimented unto particular bodies and continues to persist in the contemporary moment. In locating this specter, I ask: how have the Tran-Atlantic histories of the American Slave Trade, particularly in the United States, constructed the notion of *blackness* through a culture of genealogical, social, and physical death? Further how did the cultural associations between *blackness* and death come to “haunt” bodies of black facticity and establish, what I call, a performative hauntology of death? Finally I question how performative counter-investments in the lived body can be enacted within the historical fixity of *the black body* that disrupts and reconfigures the phenomenal existence of *blackness*?

Addressing these questions necessitates a return to Ahmed’s discussion of skin second. As established earlier, the body’s second skin—the relational bodily performance of historical knowledge—is grounded in the habitual. Ahmed, advancing Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological methods, by theorizing the interstitial space between a body and its relational object to demonstrate how the repetition of tending toward an object forms habits that allow particular bodies to extend into particular spaces. Merleau-Ponty articulates “those actions in which I habitually engage incorporate their instruments into themselves and make them play a part in the *original* structure of my own body”(emphasis mine).²³ Merleau-Ponty’s reasoning of the habitual body as not simply a body that repeats action, but is an active body inextricably bound to/in the

world and establishing the ontological constitution of the body. If habit, however, surfaces through our relationship to objects, what habits emerge through a relationship with one's own bodies as object? Further, what ontology is constituted through such a relation?

These questions churn at the center of Judith Butler's project of performativity, articulating how bodies become objects of historical discourses and are habituated to perform the historical possibilities therein. Bodies, as social agents, are not the producers/subjects of a social reality constituted through language, gesture, and symbol, but are rather produced by—the objects of—language, gesture, and symbol. Butler stresses that the body is the composite of stylized repetitive acts: habits, gestures, movements, speech and other myriad forms of embodied possibilities that are cobbled together to represent an idealized unity—the body, an “object of belief,” where the various acts of the body work to create the idea of the body, and without such acts the idea of the body vanishes.²⁴ And as we perform our historically situated bodies, we are compelled to believe the performance and therefore perpetuate this mode of belief.

Deeply rooted in a temporal orientation, acts of the body are not self-generative. Rather the body is historically dramatic, it is a performative and dynamic materialization of time into the multiple possibilities of form. Therefore, bodies are not “merely factic materiality, one is not simply a body, but...one does one's body;”²⁵ bodies carry a performative meaning that is distinct from the materiality of the body. In making such a claim, Butler transforms the notion of the “body as object” to the notion of the “body as matter,” where the materiality of the body is understood as an “effect of power.”²⁶ “At stake in such a reformulation of the materiality of bodies” Butler attests, “will be...the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects...”²⁷ Butler argues that

the matter of bodies—the dynamic materialization of the body that is perpetuated through the performance of the body’s phenomenal (spatial and temporal) orientation—is, in fact, distinct from the materiality or the biological, or in the case of this project, phenotypical disposition of the body. Butler utilizes the distinction between sex and gender as an analytic to elucidate this point,

To be female is...a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of “woman,” to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project.²⁸

I am concerned with the “sustained and repeated corporeal project,” the performatively citational practices of *blackness* that produces the effect it names, *the black body*. *Specters and Spooks* invests in understanding the effects produced through the corporeal project of the racialized body by developing a hauntology that questions how the regulatory norms of *blackness*, as conjured by the specters of the sociohistorical and socioaesthetic realities of American slavery, have become indissociable from bodies that have engaged in the act of “becoming black.”

Deconstructing the spectral trace of slavery, this undertaking of black hauntology asks, similar to reformulations that recognize the distinction between sex and gender, how can the ontological construction of *the black body* be reconfigured to tease out the distinction between the “fact of *blackness*” and “bodies of *blackness*?”²⁹ Or, as articulated through the language of hauntology, how can we understand bodies that have *become black* as the work of the specter(s) of *blackness*? Specifically focusing the relationship between *blackness*, phenomenology, history, and the body in/as performance, I argue that black bodies are produced through a forced relationship with a historized imagining of *blackness* as/in death. It is the invisible presence of this history of death that precedes, extends, and constrains particular bodies, at times hauntingly

voicing its presence through those bodies. Put simply, *blackness* is articulated as “a kind of being-toward-death but with something that has been understood as a deathly or death-driven nonbeing” forwarding the ontological state of *the black body* as a perpetual state of being haunted by *blackness*.³⁰

Personal and Social Rationale

I was first aware of the material trace of these specters of *blackness* in the small town of Jena, Louisiana, when, in December of 2006, LaSalle Parish police arrested Robert Bailey, Mychal Bell, Theo Shaw, Bryant Purvis, Carwin Jonesand, and Jesse Ray Beard for attacking and knocking unconscious a fellow Jena High School student, Justin Barker. The arrests were made in the aftermath of a lunchtime brawl that erupted after Barker reportedly referred to one of his would-be assailants using a racial epithet encumbered by the weight of centuries-old abjection and loathing. Despite Barker’s same-day release from LaSalle General Hospital, the six black young men, ranging in age from 14-18, were charged with attempted second-degree murder and conspiracy to commit second-degree murder. The public outcry was swift. Local Jena officials quickly identified the fight as a symptom of mounting racial tension, instigated in August when three nooses bearing the school’s insignia of black, gold, and white, were found dangling from a shade tree near the center of campus. The officials reasoned, since LaSalle Parish School Superintendent Roy Breithaupt deemed the noose incident an adolescent prank, and lightly punished the students responsible with a three-day suspension, Bailey, Bell, Shaw, Purvis, Jonesand, and Beard should receive equal favor. The District Attorney’s rejection of this proposition would bring the Rev. Al Sharpton, Martin Luther King III, and nearly fifty thousand supporters of the, now nationally recognized, “Jena Six” to the small town in Louisiana.

Sharpton and King III crafted a captivating array of legal argument and impassioned rhetoric that connected the Jena Six to a lingering legacy of violence enacted against black men in the United States. “This is the beginning of the 21st century’s civil rights movement,” Sharpton affirmed. “In the 20th century, we had to fight for where we sat on the bus. Now, we’ve got a fight on how we sit in a courtroom. We’ve gone from plantations to penitentiaries, where they have tried to create a criminal justice system that particularly targets our young black men. And now we sit and stand in a city that says it’s a prank to hang a hangman’s noose, but that it is attempted murder to have a fight. We cannot sit by silently.”³¹ Sharpton’s poetic sketchings firmly positioned the incidents of Jena, Louisiana within the extensive and violent genealogical arc of Taussig’s “space of death.” With each attempt to “bring justice” to the Jena Six came an overwhelming insistence of their inherited legacy of plantations and penitentiaries, an expression of the inextricable bond of the culture of the “conqueror” to that of the “conquered” through a pool of signifiers engulfing the black, male body. The result was the transformation of Robert, Mychal, Theo, Bryant, Carwin, and Jesse into the “Jena Six,” six black boys articulated through the dense spectacle of historical, performative, and cultural imaginings of death, terror, and torture enacted on and through black, male bodies.

With an impatient gaze, I watched the incidents of the Jena Six unfurl from my dormitory at Morehouse College. I was at once enthralled and unnerved by the death-driven spectacle of bodies that were consumed by entities of blackness and maleness that seemed to exceed their individuality. Even through the privilege of my position as a student at one of the nation’s most recognized Historically Black Colleges and Universities, I sensed the quieted echoes of what Aimé J. Ellis has aptly theorized as, the “call to die”—the pained voicing of one’s close proximity to social, imagined, or actual death.³² Ellis contends that contemporary black male

subjectivities are formed by this call, which is articulated through a range of death-summoning provocations: the threat of death and violence enacted through lynching, state execution, prison, poverty, mob violence, acts of insurrection. These death-summoning enunciations construct the psychic world which underprivileged, urban black men learn to inhabit. Citing contemporary examples such as Christopher Wallace (The Notorious B.I.G.) and Tupac Shakur, Ellis argues that heeding the call to die produces a “death-bound effect” in which poor urban black male subjects, or as he puts it “young poor urban U.S. black men who are depicted or see themselves as ‘niggas’ (i.e. ‘bad niggers,’ gangstas, gangbangers, thugs, as well as social outcasts, high school dropouts, and prison inmates),” develop a self-affirming consciousness that produces a keen sense of death-defiance in the face of domination.³³

In his monograph *If We Must Die*, Ellis extends Taussig’s theorizations of the space of death by exploring the historical and political deployment of “deathly violence” that leads to the formation of black male identities.³⁴ Ellis argues that “like the slave and lynching epochs that preceded it, the persistent threat of (social) death vis-à-vis state sanctioned execution, as well as extralegal policing (such as police brutality and prison guard abuse), marks the contemporary inheritance and historical continuation of the deployment of social and actual death against black people in general and black men in particular.”³⁵ Extending Taussig’s articulation of the space of death within the confines of post-modernity, Ellis, in gruesome detail, documents the reality-making assaults against black bodies in the 20th and 21st centuries; he argues,

The spectacular and emblematic episodes of racial terror and state violence that, for many blacks, both mark and mar twentieth-/twenty-first century U.S. history, represent a varied array of events constituting the living legacy of racial terror and state violence: the Red Summer riots of 1919, the Mississippi floods of 1927, the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment that ran between 1932 and 1972, Emmett Till’s murder in 1955, assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and numerous

other black political leaders throughout the era of black militancy, the 1963 Ku Klux Klan bombing of a Birmingham church in which four black girls were killed, the Watts Uprising of 1965 and those that followed throughout the late 1960s, the Vietnam War and Project 100,000 (1966-72), the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992, the Cincinnati (2000) and Benton Harbor (2003) Riots, and most recently Hurricane Katrina (2005). The global AIDS pandemic, too, which has ravaged Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, and U.S. black and gay male communities throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early part of the twenty-first century, serves as a reminder that the insidious effects of racial terror and state violence are neither unique to black men and women in the United States nor solely carried out through the overtly visible force of authoritarian subjection but rather exercised through benign neglect, federal withdrawal and the increased practice of economic privatization.³⁶

This thick history of racial terror, which Ellis explicitly defines as “ [the] coercive disciplinary practice of social control in which the violent threat of death is exercised against (but not limited to) black men through unlawful and extralegal means such as lynching, mob violence, and ‘white riots,’” are formational to the ontological and epistemological constitution of *blackness*.³⁷ The modern and post-modern conjunctures are forced to grapple with densely layered hauntings of death conjured in the presence of the America’s specters of *blackness*. Ellis continues to draw upon this history to elucidate how these specters also materialize through, what he terms, state violence, which “works in tandem with practices of racial terror as a ‘legitimated’ form of social control—state-sanctioned execution, the unregulated use of force by the police and prison guards, state neglect or inaction, questionable if not dehumanizing social, economic, and health care policy measures, denial of human and civil rights—that ensures the deliberate and calculated alienation of oppressed people from the state.”³⁸

Within this powerful, post-modern space of death, the Jena Six are undoubtedly placed; the force of racial terror echoes in Barker’s hailing of Robert, Mychal, Theo, Bryant, Carwin, and Jesse as “niggers” and its aura outlined the damp silhouette of the school’s centerpiece, until,

in response to the overwhelming burden of its signification, the tree was axed in August of 2007. This terror was only multiplied by the endorsed violence of the state of Louisiana. With each boy facing charges that carried a prison sentence of up to one hundred years, the state threatened to condemn the defendants to a life of social death. Though ultimately acquitted, the Jena Six had been summoned to occupy the space of death through the legacy of racial terror and state violence, rehearsing the theatre of existing in nonexistence for audiences separated by the fourth wall of national tabloids and network television.

Despite Barker's insistence, it is difficult to draw a perfect analogy between the Jena Six and Ellis' prototypical definition of "niggas," but for the six "young poor urban U.S. black" men facing the looming threat of life-long imprisonment, the call to die voiced by the state of Louisiana was clear. Its enunciation summoned not only Jena's six, but drew the national imaginary to the Taussig's space of death as well. But it is in that collective summoning that this call was unlike that expressed by Ellis. It was not a call to die in which a death-bound effect of defiance is produced, as if it were not always already present. Rather this call could be expressed more accurately as a "call of death," in which the affective forces of being, the pervasive potentialities of life and death, suddenly and fully irrupt a body. This call resembled more the provocations of literary legend Richard Wright, who admits, through the narrative of his first short story, *Black Boy*,

I had never in my life been abused by whites, but I had already become as conditioned to their existence as though I had been the victim of a thousand lynchings...The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness."³⁹

As a young, urban, U.S. black male ascending the lower depths of the socioeconomic scale, I had never known the abuse of racial terror or state violence but nonetheless sensed the cold

awareness of “a thousand lychings”—the anticipation of nonexistence as a result of the phenomenal negotiations of my own body in relation to omnipresent imaginings of death. I did not hear death-summoning provocations in state-sanctioned threats of death or violence, but I intimately felt them on the register of my black and male body.

My imaginings of a death, a vivid mirage that filled the space of every distant horizon, materialized into a performance about Jena’s six. The show, *Six Black Boys*, began as an investigation into the deep-seated racial tensions that occupied the negative space of the decimated shade tree. My performative investigation, however, quickly revealed itself for what it had always been: a need to find myself in the midst of the collective fears, including my own, of a body that is both black and male. *Six Black Boys* materialized as a personal discovery of the lurking presence of death that was voiced through the bodies of the Jena Six. What I had intended to unearth, however, was not the haunting of Jena’s history, but the haunting of bodies interpellated by that history, and the social, imagined, or actual death that often spawns from that relation.

Against *The Black Body* as a Universal Signifier: Assumption, Limitations, and Delimitations

Reliant on autoethnography and performance ethnography, *Six Black Boys* used my own subjectivity as the embodied nodal point of *blackness* through which conceptions of masculinity, class, and educational capital intersect. *Specters and Spooks* both extends the work of that project and benefits from my critical reflexivity of the project. In doing so, it seeks to develop a theorization of *blackness* as/in haunting with an acute awareness of social and class privilege, as well as the (near) universality granted by my gendered orientation. This critical reflexivity begins by understanding that rooting the genealogy of *blackness* through a deep corporeal knowledge of haunting exposes an arcane neurosis that, Frantz Fanon suggests, emerges from my position of

privilege. Arguing that the alienating process of internal intrusion and near possession is the only means of knowing one's own black body marks a desire, a plea perhaps, to announce the separation between my self and my race. In Fanon's words,

The educated black man, slave of the myth of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro, feels at some point in time that his race no longer understands him. Or that he no longer understands his race. He is only too pleased about this, and by developing further this difference, this incomprehension and discord, he discovers the meaning of his true humanity. Less commonly he wants to feel a part of his people. And with feverish lips and frenzied heart he plunges into the great black hole. We shall see that this wonderfully generous attitude rejects the present and future in the name of a mystical past.⁴⁰

I read Fanon's words as a warning that brings to light the epistemic violence my project is in danger of performing. The Jena Six project, indeed, marked the felt distance between myself, as a supposed steward of the ivory tower, and the community of racially marked men who precariously existed *somewhere* beyond the porcelain veneers that frames so much of my subjectivity. Aware of my privilege and the distance it necessarily creates, I resist positioning my body and the knowledges contained therein as the universal signifier of the phenomenal experience of *blackness*. Instead, I offer *Specters and Spooks* as a writing from *here*, my body, about the *somewhere* I imagine my body to be. I write in the gap of the phenomenal distance—the “great black hole”—perceived through the experience of my body. The former project manifested as an articulation of that distance by investigating the space between my body and bodies of the same genealogical arc. This project delves deeper into the phenomenal space of *blackness* by interrogating not only the space between bodies, but the sociopolitical and socioaesthetic configurations that precede those spatial orientations. Through this investigation I, as Fanon suggests, return to the mystical past, but to neither reject the present nor the future. Rather, I intellectually, creatively, and phenomenally gesture toward “true humanity” at its

fullest capacity as it is expressed through the phenomenal experience that have formed the performative composite of my body, *blackness* and maleness.

Aware of these experiential biases, I do not claim that my articulation of the ontological construction of *the black body* is universal. In fact it is far from it, for *the black body* and *blackness*, this project will demonstrate, is not, nor could ever be, an entity purely comprehended through the metaphysics of ontology. *Blackness* is, instead, understood through the dynamic confluence of affective ecologies of experience and the phenomenal orientation of corporeal knowledge(s) that work in concert to constitute my body as *black*. I understand that the relationships one's individual body has to these affective ecologies and phenomenal orientations are distinguished from the next. For me, that distinction comes not only from my position as an academic, but, is additionally a result of *seeing blackness* through lens of a masculinized heteronormativity. I understand *blackness* through the temporal and spatial orientations that are inflicted with a dense gender specificity, the inherent "male" lurking as a specter in its own right, between *the black (male) body*, conflating race, gender, and sex into the unified form of *blackness*. Following Hortense J. Spillers and Saidiya Hartman, I recognize the origins of masculinity in the corporeal project of *the black body*. And while my project works to outline the affective ecologies of gender and sex that work, in conjunction with specters of abjection and death, to frame contemporary manifestations of *blackness*, it is intentionally insufficient in its deconstruction of those ecologies. Nonetheless, the gendered configuration contained within this genealogy of *the black body* is important to my study.

My genealogical investigations begin with the Transatlantic Slave Trade and a distinction drawn between flesh and body. Spillers theorizes flesh as the material facticity of the body, the biological, and in our case, epidermal, matter. From this Spillers articulates the Transatlantic

Slave Trade as “crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of ‘flesh’ as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard.”⁴¹ In contrast, the body is the social and cultural construction of a symbolic double of the flesh. The body materializes across time and space and serves as a focus point for the convergence of “biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes.”⁴² The writing on the flesh of the captive body in the Transatlantic Slave Trade signals “‘*a theft of the body*’—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its will, its active desires” (author’s emphasis).⁴³

Spillers provides a teleology, of sorts, that narrates the pivotal move of powerlessness from the flesh to the body.⁴⁴ The transition occurs with mutilation of the flesh—“eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured: teeth missing, as the calculated work of iron, whips chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet.”⁴⁵ The mutilation that was enacted upon the flesh was transfixed onto the body. Spillers puts it this way: “These undecipherable markings on the captive body render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose severe disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color. “This body,” she continues, “whose flesh carries the female and the male to the frontiers of survival bears in person the marks of a cultural text whose inside has been turned outside.”⁴⁶ Through the act of turning the flesh inside out and dragging the male and female body to and through the “frontier of survival,” *the black body* is epistemologically flattened within a regime of powerlessness. Under the conditions of the “*theft of a body*,” “we lose at least *gender difference in the outcome*, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific.”⁴⁷ What Spillers marks is not an erasure of gender, rather

the powerlessness of the body that is marked through visual significations of *blackness* within the flesh, yet uniquely materializes through the phenomenal orientations of the body. An example is provided through the daily economies of slavery, in which female slaves were subjected to countless atrocities of sexual violence, forced to bear the weight of powerlessness in the womb and propagate the ecologies of death through the act of birth. Though both male and female slaves are possessed by the powerlessness inherent to their flesh, that powerlessness materializes through markedly divergent techniques of brutalization.

It was this very regime of powerlessness, and the suppression of gender distinction, that former slaves attempted to overcome during American Reconstruction. Such an effort, Hartman explains, was facilitated through a two-sided attempt to re-fashion the former slave into laboring citizens.⁴⁸ Government agencies such as the Freedman's Bureau and congressional law such as the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th Amendment advocated that rights of equality be extended to freedmen, but only in the event of the freedmens' complete transformation into rational and responsible, that is to say docile and laboring, citizens. The forces behind fashioning a black citizenry are simultaneously responsible for conflating notions of race and manhood. As Hartman points out, "The presumed *whiteness* and maleness of the citizen transposed the particular into the universal, thus enabling white men to enjoy the privileges of abstraction and a noncorporeal universality."⁴⁹ Former slaves aspiring equality were subject to the *whiteness* and maleness already prescribed in citizenship. Their grasps at constitutional and legal equality manifested into a process of self-making in which they assumed performative strategies indicative of "rationality" and "responsibility." This process necessarily involved assuming the maleness of citizenship, as the *whiteness* of citizenship was beyond the former slave's (epidermal) purview. Simply put, power was represented through *whiteness* and maleness, while

contrarily powerlessness was characteristic of *blackness* and femaleness. Since citizenship stood in direct opposition to enslaved bondage, this (white) masculinity dug its way into the reformulation of *blackness* forcing the recently enslaved to reinscribe its performative script.

In this light, *blackness* becomes the performative manifestation of Spiller's theft of the body, where the will and power of the body is negated, and *blackness* and manhood are conflated. In the aftermath of slavery, this negation is not enacted through the literal death of the body, but by dragging the imaginative and phenomenal body to the frontier of survival. The result is the constitution of *blackness* through, what I call, a performative hauntology of death, which, I argue, continues to structure an ontological position of *blackness* in the contemporary moment. *Blackness* operates within a politics that can not be condensed within identificatory terms of the body, but rather operates through social relationality of the flesh. *Blackness* materializes through the life and death that exists between "subjects normatively defined as black, the relations among blacks, whites, and others, and the practices that produce racial difference."⁵⁰

It is at this darkened crossroad of death and corporeality that I turn to Derrida's spectral force of hauntology to investigate the corporeally implications of *becoming black*. Developing this hauntology of *blackness* foregrounds how the discursive formation of *the black body* fixes meanings of ontological *blackness* within specular and spectacular histories of death. A melancholy drama played out through the epidermal script of the body as "the inescapable prison house of the flesh."⁵¹ This hauntology of *blackness*, then, begins by tracing the affective, anachronistic forces conjured by the spirit of slavery to recuperate the institution's spectral traces in the film and fiber of *being* (black).

Outline of Chapters

Each chapter herein considers the techniques of brutal corporealization performed by the specters of *blackness*, a presence “as powerful as it is unreal.”⁵² Chapter 2, “When the Specter Spooks: Constructing *Blackness* Through a Performative Hauntology of Death,” triangulates Derrida’s theorization of hauntology, Orlando Patterson’s seminal text, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, and Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* to articulate how the forced performative interplay with death founded the political and social performances of the slave’s body. As such, the slave’s “phenomenal and carnal form,” that is to say the performative and material manifestations of slave’s dark body, became the site upon which the affective excesses of loss and death were conjoined with the agential force of existence. Within these ecologies, a specter of *blackness* was conjured as an amalgamated affect of death, which was then delicately reduced into an epidermal schema and grafted onto the body of the slave. The slave’s body, I argue, mutated into something that is best described as a *becoming-body* of a specter. This chapter excavates “the historical transmission and dissemination” of the death-driven cultural practices of slavery encoded and decoded through representational and performative practices that are enacted through and within lived bodies. The chapter attempts to understand how the performative hauntology of death propels the specter of *blackness* to become a second-skin that always-already proceeds, and thus haunts, particular bodies. In this performative relationship, the specter assumes a phenomenological reality that continues to connect black bodies to this performative hauntology of death.

