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Disciplines of Memory, Zones of Life: Archival Bodies in Biopolitical Times

A Dissertation Presented

by

Rachel Ann Walsh

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Stony Brook University

December 2015

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2015

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in

English

Stony Brook University

2015

Working at the sometimes embattled intersections of critical race theory, biopolitics, and trauma and memory studies, my dissertation examines the relationship between the narratives of historical traumas and the biopolitical zoning of life in twentieth-century literature and post-9/11 film. My use of the term "zone" alludes to Roberto Esposito's imagining of biopower's optimization of life as an immunitarian enclosure, or the privatization of life and its sustaining resources, and its consequent foreclosure of the ethical obligations of *communitas*. Foregrounding the geographical, temporal, and affective meanings of "zone" and "zoning" each chapter examines zones that are relegated to the peripheral "elsewheres" of Michel Foucault's and Giorgio Agamben's once-dominant cartographies of biopolitics: the Jim Crow South and the plantation state; the immunized residential communities of the white, upper-middle class of apartheid South Africa during its states of emergency in the 1980s; the slave ship and red-lined, domestic spaces of black, American subjects; and the secured and the invaded homelands that exist within the imperial viewfinders of U.S. neoliberal and counter-terrorism policies. I navigate these zones and terrains through modernist and post-colonial literature and post-9/11 films that depict archival bodies or racialized subjects *as archival bodies* inscribed, as Christina Sharpe has argued, with histories of slavery and colonization. These archival bodies, I maintain, both reflect and contest how the management of public memories of historical traumas can be co-constitutive the zoning life and death that occurs through the biopolitical apparatuses of racializing capitalisms.

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List of Abbreviations

AA!: *Absalom, Absalom!*

ALD: *As I Lay Dying*

FA: Fucking A

GDM: Go Down Moses

ITB: In the Blood

SAF: The Sound and the Fury

Acknowledgements

This project has been a long time coming and throughout the long course of its development, I have been supported, challenged, and inspired by a long roster of people. My dissertation committee members, Celia Marshik, Adrienne Munich, and E. Ann Kaplan have been patient and meticulous readers of my work throughout my graduate studies career. From seminar papers, to conference abstracts, to the numerous article manuscript drafts that Celia Marshik very patiently reviewed, and to the many and initially unwieldy drafts of the early chapters of this dissertation, they have provided with insightful and generous feedback. The feedback that they gave me was illustrative of the admirable ways in which they conduct themselves as mentors, scholars, and colleagues. In the many years that I have known them, I have been inspired by the dedication, thoughtfulness, and the seemingly inexhaustible drive with which they approach their teaching and research.

I am also indebted to the insightful feedback I received from my colleagues at the Futures of American Studies and most especially, to its esteemed director, Donald Pease, who kindly served as my outside reader and whose feedback will continue to inform what I hope will be future iterations of this project.

The support that I received from my committee members was complemented by the support that I received from the English Department at Stony Brook, the Humanities Institute, and the Stony Brook Graduate School. In my final semesters at Stony Brook's campus, I was fortunate to work at the Humanities Institute. This provided me with valuable financial support and it allowed me to more fully witness how E. Ann Kaplan's contributions as director of that Institute shaped the intellectual culture of the university. During my time there, she spear-headed numerous conferences and symposiums that showcased the work of Stony Brook faculty

members alongside eminent guest speakers. Likewise, the Humanities Institute supported me and many of my colleagues who participated in Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory.

I am also grateful to Susan Scheckel who, with Celia Marshik, very generously nominated and successfully shepherded my application for Stony Brook University's Madeline Fusco Fellowship Dissertation Award. Likewise, I am grateful to Peter Manning who, through the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, directed a summer seminar that allowed me and many of my friends and colleagues to further refine our dissertation projects in their early stages. Collectively, E. Ann Kaplan, Peter Manning, Celia Marshik, Adrienne Munich, and Susan Scheckel fierced advocated to obtain support for graduate students and to foster an environment in which everyone within the department could strive to produce their best work. That they did so during long and ongoing periods of austerity measures and budget cuts is especially admirable.

I have been deeply fortunate to have friends and colleagues who have been incisive and compassionate readers of my work. During our google chat writer workshops, Eileen Chanza Torres, Emily Churilla, and Ashar Foley consistently gave me careful feedback that always led to me to return to my work with renewed rigor and to further develop my observations. Moreover, their writing and thinking---always smart and innovative---very often clarified my own. My friendship with the fiercely intelligent, deeply compassionate, and generous Aliza Atik was a sustaining source of support and the dedication she has shown in all of the domains of her life has always served as a source of inspiration.

Over the last years of developing this project, I have taught in the English Department at St. Bonaventure University and I have been fortunate to have colleagues whose rigorous

approach to their teaching and research is well-worth emulating. I am grateful to them and to the smart, very often funny, and kind students that I have had in class for showing me how to build a shared, conceptual vocabulary with them. While at St. Bonaventure, I have built a home for myself in the city of Buffalo, which has so informed my thinking about space, zones, and biopolitics. My experiences here and the people that I have met have re-oriented me to what I value. Under this heading, I am grateful to Brandon David Absher for his unfailing and unquestioning support. His generosity and unrelenting commitment to his own teaching, writing, and activism, inspired me push through the exhausting final months of this process.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my sister, Tracy Kathleen Walsh Buday, whose phone calls kept me company over many long drives home and who gave me my first copy of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* when I was an undergraduate working on my senior thesis. Still more finally, I am also profoundly grateful for and profoundly indebted to my parents, Walter Lee Walsh and Constance Ruth Adams Walsh. My father gave me my first Modern Library edition of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* with an inscription---addressed to me when I was sixteen---that encouraged me to grow as a thinker and a reader. My mother gave me my first *New Yorker* with the same, implicit imperative even though, at the age of twelve, when I requested it, I was mainly attracted to the cartoons. Over the course of my life, I have followed their shared directives to grow as a reader and thinker knowing that they did not have the same opportunities to do so and knowing, too, that they labored in sometimes hard and harsh environments so that I could. When I speak with students and colleagues about the labor that underwrites intellectual labor, about what labor qualifies *as intellectual labor*, and when I think about which subjects are zoned in and zoned out of intellectual spaces, they are always at the forefront of my mind.

I. Letting the Desert Howl: The Acoustics of Memory and Inscribed Bodies, or When Trauma was in Vogue

> "What else to liken yourself to but an animal, the ruminant kind? You like to think memory goes far back though remembering never was recommended. Forget all that, the world says. The world's had a lot of practice. No one should adhere to the facts that contribute to the narrative, the facts that create lives. To your mind, feelings are what create a person, something unwilling, something wild vandalizing whatever the skull holds." Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)

I want to begin with an illustrative sound clip. Lore Segal's mordantly funny short-story, "The Reverse Bug," (first published in the *New Yorker* in 1989 and later appearing in Segal's 2008 short-story collection, *Shakespeare's Kitchen*) imagines an impossible archive of the traumas of World War II and the ascendancy of memory studies in the Anglo-American academy during the 1980s. Set in Concordance University (a stand-in for Yale after its incorporation of the Fortunoff video archive of Holocaust testimonies), the story is constructed as a Rube Goldberg machine that, through its slapstick movements, runs through the enduring question of the twentieth-century which was posed with particular urgency during the 1980s-1990s wave of memory and trauma studies: how does one live with memories of atrocity and how does one represent that which refutes representation? In the opening scene of the story, Ilka Weiss, a Jewish immigrant who, as a child, was evacuated from the path of the Nazi death machine through the *kindertransport* brightly asks the émigrés in her adult English language class to share their presumably optimistic stories of coming to America. Her students, instead, relate the stories of their diaspora. A Viennesian by way of Uruguay, Gerti Gruner recounts a childhood that closely resembles Ilka's own "indigestible history of being sent out of Hitler's Europe as a little girl" (319) and Gerti recalls pleading with the American Consulate for the lives of her remaining family members. When she utters the phrase "American Consulate," Bolivian Paulino Patillo

interrupts her with his story of the disappearance of his father, Klaus Hermann, who, we later learn, was a high-level Nazi bureaucrat responsible for the census registries in Vienna and Budapest that ultimately resulted in liquidation of Gerti's family. Their biographies, in turn, are overlaid by the story of Japanese engineer Matsue's career. After the class engages in a collaborative and comical translation of his fragmented English ("'You have been working in the ovens,' suggested Gerti, the Viennese"), Ilka Weiss learns that he was responsible for sound-proofing the ovens at Dachau and, later, collecting sound footage of Hiroshima. In an allusive nod to the U.S.'s "small wars" of the 1980s, Matsue reveals that he was recruited by the U.S. to design the story's titled, reverse bug to potentially be used in other American Consulates, "a device whereby those outside were able to relay *into* a room what those inside would prefer not to have to hear" (323).