Chapter 3, “The Grief of a Negro’s Home: *Beloved* and the Failed Mourning of *Blackness*,” furthers the investigation of black hauntology by articulating the pathological effects

of the relationship between *blackness* and death. Guided by Derrida's first constitutive element of haunting, mourning, this chapter argues that the ontological becoming act of *the black body*, a body inhabited by the invisible force of death conjured through its own visual and biological disposition, is set in motion through the act of failed mourning. Using Fanon and the psychoanalytic queries of Joan Copjec, this chapter advances the hauntology of *blackness* by considering the psychoanalytic consequences of a body subsumed by the dark, affective, and seemingly autonomous forces of death made present by the specter of *blackness*.

Chapter 4, "Descend: To Fall into the Specter's Voice," interrogates the theorizations of Fred Moten, Frank B. Wilderson, among others to advance this hauntology by considering Derrida's second element of haunting, voice. The chapter questions how the temporal disjointment announced through the apparition's aurality leads to an ontological descent. Within this underworld of *blackness*, the body and the self are drawn to the borders of *becoming*, where it is inhabited from the inside by a specter who hails the subject into a multiplicity of presents/presence; a law that both precedes and constrains the witness, positioning the subject, like the specter, on the borders of *being* and *nonbeing*, presence and absence, life and death.

Beneath the aches and moans of disjointment, beyond the sound of spooks and specters, there exists possibility. The concluding fifth chapter of *Specters and Spooks*, "Haimatja: Home," deconstructs Derrida's final element of haunting, work. It understands the work of the specter of *blackness* as it phenomenally manifests through the factic materiality of the body. Attempting to deconstruct the citational link between the specter and bodies of *blackness*, Chapter 5 forwards a politics of performance that seeks to interrupt the cycle of haunting and enliven new relationships between the history of *the black body* and the phenomenal experience of *blackness*.

Conjuring the presence of spirits, *Specters and Spooks* questions how the deathly call of *blackness*, emerging on the haunting grounds of the American planation, makes a body not only knowable to itself, but to those who stand to witness as well. The project evokes the language of haunting and its embodied relationship to death to investigate the phenomenal and psychoanalytic construction of *the black body*, as the sociohistorical, socioaesthetic, and performative manifestations of the specter of *blackness*, that which haunts the imaginary and sociality of post-modernity. However, this project does not narrate the story of slavery, though it is dredged through the force of its existence. It is, instead, a story about bodies performing the prosaic choreographies of possibility; bodies that burn with the sensations of absence and memory, life and death, learning the nature of haunting by being, themselves, haunted.

CHAPTER 2: WHEN THE SPECTER SPOOKS: CONSTRUCTING BLACKNESS THROUGH A PERFORMATIVE HAUNTOLOGY OF DEATH

“Ghosts are the signals of atrocities, marking sites of an untold violence, a traumatic past whose traces remain to attest to the fact of a lack of testimony. A haunting does not initiate a story; it is the sign of a blockage of story, a hurt that has been not honored by a memorializing narrative.”⁵³

Roger Luckhurst

Specters: Haunting and the Metaphysics of Presence

“A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism;” a pronouncement that begins both the prelude to Marx’s most influential work, and Derrida’s intervention to expose the spectral affect inherent to notions of ontology.⁵⁴ In questioning the fundamental assumptions of “what it is to Be” Derrida holds, “learning to live—[if it] remains to be done, it can only happen between life and death. Neither in life nor in death alone.”⁵⁵ As such, Derrida explains “to be” is to “live with ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship...of ghost...And this being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations.”⁵⁶ Derrida, therefore, forwards the notion of hauntology as a synonymic surrogate of ontology, offering a more extensive articulation of being that accounts for the spectral affect of both presence and absence.

My investigation builds upon this restructuring of ontology to expose the incomplete rendering of *blackness* as an entity made ontologically stable through a metaphysics of presence. Instead it gives close attention to the forces of absence that work in equal force to constitute the black subject. This chapter delves into the corporeal implications of the hauntologizing of

blackness, dealing with/in ghosts to understand *blackness* as the confluence of a politics of history (memory), justice (inheritance), and temporality (generations). Asking, what are the implications for bodies thrust into the process of becoming *black* by those very same dimensions of memory, inheritance, and generation, this chapter invests in Derrida's nuanced theorization of being as "*hantise*," translated within the text to mean, "haunting."

Rummaging the etymology of the term reveals its emergence from the early 12th century Old French term "*hanter*" meaning "to frequent," "to resort to," or "to inhabit." Not far off is its 13th century Middle English cousin, "*haunten*" meaning, "to reside or inhabit." Derrida takes up the connotation of inhabitation to offer a logic of haunting, which marks a presence that is "inhabited in its inside, that is, haunted by a foreign guest."⁵⁷ He offers haunting as a "sense of obsession, a constant fear, a fixed idea, or a nagging memory."⁵⁸ Finally, Derrida pulls from the term's Germanic origins a verb that speaks of home, "*haimatja*," meaning "to lead home." Through these etymological traces Derrida begins to consider the ontology of "haunting," a notion reinforced through a classic Shakespearian text, as the term was first recorded in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" around 1590.⁵⁹ Simultaneously marking Marx's obsession with the playwright, Derrida uses Shakespeare as an analytic to further elaborate his theorizations.

"As in *Hamlet*, the Prince of a rotten State" Derrida narrates, "everything begins by the apparition of a specter."⁶⁰ On the peripheries of Elsinore Castle, a phantom of the former king thrice appears as the supernatural vessel of the spirit of King Hamlet. And Horatio's witnessing of the former King's mid-night appearance, indeed, inaugurates the story of lustful sin and maddening revenge founded upon the buried spirits of a rotten State. "What manifests itself in the first place," Derrida describes, "is a specter, this first paternal character, as powerful as it is unreal, a hallucination or simulacrum that is virtually more actual than what is so blithely called a

living presence.”⁶¹ The specter manifests not only on the outlying threshold of the Elsinore estate, but on the liminal borders between being and nonbeing as well, appearing as an entity with a phenomenal and tangible body that is “inhabited from the inside” by the affective and invisible force of a spirit. “[W]hat distinguishes the specter...from the spirit” Derrida explains, “is the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible...the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of *someone* as *someone other*. (his emphasis)”⁶² The specter is the bodily, and therefore phenomenal, successor of the spirit. It is that which follows the spirit, but not as the matter of time, for, according to Derrida, haunting is situated out of time; it is historical, but not dated.⁶³ Rather, the spirit precedes the specter in sentience, as the spirit is the specter without body. Derrida reads the specter as “a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other.”⁶⁴ The apparition of King Hamlet’s ghost appears in this liminal space of spectrality, where his body *becomes* something other than its factic materiality; it *becomes* a phenomenal manifestation of absence, invisibility, and intangibility.

As an entity caught between the continual return of absence through presence, the specter positions the logics of haunting within spaces of *becoming*. For it is not until the specter spooks, not until the invisible and absent *become* and are beheld in their *becoming*, that the full drama of *being* is thrust into action. As we witness the witnessing of Horatio, and ultimately Hamlet, we come to understand the specter of King Hamlet as the *becoming-body* of the invisible affective forces of Denmark, as the State’s existence rots in the hands of a spoiled king. Through this, the specter is understood not only a manifestation of the affective forces that exist, no less unseen, in the spaces between the body itself and the resonances of its remains, but, in appearing, makes

manifest the unseen forces that operate in the grounds of its haunting as well.⁶⁵ For Derrida, haunting occurs in the play between spirit and specter. “The specter is *of the spirit*,” Derrida begins, “it participates in the latter and stems from it even as it follows it as its ghostly double.”⁶⁶ The spirit is conceived as an ecology of invisible, affective force. The specter, then, is the materialization of a body that appears autonomous, but is in fact, “inhabited from the inside,” that is, consumed by the affective force of the spirit.

The spirit is a figure that is extended from a body, but, through trickery, has assumed autonomy from the body of its origin. The “conjuring trick” of the spirit is its ability to mask its genesis, to hide from its originary source.⁶⁷ The trick occurs when, in fleeing from its origin, the spirit “inhabits from the inside” another form; a second body. “...there is never any *becoming*-specter of the spirit without at least an appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility...For there to be ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever...”⁶⁸ Continuing Derrida explains that it is “Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and thoughts have been torn loose, but by incarnating the latter in *another artifactual body, a prosthetic body*, a ghost of spirits...”⁶⁹ The spirit animates this second body, causing the citational link between itself and the body of its origin to *disappear* by provoking a hallucination of the appearance of its own autonomy; *becoming* through disappearance.⁷⁰ This second body, to which Derrida refers to as “a body without nature,” “a technical body or an institutional body,”⁷¹ artifactual and prosthetic, becomes a hyper-phenomenal body that dwells on the borders of phenomenal presence and spiritual absence, between sentience and non-sentience, between the visible presence and the invisible absence of the body’s citationality. This is the specter that haunts, the dead that dwells amongst the living. And as Derrida, following Marx and Shakespeare, articulates, the act of the specter’s *becoming* manifests through the confluence of

three constitutive elements: mourning, voice, and work.

The second scene of Shakespeare's inspired tale voices the layered tragedy of Denmark's first son, as Hamlet publicly mourns his lost father during the celebratory announcement of his mother's new king. It is no accident that this scene, fuelled by both Hamlet's and Horatio's prolonged mourning, is couched between apparitions of the ghostly father. The act of mourning vigorously seeks to draw the presence of the lost and dead near. Mourning, Derrida writes, "consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead."⁷² The work of mourning requires one to know "who is buried where," however, Derrida urges, "it is *necessary* (to know—to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more!" (his emphasis)⁷³

Within this act of mourning, however, is a reciprocal gaze that negates this command. The work of mourning, in which both Hamlet and Horatio are engaged, leads each to the exterior limits of Elsinore Castle, where they bear witness to the ethereal presence of the dead. An encounter that provokes Horatio to confess, "By my God, I might not this believe/Without the sensible and true avouch/ Of mine own eyes."⁷⁴ Caught in the interpellative gaze, each man identifies the ghost through the stark resemblance of the shadowy figure to the king's former self. Horatio remarks, "Such was the very armour he had on/When he the ambitious Norway combated;/So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle, /He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice./Tis' strange."⁷⁵ The interpellative act of mourning, and the *ontologizing* and *localizing* of remains that necessarily follow, provides the grounds for the dead's already-emergent status as specter. Drawn from the undercroft, the dead conjoins the affective excesses of loss with the agential force of existence to *become* specter—"the tangible intangibility of a proper body

without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone other.”

A constitutive element of the spirit’s becoming, however, is its ability to be *ontologized* and *localized* through mourning while eluding identification, an act achieved by taking residence in the liminal space of spectrality. In this space of becoming, the spirit capitalizes upon the interpellative gaze of mourning by performing the conjuring trick of disappearance, which allows the spirit to provoke the hallucination of autonomy while concealing its origin in the artifactual and prosthetic body of the specter. In this hyper-phenomenal state, the spirit inhabiting the body of the specter is able to move in the realm of the living without being seen. As Shakespeare narrates, the spirit that haunts Hamlet returns (to the living) not only in the spectral body, but the armor, of the lost king, which works to further mask the spirit’s presence. This armory negates the reciprocity of the gaze of mourning by establishing an asymmetrical relationship between the specter and witness. This, what Derrida describes as the visor and helmet effects, grants the specter the ability, perhaps power, to see without being seen, enhanced only by a power yielded by the apparition’s helmet to speak in order to be heard. And this ability to see and speak without being identified allows the spectral illusionist to maintain his hallucinations, to hide the rabbit of time inside the hats of visibility and aurality, manipulating all as needed. The specter conceals the spirit’s origin, and the armor camouflages the specter’s presence by granting it an enhanced phenomenality.

The camouflage of the specter plays a particularly important role; through it the witness is interpellated as the recipient of the spectral gaze before any act of recognition occurs. As Derrida puts it, “this spectral *someone other looks at* us, we feel ourselves being looked at by it, outside of any synchrony, even before and beyond any look on our part, according to an absolute anteriority....” (his emphasis)⁷⁶ As such the witness becomes the subject of, is constituted

through, the furtive gaze that can never be returned. “[T]his thing that looks at us, that concerns us,” Derrida writes “comes to defy semantics as much as ontology, psychoanalysis as much as philosophy.”⁷⁷ Through this act of furtive looking, temporality and ontology are collapsed onto/into the body of the witness; s/he becomes the body in the present that has yet to look, the future body that will look, and the past body that has been looked at. This collapse of time and ontology throws those whom the specter haunts into a disjointed temporality that begins to constitute the ontological positioning of the witness—“Here anachrony makes the law”⁷⁸—ushering those who witness it to the liminal space of *becoming*.

The haunted subject, however, is not solely constituted through the visual (inter)play of the spirit and specter, but through the specter’s tricks of aurality as well. The ontological liminality of the witness is not fully materialized until it is articulated through the second constitutive element of the specter’s haunting, voice. As Derrida explains, “Since we do not see the one who sees us, and who makes the law, who delivers the injunction *we must fall back on its voice*. The one who says ‘I am thy Fathers Spirit’ can only be taken at his word.” (author’s emphasis)⁷⁹ The spirit again manipulates aurality and visibility by exploiting the reciprocity inherent in its interpellative call to submit the witness to “an essentially blind submission to [the spirit’s] secret, to the secret of his origin: this is a first obedience to the injunction. It will condition all the others.”⁸⁰ The voice of the specter performs the act of *becoming* through this blind submission, forging another carnal existence of the spirit by phenomenally extending to and through Hamlet’s body to inhabit the state of Denmark. The voice of King Hamlet’s specter is heard in the thrice-performed speech act of the swear, which obligates Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus to preserve the secret of the apparition’s presence. The secret of the specter grants Hamlet the ability to, in the words of the ghost, “Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.”⁸¹

The interpellative calls of the specter signifies not only the ails of the rotten State, but, as Hamlet's provocative fall into a death-driven madness demonstrates, hails the unsuspecting witness into a ghosted constitution. This ontological and temporal descent is the driving force of Shakespeare's plot, beginning with the apparition's coxing of young Prince Hamlet into a frenzied ontological obsession, feigned or not, which crescendos in his most notable soliloquy.

Explaining this (inter)play between the spirit, specter, and witness, Derrida articulates the last constitutive element of the specter as work. "Finally, the thing works, whether it transforms or transforms itself, poses or decomposes itself: the spirit, the 'spirit of the spirit' is work" (his emphasis).⁸² Through tricks of aurality and visuality, the spirit is invested with the "certain power of transformation," poses and decomposes itself within the bodies of both the specter and the specter's interpellated witness. The affective work of the specter manifests in the body of the witness, as the witness is transformed through the specter's hailing to become the phenomenal vessel of the spirit; the "spirit of the spirit," an "artifactual" body of phenomenal realness/presence/existence, but also a body of spectral simulacrum.⁸³ Through an internal habitation the witness is compelled to become the shadow of the spirit, which is conjured and subsequently camouflaged through manipulative conjuring tricks of visuality, aurality, and temporality.

The body of the witness becomes, what Derrida refers to as, the revenant, a body whose essence is structured upon a spirit of clandestine origin. Situated in this second body, between presence and absence, the spirit becomes a trickster of temporality, as the defining characteristic of the revenant is "coming back for the first time."⁸⁴ The spirit will return for the first time to inhabit the realm of phenomenality through the being of "someone other."⁸⁵ Although the inhabitation of the second body is for the first time, it is a simultaneous return of the spirit that

escaped its originary body, as we see in the king's inspirited or inspired body that returns home to Denmark. In the animation of the second body, the spirit inside becomes the animating force of the revenant, the hyper-phenomenal, living-dead. For, as Derrida explains, "it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the revenant or the return of the specter."⁸⁶ The witness is both the haunted and the haunting, hailed by the deathly call of the specter to be possessed, that is inhabited from the inside by the spirit, which condemns the body to carry the spectral weight of the spirit's presence.

This triangulated spectral affect between the spirit, specter, and witness is the crux of Derrida's notion of haunting, in which the absent presence of the spirit's *being* is conjured through the body of the witness, throwing time out of joint. Performing the trick of presence in absence, the witness, as the *revenant*, is ontologically oriented within a multiplicity of temporalities: "*le temps*, the temporality of time," or the things time makes possible; "*l'histoire*," the way things are at a certain point, the time in which we are living; and "*monde*," or "the world as it turns, our world today, our today, currentness itself."⁸⁷ Oriented by these three modalities, the *revenant* signifies (again, for the first time) the dislocation of time within ontology. The body of the *revenant* signifies a *being* out of time, for it is not the matter of time, that is, it exists outside of *le temps*, but nonetheless is situated within *l'histoire* and *monde*. Within this dislodged temporality, the *revenant*'s body performs the affective work of the specter, visually and aurally announcing the spirit's interpellative cry that demands the blind submission of its witness. Within the voiced presence of the *revenant*, time—*le temps*, *l'histoire*, *monde*—or in Hamlet's case, the state of Denmark, is consumed by the affective, anachronistic law of the spirit.

Following Marx's investigation of the affective forces of communism that famously

consumed ninetieth century Europe, Derrida traces the ontology of postmodernity through the spectral excess of Marx's frightened and frightening quasi-paternal phantom. Tempering the contingency of scholars overwrought with jubilee at the fall of the Soviet Union, Derrida positions the U.S.S.R. as a revenant structured upon the secret genesis of the spirit of communism. This spirit, particularly as it is ontologized and localized in the settled dust of the Berlin Wall, will continue to engineer an improper habitation of post-modernity by situating the conjuncture within communism's ecology of affective forces. The haunting of post-modernity is the felt in the spectral forces that, since Marx, consciously or unconsciously submit the socio-political, economic, and ontological axioms of the time to the injunctions of the spirit. "[T]here has been this appeal beginning with a word the resounds before us," Derrida recites, the 'since' marks a place and time that doubtless precedes us, but so as to be as much *in front of us as before us*... 'since Marx' continues to designate the place of assignation from which we are *pledged*" (his emphasis).⁸⁸ Post-modernity is bound to, pledged to, the corporeal absence contained within Marx's, and therefore communism's, spectral presence.

Speaking back to the specter and spirit to which the ontological foundations of post-modernity are sworn, Derrida develops a hauntology of post-modernity that interrogates the ontologization and localization of Marx as the becoming-body of the specter of communism. The logic of the ghost locates the question of ontology between the contingent forces of absence and presence, visibility and invisibility, the being and nonbeing. Arguing that "the logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than ontology or a thinking of Being...It would harbor within itself, but like circumscribed places and particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves," Derrida forwards hauntology to consider the affective work of the specter in the production of knowledge within an episteme, sketching imperceptible constellations of

memory, inheritance, and generation, which interpellates the episteme into the ghostly presence of the invisible.

The ghosts, spirits, and specters this project attempts to exorcise are those whose presence makes visible the affective ecologies of American slavery, and draws near the liminal space of *becoming* that constitute the ontology of the bodies who “stand as witness” to the atrocities of that institution. Furthering Derrida’s recognition of the attenuation of ontology through the metaphysics of presence, I develop a hauntology of *blackness* to articulate the haunting of the specter that functions as the generative force of black ontology in the Americas, an apparition that has journeyed centuries to inspire the here and now of the contemporary moment with its ghostly charisma.

Spooks: The Ecologies of Nonexistence in a Performative Hauntology of Death

“Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life,” sociologist Avery F. Gordon claims, it articulates the “lingering inheritance of racial slavery...the compulsions and forces that all of us inevitably experience in the face of slavery’s having even once existed in our nation.”⁸⁹ This project interrogates the work of the specter of *blackness* by recognizing slavery as the designated “place of assignation from which we are *pledged*...” or, the place that is “as much *in front of us as before us*.”⁹⁰ This inquiry into the language of haunting proceeds by developing a black hauntology to question how the affective work of the dead forges the ontological frame of those who stand to witness the conjuring of *blackness*; a presence that, even in its absence, is always there.

Speaking back to the ghosts and spirits of American slavery, *Specters and Spooks* interrogates the ontological foundations to which *the black body* is sworn, tracing the spectral means by which the experience of *blackness* is articulated onto bodies, enacted, and performed

through space and in time. The spectral trace of chattel slavery reveals the temporal dislocation produced in the presence of its “lingering inheritance.” The institution of slavery was constituted through an ecology of anachronistic forces that grant specters, which were conjured on the haunting grounds of the American plantation, the faculty to exist both within and beyond the modalities of time, *matter in time* without being *matter of time*, a point further elaborated through Gordon’s exposition. “Slavery has ended,” she explains, “but something of it continues to live on, in the social geography of where peoples reside, in the authority of collective wisdom and shared benightedness, in the veins of the contradictory formations we call New World modernity...”⁹¹ Gordon alludes to the dislodged temporality in which the specter(s) of *blackness* are positioned, sketching the specters’ armored silhouette—the “something” of slavery that persists in the visual and aural registers of the specters’ trace. Mobilizing the phenomenological method advanced by Merleau-Ponty, which forwards the body as the primary site of human subjectivity, this investigation argues that the residual “something” of slavery is the continual act of becoming achieved by the specter(s) of *blackness*. The result of this haunting is the phenomenal consumption of bodies moving through social geographies, of the imaginaries structured upon the collective wisdom of those bodies, and of the foundations of modernity by which those bodies are governed.

The first chapter began by articulating this presence as a specter, but the confluence of spectral forces within a racially marked body is perhaps more accurately articulated as a spook. “[T]he word spook,” writes David Marriott, “reveals a connection between race and terror, magic and surveillance, idolatry and power: as a verb it makes visible the impenetrable unseen that our self-deceptions bid us master and so keep at a remove.”⁹² Introduced into the American vernacular as a derogatory racial slur in the 1940s, the term conjures images of dark faces made

darker with layers of burnt cork, as minstrelsy performatively reiterates Spillers' articulate of the theft of the body. This project broadens the connotation of the term to include the historicized amalgam of visual and aural representations of bodies hailed by the specter of *blackness* and thrust into the drama of becoming (*black*).⁹³ The visibility and phenomenality of the enslaved, African descended body made manifest the affective registers of death summoned by the institution of slavery. This hauntology, then, is founded upon the historical politics of *blackness* in the Americas, a politics articulated through the Transatlantic histories of slavery's affective ecologies of nonexistence, which structured the phenomenal, imaginative, and performative conditions of possibility for the slave's body.

The very question of being (black) is written upon the ancestral flesh of the captive, and articulated through an overlapping matrix of agential subjection, coerced liberation, and the confluence of pained nonbeing within the empathetic existence of speaking bodies. The affective ecologies of nonexistence are articulated in Orlando Patterson's seminal text, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Patterson maintains that the regulation of the American slave population through the institution's thrice-folded exertion of power—1) the invisible-yet-felt force of death enacted through social relations, 2) the psychological influence that follows, and 3) the sustained control of the cultural modes of production—constituted the captive within a culture of living-death.⁹⁴ The inability to possess social and political life sought to produce a docile subject intimately bonded to the institution's affective ecologies of death and nonexistence.⁹⁵ No longer only conditioned through genealogical, social, and physical death, the slave's body was ontologically flattened within phenomenal, imaginative, and performative contours of nonexistence as well. Patterson's study is a vivid articulation of the construction of African captivity in America at the intersection of power relations, knowledge, and the body.

The remainder of this chapter explores the first facet of the power exerted upon the body through slavery, the affective force of death.

Patterson's theorizations of the invisible-yet-felt force of death are in intimate conversation with Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, in which he explains how apparatuses of the state such as prisons, clinics, and hospitals produce a knowledge of the body that exceeds the body itself. Foucault writes "...there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them; this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body." ⁹⁶ These technologies restrict the body from extending into its co-inhabited space by, quite literally, removing the body from that space. The force of these technologies, what I refer to as, affective ecologies, exert a powerful control over the performance of a body, both in the sense of the tasks the body fulfills and in how the body is performatively expressed in the world. Extending Patterson's claims, I argue that the forced performative interplay between the slave's body and enactments of death performed on the American plantation produced a knowledge that exceeded the body itself; the slave's body was saturated with affective ecologies of nonexistence, which became the foundation of black ontology in the Americas. Slavery's culture of death structured the understanding of what *blackness* was, and what *blackness* could be, mutating the phenotype of the body into an inescapable, signifier of pained death.

The ontological conditions of death are unfurled in Hartman's investigation of the nuanced configuration of black subjectivity. She argues that the ontological existence of black bodies, hinged upon the body of the captive, is rooted in the "spectacular character of black suffering" and a "denial of black sentience."⁹⁷ Slavery, and the captives it claimed, is ontologically flattened within the embodiment of pain expressed through the spectacular

representation of those bodies. The body of the captive was formed—made (non)human—through the spectacular and embodied expression of prolonged death. Hartman articulates that black subjectivity is bound to spectacular scenes of subjection and objection. She draws upon the autobiography of Frederick Douglass as he recounts the scene of his Aunt Hester’s beating. Douglass’s witnessing of the spectacle of pain enacted against his aunt was, according to him, “an original generative act equivalent to the statement ‘I was born.’”⁹⁸

This example demonstrates the foundational structuring of *blackness* as a signifier for, what Foucault calls, “the art of maintaining life in pain,” which constitutes not only the subject upon which the pain is inflicted, but the witness as well.⁹⁹ Foucault’s work elucidates how the spectacle juxtaposes “truth” and pain within a political field of reciprocal power relations of dominion and objection enacted through the body. The pain legislated through the spectacle confirmed the truth of, that is gave birth to, the objective ontological status of the captive body. “The scars left on the body [and] the spectacle that accompanies it,” Foucault explains, signifies the ontological objectivity of the subject.¹⁰⁰ The marriage of pain to truth inextricably bound the ontological state of the captive body, as well as imaginations of black subjectivity, to a perpetual state of prolonged death represented through a life in pain.

In this light, the spectacle is only not an embodied event; it is not the actual beating of Aunt Hester, or even the cries of her submission. Rather, in the words of Diana Taylor, the spectacle “...is that which we do not see, the invisible that ‘appears’ only through mediation.”¹⁰¹ According to Guy Debord the spectacle is “not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.”¹⁰² The mediated images of the “terrible spectacle” are not only the images of the captive’s body, but the bodies of the spectator, as they stand to witness the spectacle in all its various forms; the spectacle interpellates all. The social relations animated by

the spectacle quiets black subjectivity, becoming visible by the spectacle's dance with "scopic, political, [and] economic repertoires"¹⁰³ of the institution of North American slavery. Even as the spectacle comes to a natural end—in the exhausted arms of the slave-owner giving way to the back of the captive, in the final breathes of spectacle's victim, in the complete (corporeal and/or psychic) dismemberment of the captive—the dance continues, as the trace of the spectacle is sketched within the bodies of all involved. Through this tracing, the spectacle does not, as Derrida announces, "stay in [its] place," instead functioning as a conjuring trick to establish the autonomy of a white subjectivity.¹⁰⁴ Through the act of witnessing, *blackness* is articulated through the gaze of white subjectivity. This spirit beholds, gazes upon, and ultimately possesses the body at the center of the spectacle and resurrects a specter in its own image; the captive's body becomes an "abstract and empty vessel," a floating signifier, an artifactual repository, that is inhabited from the inside by *blackness* and the spectral character of objectivity and suffering which always already accompanies it because of its origin in spectacular suffering.

This performative hauntology, one in which the bodies at the center of the spectacle are forced to enact the qualities of suffering and death, is elucidated through Hartman's discussion of John Rankin and his attempts to deter his brother's involvement in the North American trading of captive bodies. Rankin uses his body, through the human capacities inherent in the language of pain, to extend his humanity to the bodies of the enslaved. Despite the best of intentions, such a move, Hartman highlights, does serious damage to the ontological field of the captive's body.¹⁰⁵ In attempting to empathetically understand the pain/humanity of the enslaved, the spectator's body moves from passive witness to, at the very least, an imaginative spectator. In this way, a phenomenal move, or a phenomenal slippage of sorts, is made where the space of the captive's body is occupied by the experiential sensorium of the spectator. This phenomenal move

does two things: first, through his empathetic appeal to “make their suffering our own” Rankin functionally obliterates the other by denying the sentience of the captive body.¹⁰⁶ Rankin replaces the captive’s sensory experience of pain with his own thereby rendering invisible the autonomy of the slave’s pained humanity. Extending from this, the second effect of this phenomenal slippage of white humanity to the captive’s body is the reinforcement of the “thingly” quality of the enslaved, positioning “it” as a fungible commodity. The slave body becomes “an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings, ideas, desires, and values...”¹⁰⁷ As an extension of this same point, the slave body as property becomes a simulation of the master’s desires; “the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and domination.”¹⁰⁸ The spectacle’s ontologization through the slave’s body constructs *blackness* as a multi-faceted specter that corporealizes the affective ecologies of nonexistence, slow death, and external power and domination, hollowing the lived body and replacing the core of its ontology within these ecologies.

Through this dis/possession of the lived body, the ecologies of nonexistence birthed the institution of slavery and, propagated by the institution’s spectacular enactments of pain are granted a phenomenal existence as they are resurrected in the racialized body of someone other. Localized within the body of the captive, the affective ecologies of prolonged death, pain, and powerlessness move from the spectacular to the quotidian. In this second phenomenal move, the specter begins to fashion the ontological status of the captive. Hartman marks the ontological shift of the captive body through, what she calls, “innocent amusements:” the dissipation of the terrors of slavery through quotidian performances of song, pleasure, and good cheer.¹⁰⁹ Hartman understands the ontological position of the enslaved to be flattened not only by the pain of

spectacles of suffering, but also by the affective ecologies of prolonged death, pain, and external domination that manifest through the “dissimilation of suffering through spectacle[s]” of song, dance, “stepping it up lively,” or other forms of coerced pleasure.¹¹⁰ Through coerced performances of joviality, the scene of subjection moved from the auction block or whipping post, where the spectacle was an external force/event, to the body itself. Now inhabited from the inside by the aforementioned affective ecologies, the body of the captive became a visual signifier of the prolonged death enacted through the slavery’s spectacles of the pained body.

The phenomenal experience of pain and the spectacular performance of the quotidian coalesced to establish a corporal language of *blackness* as an object ontologically bound to death and subjugation. *Blackness* is structured upon a performative hauntology of death, in which the captive’s body became a performative marker of not only the material, often spectacular, conditions of genealogical, social, and physical prolonged death, but the pained, immaterial conditions of phenomenal, imaginative, and performative non-existence as well. Nestled within these performances of the pleasure was an assumption of agency that assumes such performances are of the volition of the enslaved. As assumed authors of their own performative scripts, captive bodies read through the innocent amusements of slavery, became weapons against themselves, hiding the origin of the spirits of nonexistence. If the body contains performative capabilities of doing and undoing the self, then the spectacle acts as that which grounds *blackness* in the presence of its performance, as a docile and death-derived object—a spook—stripping away the agency of bodies of black facticity through the deeply felt, yet invisibly rendered, experiences of death and negation. Performative expression within the spectacle inscribes a social hierarchy through an illusion of direct testimony which stages the agency of *the black body* as a form of willed self-immolation, a “consented” state of the subjected self. It is the spectacle that spatially

and temporally orients *the black body*, and allows the specter of *blackness* to replace bodies of black facticity. This understanding of the production of the subject through seemingly self-inflicted experiences of death is further explored by placing Hartman's insights and the production of black subjectivity within a politics of morbidity as offered by Patrick Anderson's and Foucault's theorizations of subjectivation.

Anderson theorizes a politics of morbidity to highlight the constitutive power of self-starvation in the (de)formation of a subject. What I am interested in is his narration, through Foucault, of the "event of subjectivation: the production of political subjectivity in the context of subordination to larger institutional and ideological domains."¹¹¹ Here, Anderson articulates how, in the (inter)play between life and death, in "staging and sustaining the ultimate loss of the subject occasioned by death," a body is infused with an agency that thwarts the political power exercised by regimes of domination.¹¹² I argue that the black subject is formed through a politics of morbidity, what I call a performative hauntology of death, that rest within Hartman's discussion of the performance of *blackness* as a tactic of resistance. Anderson's articulation of a politics of morbidity demonstrates how physical erasure or disappearance induced by the spectacle can be embraced as an agent of performative becoming, thereby highlighting the dialectical relationship between visibility and invisibility. He begins with an understanding of morbidity as the "consciousness of the profoundly affective significance of one's own mortality."¹¹³ From this he outlines a politics of morbidity as "the embodied, interventional embrace of mortality and disappearance not as destructive, but as radically productive stagings of subject formations in which subjectivity and objecthood, presence and absence, life and death intertwine" (author's emphasis).¹¹⁴ This more than articulates the condition of captivity, as the slave subject was continually faced with the "profoundly affective significance of one's own

mortality,” or the constant presence of death Patterson spells out.

The omnipresence of death produced a particular subjectivity through ecologies of nonexistence, the *black* subject. However, through the embrace of objecthood, the subject became an agent in its event of subjectivation. This becoming materialized performatively and visually as *blackness*, an embrace of the precarious ontological positioning between life/death, absence/presence, subjectivity/objecthood—an embrace of death and negation. *Blackness* arose within ecologies of nonexistence and was subsequently appropriated as a tactic of resistance that voiced the pain(s) of the slave’s morbidity. Where Anderson considers the literal disappearance of the body, the eating away of one’s own flesh in the progression of emaciation, I consider the way in which captive bodies embraced their own disappearance caused by the specter of *blackness*, which, as Derrida reminds, conjures its own autonomy, but does so only by concealing our own. This is not a disappearance *of* the body, but a disappearance that occurs through the body’s socioaesthetic, political, and phenotypical orientation—a disappearance *into* the body.

The spectacle’s move to the quotidian, however, ultimately allowed the enslaved to enact his/her agency through tactics of practice. The centrality of practice described as the “small-scale and everyday forms of resistance [that] interrupted, reelaborated, and defied the constraints of everyday life under slavery and exploited openings in the system for the use of the enslaved,” that allowed for a performative counter-investment in the body as a site of possibility.¹¹⁵ To highlight this, Hartman cites the narrative of John McAdams and his commentary on the “Saturday night dances” mandated by his master: “We made good use of these nights as that was all the time the slaves had to dance, talk, and have a good time among their own color.”¹¹⁶ This citation articulates the need to make “good use” of the artifice of the “pain-less” dance

atmosphere. This is but one demonstration of how this spectral and spectacular character of pain is infused within the epidermis of the slave. We see the ever-evolving dynamics of the slave's pained flesh in McAdams' pursuit of refuge from the barbarism of slavery in the time spent with "[his] own color." For McAdams, the blanket of skin color was enough to shelter him from the daily atrocities of slavery. In this we see McAdams', perhaps intentional, refusal to recognize the artifice of the dance by, perhaps intentionally, accepting the artifice of his own body. The performance of *blackness*, as a tactic of resistance and limited agency, plays a vital role in redressing *the black body*. McAdams' simultaneous refusals are demonstrative of how the pained body is redressed in the collective enunciation of that pain, a performative gesticulation that transforms pleasurable domination into a politics that utilizes pleasure as an understandably insufficient form of redress. The performance of *blackness* became one such pleasurable performative gesticulation; it is through the insufficient forms of redress that *blackness* is embodied.

The following chapter explores the inefficiencies of the corporal knowledge of *blackness*, articulating how the specters of nonexistence, which allowed the captive's humanity to be consumed by a disembodied white universality, have continued to linger long after emancipation. Using Fanon's psychoanalytic and phenomenal investigations in conjunction with Derrida theorizations of haunting, the chapter articulates *blackness* through the Foucauldian move from disciplinary technologies, characterized by the right to take life, toward expressions of biopolitical effects of power constituted by the disallowance of life to the point of death.¹¹⁷ Where the spectacle once sought to organize black bodies within the confines of the plantation, upon emancipation the spectacle of pained humanity continued to limit the spatial orientation of black bodies as a means of societal protection. The spectacle achieves the protection of society

by performatively refiguring selfhood as a fetishized commodity, and denying the potential for re-signification. The biopolitical operation of the spectacle produces a black body that is disposable, in so far, as the value of the body is entangled in its ability to reproduce *blackness*—to become a specter.

The desire to reproduce *blackness* is recognized in Fanon's declaration that precedes the often-quoted "Look! A Negro!" scene; Fanon declares, "I thought I was being asked to construct a physiological self, to balance space and localize sensations, when all the time they were clamoring for more."¹¹⁸ Fanon's acknowledgement demonstrates how the spectacle is housed within a biopolitical framework of maintaining a distance that keeps *blackness* near-enough to preserve difference. The sustained maintenance of difference, the ideology foundations of Jim Crow and lynching spectacles of the American South, are other iterations of the ecologies of slow death and domination that characterizes the specter of *blackness*. This biopolitical allowance of death signals the processes of signification that reifies *blackness* through continual confrontation with abjection. Chapter 3, then, interrogates the insufficiencies of *blackness* by articulating the inability of re-signification and the psychological consequences of the process of subjectivation through the affective ecologies of death.

CHAPTER 3: THE GRIEF OF A NEGRO'S HOME: THE FAILED MOURNING OF *BLACKNESS*

“Anything dead coming back to life hurts.” A truth for all times...

Amy Denver, *Beloved*¹¹⁹

Toni Morrison's 1987 post-modern ghost story chronicles the untold memorialization of the hurt of resurrection. *Beloved* narrates the full weight of Amy Denver's truth through an inspired re-telling of the story of escaped-slave Margaret Garner. Forced to submit to the realities of life in death, in 1856, Garner slaughtered her eldest daughter instead of seeing her child “returned” to the institution of slavery under the provisions of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Set in the fictive landscape of Cincinnati, Ohio in 1873, in the midst of American Reconstruction, Morrison re-imagines the aftershock of Garner's infanticide through the experience of *Beloved*'s protagonist, Sethe.¹²⁰ Nearly twenty years after the killing of her unnamed child, Sethe and her only living daughter, Denver, continue to reside in not only in the memory of her nameless child, but in the space of the child's execution as well. Articulating Patterson's claim of the psychological control exerted upon *the black body* in excruciating detail, Morrison's novel narrates not only the story of a home built upon the haunted solace of the past, but articulates the pains of life resurrected out of death—a testament affirmed in the words of Sethe's mother-in-law, “Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief.”¹²¹

Morrison's novel, however, verbalizes more than just the story of Margaret Garner, or the experience of former slaves during American Reconstruction. “The book was not about the institution—Slavery with a capital S. It was about these anonymous people called slaves...”

Morrison explains. “When I say *Beloved* is not about slavery, I mean that the *story* is not slavery. The story is these people—these people who don’t know they’re in an era of historical interest. They just know they have to get through the day.”¹²² *Beloved* becomes an articulation of quotidian bodies roaming the liminal space between a life-in-death and a death-in-life, a life rooted in the knowledge that “anything dead coming back to life hurts.” Yet, nestled within this “truth for all times” are smaller truths that come to light through Morrison’s text, and ultimately become the driving force behind her post-modern slave narrative. Morrison’s novel locates the realms of life and death only to journey the porous line between the two. In doing so, she juxtaposes the narratives of life-in-death, as felt through the tremors of vengeful spirits, as well as narratives of death-in-life, experienced through the flesh of Sethe. These narratives collide with the introduction of a young woman with a history as opalescent as the waters in which she was conjured. Assuming the name Beloved, the single word placed on the tombstone of Sethe’s nameless child, this woman is eventually recognized as the physical manifestation of an invisible spirit; the dead resurrected into flesh.

Morrison’s text documents how, in the aftermath of American slavery, the story of *blackness* is rooted in a simultaneous desire and necessity to learn to live in a home that is haunted with “some dead Negro’s grief.” Such a story, however, is not ignited until this deathly shadow is resurrected into flesh. The novel is a testament to how the ontological foundation of being requires the acute awareness of remembered presence as it coalesces with lived absence, constructing what Morrison calls, “rememory,” the experience of the circularity of time, space, and body, as past places and things are erected through the presence of one’s body/mind. Or, as put by Morrison’s protagonist,

I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to

think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened.¹²³

Twenty-five years after the publication of *Beloved*, and nearly 150 years after the end of the American Civil War and start of the American Reconstruction Era, this chapter theorizes a notion of *blackness* in/as haunting—a rememory of nonexistence and death that is continually (re)articulated through the presence of *the black body*. The chapter delves into the ontological positioning of black life as threaded through ecologies of nonexistence, as well as the pathological consequences of that phenomenal experience.

Fanon's poetic ruminations of the post-colonial black subject provide further insight into the corporeal/phenomenal implications of the hauntological constitution of *blackness*, as well as the neurosis that necessarily results. Fanon's writings forward the notion of transcendental consciousness, a realm beyond ontological understandings of not only *blackness*, but the category of human.¹²⁴ As such, Fanon makes an important distinction between ontology and existence, which he articulates in "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," the translated title of his most cited work in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon's work is founded upon the premise: "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience..."¹²⁵ Just as Morrison text, Fanon's work calls for the development of a hauntology of *blackness* to attest to the metaphysics of both presence and absence, accounting for notions of existence born from the affective excesses of loss, absence, and pained, prolonged death. An alternative to Richard Philcox's translation perhaps conveys Fanon's hauntological questioning

of *blackness* more clearly: “Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man.”¹²⁶ Read through either translation, Fanon’s offers an understanding of black subjectivity as lacking “ontological resistance,” a psychoanalytic condition that produces the (black) self through mourning, or more accurately, the inability to mourn.¹²⁷

In Morrison’s text, this inability to mourn is translated into perversions of love, which is announced in the opening pages of the text when Denver, acknowledging the abandoned rage of the home’s spirit, remarks, “For a baby she throws a powerful spell,” to which Sethe adds, “No more powerful than the way I loved her...”¹²⁸ In her explication of the stifling torment that clings to the space shared by the living and the deceased, Morrison makes clear that the baby’s unbridled wrath is birthed from the sacrifices of her mother’s love. “Counting on the stillness of her own soul,” Morrison writes, “she had forgotten the other one: the soul of her baby girl. Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage? Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the engraver’s son was not enough. Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby’s fury at having its throat cut, but those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil.”¹²⁹ As the novel pushes forward, the manifestations of Sethe’s love is further dredged through her inability to mourn, causing her would-be lover, Paul D, to announce its overburdened mass; “Your love is too thick,” he affirms. To this, Sethe replies, “Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all.”¹³⁰ What Morrison’s text demonstrates is how the multifarious, psychoanalytic translations of this failed mourning necessitates a return to the phenomenal negotiations of *the black body* as constituted within the chasm between the (black) self and the

world. This chapter proceeds by engaging the psychological translations of this inability to mourn as it manifests through the lived body.

Blackness in/as Failed Mourning

In her essay, provocatively mirroring the title of a Charles Mingus riff, “All the Things You Could Be Now, If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother,” Hortense J. Spillers explains that race, and *blackness* in particular, “is the perfect affliction, if by that we mean an undeniable setup that not only shapes one’s view of things but also demands an endless response.”¹³¹

Conjoining Morrison’s imaginative inquiry with Fanon’s psychoanalytically-driven investigations, this chapter argues that the infliction of *blackness* manifests as a failed mourning, in which the ecologies of abjection and lack of ontological resistance that constitute the core of black subjectivity are endlessly announced through a politics of history that is inherited by bodies across a range of temporalities—an enunciation that demands response, but it is one that we are incapable of providing. My discussion of the subjectivizing process of *blackness* instigated through, what I theorize as a, failed mourning begins by: first, considering the constitution of the (black) self, then applying that discussion to Fanon’s work in *Black skin/White Masks*. In addressing the theoretical intercessions on the intersubjective constitution of race, this chapter articulates the process by which *the black body* is fashioned as both haunted and a haunting, returned always to itself “spread-eagle, disjointed, redone, [and] draped in mourning.”¹³²

During the University of Michigan’s “Tanner Lectures on Human Values” in 1988, less than a year after the publication of *Beloved*, Morrison delivered a lecture identifying the relationship between abjection and mourning, haunting, and *blackness* beyond the realm of fiction. In it Morrison pinpoints “the unspeakable things unspoken,” the invisible yet unmistakable presence of Afro-Americans in American literature, what she calls “a search for the

ghost in the machine.”¹³³ Morrison explains the impulse of mid-seventeenth century American authors who, at the height of abolitionist protests, incongruously produced texts almost exclusively within the genre of romance. Articulating this absence as a Derridain inflected haunting or nagging memory, she professed, “We can agree, I think, that invisible things are not necessarily ‘not-there’; that a void may be empty but not be a vacuum...certain absences are so stressed, so ornate, so planned, they call attention to themselves; arrest us with intentionality, and purpose...”¹³⁴ Morrison’s lecture exorcises the ghosts that haunt the machine of American Literature, speaking into existence the overwhelming absences in the work of Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman and the litany of other “canonic” novelists of the time. Through *Beloved*, Morrison announces the unspeakable void at the core of the American Renaissance Period, asking “What intellectual feats had to be performed by the author or his critic to erase me from a society seething with my presence...?”¹³⁵ Through an imaginative placing of her body within the societal framework of the American Renaissance, Morrison anticipates her nonexistence, subsequently structuring the psychoanalytic constitution of her (black) self through the anticipation of that affective absence. Extending from Morrison’s literary and imaginative theorizations of (black) nonexistence, I argue that the phenomenal construction of *the black body* leads to the psychological anticipation of nonexistence. As such, *blackness* operates as an object to be radically excluded from the body, even before its inclusion, thereby constantly hailing the self into subjectivity that precedes it. Specifically for racially marked bodies, this act of becoming originates in the absent presence of abjection at the core of one’s subjectivity, which manifests through an inconsolable mourning. Freud’s 1917 account of the pathological consequences of loss and/or death provides substantial insight into understanding *blackness* as a site of failed mourning.