Equipped with his invention, Matsue makes his own contribution to the University's unfortunately titled "Genocide Project" by activating an audio archive of the screams of Dachau and the screams of Hiroshima. The screams, with their unrelenting variety, sound the wordless testimonies that the "human ear could not accommodate" (327). First misread as laughter by the symposium's attendees, the sounds ultimately assert themselves---make themselves known---as the irrefutable evidence of trauma. "It became impossible not to know," Segal emphasizes, "that it was not laughter to which they were listening but somebody yelling. Somewhere there was a person, and the person was screaming" (327). Infecting the surrounding community with a sonic waves of "perpetually new and fresh howls of pain" (330), the screams exceed and undermine the institutional space designed to contain them. The theatre, hostage to an unending answer to the symposium's organizing question, "Should there be a statute of limitations on genocide?," is, at the close of the story, dissembled and its howls are buried in the desert of Arizona.

The ironic burial of the theatre (supported, we are told, by an Arts and Humanities grant for "scream disposal") supplies an answer to the question that prefaces Segal's story: "What if we were forced to hear the sound of torture we knew to be happening twenty four hours a day out of our earshot?" Complicating the reigning 1980s/1990s orthodoxy of "never forget!" the story dramatizes the impossibility of living with constantly activated memories of trauma while simultaneously recalling us to the truth that our archives are always incomplete and haunted by their exclusions---the testimonies that were never recorded, the artifacts that were not preserved. The recalcitrant audio file at the center of the story is itself an impossible fantasy. We are informed that Matsue returns to Hiroshima in 1946 to collect the "tapes" (323), recordings that the story suspiciously places in quotation marks, but we never learn how he came by these files. Even more obviously, Matsue's recordings of those who perished in the gas chambers at Dachau place the story squarely in the territory of magical realism. Magically realized, magically captured, the screams index the testimonies lost to the archives of the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The ever-expanding screams of Hiroshima attempt to puncture the visual boom of the mushroom cloud that obscured the life below that the bomb incinerated, and, as Rey Chow observes, came to serve a short-hand for the U.S.'s technological prowess and its emergent visuality of war.[1] Even more pertinent to my purposes here, the recordings position both the witness and the *archon*, who, Jacques Derrida famously noted in his etymological reading of the archive, exercises a hermeneutic sovereignty over the archive, as complicit---an insight borne out by Matsue's dual position as historian and, in his work at

[1] In Rey Chow's *The Age of the World Target*, she recalls both the famous mushroom cloud photograph and Albert Einstein's $e=mc^2$ and remarks that both signaled a shift in the U.S.'s approach to war. "With the gigantic impact of the explosion thus elegantly encapsulated---as if without effort—in a neat little formula that anyone could recall and invoke, an epochal destruction became, for the ordinary person, an instantly perceivable and graspable thing, like a control button at his or her command." Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), p. 29.

Dachau, as an accomplice.[2] Segal's positioning of Matsue as the complicit archivist anticipates the complication of the Holocaust as "unspeakable" by scholars working within memory studies in the early aughts. As Naomi Mandel and Ann Cvetkovich have respectively argued, the designation of trauma as "unspeakable" and, in the Cathy Caruthian model, "unclaimed" made a move that was companionate with the privileged post-structuralist tenets of undecidability/unrepresentability.[3] Drawing out the implications of this line of best-post-structuralist-fit, Mandel's *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (2006), rightly points out that the nomination of an event as "unspeakable" is a rhetorical act that enables those who perform it to evade the politics of the speaking body and the community that is imagined, consolidated, and policed, through its utterance.

The archive at the center of Segal's story simultaneously enables this evasion and undermines it. From one angle, Matsue's recordings collapse the histories of the Holocaust and Hiroshima (deployed here as an encompassing signifier for both atomic bombings) into an unimpeachable iteration of the unspeakable. The non-verbal cries both document the presence of a subject yet, through their documentation, the cries are de-corporealized and can be attached to the abstract "person who screams" or claimed by any subject. Probing at its own abstraction, "The Reverse Bug" briefly shows how the screams become an open-domain property when Paulino, the traumatized son of a Nazi bureaucrat, offers his own appropriative reading of them by telling the others, "'It is my father screaming'" (329). Ilka Weiss sharply corrects him,

[2] Of the archons Derrida writes, "The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives." Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 2.

[3] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), pp. 18-19.

"'Those screams are from Dachau and they are from Hiroshima'" (329), but Paulino's insistent rejoinder, "'It is my father . . . and my mother'" remains unanswered (329).

From another angle, however, the underwriting origins of the recording and its eventual disposal contain this abstraction within a very material, post-war geopolitical network. Segal's story situates the U.S. as the agent of the "atomic situation" that Michel Foucault identified as the genocidal "end-point" of the dream of modern power in the twentieth century (*History* 137) and as the commissioner of technologies for its redacted, neocolonial wars. Matsue's contribution to the symposium is determined both by his early work with a private Munich firm and by his vaguely sinister work for the U.S. When asked about the purpose of the reverse bug, he enigmatically responds that "'it could be useful in certain situations to certain consulates'" (323). In an interview with Han Ong in *BOMB*, Segal explains the story's titled device and the dismantling of the theatre were affectionate "quotations" of Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 film *The Conversation* ("Artists in Conversation"). Coppola's Watergate era classic depicts a private sector world of surveillance and famously ends with its lead detective, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman), ripping up the floor-boards and wall-paper of his apartment after he is informed that he has been bugged by one of his former clients. We can extend Segal's quotation, though, beyond its borrowing of Coppola's troublesome recording devices. *The Conversation*'s plot of corporate espionage (Harry records two seemingly targeted, adulterous lovers who, in the film's big reveal, enact a coup by murdering the cuckolded president of the company) reflects the absorption of technologies of war into a private sector marketplace dominated by American corporations.

I have provided this reading of Segal's story because it uncannily aggregates (and problematizes) many of the concerns that I address in my own work. In my project, "Disciplines

of Memory, Zones of Life: Archival Bodies in Biopolitical Times," I examine memory cultures in interwar modernism and in late twentieth-century and post-9/11 literature and film and explore how these texts resist or work with dominant biopolitical frameworks. Like many of the archives that Segal features in "The Reverse Bug," many of the texts that I examine address what Marianne Hirsch has termed "post-memory" narratives. In Hirsch's career-long study of this phenomenon, she has defined "post-memory" as the experience of being shaped by "overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness" (*Postmemory* 5). Beginning with her *Family Frames*: *Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997) which provides an invaluable reading of Art Spiegelman's two-volume autographic novel *Maus* (1986/1992) and addresses own her experience as a member of the 1.5 generation (a child who was greatly shaped by her parents experiences of the Holocaust), Hirsch has principally explored the inheritance of Holocaust memory amongst subjects whose families, as Spiegelman writes, "bleed history." Yet, she argues that we should situate "postmemory" amongst the other "posts" that determine the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As an epistemological framework, she suggests, we might examine the intergenerational transmission of memory within other historical atrocities with "posts" affixed to them such as "American slavery, the Vietnam War, . . . [and], South African apartheid" ("The Generation" 104).

Providing such an application, though, is a risky enterprise in part because Hirsch's primary (but not exclusive) focus on the familial transmission of memories amongst Jewish survivors elides some complicated questions taken up in trauma and memory studies over the past fifteen years: without re-installing or entirely jettisoning the victim/perpetrator binary (for, in the cases of the historical traumas of the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and apartheid, there are,

indeed, perpetrators), how do we weigh the ways in which these histories are differentially inherited and experienced by subjects? In "The Reverse Bug," both Ilka Weiss and Paulino have been traumatized but how do we account for the very different ways in which they hear the screams in the auditorium? And, speaking to the texts that I examine in my first chapter, *Absalom, Absalom!*, how do we read Faulkner's portrayal of Quentin Compson as a post-memory subject who experiences his body as "not a being, an entity, but a commonwealth" (*AA!* 7) echoing with "sonorous, defeated names" (7) alongside the racialized figure of Jim Bond whose howls haunt the ruins of Sutpen's Hundred? On this point, the "embodied experience" (9) of the intergenerational transmission of memory that Hirsch has thoughtfully examined throughout her career is one that Christina Sharpe explores through the other "post" that, as W.E.B. DuBois famously predicted, would be the demarcating episteme of the twentieth century. Sharpe's *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (2010) compellingly reminds us that "while all modern subjects are post-slavery subjects fully constituted by the discursive codes of slavery and post-slavery, post-slavery subjectivity is largely borne by and readable on the (New World) *black* subject" (3). Sharpe's insight that black subjects are inscribed by the inheritance of memories of slavery and colonialism invites another question that the prefix "post" inevitably raises: if we expand the concept of "post-memory" to Anglo-American slavery, how does the prefix "post" contribute to a historical narrative of racial progress that often elides the mutating operations of institutional racism? Finally, when we consider, as Hirsch urges us to, the ethical obligations that accompany the guardianship of memory, how might we also consider how the guardianship of memory reinforces the biopoliticization of life and the demarcation between the life that is considered vulnerable and worthy of protection and the life that can be consigned to a fast or a slow death? To paraphrase Judith Butler's moving

question, how does memory (post or otherwise) determine not only when life is grievable but, more urgently, when it is permitted to live and under what conditions?