Freud articulates mourning as the pained realities of loss, as the libido slowly withdraws from the absent object. Once “the ego succeed[s] in freeing its libido from the lost object” the work of mourning is accomplished.¹³⁶ Successful mourning is contingent upon: 1) the recognition of loss, and 2) the passing of time necessary to restore one’s ego.¹³⁷ Melancholia, contrarily, refuses both these stipulations, as it signifies the unconscious condition of the subject’s reality of loss. Freud clarifies, “The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies...from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished.” Conditioned by melancholic inhibitions, Freud continues,

...the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. This would suggest that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradiction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious. (emphasis his)¹³⁸

Morrison demonstrates the continual existence of these consumptive conditions of mourning within the social fabric of post-modernity. She does so through the simultaneous act of stitching together in order to recall—a re/membering of—the bodies constituted through an inconsolable absence of subjectivity. Morrison describes this mournful act of re/membrance through the repetitious beauty of jazz, which has “the ability to make you want [more], and remember the want. That is a part of what I want to put in my books. They will never fully satisfy—never fully.”¹³⁹ Morrison’s novels “remember the want” of racially marked bodies seeking to fulfill the inconsolable absence of life that characterized their subjectivity. In remembering that want, her work narrates the impossibility of filling the void created through the traumatic history of collective negation, but in a way that that negation is not experienced, but anticipated. Morrison holds open the quasi-evacuated space of negated humanity to return to the

moments that hold us in arrest with intentionality and purpose; she holds open the moment of collapsed meaning, in which *blackness* is formed through the performative interplay between the facticity of black flesh and the anticipation of the presence of specters carrying the cargo of the dead. Her persistent return to states of affective arrest, in which black flesh is fashioned by an overwhelming (pre)consciousness of abject and negated humanity, interestingly positions her narrative on the borders between mourning and melancholia.

As the pained recognition and memorialization of the “anonymous people called slaves,” Morrison’s text is a conscious recognition of the “*who*” that is lost. As the author has repeatedly admitted, *Beloved* explicitly targets an African-American demographic to function as a form of collective recognition of the economies of pain that have constituted the discursive and aesthetic formations of *the black body*, both during and in the aftermath of slavery. But in granting the “unspeakable things unspoken” an enunciative force, the author is keenly aware of the “*what*” that is lost as well. Morrison’s novel, as a return to the collapsed space of negated humanity, longs for the array of black subjectivities lost in the midst of slavery. Morrison’s novel demonstrates how *blackness* is constituted through a failed mourning, an object-loss that is made conscious through the phenomenality of the body, where the *who* and *what* are consciously recognized as lost. The psychoanalytic conditions of that loss, as compelled by the negated spatial orientation of the body, simultaneously constitute and exceed the body and for that reason can never be recovered. This is clearly demonstrated in *Beloved*, where the *who* and *what* of Sethe’s loss is not in question, as the baby’s spirit both constitute and exceed not only Sethe’s home, but her body as well.

It is important to note that the failed mourning of *blackness* is distinguished from articulations of melancholia offered by Paul Gilroy. In *Post-Colonial Melancholia*, Gilroy builds

not upon the work of Freud, but Alexander and Magarete Mitscherlich, whose psychoanalytic understandings of melancholia is based upon a *refusal* to mourn loss (i.e. Great Britain's refusal to mourn the loss of its empire), which in turn leads to the repetition of the affective conditions of that loss. *Blackness*, as constituted through a failed mourning, however, exceeds the act of repetition; it instead holds open the melancholic space of negated humanity in an effort to imagine subjectivity beyond the conditions of an emptied and impoverished ego. Through the acts of returning and holding open, the act of memorializing *blackness* "leave[s] an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this" Derrida explains, "is the very place of spectrality..."¹⁴⁰

This materialized effect of the corporeal knowledge of failed mourning has become known as, *the black body*; an embodied act of re/membering, akin to what Sam Durrant refers to a racial memory, which "passes itself as a memory of the body, a memory of the violence inflicted on the racially marked body, that is also a bodily memory, a memory that takes on a bodily form precisely because it exceeds both the individual's and the community's capacity for verbalization and mourning."¹⁴¹ *The black body* is the materialization of failed mourning, a specter of *blackness* that, through the act of re/membering, performs the double move of ontologizing and localizing the affective moments of collapse, the (inter)play between death and life, within the phenomenality of the body. The failed mourning of *blackness* is uniquely re/membered within bodies of black facticity, which are thrust into a dynamic act of becoming as they are situated in a flattened ontological and performative relation with psychoanalytic conditions of loss, negation, and death. And so, this hauntology proceeds by articulating *blackness* as a failed mourning, the recognition of the static affects of loss that, through the impossibility of recovery, re/members the melancholic inhibitions—the ecologies of

nonexistence, the inconsolable want—into a corporeal knowledge that is passed from generation to generation. *Blackness* as a failed mourning is about the absences genealogically recorded on the body, buried as deep in the biological disposition as it is in the psychoanalytic self, continually returning the body to a space of negated humanity. Within the flesh, there resurrected, are the thousands of specters of death and abjection so densely packed that the force of their reveal causes the body to implode upon it self, splitting the self into the multitude from which the specters emerged.

Beloved elaborates the ways in which the body is imbued with, what Harvey Young describes as, a critical memory, what I would rename as, a critical anticipation, that “assists the process of identifying similarities—shared experiences and attributes of being and becoming—among black folk not by presuming that black bodies have the same memories but by acknowledging that related histories create experiential overlap.”¹⁴² The related histories and re/memories Young speaks of are those once-lived experiences founded in the quasi-evacuated space of negated humanity and signified through an unrecoverable loss: black captivity, racial segregation, racial profiling, sexualized objectification, economic, social, and political discrimination, and many other forms of racial violence and state terror. What follows this historical experiential overlap, according to Young, is the phenomenal, that is to say corporeal, anticipation of those histories of affective loss. “When popular connotations [and histories] of blackness are mapped across or internalized within black people,” Young asserts, “the result is the creation of *the black body*. This second body, an abstracted and imagined figure, shadows or doubles the real one. It is *the black body* and not a particular, flesh-and-blood body that is the target of a racializing projection.”¹⁴³ *The black body* is the carnal form of the specters of *blackness*, carrying the affective anticipation and loss of negated humanity. It is, therefore,

through the phenomenal figure of *the black body* that individual bodies, in the aftermath of slavery, are thrust into the drama of becoming haunted from the inside.

The inaugural moment of this becoming, according to Young, is characterized through an experience of misrecognition. Providing an example Young explains, “When a driver speeds past a pedestrian and yells ‘Nigger,’ she launches her epithet at an idea of the body, an instantiation of her understanding of blackness. The pedestrian, who has been hailed and experiences the violence of the address, which seems to erase her presence and transform her into something else (an idea held by another), becomes a casualty of misrecognition.”¹⁴⁴ Concluding, Young asserts, “The shadow overwhelms the actual figure...blackness manages to become a fact through repeated deployment across a range of bodies, [and] encourages the (mis)recognition of individuated bodies (a body) as *the black body*.”¹⁴⁵

Young’s work provides a lucid example of the process by which *blackness* materializes through the localization and ontologization of the critical re/memories of nonexistence upon the body; it reveals how *blackness* operates as the anticipated confluence of the affective excesses of loss and the agential force of existence to become a specter—“the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone other.”¹⁴⁶ I challenge Young’s work, however, and argue that the act of becoming that personifies *blackness* is not characterized by misrecognition, but rather by the act that precedes misrecognition, an anticipation that materializes through the gaze itself. I argue that the example Young cites is not an experience of misrecognition, where the presence of the body is misread and replaced by the phenomenal figure of *blackness*. Instead, Young’s example demonstrates how the conditions of negated humanity have become indissociable from the body itself through its anticipation. The aforementioned experience is one of an anticipated negation, in which the psychoanalytic

conditions of loss are projected onto bodies themselves. The driver does not launch her epithet at an idea, but a body whose visibility grants the driver an initial agency to announce that body's degraded state. (Mis)recognition implies that bodies of factic blackness have an ability to signify something other than the sociohistorical conditions of its emergence. The fact remains, however, that *the black body* is an object whose matter, the flesh-and-blood materiality of the body, anticipates a specific form, *blackness*—a phenomenal condition that forecloses possibilities of subjectivity. *The black body*, therefore, is not merely a shadow or double of the flesh-and-blood body because the gaze inherent to the collective failed mourning of *blackness* positions them as one and the same—one cannot become a casualty of misrecognition, for, as Morrison's novel and Fanon's narration delicately illustrates, *the specter of blackness* is an anticipated casualty, an unnamed victim who, through its putative relationship to abjection, is situated on the precipice between life and death.

In its most unsophisticated terms, the notion of abjection is intended to signify meanings of extreme debasement, wretchedness, and ignominy. In 1982 Julia Kristeva, through her publication *Powers of Horror: An Essay On Abjection*, brings the term into conversation within theoretical circles by forwarding the notion of abjection as seminal to the configuration of the psychoanalytic and phenomenal self. She posits that the subject is formed by intense, affective relationships to the objects that it encounters. Certain objects are affectively charged with experiences of horror and revulsion, which in turn, instills fear and/or loathing within its relational subject. Thus, these objects are decidedly undesirable and come to be considered by the subject as abject, and therefore that which must be avoided or cast out from the body. Yet, the act of casting an object away from the body insufficiently articulates how abjection functions to form the self. Avoiding the abject is not encompassed solely by the subject's avoidance of a

particular object, but more so the subject's internal desire to avoid the negative affective charge produced by the encounter, thus creating a distinct psychological border between the "I" of the self and the "otherness" of the object.¹⁴⁷

Joan Copjec further elucidates the tie between abjection and affect in *May '68: The Emotional Month*. Copjec articulates affect as that which makes strange: "Affect does not familiarize, domesticate, or subjectivize...on the contrary, it estranges."¹⁴⁸ Affect has the ability to interrupt the relationship between a subject and object by removing what Lacan once called the "belong-to-me-aspect."¹⁴⁹ This belonging-together once served as the glue to the object-subject relationship, but is now, through the movement of affective, exposed as artifice. Subsequently, the subject is moved to re-signify her/his subject position. In this way, affect can be understood as the resonance of a movement that pushes an individual toward the act of signification. Copjec highlights affect's intrinsic relationship to signification by forwarding it as a movement of thought. "Affect inhabits passage" Copjec explains, "an excess of activity over each successive step constitutes the momentum of walking."¹⁵⁰ Affect continually forces the individual to walk the plank toward subjecthood until it eventually dives headfirst into a sea of its own desires, that is, its own subjectivity. Such a plunge, however, often happens with considerable hesitation: "It sometimes happens that thinking does grind to a halt, stop moving, becomes inhibited...When this happens, affect is know by a more specific name; it is called anxiety." Copjec continues, "According to one of Freud's formulations, anxiety occurs when what was repressed and should have remained hidden becomes visible. We are now able to revise this. What erupts into awareness in moments of anxiety is not something that was formerly repressed (since affect never is), but the disjunction that defines displacement, which suddenly impresses itself as a gap or break in perception."¹⁵¹ It is this type of affect, anxiety, which

characterizes abjection. When a subject is estranged from a particular relationship with an object, that is, when a subject experiences a gap or break in their perceived phenomenal relationship with an object, an anxiety is produced. This anxiety arises from the exposure of artifice; the border between the body and the object is at once constructed and blurred so that it may be reified to constitute a more definitive self.

Kristeva holds that abjection “settles [the subject] within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which...makes [the subject] ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws [the subject] toward the place where meaning collapses.”¹⁵² I read Kristeva’s “fragile texture” as the fragility of the body’s phenomenal experience, desirous to acquire knowledge through its perception. The body learns, and performs its knowledge, ceaselessly, always moving to define its corporeality as distinct from what our perception reveals as abject. This definition can only happen in moments of “collapsed meanings” where the subject is moved to convulsion and therefore compelled to (re)signify the border between the body and the abject. In this respect, the abject and the self are inverted reflections of the other—mirrored—as the self is constituted through abjection.

Morrison’s text holds open these stagnant moments of affective collapse where the body is literally thrown into convulsion in an effort to (re)signify its borders. This view of abjection, from a phenomenological perspective, leads to a deep consideration of the collective intentional arc of *the black body*, where it is understood as an abject object whose “matter,” the flesh-and-blood body or the material facticity of the body, through historical series of collapsed moments is continually resignified as a specific “form,” *blackness*. Offering a succinct explanation of the relationship between abjection and *the black body*, literary theorist Darieck Scott claims “...abjection is a way of describing an experience, an inherited (psychically introjected)

historical legacy, and a social condition defined and underlined by a defeat.”¹⁵³ I engage the works of Morrison and Fanon to articulate how encounters with *blackness*, because of the weight of its psychically introjected, abject historical capital, acts as a moment of collapsed meaning that affectively moves both racially marked and “unmarked” bodies to signify a psychological and, through a phenomenal extension of that psychosis, a corporeal boundary between itself and the *blackness* it has encountered.

I push this understanding forward, however, arguing that *blackness* operates as an anticipation of abjection, what I understand as a failed mourning. *Blackness* is produced through an event of subjectivation that anticipates socioaesthetic and biopolitical attempts to conjoin the matter of black bodies with forms of abjection. In light of this, the chapter asks: How does the anticipation of abjection lead to a pathological inability to jettison the abject because of its non-present presence? How does this lead to an understating of, as Fanon asserts, “the image of one’s body [as] solely negating” making the body an image in the ‘third person?’”¹⁵⁴

Fanon’s Specter and the Gaze of Mourning

In chronicling the hurt of resurrection, as well as the abundance of life it spurs, Morrison dramatizes the failed mourning of *blackness*, documenting the performative materializations of the specter of *blackness*, and outlining its ghostly presence ingrained in abject histories of economic, sociopolitical, and socioaesthetic conditions in the United States. Cultivating an intimate, performative relationship with particular bodies, the specters of death achieve phenomenal existence through the possession of the body it haunts; *blackness* assumes a corporeal form—the word, once again, becomes flesh. This section of the chapter continues its theorizations on how the specter of *blackness*, as conjured through a process of failed mourning, conjoins the affective excesses of loss with the agential force of phenomenality to exert a

powerful force over all bodies within its magnetic field. Extending from the second chapter's discussion of mourning as more than a construction of presence, but a carrier of an interpellative gaze that ontologizes and localizes the dead's presence, I ask: What are the consequences of a failed mourning of *blackness*, if its gaze is turned toward one's own body? Further, what are the corporeal and pathological consequences of localizing the dead in one's own body? This chapter addresses how *blackness* is constructed through the material trace of not only physical death, but the ecologies of negated humanity as an affective moment of collapse that is, as Morrison's novel highlights, imperceptibly sedimented into the bodies of those who remain.

Fanon's introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* mirrors Morrison's text by analogizing the spatial and temporal orientation that saturates black subjectivity through the mourning of one's lost subjecthood, as well as the affective disorders arising out of the ecologies abjection and negated humanity. "Blacks are men who are black," Fanon rehearses, "in other words, owing to a series of affective disorders they have settled into a universe from which we have to extricate them... We are aiming at nothing less than to liberate the black man from himself."¹⁵⁵ The recital of Fanon's experience of these affective disorders is articulated through his poetic narration in "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," the correctly translated title of *Black Skin, White Mask's* fifth chapter. Fanon narrates the interminable cycle of signification that begins and ends at the black facticity of the body.

Fanon, like Morrison, and Shakespeare before her, substantiates ontology through theorizations of haunting. And so Fanon's recitation of the subjectivating event of *blackness* begins in a state of failed mourning. Fanon confesses, "I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects."¹⁵⁶ Fanon's Merleau-Ponty inspired approach to bodily experience

intimates that this origin is his body, the starting point for his relation to the world. Fanon's prose driven elaboration further reveals his inability to dwell in his body.¹⁵⁷ The space of "shared inhabitation" between the world and Fanon's body does not produce a sense of orientation, but the act of reconfiguration produces a sense of negation—"In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating."¹⁵⁸ Read through the affective disorders produced through a sense of failed mourning *the black body* is locked within phenomenality, that is to say, it is bound to the transfiguration of the histories of nonexistence into the visual manifestation of *blackness*. *Beloved* demonstrated the force of this union. In Fanon's text this union is observed and articulated through the live experience that "...not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."¹⁵⁹ The agency of *the black body* to participate within a regime of (visual) reciprocity with the world is negated, restricting bodies of black facticity within the temporally oriented realm of *blackness-as-form*, a space of spectrality that continually returns *the black body* to the affective collapse of mourning, which localizes the sociohistorical realities of nonexistence and abjection within the flesh.

The localization of the specter is exemplified in Fanon's frequently quoted "Look! A Negro!" anecdote; the bodily histories that have been repressed emerge in the young child's utterance. It is a moment of rupture that results in an anxiety, which, for Fanon produces the sensations of attack and collapse, his body ultimately giving way to a historicized epidermal schema. "Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from myself, and gave myself up as an object."¹⁶⁰ Fanon's encounter with the abject leads to a break in perception, marking the distance between *himself* (his matter) and *his self* (his form). And just as Paul D

submits to the overwhelming impulses of his body, Fanon is thrown into a spitting, tensing, sweating, aching, vomiting, trembling convulsion that causes “a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over [his] body.”¹⁶¹ In this continual moment of arrest/collapse, Fanon is unable to locate his agency, bonding with abjection through the unspeakable act of mourning.

For Fanon, the failed mourning of *blackness* materializes as an inability to surpass the symbiotic forces of negation and self-consciousness, a liberation unachieved due to a failure to descend into, what he calls, a “zone of nonbeing, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge.”¹⁶² This zone marks a space where one’s humanity is constructed neither on the basis of negation nor self-consciousness, but is an arid region beyond signification. Because black bodies are caught within the cycle of signification that inscribes history upon the body, they are continually subjected to moments of affective collapse, yet lack the ability to descend into the zone of nonbeing, to engage a “genuine new departure” that (re)signifies the borders between the abject and the self. Because of this inability, *the black body* is no longer a mirror reflection of abjection, but signifies abjection itself. *Blackness* is articulated through a constant state of failed mourning that materializes through continual breach. Bodies that experience the condition of being *black* engage their subjectivity through the “spitting, swearing, moaning, tensing, sweating, aching, vomiting” of encountering their own bodies as blackness-as-object/blackness-as-abject. A breach that Fanon, through repeated acknowledgement, learns to anticipate:

The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on

me; it is, rather, a definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world.¹⁶³

I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*.¹⁶⁴

Interpreting Fanon's narrative through the lens of hauntology, we understand that this ontological anticipation is instigated through the gaze inherent to mourning. This is made evident in Fanon's attempt to overcome the ecologies of nonexistence by seeking reciprocity in the gaze of the Other. He writes, "Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body... would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost, and taking me out of the world put me back in the world."¹⁶⁵ The inconsolable want at the core of black subjectivity is conveyed in Fanon's plea to be taken out of the cyclical space of static abjection and returned to the zone of non-being, an ever-reaching space of phenomenal ambiguity. Hoping to overcome the "suffocating reification," the continual moment of arrest in which his black flesh is constantly overwhelmed by specters of negation, Fanon turns toward the gaze of the Other to restore his "lightness of being," and set his ontological drama in motion.

The gaze of the specter, first, marks Fanon's body as witness; his body has been collapsed by temporality and ontology. As discussed in the previous chapter, the act of furtive looking performed by the specter interpellates its witness into: 1) the body in the present that has yet to look, 2) the future body that will look, and 3) the past body that has been looked at. Locked within a cycle of failed mourning, Fanon's body is positioned as the body in the present the has yet to look; the desire to escape the suffocating moment of arrest by appealing to the gaze of the Other positions his body as that which must look; and the negation of the Other's gaze positions his body as looked at by the specter of *blackness* long before Fanon's act of recognition occurs. This tripling effect of *blackness* is encapsulated in his text: "And then we were given the

occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negation. It's an image in the third person."¹⁶⁶ Through Fanon's narrative we understand that the process by which bodies of black facticity engage the event of subjectivation is characterized by a submission to the tripling effect induced by the specter of *blackness*—the ghosted constitution of the self through a failed mourning, which manifests not only as being haunted but also as a haunting.

In this way, *the black body* has the ability to occupy the space of spectrality, demarcated by the line between the abject and normalized. *The black body* functionally serves as the spectral, armored gatekeeper of abjection. As Derrida reminds, King Hamlet's armor "may be but the body of a real artifact, a kind of technical prosthesis, a body foreign to the spectral body that it dresses, dissimulates, and protects, masking even its identity."¹⁶⁷ The production of *the black body*, which acts as the specter's "technical prosthesis," preserves the identity of the specter. The specter's armor, *the black body*, constructs an asymmetrical relationship with its witness, granting the specter an ability to "see without being seen, but to speak in order to be heard" that denies the reciprocity of its witness.¹⁶⁸ This asymmetrical relationship characterizes the young boy's reaction to Fanon's body. The young boy's fear of being eaten by the Negro is not a fear of literal consumption, but rather a fear of being interpellated into the space of spectrality, the very abjection the boy is attempting to avoid. The young child, for the first time, recognizes through this moment of arrest, that he too is positioned on the precarious abyss of abjection; he is recognizing how his self is constituted through the ghostly anticipation of abjection signified through *the black body*. The specter has drawn the child to the precarious borders of being. The sociopolitical and socioaesthetic ecologies of nonexistence, upon which the presence of the

specter is constructed, work to preserve these vocabularies. In so doing, the phenomenal reach of the specter is extended and the asymmetrical relationship experienced by bodies of black facticity, as witnesses of the specters inherent to their phenomenal existence, is preserved.