The questions that I have posed above roughly paraphrase many of the post-9/11 interventions of scholars working at the intersections of memory studies, critical race, and queer theory. Entering from different disciplinary vantage points, Ann Cvetkovich, Michael Rothberg, Mimi Thi Nguyen, Veena Das, and Saidiya Hartman (luminaries within very well-illuminated fields) have collectively expanded our understanding of trauma's temporalities (the historical event with a definite end-date and seriality of everyday experiences of violence), scrutinized the politicization of public memory, and alerted us to the danger of pathologizing queer and racialized subjects who have experienced trauma. Written over a decade ago, Cvetkovich's 2003 *An Archive of Feelings* still provides an invaluable guide for navigating these interconnected hazards. Moving away from the then-reigning model of trauma as an epochal event---implicitly gendered as masculine in the case of the American soldiers's experiences of the Vietnam War and the discourse of PTSD that emerged in the 1980s--Cvetkovich makes the case for examining "everyday and ongoing" experiences of trauma by recalling us to Sigmund Freud's, Karl Marx's, and Walter Benjamin's respective theorizations of the shocks of modern capitalism. Cvetkovich argues that we can approach "trauma as part of the affective language that describes life under capitalism" (19) and models this approach through an archive comprised of texts that explore the legacies of colonialism and diaspora and the queer political collectives that emerged during the HIV/AIDS crisis. Through this archive, she demonstrates that a queer approach to trauma and

memory studies can generate counter-publics rather than, as Wendy Brown argued, "wounded subjects" petitioning for admission to the dominant culture.[4]

Cvetkovich's attention to the "systemic violence" subjects experience under capitalism and her advocacy for archives that resist being contained within a larger narrative of national progress predict the more recent contributions of Lauren Berlant, Sara Ahmed, and Nicholas Mirzoeff. In Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011) she examines the trauma of living within what has been increasingly referred to in our post-Occupy era as the "precariat"---those exposed to a slow death of economic insecurity within neoliberal economies. Written during the 2007-2008 financial crisis, which she aptly describes as the spectacular intensification of "decades of class bifurcation, downward mobility, and environmental, political, and social brittleness, that have increased progressively since the Reagan era," (11), *Cruel Optimism* asks us to approach trauma as a genre of the historical present in which the subject is forever in crisis mode. Eloquently reconciling our understanding of trauma as an exceptional rupture with the phenomenon of the everday fissures that can occur as one is repeatedly exposed to violence, Berlant writes, "trauma shatters the biostory that was a foundation for what gets taken for granted about life's historical self-continuity, it transforms the work of survival without much of a normative plot or guarantees" (81). The normative plot is, in the neoliberal iteration that she describes, the promise of the good life and entrepreneurial mobility, in which, as Foucault predicted in his lectures on neoliberalism, the key actor, *homo economicus* is "an entrepreneur of himself" (*Birth* 226). As entrepreneurs of ourselves, we are encouraged to advance ourselves while forms of social support shrink. The working poor and lower middle classes, who are not able to, in Suzan-Lori

[4] See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995).

Parks's phrase, "get a leg up" are pathologized as losers within this economy---rendered invisible and relegated to inhospitable zones of life.

The neoliberal gospel that Berlant critiques is inextricably bound up with a narrative of post-racial progress in which, as David Theo Goldberg (among numerous others) has argued, enduring institutional racisms are viewed as aberrations---personal prejudices---that need not be corrected by political intervention. As of this writing, the term "post-racial" is only ever deployed by critics who place it in derisive italics. It has been thoroughly discredited by the long roster of names of the women, men, and transgender black and Latino subjects who have been subjected to police state violence. Yet, the narrative that the term connotes does have political purchase. To cite but one example: the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) to nullify crucial provisions in the Voters Right Act of 1965 because, in Justice John G. Roberts Jr.'s estimation, "Our country has changed," sadly demonstrates the continued belief in a post-racial horizon (*Shelby* 24).

Critical of these much-vaunted changes, Jodi Melamed urged us to consider how the promises of a post-racial horizon have been underwritten by a very selective co-opting of multiculturalism. In *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (2011), she observes that neoliberalism recalibrates American racisms and produces "new privileged subjects, racializing the beneficiaries of neoliberalism as worthy multicultural citizens and racializing the losers as unworthy and excludable on the basis of monoculturalism, deviance, inflexibility, criminality, and other *historico-cultural* deficiencies" (xxi, emphasis mine). Put differently, upwardly mobile racialized subjects who do not insist upon their cultural difference in unpalatable ways are hailed a sign of post-racial progress. Melamed's study is particularly relevant to my own because of her examination of how the literary marketplace,

figured in bestseller lists and college syllabi, have contributed to the ideal of a deracialized middle-to-upper-middle class. In sum, she suggests that "reading about the Other," is posited as a substitute for engaging in political reform that would dismantle the institutions that have produced "the racialized Other." Her incisive critique, though, is paired with an examination of literary texts that document activism and anger and seek to foster political collectives and hope. These texts, and her suggestion that affects of anger, irritability, and depression, are often coded as signs of deviance in racialized subjects, strongly chime with Ahmed's observation that subjects who insist upon the present-tense of social injustices that have been historicized as "dark chapters within our nation's history" are often pathologized as "stuck" and stagnated by *their* anger, *their* unreasonable hostility, *their* inexplicable depression.[5] As Claudia Rankine so eloquently writes in *Citizen: An American Lyric*, "The world is wrong. You can't put the past behind you. It's buried in you; it's turned your flesh into its own cupboard" (63). Weighed and weighted down by an ongoing history that "the world" insists is past and removes from its visual horizon, racialized subjects (angry black women, angry Latinos, angry Muslims), are encouraged to align themselves with this visual horizon or "get stuck." Rankine, Melamed, Ahmed, Berlant, as I will discuss in my third section, Nicholas Mirzoeff, collectively reject this horizon and instead issue calls for angry archives that would refuse their burial in the post-racial promised land.

In "Disciplines of Memory, Zones of Life: Archival Bodies in Biopolitical Times," I both heed these calls for an archive of deviant affects and, in conversation with Melamed's study, I examine how literary and cinematic works that address traumas of racial violence that

[5] See Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010) and *Willful Subjects* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014).

are contained within what I categorize as "phantasmagorical archives" or, narratives whose specters and ghostly traces draw our attention to the law of the archive that Jacques Derrida identifies in *Archive Fever*: *a Freudian Impression* (1995). The etymological root of the archive, *arkhē* is, Derrida reminds us, that which the term "archive" houses; it connotes the temporal-spatial coordinates ("commencement" in a specific time and place) and the law that decrees the start-date of that history and lays claim to that space. That the organizing hermeneutics of twentieth-century philosophy and critical theory have been devoted to questioning these orders is a familiar truth he addresses in a long aside that later appears as his first footnote. "Of course," he hurriedly acknowledges, "the question of a politics of the archive is our permanent orientation here . . . This question will never be determined as one political question among others. It runs through the whole of the field and in truth determines politics from top to bottom as *res publica*" (2). Permanently oriented, Derrida notes that while the archive shelters the *arkhē* it nonetheless "shelters itself from this *memory* which it shelters: which comes down to saying that it also forgets it" (2, emphasis mine). The archive, then, protects itself from or, to use the nomenclature of Roberto Esposito's biopolitical paradigm, immunizes, the memory of the law that governs it.