The specter's ability to see without being seen maintains the hallucination of its autonomy by manipulating the visibility of black facticity. This is demonstrated in Fanon's attempt at ontological restoration, which fails in the face of the phlegmatic gaze of the Other. "Fixed" within the visual hallucination of the specter, Fanon enters a state of negation so tense that he, like Hamlet, is catapulted into a frenzy that requires a (re)signification of his ontological borders. Hamlet's return of the specter's gaze forced him, for the first time, to consider the ontology of being and nonbeing. This moment of ontological reconsideration for Fanon, contrarily, turns the gaze inward to mark the recognition of his body in a predisposed state of possession. Fanon witnesses the presence of the specter of *blackness* within the gaze of the Other: "I see in this white gaze" Fanon states, "that it's the arrival is not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!" Fanon's articulation of the becoming of a Negro marks a body whose materiality anticipates the arrival of the affective ecologies of nonexistence. Through this anticipation the citational link between the ecologies of nonexistence and its origin within slavery's culture of death disappears within Fanon's body, just as the affective resonance of *Beloved* disappears in the body of *Sethe*. The confluence of phenomenality and spectrality is Fanon's body, which provokes the hallucination of the autonomy of *blackness*; the Negro *becomes* through the disappearance of the specter's origin that is inherent to the body's appearance—"I am overdetermined from the outside, I am a slave not to the 'idea' others have of me, but to my appearance. I arrive slowly in the world; sudden emergences are no longer my habit. I crawl along. The white gaze, the only valid one, it is

already dissecting me. I am *fixed*.”¹⁶⁹ Fanon is articulating the state of being haunted, which Derrida suggests as a state of being overwhelmed with a sense of obsession, being a constant fear, a fixed idea, or the lingering resonance of a nagging memory.¹⁷⁰

This nagging resonance is announced through the affective anxiety of the young child. An additional return to Derrida’s theorizations of haunting explains that the specter possesses not only the ability to see without being seen, but to speak in order to be heard. The child’s utterance is, as Derrida writes, a falling back of the voice of the unseen law-maker, that is to say the visual and aural realities of the ecologies of death and nonexistence, that stands before him. The specter assumes another carnal form through the possession of the young child. The child’s blind submission, marked by his utterance, signals the aural manipulation of the specter as it uses the sonic and affective registers of the body to confirm its autonomy.

However, bodies blackened through the act of possession, that is to say bodies inhabited by the specter of *blackness*, have the potential to expose its artifice as a “technical prosthesis” by blurring the line between the abject and the non-abject. Bodies of a black facticity uniquely positioned as the haunted and the haunting, possess the ability to make strange the notion of *blackness* itself. Specifically within the United States this unnerving performance materializes through the deconstruction of the falsely dichotomous vocabularies of *whiteness* and *blackness*. The following chapter explores the performative potential of this capability by exploring the voice of *blackness*, and ludic possibilities therein.

CHAPTER 4: DESCEND: TO FALL INTO THE SPECTER'S VOICE

Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*¹⁷¹

I feel in myself a soul as immense as the world, truly
a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers, my chest has the power to expand
without limit. I am a master
and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple.
Yesterday, awakening to the world,
I saw the sky turn upon itself utterly and wholly.
I wanted to rise, but the disemboweled silence
fell back upon me, its wings
paralyzed. Without responsibility, straddling
Nothingness and Infinity,
I began to weep.

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin/White Masks*¹⁷²

It is a familiar scene. Lost somewhere amidst a miasma of reefer smoke and the even more intoxicating heat of Louis Armstrong's trumpet, he waits in a lyrical break, possessed by the sounds of an underworld as dark as it is majestic. Descending far beyond the River Styx, where the iridescent silhouettes of ghosts long forgotten softly drown, he arrives at the netherworld's melancholic heart; it beats with the tempo of his origin story—"In the beginning there was blackness...Black is...and black ain't...black will make you, or black will unmake you."¹⁷³ The novel's nameless protagonist, overcome by the dissonant sounds of *blackness*, retreats from the cadence of Louis' horn to find what remains of himself still in the damp void of

a Manhattan basement. As he ascends from this “underworld of sound,” with him emerges the suffocating echo of the underworld’s cry: “What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?” Unable to address the complexities of this call, this son of invisibility pulls his past into the present to narrate his tragic romance with impermanence. Ralph Ellison, by way of his invisible man, narrates the ontological problem of a black (and blue) existence, delicately unfolding the politics and poetics of (in)visibility to reveal the process by which the affective ecologies of abjection and negation speak through, and beyond, the aesthetic regimes of *blackness*.

In this way, Ellison’s text operates as an imaginative conservatory for Fanon’s theorizations. When placed in conversation, these texts offer a productive interpretation of Orlando Patterson’s claim that power is exercised upon *the black body* through the sustained control of its cultural modes of production. This sustained control, I argue, is demonstrated in the specter’s ability, through the aural dimensions of its presence, to conjure its own autonomy by concealing that of the body it possesses. Fanon’s narrative illuminates the anticipation of the specter, and the subsequent grafting of the affective ecologies of death into an epidermal script that inhabits the insides of *the black body* to construct it as overdetermined from the outside. In this atmosphere of upturned skies—a time out of joint—the disemboweled silence is heard and the depths of ontology are revealed to the witness who rapidly approaches the possibility of descent into one’s own *essentia*. Paralleling Hamlet’s incessant downward spiral, Fanon and Ellison’s protagonist are positioned in the liminality between Infinity and Nothingness: a collapsed moment of disjointed temporality constructed through the announced presence of the specter, and experienced through the tripling of the self. Unlike the Prince of Denmark, who, despite his paralyzing inaction, ultimately falls forward into an ontological abyss, Fanon’s phenomenally black body restricts his psychoanalytic self from leaping into the depths of this

zone of nonbeing. Ellison, however, pens into existence that which his contemporary cannot, imaginatively sketching the fall into this ontological abyss. This affective collapse of time and the descent made possible through the specter's aurality is rendered through the poetic musicality of Armstrong's horn, which grants the musician the uncanny ability to "make poetry out of being invisible."¹⁷⁴ Through this descent, the potentialities of being, what Ellison calls, "The Blackness of Blackness," is revealed.

I follow Ellison and Derrida, Fanon and Shakespeare into the subterranean nadirs of black hauntology. Occupying the point of convergence between these texts, this chapter argues that the aural dimensions of the specter of *blackness* materializes through an affective stagnation, a collapsed moment resulting in a deep sense of failed mourning, which breaks or disjoins time. However, the mobilization of the aural and affective registers of the body, which are constructed in the socioaesthetic and biopolitical relation between *blackness* and abjection, announce the performative potentialities contained within this moment of collapsed temporality; the voice of the specter creates the conditions of possibility for descent into the arid region beyond the ontological. Therefore, this chapter will first sketch the conditions of affective stagnation that produce *the black body* as an immovable object within fields of signification. Then discussing how this simultaneous collapse of temporality and visibility provokes an ontological descent that is both precarious and promising.

The Stillness of Sound: Visuality, Aurality, and *Blackness*

Ellison's inspired fiction dramatizes the phenomenal experience and psychological consequence of journeying through the world, unseen. His narrative interrogates spectrality, the porous divide between the material and the ethereal that *the black body*, through its ontological fungibility, is able to traverse. Through this investigation, Ellison reveals how the visibility of

blackness encompasses a host of sensations and histories, articulating the ways in which historical discourses work in concert with the entirety of our sensorium to construct the ontological locus of a subject that is identified within a field of vision. Advancing the hauntological theorization of *Specters and Spooks*, I argue that the ontologization of *blackness* solely through visual regimes constructs a subject that disappears through its appearance. Describing this disappearance as an inconsolable want at the core of his subjectivity, or, as Fanon might suggest, the pathological manifestation of his body as a solely negating image—as invisible—Ellison confesses, “You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you’re a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fist, you curse and swear to make them recognize you. And alas, it’s seldom successful.”¹⁷⁵

Ellison’s confession articulates the phenomenal experience of *blackness* as conceived through affective registers of the aural and the haptic. This is echoed in Nicole Fleetwood’s monograph, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, in which she argues that *the black body* exceeds visual perception; rather it is a multisensory experience of synesthesia, the condition in which the experience of a sensation automatically and involuntarily leads the sensory experience of another. This is described through yet another confession, that of Jesse Jackson Jr., who admits being afraid after hearing footsteps behind him late at night and being relieved when he turned to see a white man. This example demonstrates how the historical discourses of *blackness* are transfigured through aural registers that involuntarily and automatically trigger the sight of *the black body*. This fear is only relieved when the sight of *blackness* dissipates in the presence of *whiteness*.

With this theoretical foundation, Fleetwood argues for the fluidity of *blackness* as that which is not indelibly inked onto bodies or objects, but circulates: “Blackness fills in space

between matter, between object and subject, between bodies, between looking and being looked upon. It fills the void and is the void. Through its circulation,” she continues, “blackness attaches to bodies and narratives coded as such but it always exceeds these attachments.”¹⁷⁶ *The black body* is a particular object that, because of its move from signifier to sign, “gives itself,” in the language of phenomenology, in a way that is more than what is gazed upon, that is it carries a corporeal surplus, a meaning that escapes the boundaries of the sign. *Blackness* runneth over; it eludes signification with an excess of meaning that constantly signals the absence that is lost in the flesh of the body.

However, the affective surplus of *blackness*, explicitly during the Reconstruction Era, was harnessed and converted into a self-regulatory scene of subjection by limiting the excessive meaning of its visual signification. As a result, *the black body* lacked “movement within a field of signification” resulting in a “powerful stillness.”¹⁷⁷ As a “unified” sign, subjected to this “powerful stillness,” the image of *the black body* became the authoritative source of *blackness*, and the excesses beyond the image—the referent to an absence it never held—were repressed. Attempts to recover the absence that was never there, the Nothingness Fanon eludes to, led to the condition of mourning that could never be redressed. Hartman acknowledges those conditions of mourning that resulted from the delimitation of black visibility:

The abolition of slavery presumably announced the end of subjugation based on race or servitude, that the ascendancy of formal race—that is, immutable, inherent, and naturalized racial differences—perpetuated the “stigma of inferiority based on race...” While the freed would no longer “feel the disheartening influences of belonging to a subjugated race,” it was expected that they would “have to struggle under the difficulties and embarrassments arising out of recent slavery, or connected with a social repugnance founded principally on physical traits...” Certainly the “repugnance of the physical” denotes the abjection of blackness and the ambivalent character of the abject exemplified

by the conflicted and uncertain incorporation of black citizens into the national body...¹⁷⁸

The post-Emancipation sociopolitical and discursive formations of *blackness* were articulated through a “repugnance of the physical,” as well as a social repugnance, that functionally prohibited the fluidity and the excess of *blackness* by arresting and capturing the image of *the black body* within the narrative scripts of potential citizenship. As such, *blackness* as an abject form needed to be expunged through methods of biopolitical “quarantine,” which forced the aesthetic interpretation, articulation, and performance of *blackness* within a flattened epistemological visibility. Because of the flattened visibility, “the complexity of black lived experience and discourses of race are effaced.”¹⁷⁹ The bodies of black facticity that lived beyond the sign of *blackness*, that is, beyond the black iconicity of ideal citizenship represented in the image of *the black body*, were politically, socially, economically, or physically effaced.

This is the milieu in which Du Bois is situated. His rhetoric operates within a field of signification and vision that consistently produces with the image/sign of *the black body* and the signification of *blackness* it authenticates. The question that grounds his work is the same question at the fore of Fleetwood’s theorization of *blackness* and visibility: “How does it feel to be a problem?”¹⁸⁰ Rearticulated in the words of Fleetwood, “...the black body is always problematic in the field of vision because of the discourses of captivity and capitalism that frame this body as such.”¹⁸¹ Du Bois, Fleetwood, and the multitude of bodies marked as black are forced to reckon with the specters that trouble their presence. This encounter between the phenomenal presence of the body and the spectral weight by which it is constituted is explicated through Du Bois’ often-quoted passage in the opening pages of *Souls*.¹⁸² Positioning the Negro in a field of vision, Du Bois explains the constitution of *the black body* through the act of looking, whether it be through the gaze of a viewer from the “other world” or the act of “looking

at one's self through the eyes of the other.”¹⁸³ Du Bois' theory of double-consciousness recognizes the spectral trace of *blackness*, as well as the acknowledgement of a second-sight used to observe the temporized signification of *blackness* within a particular moment of affective collapse. Du Bois' work, then, attempts to challenge the nature of that signification in hopes of recouping the repressed excesses of *blackness*.

To do this, Du Bois turns to aesthetics and ultimately performance to develop the trope of the New Negro as the central figure in re-visioning the signification of *the black body*. As Eric King Watts argues, “We must treat the New Negro as a kind of ‘artifice.’ We must attend to the productive forces captured in black artistic practices making emergent forms of black visibility and sensibility...”¹⁸⁴ Du Bois' employment of aesthetics attempted to harness the “productive forces” responsible for the emergence of one artifactual body, *the black body*, in order to replace it with another, the New Negro. Du Bois' initial hope was that this new signification would ultimately unchain material black bodies from its abject form through political, aesthetic, social extension. As he put it, “the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic...”¹⁸⁵ For Du Bois, this political unity does not reside within this new subjectivity of *blackness*, nor in the aesthetic practices that structured it, but rather it is a production of the affective resonances those aesthetic practices and new subjects announce. The affective resonance of the New Negro is understood, first, through its epistemological disruption of *blackness* as signified through *the black body*; and, second, through its desire to be signified, to quite simply “make sense,” not only within visual but discursive fields as well.

Du Bois operates within the regimes of what Watts has identified as voice; “a phenomenon that is brought to life through artistic and aesthetic practices that move audiences into a sensual relationship with discourse, impelling a public acknowledgment of the affective and ethical dimensions of speech.”¹⁸⁶ I understand voice to be the enuciative force that exposes the relationality between one’s experience of one’s own body, the discourse(s) that condition that body, and the world in which that body is placed. The unasked query that structures *Souls* is not asked through speech, but heard through voice. Voice is fluid, cresting at particular historical nodes and through particular aesthetic practices and dispersing at the very moment of its enunciation. Du Bois’ work became an integral component of the New Negro movement, as a manifestation of voice was used to rearticulate the hyper-phenomenal experience of *the black body*.

Fleetwood’s investigation is an attempt to understand how voice continues to circulate within the visual field of *blackness*, exploring the “affective power of black cultural production or the calling upon the spectator to do certain work...”¹⁸⁷ Fleetwood’s work, as is Du Bois’, is founded upon the assumed privileged position of the spectator that calls upon the viewer “...to do certain work, to perform a function as arbiter, or decoder, of the visual signs that become aligned with blackness.”¹⁸⁸ Du Bois and Fleetwood harken toward the excess and absence that lingers behind the image of *the black body*. But instead of occupying the zone in which that excess/absence “exists,” they pull the excess into the field of signification in order to reconstitute the sign of *blackness*.

This, I believe, is a necessary exercise, as it does expand the realm of possibility of knowing *blackness*, that is, the epistemological understanding of *blackness*.¹⁸⁹ However, if this is the only action taken, the war of signification wages on within a closed hermeneutical circuit; the

object of sight, *the black body*, has little control over its arbitration or decoding, as that autonomy is given over to the viewer whose gaze acts as a tool of negation. Or to use Du Bois' terminology, *the black body* can only know the image from "the other world." Both Daphne Brooks and Hartman demonstrates this through a discussion of minstrel performance, which was used as a vehicle of white epistemological exploration. The harnessing and control of the corporeal excess of *blackness* becomes the foundational theatrics of minstrel performance. Here, the excessive meanings of *blackness* were (re)possessed and replaced with yet another singular semantic container, which ironically (re)presented *blackness* as a fetishized spectacle of excessive buffoonery, sexual promiscuity, and all out pandemonium. Minstrel performance, yet again, nullified the excesses of the signifier of *blackness*, in an effort to claim a sense of explorative mobility for *whiteness*, its semantic doppelganger. With this logic, *the black body* can claim the grotesque excess of marginalization, but not by operating outside the limits of signification, but by pulling excess into the field of signification. This accepts the ontological stagnation of *blackness*—accepts the notion that *blackness* can be unified as a sign—and functions as an epistemological reaction that attempts to rearticulate how one *knows blackness*.

The gaze of the Other represents the subjugation of visibility, subsuming even the affective resonance of voice, as that which brings *blackness* to life through artistic and aesthetic practice. This view of the relationship between *blackness* and visibility leaves an important question unexamined: from where does this life spring? This logic of visibility is structured upon a gaze that will ultimately lead back (again, for the first time) to conditions of failed mourning; the signification of *blackness* will be a return of the anticipation of an absence that never was. The reiterative cycle of signification is a perpetual movement from one moment of collapse to the next. However the life of *blackness*, the next section will argue, lies not in these moments of

collapse, but in the upshot of kinetic force produced through that implosion. Using theorists such as Fred Moten, and Kristeva, I suggest that black life lies in the gruesome sound of moving “from loss to loss, [until] nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver.”¹⁹⁰

Into the Uncanny Valley of Death: The Aesthetics of Descent

This hauntological investigation has worked to outline how, through a series of phenomenal and psychoanalytic conjuring tricks, the ecologies of nonexistence have grafted the bodily and visual configuration(s) of *blackness*. As such, *the black body* is thrust into an intimate relationship with death. It is the goal of this section to explain how this deathly relation reveals the capacious life of *blackness*. Advancing the third chapter’s articulation of the relationship between abjection, aesthetics, and *blackness* through a consideration of afro-pessimistic and afro-optimistic theories of black life, this section attempts to address the question of origin left unanswered by the aforementioned theories of visibility. Using Ellison’s *Invisible Man* as a heuristic guide, I argue that the origin of *the black body*, conceived always in excess of itself, exists far beyond the regimes of visibility and ontology constructed to contain *blackness* within an undying cycle of signification. The balance of this chapter exposes how, through its relationship to abjection and death, *the black body* traverses the discords of signification, ultimately enabling a descent into and beyond the knowability of *blackness*.

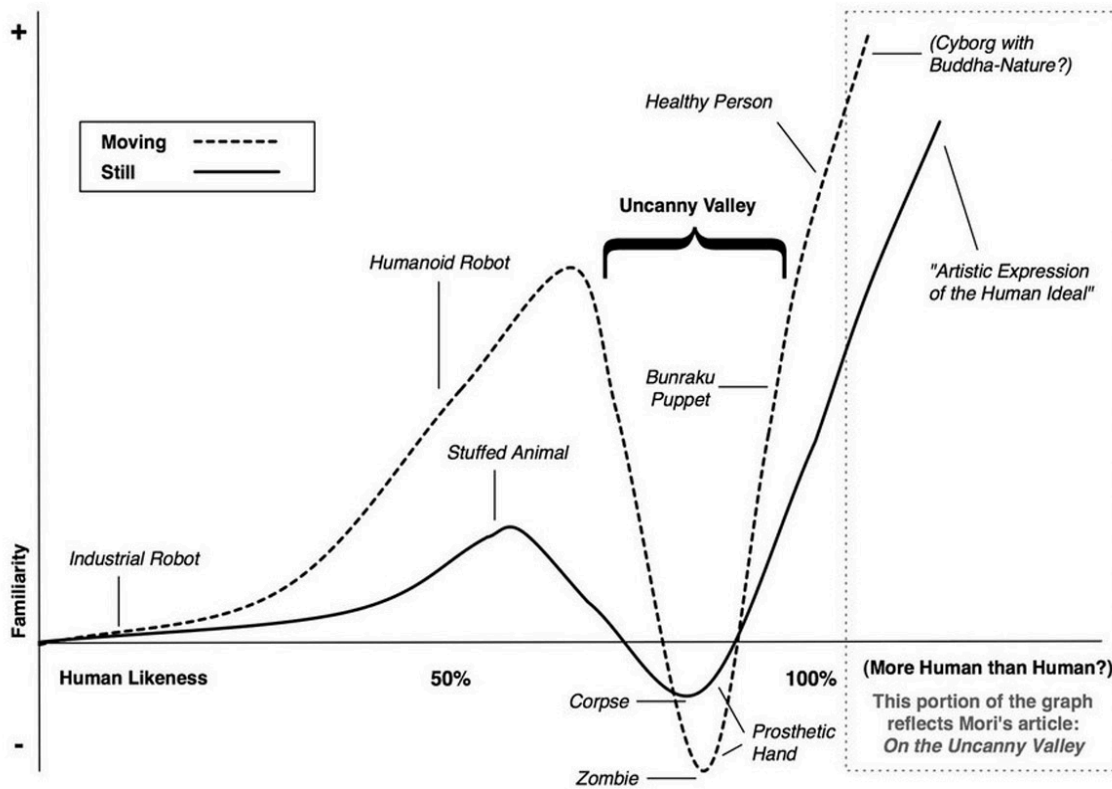
This section is foregrounded by the previous chapters’ discussion of the psychoanalytic conditions and phenomenal consequences that result from the overwhelming (pre)consciousness of negation and exclusion from the categories of humanity, which propagates the visual and aesthetic production and reproduction of *blackness* as an abject form. Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection* offers myriad examples of the production and reproduction of *blackness* through

associations with an abject visuality. She highlights how bodies of black facticity were transfigured into abject commodities through the simultaneous “pleasure(s) of terror,” that pleasure derived from inducing mental, physical, and physic harm, and the “terror(s) of pleasure,” the horror inherent within scenes of forced enjoyment.¹⁹¹ As the former chapters illustrate, *blackness* emerged as an embrace of disappearance: a performative becoming that reached for the autonomy of one’s own subjecthood by using the performative and affective weight of *blackness* as a tactic of resistance and strategy of redemption. Considering the origin of *the black body* in light of this performative hauntology of death, we must ask: is it possible to disassociate *blackness* from its cyclical, performative, and visual signification of the body, and instead understand it through the kinetic, transformative energy it possesses by virtue of its production through the powerful stillness of affective collapse? An answer lies in articulating the aesthetics of descent through an investigation of the aesthetic theory of the Uncanny Valley. Such an investigation reveals how the affective moments of collapse can be mobilized to literally and imaginatively, that is to say phenomenally and psychically, push the subject pass the significations of death.

The theoretical scaffold of the Uncanny Valley emerges from the work of roboticist Masahiro Mori, who in 1970, heavily indebted to Freud’s 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” published an article entitled “Bukimi No Tani” (translated to mean “valley of eeriness”) in the journal *Energy*. Mori originally hypothesized that nonhuman entity, operating on one of two registers, animation and motionlessness, would elicit an empathetic response from human observers as its appearance aesthetically approaches human-likeness. Using robots as nonhuman test “subjects,” Mori constructed a graphic representation of the human capacity for empathy in relation to its

nonhuman counterpart (see graph below), which revealed that aesthetic augmentations of the nonhuman actor's human-likeness of would elicit a progressively positive emotional response.

Graph 1: June 2012. "The Uncanny Valley" *Robotics and Automation Magazine*.