Indebted to Derrida, my dissertation is oriented to the *biopolitics* that the law of the archive engenders and reinforces----that is, how the memory of the law that the archive simultaneously shelters and denies is co-constitutive of the zoning life and death that occurs through the biopolitical apparatuses or *dispositifs* of racializing capitalisms that were born out of the plantation state and the colony. My use of the term "zone" alludes to Bruno Latour's well-cited claim that modernity produces ontological zones of the "human and the nonhuman" as well Roberto Esposito's imagining of biopolitics as an immunitarian enclosure, or the privatization of life and its sustaining resources, and its consequent foreclosure of the ethical obligations of

communitas.[6] I capitalize on the spatial dimensions of biopower by putting into play the meanings that the word "zone" assumes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a demarcated region that allows for warfare or for the optimization of life (the expansive, aerial warspace of the U.S.'s counter-terrorism missions; the fortified "Green Zone" in Baghdad) and, beginning with early twentieth-century American discourses of urban-planning, as a signifier for the regulatory design of neighborhoods in which only certain populations and practices are permitted. Alongside these spatial understandings of the term, I also consider the colloquial signification of the term "zone" as an affective episode of either concentration (that ubiquitous sports-slogan---"get in the zone!") or an accidental lapse in, or an intentional withdraw of, attention ("I zoned out," a student might explain). Foregrounding the geographical, temporal, and affective meanings of "zone" and "zoning," each chapter examines zones of the biopolitical/necropolitical divide that are jettisoned or relegated to the periphery of Foucault's and Agamben's once-dominant cartographies of biopower: the Jim Crow South and the plantation state (chapter 1); the immunized residential communities that house the white, upper-middle class of apartheid South Africa (chapter 2); the slave ship and geographies of the invaded, domestic spaces of black, American subjects (chapter 3); and the secured and the invaded homeland (chapter 4). I navigate these different spaces and states through literary and cinematic texts that depict archives and, through their canonization and circulation in the literary marketplace, themselves constitute archives, which contest the biopolitics of the regions in which

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[6] In Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*, he claims that "the modern" engenders a set of purification practices in which the ontological zone of the human is distinguished from the nonhuman. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambrige, MA: Harvard UP), pp. 10 and 13. In *Bíos*, Roberto Esposito tracks the etymology of "immunity" and "community" and writes, "If *communitas* is that relation, which in binding its members to an obligation of reciprocal donation, jeopardizes individual identity, *immunitas* is the condition of dispensation from such an obligation and therefore the defense against the expropriating features of *communitas*." Robert Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* trans. Timonthy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 50.

they are embedded and, in some later instances, compel us to imagine an ethics that would affirm life.

My aim in constellating these archives is to consider how these texts both generate public memories of this zoning and how they alert us to the ways in which the generation of public memory can serve as a disciplinary mechanism of biopower or, alternately, as a means of calling for an affirmative biopolitics that would cultivate spaces and counter-publics that allow life to thrive.

II. Dispatches from Foucault's "Elsewheres," or Outside/In the Biopolitical Machine

". . . and we must show that each time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam . . . civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread . . ." Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950)

"In our recent politics, "secret" has become an oddly complex word. From whom was 'the secret bombing of Cambodia' secret? Not from the Cambodians, surely. From whom was the existence of these 'secret overseas facilities' secret? Not from the terrorists, surely. From Americans, presumably." Mark Danner, "US Torture: Voices from the Black Sites" (2009)

Mapping these zones, my project is in conversation with the ongoing corrective to the biopolitical turn that, within the Anglo-American humanities, occurred in the aftermath of 9/11. In very many ways, my work can be traced back to the late spring of 2004 when, roughly one year after CNN had shown real-time footage of the U.S.'s "shock and awe" campaign against Baghdad, CBS's *60 Minutes II* broadcast images of Iraqi prisoners arranged in a pyramid of unindividuated flesh while white, American soldiers brazenly grinned at the sovereignty they, and by extension, the nation, exercised over the captive bodies whose faces were obscured by sandbags. Watching these images and studying them when a larger cache was published in the *New Yorker* and *Salon.com* (although, as we later learned, it was only a small sample of a larger archive of images taken by soldiers and private contractors), I felt the sad exhaustion that arises

from being confronted with a more concretely defined reality that one has dreaded. The photographs were the boots-on-the ground iteration of "shock and awe." The stylized poses adopted by Lynndie England, Sabrina Harman, and Charles Garner, were choreographed by an administration that would never be held accountable for their crimes and determined by an imperial viewfinder through which the faceless captives were read as life that resided so far outside of the category of the human that their bodies could be painfully rendered and their lives taken with impunity.[7]

"Abu Ghraib," and "Guantánamo," functioned and continue to function as geopolitical signifiers of a much longer, partly redacted dossier of crimes against humanity that occurred in what Anne McClintock trenchantly described as the "global gulag of secret interrogation prisons" ("Paranoid Empire" 57) and, as we continue to see, beneath the expansive flight path of drone planes. These black site prisons and drone strikes that target lives as dots to be eradicated, reveal that the charge "crimes against humanity" was and has always been a misnomer and should be more accurately phrased as "crimes committed in service of securing the category of the human"---against the enemy combatant, the radical fundamentalist, and, as U.S. border control intensified under the auspices of counter-terrorism, the illegal.

The divisions drawn between the populations that are protected and the life that can be held captive for indeterminate prison sentences or eradicated recall those demarcating lines analyzed in Michel Foucault's 1975-176 lectures at the Collège de France, given as, Ann Laura Stoler notes, when *History of Sexuality, Volume One, An Introduction* was in press. Stoler's

[7] As Judith Butler states in a widely exported quotation, "There are two distinct forms of normative power: one operates through producing a symbolic identification of the face with the inhuman, foreclosing our apprehension of the human in the scene; the other works through radical effacement, so that there never was a human, there never was a life, and no murder has, therefore, ever taken place." Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 147.

landmark 1995 *Race and the Education of Desire*: *Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* served as the inaugural guide through Foucault's 1976 lectures on race. However, the lectures themselves were not available outside of the archives and contraband, circulated copies until Arnold I. Davidson at Palgrave MacMillan published an English translation in staggered waves in the early aughts. To be sure, Foucault's post-structuralist star certainly had not been in any danger of fading, but conjured in this series, Foucault appeared once again as a prophet and contemporary. The 2003 English translation of his 1975-1976 lectures on biopower, collected as *"Society Must Be Defended"* coincided with the U.S.'s invasion of Iraq and his *"Security, Territory, Population"* and *"The Birth of Biopolitics"* lectures, published in 2007 and 2008, respectively, seemed to speak to the neoliberal economies that underwrote the expansive reach of Homeland Security and the establishment of border check-points throughout the American Southwest. The reception that his lectures enjoyed, moreover, was partially influenced by the coterminous rise of one his successors, Giorgio Agamben. Agamben's bare life trilogy, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (*Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*) (1995/1998), *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive* (1999), and *State of Exception* (*Stato di eccezione*) (2003/2005), promised to work across the scales of power examined in Foucault's career-spanning anatomization of the disciplined body and his attention to the species-level politicization of life.

For both the Foucault of the 1976 lectures and, more pronouncedly, Agamben, the Nazi death machine is the paradigmatic instantiation of the recuperation of the sovereign power to kill. While Agamben installs "bare life" as the universal mechanism that allows for the activation the death machine, in Foucault's *"Society Must Be Defended"* lectures, he specifies that the threat of racial contamination is that which authorizes the sovereign power to eradicate entire populations.

In a stunningly frustrating moment that so many of his readers have heavily underlined, Foucault hesitates before classifying this regulatory power: "I am certainly not saying that racism was invented at this time. It had already been in existence for a very long time. But I think it functioned elsewhere" (*"Society"* 254).

Stoler warns us that those looking for the long-hidden, long-hoped-for Foucault who would provide a genealogy of racism in modernity will be disappointed. His subsequent lectures of 1978-1979, collected as *The Birth of Biopolitics*, turn to liberal economies and the rise of neoliberalism within the U.S. and Western Europe. What we can instead take from his lectures, she maintains, is an understanding of racism as not a "confrontation" between separate races but divisions drawn within the social fabric between the healthy and unhygienic, the civilized and the degenerate, and racially pure and the unfit (Stoler 60). For many of his readers, though, (and I count myself among them), this is simultaneously the problem and the site of possibility with scholarship on biopower. Foucault's relegation of the histories of colonization and slavery to an uncharted "elsewhere" was repeated, with a much more egregious difference in Agamben's work, where, aside from *Homo Sacer's* passing reference to the Rwandan genocide, histories of black subjects who were registered as not only bare life, but, more pointedly, bare capital within slavery's and colonialism's economies, are entirely omitted.

These lacunas have invited the criticism that the trending wave of biopolitical theory attempted to override and move beyond the work of critical race theorists and post-colonial scholarship. Critics charged that Agamben's seductive lyricism and selective reading of Hannah Arendt's work was particularly suspect and deepened a damaging schism within trauma and memory studies between histories of slavery and institutional racism and Holocaust memory. On this point, Michael Rothberg takes Agamben to task for his positioning of the concentration

camps as the "pure space" of modernity's biopolitics and thereby erecting "an artificial discursive wall around 'the West' that prevents him both from seeing forces outside Europe as constitutive of modernity . . . and from finding a way out of the 'biopolitical machine' that is not apocalyptic" (63). Rothberg expansively shows that this ahistorical barricade excludes any consideration of the numerous post-war Jewish (prominently among them, Hannah Arendt) and anti-colonial thinkers who addressed the relationship between the event of the camps and the histories of modernity's conscripts. Raising similar objections to Agamben's Schmittian reading of Guantánamo, Nasser Hussain and others have likewise invalidated his diagnosis of it as a space of suspended law and instead countered that it can more productively be read as a detention center predicted by other, extra-legal spaces created by colonial powers and continuous with the governmentalities of the U.S.'s immigration and prison policies.[8] Notably, Hussain's objections were prefigured by Susan Sontag, Hazel Carby, and Ishamel Reed, all of whom pointed out that while the photographic evidence of torture at Abu Ghraib was egregious, it could be placed within the same national family album alongside the photographic postcards of lynching that were widely sold during the early twentieth century and the not-pictured abuse of prisoners on U.S. soil.[9]

These correctives that I have recounted have been largely metabolized within the interstitial scholarship of trauma studies and biopolitics. To cite Agamben's work without any caveated acknowledgement of its limitations is to commit a faux pas within most circles. Yet, these points warrant some belaboring if only because they speak to the continued, colonial

[8] Nasser Hussain, "Beyond the Norm and the Exception: Guatánamo" *Critical Inquiry* 33.4 (2007): 734-753.
[9] Hazel Carby writes: "The techniques used on the Abu Ghraib prisoners are familiar from a long history of similar incidents on American soil. In 1997, in a Brooklyn police station, a young Haitian immigrant called Abner Louima was tortured by police officers---one of whom, Justin Volpe, sodomised him with a broom-handle." Hazel Carby, "A Strange and Bitter Crop: the Spectacle of Torture," *OpenDemocracy.net*. 10 October 2004. Pdf. 3.

ordering of the bodies of knowledge that we produce. In Alexander G. Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014), he acerbically muses, "If I didn't know any better, I would suppose that scholars not working in minority discourse seem thrilled that they no longer have to consult the scholarship of nonwhite thinkers now that European master subjects have deigned to weigh in on these topics" (6). Tongue only slightly in cheek, his speculation, I would argue, does speak to how some branches of biopower have exhibited an unlikely kinship with a post-racial understanding of the present and future (read: we can direct our attention to neoliberalism or the cultivation of bio futures since the subject of racism has now been exhausted). Weheliye's study counters this by bringing Hortense Spillers concept of *habeas viscus* ("you shall have the flesh") to bear as a conceptual locus that enables us to account for the inscriptions of political violence and exploitation on the racialized body in ways that *habeas corpus* ("you shall have the body"---as a bearer of rights) does not. Like Rothberg, he movingly reads the space of the camps, the prison, and the colony as sites within the constellation of modernity rather than as spaces that should be placed within a competitive chronology. Like all of the theorists whose work I have cited here, he does so to the end of pursuing a more capacious, more sustainable, humanism.[10]

Over the long course of developing and refining this project, my work has been influenced by Rothberg's and refined and reaffirmed by Weheliye's comparative studies. I seek to repay this debt by attending to how our academic disciplines are shaped by the power relations that they examine and to the sites of resistance and ethics that we can locate in works that exist in

[10] At the close of his chapter on biopower and racism, Weheliye writes (in a passage that very strongly chimes with Rothberg's work), "The point to be made here does not concern replacing the camp with the plantation as the nomos and hidden matrix of current politics but that it is necessary to think through the commonalities and disparities between these two spaces without awakening the demon of comparison." Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), p. 72.

tension with the institutions that house them. Like Weheliye and Rothberg, I insist that we must reject any genealogies of power that would attempt to redraw the boundaries of a self-contained "West" (an entity that was only ever a bogus fiction) and exclude the contributions of critical race and post-colonial theory. That said, Stoler, Achille Mbembe, Rey Chow, Jasbir K. Puar, and Mimi Thi Nguyen have masterfully demonstrated that we need not be bound to Foucault's relegation of slavery and "colonizing genocide" to the "elsewheres" of modernity. Just as Aimé Césaire condemned the gangrened, post-war humanism of the West that disavowed the relationship between the annihilation of the Jewish population of Europe and the colonial violence it continued to perpetrate in Vietnam, we can and must instead examine the global scope of the calibrations that determine which subjects are incorporated, excluded, or provisionally folded into the population whose future must be secured and human capital must be guaranteed. Following their leads, my aim here is to productively place Foucault's understanding of the disciplinary and regulatory modes of power in conversation with Weheliye's understanding of "racializing assemblages" as "a set of sociopolitical practices that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite humans, and non-humans" (4). Such a conversation would allow us to navigate a shifting terrain in which the calculations of which subjects qualify as "full humans, not-quite humans, and non-humans" are made according to a matrix of "race, class, gender, and sexuality" but also to the public memories that inform the workings of this matrix. If, as Foucault outlines in his *Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, neoliberalism's *homo economicus* is an entrepreneur of himself whose human capital---encompassing everything from education to the mother's supervision of the child's nutrition (there is no co-parenting in Foucault's sample household)---must be carefully cultivated, I want us to understand public memories of trauma as a form of human capital whose management (its suppression, its selective canonization, its

commodification, its placement within a narrative of national progress) informs one's relationship to the protected category of the human. Just as urgently, this project highlights works that insist upon their anger---the archives that howl out from the desert and beyond.

III. Illustration Two: *And counting . . .* /"Rosie is Riveted": Between Mourning and History

> the victor departs
> wondering
> whether out of Marsyas' howling
> there will not some day arise
> a new kind
> of art—let us say—concrete
> suddenly
> at his feet
> falls a petrified nightingale
> he looks back
> and sees
> that the hair of the tree to which Marsyas was fastened
> is white
> completely.
>
> Zbigniew Herbert, "Apollo and Marsyas" (1957)

"torture video panopticon prisoners speak digitally on cell phones home teleprompting images rosie is riveted torture/torture woman's place is the house of horrors howling we have met the Frankenstein monster and she is us torture" Evie Shockley, "a thousand words" (2006)

Trauma studies is not, as it was during its hey-day in the late 1980s and 1990s, in vogue. By proposing that we approach public memory as a form of biopower, I am asking us to enter a terrain that some would argue has been exhaustively tilled. The public memorials of the late twentieth century have been built; one can now exit through the gift-shop of the 9/11 memorial and museum and purchase a commemorative mug. Suspicious of the apolitical limitations of such commemorations, Nicholas Mirzoeff's ambitious *The Right to Look*: *A Counter History of Visuality* (2011), turns to the Paris Commune of 1871, placing it within the concatenation of revolutions and anti-slavery movements that occurred during the close of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth. Lingering over one of the portrait photographs of the Commune for its

punctum of life, he powerfully observes that these images capture the right to life that is inherent in claiming the right to look. Mirzoeff reflects, "The conviction that history was on their side, no matter what happened in the short term, is what seems irrecuperable here, rather than the foretold and chosen deaths of those posing. I am tired of mourning. I would like to know what it would feel like to feel so engaged with history rather than death" (187). Mourning is, indeed, tiring. As we continue through the long durée of counter-terrorism policies that were authorized by the hijacking of public mourning and witness the horrifying manipulation of public anger in which ISIS is now engaged, there is an exhaustion that sets in from "paying witness" to atrocities that are determined by the enduring metrics of valued vs. expendable lives. Yet, for all that I share some of Mirzoeff's fatigue, his frustration threatens to introduce a false, and *decidedly gendered*, binary between mourning and history (which functions as a catch-all for activism and political engagement) that his own archive in *The Right to Look* would refuse. Mourning *is* a political act that asserts the conjoined right to look/right to life by protesting the life that was stolen.[11] Here, one need only recall Mamie Till's insistence on burying the maimed body of her son in an open casket; members of ACT UP staging "Ashes Actions" and throwing the cremated remains of their loved ones onto the lawn of a White House administration that had deemed queer subjects as a risk population not worth saving; and more recently, the insistence on honoring the long roster of the names of black subjects killed by police officers.

As Mamie Till, ACT UP, and the recent Black Lives Matter movement have demonstrated, acts of mourning claim space for erased bodies in the public sphere. Acts of mourning can also take the form of inscribing the narrative of that erasure onto one's skin. In

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[11] In *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Cvetkovich also warns us against the gendered implications of pitting mourning against political activism.

March of 2010, Iraqi-American artist Wafaa Bilal staged a 24-hour performance titled *And counting* . . . in midtown Manhattan. On his exposed back, a tattoo artist inscribed in Arabic the names of cities in Iraq where roughly 5,000 American soldiers had died and 100,000 Iraqi civilians (the U.S.'s official and by the 2006 Lancet study's account, conservative estimate) had been killed.[12] The soldiers' deaths were pin-pricked onto Bilal's back as clearly visible, red inked dots while the deaths of the Iraqi civilians were marked in green U.V. ink only intelligible beneath a black light. As Bilal's body was marked, spectators were invited to read aloud the names of the dead. Consistent with his previous work, Bilal's *And counting* . . . recruited audience members not as critical interlocutors (his work, to some extent, performs its own analysis) but as protesters correcting the U.S.'s less than rigorous accounting of the number of Iraqi civilians killed during its occupation. On the epidermal map etched on his body, Bilal claimed space for the dead while reminding his fellow participants that the deaths of Iraqi civilians and American soldiers could not be uniformly housed under the heading of "victims of war."