This response steadily inclines until, however, that the aesthetic form of the nonhuman actor reached the point of the barely human. At this point on the graph, which Mori articulates as the point of the uncanny or the eerie, empathy quickly turns to loathing, fear, and/or revulsion. As the eerie similarities to the human form escalate in this nonhuman entity, the negative affective reaction of the human observer also grows in intensity causing the line graph to take a precipitous nosedive. The graph demonstrates the increase in negative affective charge, until the nonhuman actor's empathetic response reaches the lowest point of the curvature—death. Another pivot of empathic response is reached, however, as the nonhuman agent ascends from the depths

of the uncanny and begins to approach the ideal aesthetic form of humanity, the realm of the fully-human, or what Mori deemed the healthy human. Here, the nonhuman entity is recognized through “human-to-human” empathy levels. Demonstrating the full range of affective response elicited by the nonhuman actor, line graphs forms a deep valley. This simulated gorge, illustrating the fall and subsequent rise of negative affective response, comprises The Uncanny Valley.¹⁹²

Because of its situation as the phenotypical exception to the category human, *blackness* is constructed through its lack of aesthetic likeness to the ideal human form. As articulated in the second chapter, *blackness* is structured upon a politic of the sustained maintenance of difference, a politics that requires the affective register of *blackness* to be positioned at the point just before death. Articulated through the theory of The Uncanny Valley, *Blackness*, as the nearest nonhuman entity to the human form, has been firmly positioned at the lowest point on the curvature of elicited affective response; its aesthetic form signifies the dead. The aesthetic form of *blackness*, as a moving, breathing signification of death, operates on the highest affective register, as this project has worked to demonstrate, most recently through the poetics offered by Fanon. Theories of the Uncanny Valley allow a return to the question that emerges from the genealogical considerations of *blackness* raised by Hartman—is it possible to disassociate bodies from the visual signification of death inherent to the form of *blackness*?—with a vocabulary of aesthetics that articulates the possibility of *the black body* to traverse the curvature of empathetic response, simultaneously eliciting and mobilizing the movement of affect to operate beyond the registers of visual signification and, by that same token, objectification.

It is this question of affectively produced aesthetic and visual mobility that, I argue, circulates within the seemingly dialectical theories of Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists. The

Afro-pessimist response to the aforementioned question is breached in the work of Frank Wilderson. “When a group comprised of African-derived ‘people’—yes the scare quotes matter—gather at the intersection of performance and subjectivity,” Wilderson argues, “the result is often not a renewed commitment to practice or an explicit ensemble of questions, but rather a palpable structure of feeling, a shared sense that violence and captivity are the grammar and ghosts of our every gesture.”¹⁹³ Wilderson offers a definition of *blackness* as constructed through the memory of slavery’s structure of violence and a need or cry to recover the surrendered autonomy of *the black body*. His work recognizes the construction of *blackness* through the corporeal knowledge of failed mourning. In line with Fanon, *blackness* functions as a deeply felt experience of negation that materializes in the phenomenal relationality between bodies of black facticity and the world. For Wilderson, black life is positioned at the aesthetic site of death and as such carries the affective charge, what he labels “palpable structure of feeling” that such a placement produces.

I read Afro-pessimistic perspectives of black life through Kristeva’s articulation of the subject-making potential of abjection. Kristeva offers a nuanced articulation of the emotional response elicited by abjection. “Food loathing,” Kristeva argues “is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection...when the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire.”¹⁹⁴ This example speaks to abjection’s ability to, through the body’s phenomenal relation to the object, literally push the body into motion—spitting, swearing, moaning, tensing, sweating, aching, vomiting—literally pushing the body into convulsion.

Kristeva provides another example that bears significance for understanding the relationship between *blackness*, death, and abjection:

The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver.¹⁹⁵

Here, Kristeva is demonstrating how the abject evokes not only corporeal movement, but also evokes the affective movement of thought that pushes the subject toward signification. In the case of the cadaver, the subject is moved to signify the borders of its own body through its encounter with the theater of death. This move toward signification is an act that must happen in order for the subject to live. Living then is an affective movement from one moment of abjection to the next—“from loss to loss”—until the inertia of being is abnegated, and the body is thrust, one final time, “beyond the limit” into the expanse of death.

The Afro-pessimistic aesthetic understanding of *blackness* as placed at the lowest point of the curvature allows for a mobilization of the kinetic energy of death through the act of re/membrance, as it emboldens bodies of black facticity to move toward signification. This act of re/membering, rather than discarding the abject, mobilizes an affect that ontologizes and localizes abjection within *the black body*. Unable to thrust aside that which inhibits life—the defilement(s) of the body that exceeds the signification of death—*the black body* is caught in a

cyclical movement from loss to loss without the ability to extricate itself from the point just before the limits of death. Yet in the interstice where the forces of being and abjection meaningfully converge, the conditions for living remain. Afro-pessimism seizes the productive life force of this space, and forwards it as the origin point of black life. Wilderson clarifies this point in a conversation with Hartman, “I’m not saying that in this space of negation, which is blackness, there is no life. We have tremendous life. But this life is not analogous to those touchstones of cohesion that hold civil society together. In fact, the trajectory of our life (within our terrain of civil death) is bound up in claiming—sometimes individually, sometimes collectively—the violence which Fanon writes about in *Wretched of the Earth*...”¹⁹⁶ Wilderson’s work is a further illustration of the ways in which *blackness* is structured upon a performative hauntology of death, producing subjects through a corporeal relation in which the body “claims” of affective ecologies of imaginative and phenomenal nonexistence. Life is produced through this association with nonexistence as a result of the placement of *blackness* on death’s curvature; this is why the scare quotes matter. This is also why, as Wilderson explains later, “It doesn’t help us politically or psychologically to try to find ways in which how we live is analogous to how white positionality lives, because as I think [*Scenes of Subjection*] suggests, whites gain their coherence by knowing what they are not...”¹⁹⁷ *The black body*, even through the affective resonance of its visuality, cannot reify its borders to know itself beyond its temporal emergence as abject; it will always be excluded from the parameters of humanity, as long as humanity carries the signification of *whiteness*. Black life, particularly in the United States, is therefore distinguished from the paradigms of its white counterpart, but nonetheless possesses the agential force of being.

An Afro-optimistic articulation of black life, contrarily, acknowledges the grammar and ghosts of *blackness* without endowing it with an agential influence over black life. Instead of ontologizing and localizing abjection within the body, this school of thought largely advocated by Fred Moten, mobilizes the affective movement inherent to *the black body* to escape its phenomenal signification. “Perhaps,” Moten suggests, “the dead are alive and escaping. Perhaps ontology is best understood as the imagination of this escape as a kind of social gathering; as uncommon plainsong and dance; as the fugitive word; auto-interruptive, auto-illuminative shade/s. Seen in this light, black(ness) is, in the dispossessive richness of its colors, beautiful.”¹⁹⁸ Afro-optimists call for a break in the affective stillness of *blackness* by provoking a move on the curvature. Such a move escapes the limits of death and progresses toward, what Mori’s graphic representation depicts as the “more than human,” perhaps the post-human. To unpack this dense understanding of *blackness* I, inhabiting Moten’s work, (re)turn to the body of the enslaved as the origin of *blackness*.

Moten, following Hartman, agrees that the call to black subjectivity is bound to spectacular scenes of subjection and objection as demonstrated through the captivity of African bodies. Moten unfolds Hartman’s example drawn from the scene of Aunt Hester’s beating in Douglass’ autobiography. His witnessing of the violence enacted against his aunt was, for him, “an original generative act equivalent to the statement ‘I was born.’”¹⁹⁹ However, nestled within this recitation is an original repression, a sense of failed mourning, made evident by young Douglass’ urge to hide himself (“I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected it would be my turn next”) as well as Douglass’ inability, years later, to articulate the full magnitude of the spectacle (“I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld

it...”).²⁰⁰ This repression vanishes scenes of subjection even as they are invoked. Moten utilizes Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection*, and her refusal to recite the spectacular scenes of subjection, to demonstrate how this subjection/repression/abjection is a spectral generational transferal to whose *turn it is next*. “[I]f every recitation is a repression” Moten posits, then “every reproduction of a performance is its disappearance.”²⁰¹ As the maimed, marred, mutilated visuality of *blackness* falls from sight, the scenes of subjection fall with them. What remains, and what is spectrally transferred, is the phonic substance of those scenes, a substance that cannot be reduced to visuality, language, speech, scare quotes, or even a curvature. It is a para-phenomenal substance, what Moten calls an “inspired materiality,” that constitutes the scenes and the subjects within them.²⁰²

Moten sketches the constitutive force of this phonic materiality through a discussion of the enslaved as a speaking commodity. “My argument starts,” Moten explains, “with the historical reality of commodities who spoke—of laborers who were commodities before, as it were, the abstraction of labor power from their bodies and who continue to pass on this material heritage across the divided that separates slavery and ‘freedom.’”²⁰³ Through a sophisticated cruising of Derrida and Marx, Moten articulates how the nonexistence of the commodity produced an affective movement to signify the borders of the self. The resistance to, as opposed to the claiming of, these ecologies of nonexistence enabled an act of invagination, the embryonic process of being turned inside out, where “the commodity” turned inward to break from external value structures and produce an alternate, intrinsically derived sense of value. This internal, yet not intrinsic, value recognizes the confines of a pre-determined (*white*) humanity, and thus pushes pass the curve’s nodal point of “human to human” recognition. Said differently, if enslaved bodies are possessed by the object-oriented value of *blackness*, then this phonic

invagination is used to envision the body of the enslaved in light of this alternate sense of value. Thus a break is made between the putative abject exteriority and an intrinsically valuable interiority. The life of *blackness*, then, is constituted through the phonic surplus that resistance necessarily produces; *Blackness*, I argue, is fully articulated in the move—the escape—beyond the aesthetic, that is to say the visual and aural, limits of the human form.

For this reason, black life is not contained within the phenomenal relationality of bodies of black facticity, because as both Fanon and Wilderson testify, the phenomenal orientation of *the black body* prevents the ability to enter the realm of the ontological. Black life must exist beyond this limit into, as Moten suggests, the realm of the aural which “breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside; here what is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense of aspiration.”²⁰⁴ Moten, therefore, forwards black life as that which disrupts the movement of the spectral dimensions of repressed subjection and abjection, a life that exceeds the affective movement from loss to loss. In this place, “Where shriek turns speech turns song—remote from the impossible comfort of origin—lies the trace of our descent.”²⁰⁵ For Moten, black life is in the gutted silence of repressed abjection, which forces the subject to escape into its interiority until it falls beyond its own limits. For Moten, what is at stake is: “the universalization or socialization of the surplus, the generative force of a venerable phonic propulsion, the ontological and historical priority of resistance to power and objection to subjection, the old-new thing, the freedom drive that animates black performances...Part of the project this drive animates is the improvisation through the opposition of spirit and matter that is instantiated when the object, the commodity, sounds.”²⁰⁶ Following Moten, I argue that black life breaks the cycle of the kinetic charge of abject visuality and converts that energy into the unbounded, affective force of

plummeting pass the limits of signification, a force that is heard through a deathly nonexistence—cadaver: *cadere*, to fall. Ellison's canonical text provides a garishly acute illustration of the improvisatory possibilities of *black* descent and ascension.

The Underworld of *Blackness*

The prologue of Ellison's text begins by illuminating his state of invisibility through story. "One night I accidentally bumped into a man," he begins "and perhaps because of the near darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name. I sprang at him, seized his coat lapels and demanded that he apologize."²⁰⁷ The narrative continues to outline the vicious beating delivered upon the man's refusal to apologize. Seconds before Ellison's antihero moves to end the man's life, he reaches the vital realization: "...it occurred to me that the man had not seen me, actually; that he, as far as he knew, was in the midst of a walking nightmare!"²⁰⁸ As the blade falls to his side, and the man moans on the cold concrete, the protagonist, unnerved that this man was "almost killed by a phantom," fades into the darkness from which he appeared.²⁰⁹ As he vanishes from sight (again, for the first time), a final pivot in perspective occurs, as he realizes the absurdity of the man's near-death experience caused by a figment of the man's own imagination. In this realization he is overcome with absurd amusement, as he puts it, "I ran away into the dark, laughing so hard I feared I might rupture myself."²¹⁰ This final comment reveals the relationship Ellison's text has to Fanon's articulation of the phenomenal experience of *blackness*, a connection vividly drawn through Fanon's final, and perhaps, most provocative reaction to the young child's shriek. It reads, "*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared, Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me."²¹¹ In the aftermath of the child's exclamation Fanon divulges, "I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question. I couldn't take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially

the *historicity* that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.” (emphasis his)²¹²

These texts are united through the experiences of affective collapse and the anticipation of abjection that materializes as a symptom of failed mourning through the Other’s gaze. As such, both are placed within the limits of the uncanny. The anticipatory anxiety of *blackness* is further reflected in Fanon’s admission, “I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. In the interval, just before the film starts, I wait for me. The people in the theater are watching me, examining me, waiting for me. A Negro groom is going to appear. My heart makes my head swim.”²¹³ In the moment preceding the film, and in the moment following the child’s utterance, both Fanon and the Other anticipate the apparition of the specter of death groomed to appear through the visuality of *the black body*. Overwhelmed in arrested anticipation, Fanon triples in time; he is at once his self, the haunted phenomenality of deathly ecologies of negation, and the haunting materialization of abjection. Fanon is subsumed into this collapse of time, so that out of his disappearance the presence specter of *blackness* can emerge. Fanon’s narrative verbalizes the unspeakable inability for escape, unable to actualize the performative possibilities represented through resonance of laughter.

Ellison’s opening narrative, in similar fashion to Fanon’s, illuminates the tripling of novel’s protagonist, and the persistent conjuring trick of disappearance that characterizes his phenomenal experience. There is an important distinction, however, between Fanon’s and Ellison’s texts, which rests in the resonances of aurality. Though both articulate the experience of negation that, as this chapter’s epigraph recites, forces the self into an occupation of the space (and time) between nothingness and infinity, it is only Ellison’s protagonist who is able to avoid suffocating reification and escape into the hollow depths beyond visuality and ontology. Where

Fanon's experience of this affective moment of collapse forecloses his potentiality, his laughter is halted in the face of the thousands of legends and stories of his phenomenality, Ellison's protagonist resonates with expansiveness. For Fanon, the surplus experienced by Ellison's character is impeded.

Ellison suggests that the absurd revelation provoked in the opening anecdote is paramount to understanding the self as possessed in a space of temporal disjointment. It is this revelation that ultimately structures the possibility of his ontological descent and subsequent ascendancy. This affirmation serves as the conclusion of the prologue, as the protagonist argues that this haunted state absolves him of responsibility. He confesses, "I can hear you say, 'What a horrible, irresponsible bastard!' And you're right. I leap to agree with you. I am one of the most irresponsible beings that ever lived. Irresponsibility is part of my invisibility; any way you face it, it is a denial. But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me?... Responsibility rests upon recognition..."²¹⁴ This manifesto reveals how invisibility absolves him of the responsibility of operating within the current(s) of time, what Derrida calls the "*monde*," as well as the current(s) of the visibility of simulated death. This is articulated in the protagonist's return to his opening anecdote: "Responsibility rests upon recognition, and recognition is a form of agreement. Take the man whom I almost killed: Who was responsible for that near murder—I? I don't think so, and I refuse it. I won't buy it. You can't give it to me. He bumped me, he insulted me. Shouldn't he, for his own personal safety, have recognized my hysteria, my 'danger potential?' He, let us say, was lost in a dream world. But didn't he control that dream world—which, alas, is only too real!—and didn't he rule me out of it?"²¹⁵ The tripled body lacks the burden of operating within the fluctuating significations of an imposed temporality. Occupying the space (and time) between nothingness and infinity, the body is traced

with the affective force of spectrality, an irresponsibility that unchains the body from the “dream world (of the living dead)” constructed through the gaze of the Other.

Fred Moten calls the force of this irresponsibility an “ontic-ontological fugitivity:” the unregulatable, para-ontological affective force of existence that operates not only in excess of the categories in which it is place, but also operates in excess of itself.²¹⁶ In sharp contrast to Fanon, Moten explains and Ellison illustrates how the ontic-ontological force can be mobilized as a mode of resistance, moving from loss to loss on the curvature of the uncanny until one ascends beyond the static parameters of humanity. “What Fanon’s pathontological refusal of blackness leaves unclaimed” Moten argues, “is an irremediable homelessness common to the colonized, the enslaved, and the enclosed. This is to say that what is claimed in the name of blackness is an undercommon disorder that has always been there, that is retrospectively and retroactively *located* there, that is embraced by the ones who stay there while leaving somewhere else.”²¹⁷ The Invisible Man, through the phenomenal localization of the specter of *blackness*, exceeds the visual realm, and is thereby able to mobilize the ontic-ontological force of his body to move within and between the specter’s temporal collapse. Through this affective movement, he escapes within the aural and sonic resonance that operates on the fringes of the space/time that Mori’s theorizations graphically depict. This is demonstrated through his ability to hear the unheard chords of invisibility that orchestrate Armstrong’s poetry: “So under the spell of the reefer I discovered a new analytical way of listening to music. The unheard sounds came through, and each melodic line existed of itself, stood out clearly from all the rest, said its piece, and waited patiently for the other voices to speak. That night I found myself hearing not only in time, but in space as well. I not only entered the music but descended, like Dante, into its depths.”²¹⁸ Though both Fanon’s and Ellison’s narrative articulate the experience of being tripled

through the same experience of affective collapse, it is the acknowledgement of corporeal surplus and the subsequent movement through the affective registers of stillness that ultimately allows Ellison's protagonist to be coxed into a descent, what Moten refers to as the act of simultaneously staying *there* in order to leave *somewhere*. The ability to steal away precisely because of the inherent homelessness of a haunted constitution is, for Moten, that which ontologizes *blackness* through a fugitivity—a phenomenal and psychic escape into the resonant tombs buried far beneath ontology, where the “terribly beautiful vitality” of *blackness* can be accessed and mobilized upon one's return to the realm of the living, a return that is for the first time.²¹⁹

Ellison's psychic descent into the timbre of Armstrong's sound, exposes the aural dimensions of that vitality through the gnostic sermon of a “blackness [that] is most black, brother, the Blackness of Blackness.”²²⁰ Though Ellison's anti-hero returns from the underworld of affect and sound, his psychic self is trans-fixed, caught between the competing vibrations of the *there* of his body and the affective fixation on the *somewhere* of his consciousness and, even deeper, his soul. Moving from one moment of collapse to the next, the Invisible Man narrates the teleology of his ghosted constitution in hopes of exposing the expansiveness of invisibility, of *blackness*; the simultaneous infinity and nothingness that will ultimately “liberate the black man from himself,” as Fanon suggests.²²¹ This sentiment is echoes in the crypts beneath New York City, where Ellison's invisible protagonist is transported by the light of improvisatory escape, urging, “Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.”²²²

Similar to Ellison's protagonist, the concluding chapter of *Specters and Spooks* emerges from the depths of *blackness* to articulate how *the black* body, as the work of the specter of blackness, possesses a "certain *power of transformation*," or, as Moten suggests, "an irreducibly improvisatory exteriority that can occasion something very much like sadness and something very much like devilish enjoyment."²²³ As such, the final chapter begins to explore performances of *blackness* that exploit the knowledge of descent by performatively announcing into existence an affective collapse that continually pushes the body to resignify its borders beyond the purview of humanity. In pinpointing how bodies locates the affective and aural latitudes that emerge in moments of collapse, the chapter, in the words of Fred Moten, seeks to "fathom a social life that tends toward death, that enacts a kind of being-toward-death, and which, because of such tendency and enactment, maintains a terribly beautiful vitality."²²⁴

CHAPTER 5: HAIMATJA: HOME

And so it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there,
pre-existing, waiting for me.

Frantz Fanon, *White Skin, Black Masks*²²⁵

Conclusion

Centuries-old, yet saturated with post-modern renewal, this ghost story is recited from the timeless border between metaphysical presence and spectrality. Its narrative is formed in the mouth of spirits calling out from their tombs; there they wait for us. Their cry—haunting the horn of Louis Armstrong and echoing in the basement of invisible men, announcing the unspeakable truth of re/membrance, and irrupting the bodies of Till and Martin, the Jena Six and my own—travels far beyond the depths of their isolation inviting, compelling, a response. This project is infused with the enunciative force of that riposte. *Specters and Spooks: Developing a Hauntology of the Black Body* engages this choir of spooks and its post-modern sonata, “rumbling sound of ghosts chained to ghosts,” to reckon with the memorialized, inherited, and generational mourning of *blackness*: a politics that takes up the company of specters to understand how slavery constructed a “black hole” that bifurcated being into two categories: the nonexistent and everything remaining. Understanding the persistent seething affect of this reality, this hauntology has worked to articulate *blackness* not only as an experiential frame, but as that which conditions the phenomenal and psychoanalytic possibilities for subjects, regardless of their phenomenal orientation, positioned within the contemporary, racialized conjuncture in the United States.

As such, *blackness* and all that this specter inhabits—bodies, myths and music, poetics and lyricism, voice, sound, speech, and love—is articulated through the full definitional offerings of an ontological *quarry*: 1) “obsolete: a heap of the game killed in a hunt,” 2) “one that is sought or pursued,” 3) “an open excavation usually for obtaining building stone, slate, or limestone,” 4) “a rich source.”²²⁶ *Blackness* is: 1) the collection of corpses performatively arranged and ordered, 2) bodies sought after and pursued, 3) an evacuation of history that searches for the building blocks of immanence, and 4) a source that is both dense and rich in its nature. This hauntology unknots this ontological *quarry* to reveal how *blackness* saturates both space and time with a pre-existing meaning of what it is to be (not only black, but) human. This layered meaning of humanity haunts the social configurations of post-modernity, forcing us to seriously consider the corporeal consequences of existing, in any relation to, a space void of existence. However, considering the presence of these specters and spooks revealed the radically productive power of the wailing void constructed through the negation of the slave’s humanity. Within the sound of haunting is the potential for descent that reveals a rich source of possibility. This final chapter evacuates the material formation of *blackness*, that is to say *the black body*, to find ways in which *blackness* is divorced from the bodies it intends to subsume. This hauntology, then, concludes by returning, again for the first time, to the body to ask how performative counter-investments in the body enacted within the phenomenological and psychoanalytic, socioaesthetic and historical fixity can disrupt and reconfigure the deathly presence of *blackness*? What other modes of meaning making are at work through a politics that is performed alongside our ghosts?

An answer lies in understanding how the underworld’s spirits are resurrected within a carnal form, as each of our bodies become the work of the spirit, we are the revenant of *blackness*. As Morrison’s *Beloved* delicately details, even though “anything dead coming back to life hurts,” within the act of resurrection resides the deepest pleasures of life.²²⁷ While, as

explained in Hartman's work, pleasure is used to discredit claims of pain and erase black sentience, wrapped within those aesthetics of nonexistence is a deep sense of possibility—"particular patterns of movement, zones of erotic investment, forms of expression, and notions of pleasure"—that can construct networks of affiliation, that is to say community, that reconfigures the death-driven sociality of the specter.²²⁸ How can we learn to live with the specters resurrected within the aesthetic scripts of the body to access the pleasure inherent to that resurrection? Derrida asserts that "One must have one's ghost's hide and to do that, one must have it. To have it, one must see it, situate it, identify it. One must possess it without letting oneself be possessed by it, without being possessed of it."²²⁹ With that knowledge, the question becomes, how can we create spaces of pleasure, that is, spaces of aesthetic and performative reproductivity and insight by capitalizing upon the constitution of *the black body* through this performative hauntology of death?

Such a politics of performance is articulated in Moten's project, which seeks to "describe the material reproductivity of black performance and to claim for this reproductivity the status of an ontological condition."²³⁰ The politics begins by exploring the relationship between resistance and *blackness* to demonstrate how the former operates as the catalytic force of *blackness* as it oscillates between autonomous subjectivity and a possessed objectivity, it begins by understanding that *blackness*, as Moten suggests, "is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist."²³¹ Moten's reveals how the testimony of *blackness*, that is the performed resistance of objectivity, places *blackness* in-between a subjectivity that "is defined by the subject's possession of itself and its objects" and an objectivity that is characterized "...by a dispossessive force objects exert such that the subject seems to be possessed—infused, deformed—by the object it possesses."²³² The power of the *blackness* to possess the subject, coupled with the subject's ability to speak back marks the genesis of *blackness*; a genesis that subverts black

autonomy while simultaneously donning the black subject with an innate agency, or as Moten puts it an “irreducible sound,” that performs against its own objection. Using Hartman and Butler to elucidate his stance on black subjectivity Moten explains that “...the call to subjectivity is understood also as a call to subjection and subjugation and appeals for redress or protection to the state or to the structure or idea of citizenship—as well as modes of radical performativity or subversive impersonation—are always already embedded in the structure they would escape.”²³³ This “irreducible sound,” this performative genesis of *blackness* inherent to scenes of objection becomes the movement by which the subject irrupts the haunting and reconfigures sociality induced by the specter of *blackness*.

I explicitly engage performance, and in particular, theatre as a catalytic that instigates the irruption of haunting. My standing rendezvous with theatre is in accord with ways in which theatre scholar Harry Elam Jr. intellectually and artistically pursues theatre as a space of black cultural production, deepening understandings of the relationship between “the seen and unseen, between the visibly marked and unmarked, between the ‘real’ and the illusionary.”²³⁴ Theatrical productions deconstruct the relationship between historical narratives, visual discourse, and racial performance to unravel the regimes of race that frame contemporary understandings of *the black body*. At its core, is the belief that understanding performance in *theory* is necessarily incomplete without *practice*—the intimate and embodied knowledge of how one’s body, voice, and emotion work in concert to tap into an imaginative field that effectively creates new ways of embracing the world. This work began my using the Jena Six incident as a catalyst to articulate the legacy of lynching in the American South as a ritualistic practice that has tainted our understanding of contemporary, racial performance. I followed the writing and staging of “6 Black Boys” with an adapted rendering of Ralph Ellison’s poetic narrative of racial erasure. Written in Fall of 2012, “Sketches of a Man” staged Ellison’s poetics of invisibility through a

theatrical re-telling of the process by which *the black body* becomes an alien unto its world and its self. By juxtaposing Ellison's novel to the post-racial political landscape spurred by the two-time election of Barack Obama, the performance sought to articulate the ever-evolving dynamics of black visibility. Taking the performative excess of *blackness* as a starting point, I, along with a countless number of practitioners, use visual and performing arts to traversing the aesthetic limits of *blackness* in hopes to exceed the visibility of *the black body*.

This has been demonstrated throughout the course of 20th and 21st American history, and through myriad art forms. I take seriously the words of theater critic and activist Larry Neal, who, in his 1968 manifesto, wrote "...theatre is potentially the most social of all of the arts. It is an integral part of the socializing process. It exists in direct relationship to the audience it claims to serve."²³⁵ The liveness of theatre distinguishes it as an art form. Theatre offers a communal space in which two bodies, the performer's and the viewer's, collide to produce a mutually constitutive relationship that continues to exist beyond the theater space and compels the viewer to take seriously the artist's critique of the existing material conditions as articulated through the bodies of the performers. Neal's manifesto *The Black Arts Movement*, Amiri Baraka's 1965 essay "The Revolutionary Theatre," as well as the seminal works by Jean Genet, Charles Gordone, Douglas Turner Ward and others testify to the political power and transformative potential theatre possesses.

The Black Arts Movement, as the "spiritual sister" of the Black Power Movement, operated in and through the interstices of aesthetic production and political action to give shape to and define the borders of a community. Central to the Movement was the need to articulate "Black Experience" as the thread that ran through the collectivity of *colored* Americans who struggled to find themselves within the structure of *being* offered by the Western (white) world. What was located in this cultural and ontological exploration was, what has been termed, "The

Black Aesthetic.” To elucidate the full force of “The Black Aesthetic,” Neal quotes Etheridge Knight: “Unless the Black artist establishes a ‘Black aesthetic’ he will have no future at all. To accept the white aesthetic is to accept and validate a society that will not allow him to live.”²³⁶ Neal, by way of Knight, calls for art that creates new ways of being by propelling new values, new histories, and new forms of aesthetic expression in the world. The totality of this newness, the “new thing” of The Black Arts Movement while resting upon new ways of seeing *blackness*, is not exhausted in the visuality of art and life. The new vision of *black* is heard and felt in the opening riff of Charles Mingus’ baritone sax in *Moanin’*, and in hands and horns of the trailblazers of free jazz: Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, and ultimately John Coltrane; it is imagined by Black Arts playwrights like LeRoi Jones, Ed Bullins, Jimmy Garrett, Jean Genet; it reverberates through audiences caught in the trance of “The Godfather,” and is voiced as they chant “I’m Black and I’m Proud;” it is poetized in the verses of Sonia Sanchez, Sun Ra, Larry Neal, Don L. Lee; and eventually spectacularized in films such as “Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song” and “Cotton Comes to Harlem.” Undoubtedly wrapped within the vision of this “new thing” are intimate connections to a deeply felt sensuality and aurality. While utilizing and relying upon drastically different cultural mediums—music, poetry, drama—these artists seek to restructure the aesthetic form of *blackness* by traversing the discords of its aurality.²³⁷ The imagination of *blackness* as a body of possibility inspires, enlivens, and inhabits my work as an artistic scholar.

Future Research Endeavors

The future of *Specters and Spooks* seeks to expose the performative irruption of haunting through the deployment of performance theory and practice by extending chapters 2, 3, and 4 to analyze various performative counter-investments in *the black body*. I first aim to extend the genealogical considerations of the second chapter by tracing the specters of *blackness* beyond

chattel slavery in the United States to the 1804 independence of the island nation of Haiti. Exploring the thick history of the Haitian Revolution, I argue, solidifies the discussion of phenomenal and performative relationship between *blackness* and death by considering what Daphne Brooks calls the “transatlantic imaginary,” the spatially and temporally over-lapping diasporas of bodies caged within a trope of darkness. The social and performative manifestations of *blackness*, in the U.S. in particular, and intimate relation to death are inextricably bound to the transatlantic histories of revolution in Haiti. The recitation of this history begins on the night of August 22, 1791, when slaves from nearly one-hundred plantations neighboring the city of le Cap, the former capital of the French colony of Saint-Domingue, gathered for a secret religious ceremony in the wooded highlands of the Morne Rouge, at a site known as Bois Caïman.²³⁸ At the ceremony’s helm was Boukman Dutty, who, through his role as a coachman and *commandeur* at one of le Cap’s largest plantations, developed an intricate social and political infrastructure among black slaves and maroons throughout Hispanola’s northern region.²³⁹ His authority was augmented considerably by the sheer magnitude of his soldier-like physique, and so more by his position as “Zamba,” a priestly position held by respected practitioners of the syncretic religion of West African Dahomean tradition and Christianity, widely known among French patriots as voodoo. Both his physical and religious gravitas proved crucial to what would become a legendary meeting of Saint-Domingue’s slave elite.

On the night of August 22, with a stature large as the surrounding mountains, Boukman towered over the mass of blacks gathered at Bois Caïman to prophesize of the coming slave uprising. Over the escalating roar of an ensuing thunderstorm, the legend goes, Boukman professed, “*Eh! Eh! Bomba! Heu! Heu! Canga, bafio té! Canga, mouné de lé! Canga, do ki la Canga, do ki la! Canga, li!* (We swear to destroy the whites and all they possess! Let us die rather than fail to keep this vow!”²⁴⁰ Antonie Dalmas’ 1814 ethnographic representation recites,

following this a woman, taken by the spirits, started dancing in the crowd. “Armed with a long, pointed knife that she waved above her head,” Daniel Bellgarde’s 1953 *Histoire Du Peuple Haïtien* recounts, “she performed a sinister dance singing an African song, which the others, face down against the ground, repeated as a chorus. A black pig was then dragged in front of her and she split it open with her knife.”²⁴¹ Collecting the frothing blood in a wooden bowl, lifting it to her lips, allowing the warmth to coat her tongue, the high priestess confirmed her vow to Boukman. As each delegate made the same blood-oath, Boukman delivered an inspired call to arms that denounced the god of their French captors and sought vengeance against the god “who thirsts for our tears.”²⁴² Igniting a revolution with his final words Boukman cried out, “*Couté la liberté li pale nan coeur nous tous.*”²⁴³ The folkloric interpretation of the events explains that it was this axiom—“Listen to the voice of liberty which speaks in the hearts of all of us”—that echoed through Morne Rouge as the insurgent force of nearly two-thousand split into factions to begin the immediate and systematically destruction-by-fire of all material manifestations of their existence under French enslavement: sugar mills, cane fields, farming equipment and tools, storage units, slave quarters, and above all else, plantation dwellings.²⁴⁴

Fighting under Boukman’s command, the brigade of slaves that gathered in the mountains of le Cap multiplied to just over twenty-thousand infantrymen in less than a month, burning nearly two-hundred of Saint-Domingue’s finest sugar plantations and over twelve-hundred of the region’s coffee plantations in the process.²⁴⁵ By September’s end, Boukman’s company of slaves, free blacks, and maroons decimated every plantation within a 100-mile radius of le Cap.²⁴⁶ With crude military barracks set-up just beyond perimeter of the region’s capital, Boukman’s force was poised to sack the city, which functioned as the French’s only site of military resistance in the region, as well as a place of solace for the few whites who escaped the rebellion’s initial onslaught.

As the insurgent force continued to grow, mythologies of Boukman's magico-religious voodoo methods propagated within the city's walls. The first written accounts of Boukman's uncanny siege of le Cap was recorded through a compilation of letters written by an order of nuns at the Communauté des Religieuses Filles de Notre Dame du Cap-Français.²⁴⁷ "From the convent, the nuns saw the insurgents at the gates of le Cap, they heard their death cries, witnessed their dances; they felt the terror that had struck the soul of the whites upon hearing of the massacres and destruction that were carried out in the countryside."²⁴⁸ This correspondence, juxtaposing the terror of the nuns to the near-fantastic barbarism of the rebel, speaks to French colonials' presumptions of the rebel force as enhanced by a naturalistic "Stoicism" infused with a strong sense of beastly savagery, as evidenced by the unmitigated bloodshed of the revolution's first month.

The conviction that rebels were endowed with Stoic powers, a belief that rebels experienced their bodies as passive matter enhanced by a blend of naturalistic voodoo powers and a primordial fervor for violence, were furthered through the interactions between French troops and slave rebels. One French defender of le Cap recounts the story of a rebel captive who, after two failed attempts to assassinate his captors, admitted his conspiracy by stating, "Master, I know that is true. It is the Devil who gets inside this body of mine."²⁴⁹ Even in the face of imminent execution, the narrator continues, the rebel jeered and mocked his captors, ultimately giving the signal for his own execution without fear or complaint. Baffled by the slave's unyielding courage, the executioners examined the cadaver to reveal "...pamphlets printed in France [claiming] the Rights of Man...On his chest he had a little sack full of hair, herbs, bits of bone, which they call a fetish...and it was, no doubt, because of this amulet," the French soldier reasoned, "that our man had the intrepidity which the philosophers call Stoicism."²⁵⁰ The soldier's conjecture, while within the realm of the fantastic, was not complete fantasy. Numerous

stories of revolutionary rebels have been uncovered that express a deep sense of personal and cosmic invulnerability not only through the scarified pig's husks, which were kept for their presumed protective powers, but from the mythic certainty that death in battle would return one's spirit to Africa.²⁵¹ These beliefs, tied to the ritualistic practices of the Voudon religion, had a profound effect on the psyche of the slave rebels. The result was, what Haitian revolutionary scholar David Patrick Geggus illuminates as, a zeal toward death, an equal-and-opposite force of courageous ingenuity and suicidal fervor.²⁵² This deathly zeal not only resulted in explicit displays of courage, as demonstrated by the aforementioned would-be rebel assassin, but functioned as the ideological force around which rebel forces were galvanized.

In the eyes of the French, however, this zeal toward death, masked by a black savage spiritualism, was expressed through indescribable, supernatural feats of war. Philibert François Rouxel de Blanchelande, governor of le Cap and commander of the French auxiliary troops in 1791, expressed the impossibility of defending the city against the "regenerative" power of the rebel force. As the siege of le Cap extended from days to weeks, maroons and free people of color throughout the surrounding Morne Rouge mountain range joined the rebel force. This surge in numbers, when coupled with the assumed magico-religious spiritualism and guerrilla warfare tactics of the insurrectionaries, created an illusion of a force that "would not die." As word of this defiance of death spread throughout the French force within le Cap's walls, it was inflected with the Western European folkloric tradition of the revenant (or, in the Norse tradition, the *aptrgangr*), one who walks after death. French soldiers firmly believed they were in battle with the living dead. Le Cap ultimately fell to rebel forces on September 26, 1791, but not before surviving French loyalists fled to North America, taking with them the tales and legends of black magic and living-death. New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charleston, SC, and Savannah, GA

bore the burden of the mass exodus from Saint-Domingue. No port, however, welcomed as many ships baring the French flag than the port of New Orleans.

An understanding of *blackness* as animated by the specters of death benefits greatly from an investigation of the ways in which the historical events of the revolution on the island of Saint-Domingue have influenced the experimental ways that bodies embrace the relationship between *blackness* and death to resonant beyond the existing visual and ontological registers. This was demonstrated not only in the revolutionary zeal toward death embraced by Saint-Domingue's mutineers, but this embrace of death, maturing through a matrix of race, performance, and capitalism, continued to thrive in the Voudon inflected performances of the Congo Square in Louisiana, as well as New England's phantasmagoria shows the 1840s and 1850s. These phantasmagoria shows, where ethereal bodies of phantoms were conjured through the body of the performer, serve as another example of the body's fungibility as the performer tip-toed the boundary of spirit and flesh by "mask[ing] and convert[ing] their bodies into instruments of deception,"²⁵³ These shows of racial phantasmagoria also conjured a deeply-felt American fear of the (racial) boundarylessness of the body; a fear most often played out on the body on slave mulattas. Within the show, the mulatta conjurer, often female, performs her body in a way that "call[s] into question the logic of enslaving people according to 'blackness' ... [as] the white mulatta's body of evidence, her figure (encom)passing the uncanny traces of the familiar [white body of the spectator] and the foreign [blackness], makes the violence of his white supremacy spectacularly visible and yet disturbingly contiguous with blackness."²⁵⁴

Through this optic regime the spectator sees the "body of white power" etched on the body of the racial phantasmagoric mulatta, and thus the spectator comes dangerously close to recognizing the "traces of [his own] impurity."²⁵⁵ This near recognition does two things: first, it acknowledges the power of the racially phantasmagoric body to conjure its own autonomy by

using the simultaneous legibility and illegibility of its body to create a space of possibility and resistant performance; and second, the body of the racial phantasmagoria illuminates the corporeal excess of the body, an excess desired to be harnessed and/or controlled through the gaze of the spectator. Again we become aware of the ways in which the body carries a “corporeal surplus” rooted in the theatrically and revolutionary history of the “mythical black body.”²⁵⁶ The body eludes signification with an excess of meaning (spectacularly) “giving itself” in a way that overcomes its phenomenal form. Such performances, as Brooks highlights, and Moten affirms, forces a consideration of the ability of black bodies to use “gifts of performance to build a bridge out of abjection.”²⁵⁷

Further the irruption of *blackness* through performative counter-investments in the body, I hope to, first: deepen my articulation of the aural registers of black visuality and the descent it provokes, as well as the psychoanalytic affective collapse produced through the relationship between abjection, *the black body*, and death. Second, I hope to use the aesthetic theory offered by The Uncanny Valley as a lens to explore the historicized haunting of *the black body*, particularly as performed in the Haitian Revolution and Vodoun influenced cultures of New Orleans, Charleston, and other locations through the American South and Northeast. Finally, this aesthetic lens provides valuable insight into the emergent scholarship on the relationship between *the black body* and the zombie, in both its Americanized and Afro-Caribbean traditions, the contemporary debate between Afro-Pessimists and Afro-Optimists, as well as popular manifestations of black (life and) death heard (seen and felt) in the musical/lyrical/poetic compositions and performances of Afro-futurists: Sun Ra, Octavia Butler, Parliament-Funkadelic, and the rich anthology of artists exploring the boundaries between futuristic realism and science fiction that simultaneously deconstruct and (re)envision the past, present, and future of the African diaspora. Such investigations would also consider contemporary artists and

performance practitioners, such as Barbara Panther, Katori Hall, Kanye West, Janelle Monae, and Tarrell Alvin McCraney, whose work embodies the legacy of (re)defining the temporal structures of *blackness* by breaching its aesthetic and aural parameters.

The final projected research endeavor seeks to investigate the counter-investments in the body as related to the conditions of failed mourning. Extending the third chapter's theorization of *blackness* in/as failed mourning, I aim to read the presidency of Barack Obama through a hauntological lens to consider how his presidency explicitly demonstrates the intimate relation between *the white body* and the ecologies of nonexistence made present by the specter of *blackness*. Obama's presidency may reveal yet another iteration of the conjuring trick performed by the specter of *blackness*, disappearing its origin by concealing the autonomy of phenomenally white bodies. The nationwide defamations arising in the wake of Obama's election parallel the performative utterance of the young child—"Look A Negro!"—as *the white body*, in similar fashion to Fanon's young travel companion, is drawn to the spectral borders of abjection and nonexistence by the specter of *blackness*. This affective moment of collapse forces a reification of the ecologies of white existence in relation to the ecologies of nonexistence that consumes Obama's body. This psychoanalytic reimagining, however, is problematized by Obama's genealogical configuration, which is explicitly separate from the sociohistorical lineage of American chattel slavery. Exposing the ways in which the conditions of failed mourning not only constitute *blackness*, but *whiteness* as well, Obama's phenomenal presence, and the spectral weight his body carries, perhaps represents the call of death that softly echoes in the imaginaries of *white* America. Similar to my experience with the Jena Six, this call of death forces one to reckon with the possibilities of one's own subjectivity as constituted through the imaginings of death.

In the end, I believe the simultaneous elation and trepidation of Obama's election necessitates a sincere consideration of the ability of the specter of *blackness* to conjure the hallucination of its own autonomy. Obama's presidency refines the semantics of Audre Lorde's well-known inquiry to ask: if the body is a tool of the master, can it be used to attempt to tear down the master's house, even if the house has been made into a home that is now under the jurisdiction of the formerly enslaved? How can performances of *blackness* articulate black agency when spectacular conditions of suffering and pleasure, as represented through the simultaneous elation and fear of Obama's body, have "so masterfully simulated black 'will' only in order to reanchor subordination?"²⁵⁸ Is his presidency another hallucination of the specter's autonomy? Or does the presence of his body materially orchestrate a descent into the depths of *blackness* that aids in escaping the reifying cycle of signification?

These questions elucidate why, for Derrida, a communion with specters is a question of justice. The act of mourning is in the pursuit of justice; it is a pursuit of the specters that bring into being the conditions of rectitude to which our bodies, as the work of the specter, are pledged. The irreducible trace of justice resonates through the body; justice, like its foil, haunting, will not befall one day because it must be worked at, our bodies must be worked over, haunted, inhabited from the inside to find the sense of justice that was always there, waiting. Explicating the dialogic relationship between the body in/as performance, haunting, and the ideals of justice Derrida writes,

If he loves justice at least, the "scholar" of the future, the "intellectual" of tomorrow should learn it from the ghosts. He should learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the "there" as soon as we open our mouths... Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.(emphasis his)²⁵⁹

I believe Derrida compels the mourner, the one who seeks justice, to find the resonance of the body that exceeds its phenomenal orientation and speak, which is to say perform, learn and live with the strength of that resonance. Not in an effort to “make conversation” with/about the specter (chapters 2 and 3 expose the dangers of such an encounter). Rather, we must fellowship within the quiet terror of injustice their presence brings to light. In communion with the specter we are granted with temporal and aural foresight, able to divulge the reluctant and unspeakable truth of our inaction as they, in turn, whisper the secrets of fugitivity. We must rethink the *there* of the specter’s haunting and descent into the irreducible *somewhere* of the specter’s aural presence, becoming a witness of the lines of flight the bend backward and forward from each moment of collapse—live fully and deeply from each loss to the next until, from the specter, we learn that the nature of haunting is the simultaneous ability “to be” and “to escape.” We must fall deep into the lull of the specter to, as Avery F. Gordon eloquently puts it, develop a “...willingness to follow ghost, neither to memorialize nor to slay, but to follow where they lead... to allow the ghost to help you imagine what was lost that never even existed, really. That is its utopian grace...”²⁶⁰ Perhaps, in the truest sense of the word, the *haimatja*, the haunting is a calling to bodies in search of a home. And by traversing each moment from “loss to loss,” living with those spirits, we realize that the “home” we seek never existed, really; thus illuminating the realm of possibility that was always there, waiting just beneath the surface, unseen.