Bilal's tattooed body, and the lesson that it imparts about the impossibility of suspending questions of sovereignty through the political act of mourning, recalls the (perhaps embellished) story of the tattooed woman that *New Yorker* journalist Seymour Hersh told in the aftermath of reporting on Abu Ghraib. In various news publications and awards dinners, Hersh recounted receiving a call from a mother of a soldier who had worked in the Abu Ghraib prison and who later gave him a flash-drive containing images of dogs attacking hooded, naked Iraqi prisoners.

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[12] In their October 14th, 2006 issue, the *Lancet* published the John Hopkins' and Al Mustansiriya University study of Iraqi civilian casualties. The U.S. had estimated the civilian casualties at 151,000; the *Lancet* study estimated that 654, 965 civilians had died since the invasion of 2003. In my email exchange with Bilal, he clarified that he was well-aware of the figures produced in the *Lancet* study but that he ultimately based his numbers on the Iraq Body Count.

In his August 15th, 2008 interview with WNYC's *On the Media*, he told Brooke Gladstone that he later met with the woman (Hersh refers to her as "the mother") who supplied him with these photographs and recounted

> when the child came back she moved out of the house, left her husband, left her family. Every weekend she began to get tattoos, dark tattoos, every time they saw her, more and more tattoos. Eventually she filled up her body, up to the neck, with dark tattoos. And the woman said to me at one point, it was as if she had wanted to change her skin. ("40 Years Later, Hersh on My Lai")

For Hersh, his conversation with the mother was yet another echo from his career-making exposé on the My Lai massacre. Forty years earlier, the mother of Terry Haute, one of the American soldiers responsible for the massacre, introduced Hersh to her son by saying, "'I gave them a good boy, they sent me back a murderer'" ("40 Years Later, Hersh on My Lai"). In both tellings, the soldiers are troublingly infantilized as "the child" or "the boy," eliding the soldiers's agency much in the way that American soldiers who served in the Vietnam War were positioned as victims—both of war but more pronouncedly, of the critical Left—as public memories of Vietnam became absorbed and were generated during the 1980s. Indeed, Hersh's story of the soldier who wanted to change her skin with, he repeatedly emphasizes, "dark tattoos," is crafted like a national allegory of the scapegoat. A woman divorces herself from, or, more accurately, feels herself banished from her community; she inscribes its sins upon her body; she makes the shame she has been made to feel legible, confrontational; she darkens her white skin with it. It becomes her war testimony of a war in which, particularly in 2008 when Hersh again shared this story for *On the Media*, the U.S. was no longer interested.

How do we read this war testimony, though, alongside Bilal's tattooed back in *And counting . . .* ? How do these two figures, one, a white American soldier, the other an Iraqi-American whose brother was killed in a missile strike, wear the war on their skin? Hersh never revealed the identity of his unnamed soldier but his narrative of her shamed and scripted body reads as though it could be roughly attributed (with some queer adjustments) to M.P. Sabrina Harman, who had an image of the famous, hooded prisoner known as "Gilligan" tattooed onto her arm and whose body art is highlighted in Errol Morris's documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). One of her tattoos is an image of a skull with taped X's across its eye sockets; beneath it is the rotten apple with the number "6" (Lynndie England had a similar apple inscribed on her skin).[13] The icon is, of course, a visual allusion to how they were read---the "rotten apples that spoil the bunch"---but it also exhibits the same Judeo-Christian iconography of the scapegoat----as Eves who ate from the Edenic apple rotted with knowledge, they were both "Fallgirls" as Caldwell terms them, and fallen girls whose S&M pantomiming signaled a fall from an American innocence. In her own narrative, Harman maintains something of her own innocence by casting herself as a documentarian caught in a dehumanizing viewfinder.[14] The point that I want to make here is that Hersh's national allegory of shamed American innocence (that draws our attention away from the hooded figures of the photographs to the white,

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[13] The images of the apples, which are featured on the front-piece for Ryan Astley Caldwell's study of the gendered framing of Abu Ghraib, *Fall Girls: Gender and the Framing of Torture at Abu Ghraib* (2012), are, of course, a visual appropriation of "rotten apple" moniker that they were assigned both by those in the press and the military and in the U.S. military's courtroom where they, along with five other Military Police soldiers, served prison sentences while the administrators who had directly commissioned their acts remained unaccountable. Caldwell, who testified as an expert witness for the defense, lists the Military Police officers and Military Intelligence soldiers found guilty as "rotten apples." Ryan Ashley Caldwell, *Fallgirls: Gender and the Framing of Torture at Abu Ghraib* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

[14] Philip Gourevitch cites some of Sabrina Harman's letters to her partner, Kelly, and observes, "By the end of her outpourings, she had repositioned herself as an outsider at Abu Ghraib, an observer and recorder, shaking her head, and in this way she preserved a sense of her own innocence." Philip Gourevitch, "Exposure: the Woman Behind the Camera at Abu Ghraib," *The New Yorker,* Condé Nast, 24 March 2008.

generically working class body “darkened” with shame) belies a much more complex circuit of affects of shame, anger, and resentment. Moreover, if we read the body of the unnamed soldier alongside, but not in competition with, the map of Iraq and its dead that was etched into Bilal’s back, we return to a question that, I would argue, really underlies the distinction that Mirzoeff makes between mourning and history---when does the adopted posture of the witness foreclose considerations of agency that are required for political action? *And counting* . . . partially answers this question because it creates and demands that we inhabit two spaces: the space of Iraq as configured by American neocolonialism and the space of the commons that would not elide the differences between the deaths that it requires us to account for.

Generating these two spaces, the former of which evokes both the tortured bodies pictured at Abu Ghraib and the Christian iconography of the crucifixion, Bilal’s performance is the howl of the tortured Marsyas that may, as the Polish post-war poet Zbigniew Herbert suggests, only reach the ears of his victorious assailant, Apollo, as an unintelligible “vowel” of pain (much like the sound file of unintelligible cries in Segal’s “The Reverse Bug”), but “in reality” articulates the “inexhaustible wealth/of his body . . . the wintry wind of bone/over the salt of memory” (22, 24-25, 31-32). Herbert, whose life and work also refused the distinction between mourning and history, envisions, perhaps even threatens, that a new art will arise from the visceral scene of torture, much in the way that Césaire calls for a global humanism.

IV. Foucault’s Elsewheres, Part 2: Archival Bodies in Biopolitical Times

> “‘what conscience to trade with which would have warranted you in the belief that you could have bought immunity from her for no other coin but justice?’” William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

Situated between these two bodies---the tortured body that demands recognition and the infected body of the imperialism, I begin my first chapter in two historical moments that I place

in conversation with one another: the 1930s, during the rise of the fascism that Foucault maintains, epitomizes twentieth-century biopower, and 2005 when, two years into the U.S.'s unpopular occupation of Iraq and one year after the Abu Ghraib photographs were published, Oprah Winfrey selected three of William Faulkner's novels (*The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, and *As I Lay Dying*) for her reading club---a Great Works program outfitted to her popular brand of self-help evangelicalism. Winfrey's choice of Faulkner was, numerous commentators remarked, consistent with her post-Jonathan Franzen focus on canonical, (safely dead) American authors that her audiences might have encountered in high school and college syllabi. Among these commentators, several critics repeatedly underlined the widely different understandings of trauma and memory that Faulkner and Winfrey enable.

Countering these criticisms, I argue that Winfrey's declaration that 2005 would be the "Summer of Faulkner" was a perspicacious choice. Faulkner's ambivalent portrayal of whiteness as a construct forged through racial violence spoke to the post-9/11 national fantasy of violated innocence that Donald Pease anatomizes in *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009). Turning from Winfrey's "Summer of Faulkner," I focus on three texts that were not included on her reading list: his 1931 short-story "That Evening Sun," *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and *Go Down, Moses* (1942). Collectively, these texts allow us to approach the plantation ledger as an early and definitive technology of biopolitics that divided subjects who could accumulate property and those who could be reduced to, in Orlando Patterson's phrase, socially dead property. Throughout, I argue that the plantation ledger that Faulkner installs as an archive, and which serves as a figure for the revisions and interplay between his works, enables a more expansive mapping of biopower. In *Absalom, Absalom!,* narrators attempt to heed the writ of *habeas corpus* (giving Quentin Compson the archival body of evidence) and instead generate

numerous accounts of Charles Bon's murder in which things very obviously do not add up. Throughout the inter-generational accounts that we receive of Henry Sutpen's eventual murder of Charles Bon, Faulkner's novel depicts the paranoia of whiteness that violently anticipates the disaster of racial contamination. Tracking the absent, murdered body of Charles Bon, Quentin Compson (months before his suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* where we first meet him) navigates a living archive of oral histories. Rather than focus on Quentin Compson as the *archon* who is inscribed with the histories that he hears, I attend to the archive that we find in the burial stones that incorporate Bon's family into the dominant genealogy of the novel. Later, I examine Faulkner's return to the ledgers in *Go Down, Moses*, where Ike's renunciation (but not repudiation) of his family inheritance is framed by the body of the animal.

In chapter two, I turn to another Nobel laureate, J.M. Coetzee, whose work secured its place in the Anglophone canon and the upper echelons of the literary marketplace largely because of its post-colonial rendering of whiteness and complicity. Indeed, the Nobel Prize Committee's webpage advertises that he was honored with the prize in 2003 in recognition of his depiction of the "surprising involvement of the outsider." My examination of Coetzee's body of work briefly addresses two of his novels of the outsider---his first novel, *Dusklands* (1974) and his allegory of the State of Emergency, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). I then provide a more sustained reading of his *Age of Iron* (1990), written during the states of emergency in South Africa during the 1980s. At first glance, *Dusklands* (consisting of two novellas "The Vietnam Project" and "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee") would not seem a likely candidate for the schema I have defined, but the fabled conditions of its production inform my classification. Written during his graduate studies at University of Texas and his brief stint as a faculty member in the English Department at SUNY Buffalo (1968-1971) and published after his application for

permanent residence in the U.S. was denied, *Dusklands* draws the through-line between the U.S.'s paranoid production of "Vietnam" as a geopolitical space that must be contained and the genocidal, colonial violence in South Africa. That "The Vietnam Project" is a report commissioned by a military bureaucrat, "Coetzee," (the administrative head of the "New Life project") who returns as Jacobus Coetzee in the novel's final story of the massacre of a Hottentot community, predicts one of the leitmotifs of his fiction and metafiction: his casting of his authorial surrogate and of the white *archon* as fully imbricated in the violence that they witness. I pivot from my brief discussion of *Dusklands* into a more sustained reading of *Age of Iron*, where Elizabeth Curren's imbrication is reflected through the metaphor of the breast cancer ravaging her body and the police state violence that intrudes within her gated, upper-middle class enclave in Cape Town. In my analysis of *Age of Iron*, I place Coetzee's work in a conversation with the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas that attends to the limitations and possibilities of his ethical relation to the other.

In my third chapter, I constellate two late twentieth-century texts, British-Guyanese author David Dabydeen's lyric novel, *Turner* (1995) and the American playwright Suzan-Lori Parks's *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* (1985-1989). Dabydeen's lyric novel repurposes the signifier of "Turner" and the artist's portrait of the *Zong* massacre of 1781 in which insured slaves were redeemed by being jettisoned into the sea. Ian Baucom and writers of the Black Atlantic have approached the *Zong* as a "truth event of modernity" that reflects the singularity and seriality of the traumas of the Middle Passage.[15] Dabydeen's poem also advances this reading, however, by opening his poem with a scene of casual murder that followed after the

[15] Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

Zong's passage, he refuses the transatlantic Enlightenment narrative of progress that was authored when J.M.W. Turner's seascape was first unveiled at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. I situate Turner's "howl of pessimism" in the echoes that sound in Parks's *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*. In *Imperceptible*, Parks dramatizes Soyica Diggs Colbert's insight that the "legacy of slavery, as communicated through racial hierarchies, reduces black people to materiality---walking archives" and depicts scenes in which the black, female subject is positioned as a historical artifact that, having been catalogued, can now be dispossessed.[16] On this point, *Imperceptible Mutabilities* interweaves the story of Aretha Saxon, a newly emancipated and expiring black woman, with the displacement of black subjects under the neoliberal policies of the Reagan era that approached low-income black and Latino subjects as disposable populations. Much like Dabydeen's *Turner*, Parks's work, I argue, stages historical footnotes to contest their *historicization* of racializing capitalisms.

Chapter Four returns to the beginning of this project and considers three films built around phantasmagorical archives, Michael Haneke's arthouse thriller, *Caché* (2005), Nina Davenport's documentary *Operation Filmmaker* (2007), and Alex Rivera's science fiction film *Sleep Dealer* (2008). Haneke's *Caché* (2005), which briefly references the sentencing of Abu Ghraib prison guard, Charles Garner, and draws upon well-established connections between the French-Algerian war and the U.S.'s occupation of Iraq, articulates the desire for a disembodied archive that would indict the white bourgeois of France and the U.S. without allowing for the enunciation of a political French-Algerian subject. I pivot from *Caché*'s problematic, ghostly archive to Davenport's documentary of a MTV reality television star-made-good, Muthana

[16] Soyica Diggs Colbert, *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), p. 4.

Mohamed, an Iraqi film student who is selected by American director Liev Schreiber to serve as an intern on his film adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's novel, *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). Liev Schreiber's well-intentioned attempt to airlift Mohamed out of Baghdad and create a space for transcultural memory and understanding is completely undermined by the disappointing archive that Mohamed, as a documentary and Iraqi subject, provides. As a subject whom Schreiber first randomly encounters on his television screen, Mohamed is expected to furnish an affectively compelling archive and instead his narrative unspools as a slow-motion disaster of bad affects (resentment and irritation chief among them).

I liken the gospel of neoliberal uplift that shapes Mohamed as an archival body to Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* which connects the U.S.'s neoliberal incursions into Mexico with its intensified border control under the auspices of Homeland Security. *Sleep Dealer* shows the privatization of the commons (water and labor) and the rendering of the Mexican migrant as a decorporealized laborer, who, divorced from his body, cannot make demands upon the State---as Nemo's supervisor at Cybracero tells him, "We give the U.S. what they always wanted: all of the work without the worker" (*Sleep Dealer*). As in chapter three, I use *Sleep Dealer* to expand on Foucault's theorization of biopower under neoliberalism and to consider the film's (admittedly patriarchal and masculinist) call for a reclamation of the commons.

Finally, in my epilogue, I return to the sonic archive of silence that we see in Phil Klay's "Ten Kliks South," from his 2014 short-story collection, *Redeployment*. Returning again to the question that I have explored in my introduction---how do we mourn subjects of war without eliding the differences between Iraqi civilians and U.S. soldiers---I briefly consider how Klay's story questions the "frames of war" whose underwriting biopolitics are increasingly being critiqued through the real-time archiving of violence against refugees and black and Latino

subjects. Engaged with both mourning and history, these acts of citizen counter-surveillance have demanded a new visual horizon and raise the possibility of an affirmative biopolitics.

Chapter One: Blood and Debt: Faulkner's Phantasmagorical Archives

I. "A Summer of Faulkner": Trauma, Memory, and the Literary Marketplace

In the summer of 2005, roughly one year after CBS's *Sixty Minutes II* aired its report on the acts of torture committed at Abu Ghraib and two years after CNN broadcast the spectacle of the U.S.'s first aerial attack on Baghdad, Oprah Winfrey announced her book club selection of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), that enduring high school AP reading-list staple, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and *Light in August* (1932). Following her decree that 2005 should be the "Summer of Faulkner," journalists and op-ed columnists opined that her nomination of Faulkner was heavily informed by her 2001 fracas with Jonathan Franzen. In its aftermath, they maintained, she had wisely elected to only choose books whose authors were safely dead and therefore unable to raise, as Franzen did, objections to the commercialized sentimentality ("schmaltz" in his phrasing) and flyover-country bourgeois readership that her book club seemed to cultivate.[17] These inevitable references to the Franzen scandal were often accompanied by the observation that Winfrey, the self-appointed curator of a middle-brow Great Works reading program comprised of predominantly female readers, and Faulkner, the high modernist laureate of the American South, were an unlikely pair. In conservative journalist David Skinner's *The Weekly Standard* column, he snidely remarked that Faulkner's intellectual nihilism was at odds with Winfrey's evangelicalism of self-help and pop-psychology uplift:

[17] Franzen writes his own experience of the Winfrey debacle in his *New Yorker* essay, "Meet Me in St. Louis," where he ruefully recounts his physical and emotional discomfiture with marketing his Midwestern childhood and his ongoing experience of mourning the loss of his parents. Recalling the precipitating event of a book signing in Chicago where he had just taped his interview with Winfrey, Franzen writes, "When I talk to admirers of Winfrey, I'll experience a glow of gratitude and good will and agree that it's wonderful to see television expanding the audience for books. When I talk to detractors of Winfrey, I'll experience the bodily discomfort I felt when we were turning my father's oak tree into schmaltz, and I'll complain about the Book Club logo. I'll get in trouble for this." Jonathan Franzen, "Meet Me in St. Louis," *The New Yorker*, 24 December 2001.