EPILOGUE: DEEPER, ELLISON'S SONG

to those who use their tongues
as if they are more than flesh, as if
inscribed beneath the muscle lurks
an unrefined truth, to those who name
to make the name a gun—
the Zulu, the Seminole, the savage,
Mulatto, Jew, Black, the Orient,
the Alien, Woman
the Other—
those who name to know.
imagine more than just
fiber and liquids.
different somehow
is the scholar, the science steeped in doubt.
Knowable
Somehow.
the historian. The philosopher.
rest the tongue and
take in hand the pencil that has traced your toes in
“foreign” soil. Soles
of feet, deep in the heart of the softest whisper.
of you. forget
the privilege presumed
in the tongue and
feel/listen
re/member
the warmth of the
the deepest touch,
distant though it may
Be.

NOTES

Prologue Notes:

- ¹ Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. (New York: Random House, 1995.): p.6.
- ² “Live with your head in the lion’s mouth, I want you to overcome’em with yeses, undermine’em with grins, agree’em to death and destruction, let’em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.” *Ibid*, p.16.
- ³ My understanding of the performance resistance of the body is very much in line with Fred Moten’s articulation of the resistance of the object, arguing, “The history of blackness is a testament to the fact that objects can and do resist.” See Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.): p.1-24.
- ⁴ Elsewhere, I have articulated this as, “overlapping fragments of a historical self; a self that is not only my own, but represents the ‘Jena Six,’ as well as of the collectives of black Americans struggling to define their identity outside the limits of the spectacular.” See Powell, Kashif Jerome. “Six Black Boys: An Autoethnographic Performance of the Jena Six.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 31 (2011): p.71.
- ⁵ The understanding of performative writing and its ability to viscosity and aurality perform the polemics of an argument emerges from a series of conversations with cultural theorist, Bryanne H. Young. Her insight on the intellectual and artistic utility of the written word inspires not only the prologue, but the entirety of the text as well.

Chapter 1 Notes:

- ⁶ Clinton, Catherine and Stephen Alcorn. *I, too, Sing America: Three Centuries of African American Poetry* (New York: Houghton Mifflin P., 1998): p. 91, lines 17-20.
- ⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Routledge, 1994.): p. 2.
- ⁸ Taussig, Michael. “Culture of Terror--Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): p.467.
- ⁹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*; p.467-468.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ¹¹ Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.): p.11.
- ¹² In his 1945 manuscript *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty makes an important break from the strand of phenomenology advanced by Edmund Husserl, arguing that perceptual experience does not reside in Cartesian notions of representative knowledge. Rather, perception is a complex, relational, and intersubjective experience with the world. The noesis (the subject) of a phenomenological relationship does not experience the noema (the object/phenomenon) through a process of reduction and isolation. The objectivity of the object is only understood through its perceptual complexity, that is, through its relationship with a conditioning background that engulfs the object. Merleau-Ponty uses the phenomenological bracket as a heuristic device that exposes the relationality of an object, as opposed to Husserl’s attempt to use the bracket as a tool for reduction. The *epoché* allows for an understanding of how an object is constituted only through its relation to the other objects within its perceptual horizon. The

notion that ideas of whiteness are internal representations of the external world is, as Merleau-Ponty scholar Lawrence Hass explains, “a fallacy of mistaking a second-order conceptual process for the primary, experienced one. It is a fallacy of mistaking the abstract for the fundamental” (Hass 31). Instead, the perception of the lily’s whiteness, as Merleau-Ponty posits, is only understood through the blueness of the lake, the greenness of the grass, and the yellowness of the sunflower, etc.

This mistake Merleau-Ponty corrects through his phenomenology of perception by articulating the intersubjective nature of perceptual experience. Because relationality is an inherent feature of perception, perceptual experience is understood as directed towards things that transcend the subject. As both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger argue, the phenomenological attitude “says to show,” that is, it directs the subject toward worldly experiences. Phenomenology shows us something. Thus perceptual experience is an opening up of one’s self to things and other beings. The world, consequently serves as our collective natural setting. Thus perception is not something that is internal, but instead emerges betwixt and between the lived body and the things of the world. Perception is a synergy, as termed by Merleau-Ponty, a circular system of interaction between the embodied self, the embodied other, and things of the world. As Merleau-Ponty explains, phenomenology is the effort to uncover “...the layers of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us, the system of ‘self-others-things’ as it comes into being....” (Hass, 55) Put simply, the system of “self-others-things” collaboratively creates experience, where I am inescapably in the world through the agency of my body, through a co-present, lived experience.

See: Hass, Lawrence. *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. P, 2008): p.55.

¹³ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham: Duke University P., 2006.): p.28.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.52-53, p.134.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 52-53, p.134.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.39.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.40.

¹⁷ aqi Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*: p.41.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.41-44.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.131.

²⁰ Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Cirum-Atlantic Performance*. (New York: Columbia University P., 1996): p.5.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.25-26.

²² *Ibid*, p.26.

²³ Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco, eds. *The Body: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2005.): p.53.

²⁴ Butler, Judith “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (Dec1988): p.157.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.156.

²⁶ Fraser and Greco, *The Body*: p.63.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.63.

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- ²⁸ Butler, "Performative Acts": p.156.
- ²⁹ "The Fact of Blackness:" See, Chapter 5 of Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Also see, Moten, "The Case of Blackness" and Read, *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*.
- ³⁰ Moten, Fred. Spring 2008. "The Case of Blackness." *Criticism* 50.2: p.177.
- ³¹ Sharpton, Al. Interview with Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzales. *The Daily Independent Global New Hour*. Sept. 21, 2007. On-line.
- ³² Ellis, Aimé J. *If We Must Die: From Bigger Thomas to Biggie Smalls* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. P., 2011): p.17.
- ³³ *Ibid*, p.8-9.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p.16.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, p.12-13.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p.14.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, p.4-5.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p.4-5.
- ³⁹ Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. (New York: Harper Collins P., 1944): p.84.
- ⁴⁰ Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Richard Philcox. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove P., 2008.): p.xvii.
- ⁴¹ Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." In *The Black Feminist Reader*. Eds. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.): p.59.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, p.60.
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, p.60.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.60. Spillers explains first "the captive['s] [flesh] becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time—in stunning contradiction—the captive['s] [flesh] reduces to a thing, becoming *being for* the captor; 3) in this absence *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of 'otherness': 4) as a category of 'otherness,' the captive [flesh] translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into [the boy as] a more general 'powerlessness,' resonating through various centers of human and social meaning."
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 60.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.61.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.60.
- ⁴⁸ Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.): p.152-157, p.175-183.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.154.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.56-57.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.58.

⁵² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.157.

Chapter 2 Notes:

⁵³ Luckhurst, Roger. "'Impossible Mourning' In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Michele Roberts's *Daughters of the House*." *Critique* 37.4 (1996): p.247.

⁵⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Routledge, 1994.): p.2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.xvii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.xviii.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.3; p. 224.

⁵⁹ References to the Germanic use of "haunting" can be located in Shakespeare's text as follows: Act 2: Scene 1: Line 141-142: Titania "And see our moonlight revels, go with us; If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts." Act 2: Scene 2 Line 84-85 Demetrius "I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus." Act 3: Scene 1: Line 94-95 Quince: O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help! Act 3: Scene 2: Line 5 Oberon: "What night-rule now about this haunted grove?"

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.2.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.6.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.3: Derrida further elaborates, "... [haunting] is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar. Untimely, it does not come, it does not happen to, it does not befall, one day, Europe, as if the latter, at a certain moment of its history, had begun to suffer from a certain evil, to let itself be *inhabited* in its inside, that is, haunted by a foreign guest."

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.156-159.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.157.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.158.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.158. "Now, the height of the conjuring trick here consists in causing to disappear while producing 'apparitions,' " Derrida explains, "which is only contradictory in appearance, precisely, since one causes to

disappear by provoking hallucinations or by inducing visions.” Through the conjuring trick, the specter *becomes* phenomenally autonomous, but is always citationally linked to the spirit.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.158.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Act 1: Scene 1: Line 71-73.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 1: Scene 1: Line 57-61.

⁷⁶ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.6-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁸¹ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Act I: Scene 5: Line 25.

⁸² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p. 9.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.159.

⁸⁴ Again, Shakespeare elucidates. As we witness the interaction between Horatio and Hamlet, the audience quickly realizes that the appearance of King Hamlet’s specter is an anticipated one, as Horatio, though skeptical, was forewarned of the ghost’s existence. This anticipated coming, Derrida stresses, will simultaneously be a reappearance for the characters of play, but will appear for the first time on stage.

⁸⁵ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p. 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.21.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁸⁹ Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Social Imagination* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota P., 1997.): p.7, p.139.

⁹⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.19.

⁹¹ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*: p.139.

⁹² Marriott, David. *Haunted Life: Visual Culture and Black Modernity*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. P., 2007): p.1.

⁹³ The word spook, often associated with undercover agent novels of the 1940s, finds its etymological roots wrapped in Dutch, Germanic, Norwegian, and Swedish uses of the term meaning, ghost, apparition, or, in the case of

Norway, scarecrow. The term was folded to common vernacular in 1867 as the verb for walking or acting like a ghost, and in 1935 the word began to denote the act of being unnerved.

⁹⁴ Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. P., 1982): p.2-3.

⁹⁵ See Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977): p. 25. "...the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."

⁹⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*: p.26.

⁹⁷ Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.): p.3, p. 9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁹⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*: p.38.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.38.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham: Duke Univ. P, 2003). p.145.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p.145.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p.141.

¹⁰⁴ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.9.

¹⁰⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; p.19. In witnessing the pained humanity of the captive in these "scenes," on these "stages, and of these "spectacles," whites bodies became the phantasmal conduit for understanding black humanity. In light of this, Hartman unfolds a laundry list of important rhetorical questions: "Can the white witness of the spectacle of suffering affirm the materiality of black sentience only by feeling for himself? Does this not only exacerbate the idea that black sentience is inconceivable and unimaginable but, in the very ease of possessing the abased and enslaved body, ultimately elide an understanding and acknowledgement of the slave's pain?...Does this not reinforce the "thingly" quality of the captive by reducing the body to evidence in the very effort to establish the humanity of the slave?"

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.18.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.21.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.21.

¹⁰⁹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*: p. 22.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹¹¹ Anderson, Patrick. *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance, and the Morbidity of Resistance*. (Durham: Duke Univ. P., 2010.): p. 3.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.3.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.19.

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- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.3.
- ¹¹⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*: p.51.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.49.
- ¹¹⁷ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990.): p.138.
- ¹¹⁸ Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Richard Philcox. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove P., 2008.): p.91.

Chapter 3 Notes:

- ¹¹⁹ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987.): p.33.
- ¹²⁰ Sethe's name has been translated to mean, "forgetting." Alternate meanings, however, are derived from the Egyptian deity, Setekh, the god of storms, chaos, and disorder who, according to ancient religion, murdered and mutilated his brother, Osiris.
- ¹²¹ Morrison, *Beloved*: p.5.
- ¹²² Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Social Imagination* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota P., 1997.): p.142.
- ¹²³ Morrison, *Beloved*: p.35-36.
- ¹²⁴ It is important to note, that this distinction between ontology and existence is largely overlooked by both Afro-Pessimists and Afro-Optimists who have taken up Fanon's work. Fanon's articulation of the experience of *blackness* has been positioned as a starting point for arguments concerning black ontology, but without consideration of his move toward transcendental consciousness. As the next chapter will work to demonstrate, this partial consideration of his work suppresses the potentialities of the experience of *blackness* and forecloses the possibility of ontological expansion.
- ¹²⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.90.
- ¹²⁶ Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (London: Pluto P., 2008.): p.82.
- ¹²⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.90.
- ¹²⁸ Morrison, *Beloved*: p.4.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p.164.
- ¹³¹ Spillers, Hortense, J. "All the Things You Could Be Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race" In *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism* Eds. Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, and Helene Moglen (Berkeley: Univ. of California P., 1997).
- ¹³² Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p. 93.
- ¹³³ Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken." University of Michigan. Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. 07 October 1987: p.135-136.

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- ¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.136.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.136.
- ¹³⁶ Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia" In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Vol. XIV (1914/1916) On The History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Paper on Metapsychology and Other Works*. Trans. James Strachey. Eds. James Strachey and Anna Freud. (London: The Hogarth P., 1921.): p.252.
- ¹³⁷ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p. 9.
- ¹³⁸ Freud, Sigmund, "Mourning and Melancholia": p.245.
- ¹³⁹ Durrant, Sam. *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison*. (Albany: State Univ. of New York P., 2004): p.79.
- ¹⁴⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.82.
- ¹⁴¹ Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*: p.80.
- ¹⁴² Young, Harvey. *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010.): p.18.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.7.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.7.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.7.
- ¹⁴⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Routledge, 1994.): p.6.
- ¹⁴⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. (New York: Columbia Univ. P., 1982.): p. 2-3. As Kristeva explains, "When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable object. The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-ject, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing a systematic quest of desire...The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I."
- ¹⁴⁸ Copjec, Joan. "May '68, The Emotional Month." In *Lacan: The Silent Partners*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. (New York: Verso Publications, 2006.): p.95.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.95.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.95.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.96.
- ¹⁵² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*: p. 2.
- ¹⁵³ Scott, Darieck. *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*. (New York: New York Univ. P., 2010.): p.17.
- ¹⁵⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.90.

¹⁵⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.xii.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.89.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.91. “All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to stretch out my right arm and grab the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. As for the matches, they are in the left drawer, and I shall have to move back a little. And I make all these moves, not out of habit, but by implicit knowledge. A slow construction of my self as a body in a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of my self and the world—definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world.”

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.90. Also see: Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham: Duke University P., 2006.): p.111. Ahmed further explains the phenomenal process of negation, holding that if orientation is about the extension of the body in space, disorientation is what necessarily follows when that extension fails or, in the case of the black body, is restricted. She discusses the subtle double-meaning of the “orient” in “orientation.” Using Edward Said’s writings on Orientalism, Ahmed explains that to orient does not always signify that which directs the body, but could also signify a location that is inherited as a man-made, flattened, and static space. Using the Eastern Orient as a prime example of this second meaning of orientation Ahmed explains, “To orientate oneself by facing a direction is to participate in a longer history in which certain ‘directions’ are ‘given to’ certain places....”

¹⁵⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.90.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.92.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.92.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.xii.

¹⁶³ Fanon, Trans. Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.83.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.87.

¹⁶⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.89.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.90.

¹⁶⁷ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.7.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁶⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.95. Fanon’s statement evokes Ahmed’s interpretation of bodily habit. Remembering that for Ahmed habits are the body’s second skin that allows for bodily motility, we understand that Fanon habit of sudden emergence is occluded through his historical rigidity.

¹⁷⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.3; p. 224.

Chapter 4 Notes:

¹⁷¹ Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. (New York: Random House, 1995.): p. 8.

¹⁷² Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Richard Philcox. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove P., 2008.): p. 93.

¹⁷³ Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.10.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.8.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.4.

¹⁷⁶ Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago P., 2011): p.6. What Fleetwood identifies is the way *blackness* operates with a field of signification as a signifier, an image that produces and reproduces the conditions of its own existence. Jacques Lacan explains within a field of signification there are signs, traces, and signifiers. A sign is that which unites the object with a precise idea; a trace is the separation of an object from its sign, a footprint in the sand where the missing object is the foot; and a signifier is that which, like trace, signals an absence, but unlike the trace that signifier is characterized through the absence of an object that was never there. A signifier, Lacan would eventually explain, is structured to refer to a set of other signifiers with which it is associated. In this way the signifier signals the absence of another sign.¹⁷⁶ *Blackness* is understood through the signification of this absence—"It fills the void and is the void"—marking the absence of its coupled sign, or the set of signifiers with which it is associated.

As articulated through the hauntological investigations of the preceding chapters, *blackness* became associated with signifiers of abjection, negation, pain, and docility, which were signified through the body of the enslaved. Consequently, this set of signifiers simultaneously referred back to *blackness* and the slave's body, constructing the illusionary trace between to two; an idea, *blackness*, that seems to have escaped, or been separated from its object, the body. Discourses within the Reconstruction Era attempted to *reconstruct*, that is unite, the idea with its object. *Blackness*, and the signification of abjection and negation it now signified, was affixed to—constituted the affixation of—the bodies of freed men and women. This offered the precise idea of *blackness* an object, *the black body*. As signifier, *blackness* did not (and could never) refer to a phenomenal reality, an ability it now possess as sign. In this move from signifier to sign, vision and performance became the political forces of repression, and crystallized the inescapability of the racially marked body, which now lacked cultural and self-making autonomy.

¹⁷⁷ Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." In *The Black Feminist Reader*. Eds. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.): p.59.

¹⁷⁸ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*: p.163.

¹⁷⁹ Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*: p.10.

¹⁸⁰ Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994.): p.1.

¹⁸¹ Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*: p.18.

¹⁸² "[T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a particular sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others... One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (Du Bois p. 2).

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ Watts, Eric King. *Hearing the Hurt: Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and Politics of the New Negro Movement* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama P., 2012.): p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁸⁶ Watts, *Hearing the Hurt*: p.4.

¹⁸⁷ Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*: p.7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ This approach is a necessary and a useful tool in exposing, through the performative and aesthetic, the relationality between one's experience of one's own body, the discourse(s) that condition that body, and the world in which that body is placed. The utility of this approach is demonstrated through the forces that emerge from Du Bois' trope of the New Negro, as well as within Daphne Brooks' theorization of "dissenting bodies." In her work, Brooks explores the performative methods of 19th and 20th century black cultural producers in their attempts to garner a sense of ontological autonomy through an investment in their marginalized bodies as sites of resistance and possibility. These performers registered "the disorienting condition of social marginalization and the resourceful ways the African American rehearsed methods to transform the notion of ontological dislocation into resistant performance so as to become the agents of their own liberation" (p.3). Through her investigation Brooks highlights the creative and aesthetic energies buried beneath the cultural alterity and putatively grotesque ontological state of the "being" of the Black Body. These energies, conjured through the disorientation of marginalization, manifest into, what Brooks calls, "afro-alienation acts, [where] the condition of alterity convents into cultural expressiveness and a specific strategy of cultural performance. Afro-alienation," she continues, "recurs as a trope that reflects and characterizes marginal cultural positions as well as a tactic that the marginalized seized on and reordered in the self-making process"(p.4).

Afro-alienation is a tropological kin to Du Bois' New Negro, as both erupt from bio-political forces of subjection and othering that results in the quarantine physical bodies and immobilization of the sign of blackness. In spite of this ontologically "powerful stillness" articulated by Spillers, black bodies moved, danced, sung, and in doing so estranged stillness and the gaze that accompanied it to embrace the spectacle of their flesh. As Brooks expounds, through Afro-alienation black bodies embraced Du Boisian double consciousness, "...the 'strange' situation of 'looking at one's self through the eyes of the other,' as transforms it into 'what Brechtian feminist Elin Diamond describes as the enlivened position of 'looking at being looked at ness.' ' Calling attention to the hypervisibility and cultural constructions of blackness in transatlantic culture...[and] rehears[ing] ways to render racial and gender categories 'strange' and to thus 'disturb' cultural perceptions of identity formation" (p.5). Dissenting black bodies, those refusing the signification of the Black Body, "experiment[ed] with ways to express their dissent relationship to the dominant culture and plot[ting] ways to subvert that dissonance" (p.5). This became the anchor for (un)doing the citational links between black bodies the authoritative dictation of the Black Body by dwelling in the excesses of blackness.

¹⁹⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. (New York: Columbia Univ. P., 1982.): p. 3.

¹⁹¹ Saidiya, Hartman V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Oxford Univ. P., 1997.): p.29.

¹⁹² Mori, Masahiro. Trans. Karl F. MacDorman and Norri Kageki. June 2012. "The Uncanny Valley" *Robotics and Automation Magazine*.

¹⁹³ Wilderson, Frank B., III. May 2009. "Grammar & Ghosts; The Performative Limits of African Freedom." *Theatre Survey* 50:1: p.119.

¹⁹⁴ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*: p.2-3.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.3.

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- ¹⁹⁶ Hartman, Saidiya, V and Frank B. Wilderson III. Spring/Summer 2003. "The Position of the Unthought: An Interview with Saidiya V. Hartman Conducted by Frank B. Wilderson, III. *Qui Parle* 13.2: p. 187.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.187.
- ¹⁹⁸ Moten, Fred. Spring 2008. "The Case of Blackness." *Criticism* 50.2: p.211-212.
- ¹⁹⁹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*: p.3.
- ²⁰⁰ Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.): p.19-20.
- ²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ²⁰² *Ibid*, p.11.
- ²⁰³ *Ibid*, p.6.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.14.
- ²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.22.
- ²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.13.
- ²⁰⁷ Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.4.
- ²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.4.
- ²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ²¹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.91.
- ²¹² *Ibid*, p.91-92.
- ²¹³ *Ibid*, p.118-119.
- ²¹⁴ Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.14.
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.15.
- ²¹⁶ Moten, "The Case of Blackness": p.183-188.
- ²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.187.
- ²¹⁸ Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.9.
- ²¹⁹ Moten, "The Case of Blackness": p.188.
- ²²⁰ Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.9.
- ²²¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: p.xii.

²²² Ellison, *Invisible Man*: p.7.

²²³ Moten, *In the Break*: p.255.

²²⁴ Moten, "The Case of Blackness": p.188.

Chapter 5 Notes:

²²⁵ Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (London: Pluto P., 2008.): p.102.

²²⁶ "Quarry." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Chicago: An Encyclopæida Britannica Company, 2014. merriam-webster.com. 21 April 2014.

²²⁷ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987.): p.33.

²²⁸ Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.): p.58.

²²⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Routledge, 1994.): p.165.

²³⁰ Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.): p.18.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p.1.

²³² *Ibid*, p.1.

²³³ *Ibid*, p.2.

²³⁴ aqi Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago P., 2011) p.71.

²³⁵ Neal, Larry. "The Black Arts Movement." *Drama Review* 1.1 (Summer 1968): p.31.

²³⁶ Neal, Larry. *Visions of a Liberated Future: Black Arts Movement Writings*. (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1989) p.63-64.

²³⁷ Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago P., 2011) p.3.

²³⁸ Geggus, David Patrick. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2002.): p. 84.

²³⁹ Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1990.): p.28-30.

²⁴⁰ James, C.L.R. *Black Jacobians: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. (New York: Random House, 1989.): p.85.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.81.

²⁴² Fick, *The Making of Haiti*; p.93.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, p.93.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.97.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.105.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.105.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.104.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.104.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.111.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.111.

²⁵¹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: p.78.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p.78.

²⁵³ Brooks, Daphne. *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1810-1910*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.): p.18.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 19: Here Brooks utilizes the notion of the “ideal spectator who, Kristina Straub claims, ‘is not only detached from the spectacle [but] almost, indeed, invisible himself in his relation to the visible...benignly distant from objects of his gaze...”

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.19.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.25.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.13.

²⁵⁸ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*: p. 56.

²⁵⁹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: p.221.

²⁶⁰ Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Social Imagination* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota P., 1997.): p.57-58.

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