> If Oprah is inspirational, her fellow Mississippian Faulkner is fatalistic. . . . In the happy televised world of Oprah, people are put upon until they decide they are not going to take it anymore. In Faulkner's South man is cursed, sinful, and at best he quietly suffers his undeserved fate. Such stoicism is of course unheard-of on Oprah, where people *broadcast their tales of victimization* around the world. ("Oprah vs. Faulkner," emphasis mine)

Skinner's sneering complaints about Winfrey's viewers contain traces of the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s that were fought inside the classrooms and the news media platforms of the Anglo-American academy. His misogynistic claim that on her show "people" (read: women and people of color historically excluded from the universal, abstract category of "man") "broadcast their tales of victimization around the world" rehearses a familiar narrative: once upon a time, the post-war, American university taught Great Works, but from the 1970s onwards, critical race theory and disciplines organized around "identity politics" displaced these Great Works with "tales" of history's victims. Skinner's attribution of the category of "man" to Faulkner's body of work functions as something of a dog-whistle for those nostalgic for the Cold War American academy. It alludes to Faulkner's often-quoted 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance lecture where he declared his faith in the perseverance of "man" ---a declaration that, Mark Greif argues, was in keeping with post-war discourses that sought to uphold the category of the "unmarked" man in the aftermath of its genocidal divisions of World War II (Greif 4-5). In Skinner's Faulkner/ "man," Oprah/ "people" binary, however, "man" has been usurped by a vulgar chorus of people promiscuously circulating their personal narratives, led, in this instance, by a black woman who, throughout her career, has publicly insisted on the legitimacy of her own personal narrative.

Skinner's crude response to Winfrey and her readers might hardly bear mentioning---to apply something of an anachronistic question to Skinner's pre-Twitter criticisms, why feed the trolls when their critiques unfold along such tired and predictable lines? Yet, the tension that he identifies between Winfrey and Faulkner was also highlighted by more thoughtful writers who supported Winfrey's selection. In J.M. Tyree's essay for *The Nation*, he praises Winfrey's promotion of Faulkner's novels and more carefully reflects upon the differing understandings of trauma that his works and her show engender. Commending Winfrey for "taking a major gamble on her audience's attention spans and political sensitivities," Tyree observes that this was a particularly high-stakes gamble given the philosophical divides between the canonical novelist and the television celebrity ("As I Lay Reading"). "In Faulkner," he writes, "the world is gone wrong, and everything in it is hopelessly broken, whereas Oprah, who is similarly bold in confronting the cruelties of the past, offers the mild remedy of 'inspiration,' a perpetual procession of heartwarming or heartbreaking personal stories of overcoming fear" ("As I Lay Reading"). Although Tyree ultimately reads this difference as evidence that Winfrey's critics have under-estimated her, his words strongly echo Skinner's.

More recently, Brown University Comparative Literature professor Arnold Weinstein, one of the scholars that participated in the Summer of Faulkner project by providing online lectures that Winfrey's readers could consult, published a *New York Times* column with the unfortunate headline, "Closed Minds, Great Books" (Allan Bloom's 1987 contribution to the culture wars, *The Closing of the American Mind*, continues to provide titles for trend articles about academia). Weinstein regrets that Faulkner is a hard sell amongst a generation of students who have been characterized by the news media as overly politically-correct millennials who now require "trigger warning" disclaimers on course syllabi to ensure that their classrooms are

"safe spaces" ("Closed Minds, Great Books"). Weinstein concedes that such generalizations are reductive, but he encases the terms *trigger warning* and *safe space* in skeptical quotation marks and, after safely partitioning them, raises a familiar question about the dubious enterprise of evaluating books on the basis of the politics of their authors. Amongst a younger generation of readers, Faulkner runs counter not to the tales of inspirational uplift that Skinner and Tyree associate with Winfrey but to overly refined political sensibilities.

Admittedly, the constellation I have mapped between Skinner, Tyree, and Weinstein, contains some significant lines of distance between their respective positions. Having made that disclaimer, though, their concerns about the difficulties that Faulkner's works might pose for contemporary readers recall us to the ways in which trauma studies, and its metabolization in the sectors of popular culture that Oprah Winfrey once represented, continue to be entangled in the culture and canon wars. Collectively, they identify an incompatibility between Faulkner's "bad politics" (in Weinstein's phrasing) or "fatalism" (in Skinner's New Criticism-era vocabulary) and finicky readers whose sensitivities are informed by either Winfrey's brand of confessional culture or by an activist hermeneutic that would outrightly reject Faulkner's ambivalent portrayal of the nation's racial mythologies. Their observations about the sensitivities of these imagined readers resemble, in a distorted form, Lauren Berlant, Mark Seltzer, and Wendy Brown's critiques of the absorption of some of the insights of trauma studies into what Berlant invaluably termed as the affective public sphere of American culture. In Ann Cvetkovich's 2003 *An Archive of Feelings*, she distills the interventions of these theorists by summarizing, "the U.S. culture's transformation into a trauma culture is a problem, representing the failure of political culture and its displacement by a sentimental culture of feeling or a voyeuristic culture of spectacle" (15). For many, Winfrey's show represented some of the failures that Cvetkovich cites; her program

advanced the confessional culture of late twentieth-century talk-shows and proselytized a neoliberal gospel of self-actualization.

Of course, as Skinner's misogynistic complaints demonstrate, the cultural transformations that Winfrey had wrought and sold amongst her viewers were decidedly political. Winfrey and her masses of reading women presented the dual threat of spectacles of sentimentality *and* through her Book Club, an intrusion upon the white, masculine domain of intellectual rigor and the universality of "man" that Skinner conjures in his antiquated reading of Faulkner. During its reign, Riché Richardson reminds us, Winfrey's Book Club was the largest in the world and its widespread influence on the publishing industry and academia signaled "[a] democratizing [of] the conventionally masculine and white-dominated public sphere . . . through the diverse and female-centered audience that it constitutes through a plural body of readers" (123). Richardson's observations about Winfrey's reliance on digital media rather than television to guide her readers as they moved through some of Faulkner's major and most difficult works warrants an extension of his claim. Arguably, Winfrey's "Summer of Faulkner" functioned as something of a prototype of the open, online courses now offered by many universities and the digital archives that they have uploaded onto YouTube and itunes. On her website, readers could view video lectures given by prominent Faulkner scholars, take quizzes, and review reader's guides. Both offline and online, Winfrey's "Faulkner 101" (the bannered title of her reader's website) course did indeed reflect a merging and a reconfiguration of the public and academic spheres.

With that said, this brief rehashing of the culture wars circa 2005 may hardly seem worth lingering over. Winfrey's updated Book Club 2.0 does not wield the same influence that its predecessor did since her show ended in 2011. Yet, her selection of Faulkner's novels and the

disparity that readers identified (and in Weinstein's case, continue to underline) between Faulkner's modernist depiction of the historical traumas of slavery and Jim Crow terrorism and the trauma cultures of the twenty-first century invites the question: in what ways *did* Faulkner's politics and poetics of memory speak to the politics and poetics of memory and trauma in the early twenty-first century? Put differently, how were Faulkner's works framed as being relevant to our historical present?

Even prior to Winfrey's book club selection, Faulkner was reported to have enjoyed something of a resurgence in popularity. In Steven Weisenburger's 2006 *American Literary History* article, "Faulkner in Baghdad, Bush in Hadleyburg," he cites a 2003 National Public Radio interview with university students and professors in Baghdad who expressed a strong affinity for Faulkner's "'sense of history,'" dramatized in his 1951 novel *Requiem for a Nun* (739-40). For Weisenburger the NPR report largely serves as an opening gambit to his larger argument about how *Requiem*'s leitmotifs of "race, nation, and sovereign violence assume antidemocratic and even protofascist guises" (740) and how, in turn, these "protofascist guises" were mirrored in the Western-frontier fantasia that President Bush staged in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Significantly, though, Guy Raz's interview with "Iraq's New Generation of Bohemians" closely resembles Azar Nafisi's best-selling *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) in which Nafisi recounts clandestinely presiding over a book club and teaching young Iranian women the secular classics of the Western European and American canon. Raz's NPR story advances a similar story-line; Iraqi poets, students, and university professors all attest to Faulkner's universality and the vignette focuses on a once religious, now-secular, poet who emphasizes his love for "Shakespeare and Derrida" ("Bohemians"). Situated within a pantheon of cosmopolitan literature and theory, the Nobel Laureate is framed in much the same way that

he was when he was awarded the prize in 1949---as an ambassador for the American values of intellectual freedom and expression.[18]

Like Weisenburger, I am attentive to how Faulkner's Cold War-era "ideologeme" was reflected in the post-9/11 American imaginary, but my interest is primarily directed towards kinship between Faulkner's major works of 1930s and 1940s, the understanding of memory that they engendered, and the beginning of the long durée of counter-terrorism. How did Faulkner's portrayal of the haunted, white American South and the nation's violent racial mythologies speak to readers four years after the launch of the Global War on Terror? As Donald Pease recalls in his *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009), the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were an attack on "the U.S. people's fantasy of itself as radically innocent. The Homeland Security State that Bush erected at Ground Zero was endowed with the responsibility to defend the Homeland because the foreign violation of their Virgin Land had alienated the national people from their imaginary way of inhabiting their native land" (Pease 159). The fantasy of national innocence that Pease anatomizes throughout his study is inextricably bound to a fantasy of whiteness as the immunity from any substantive reckoning with its crimes. Or, as one of Faulkner's more critical readers, James Baldwin, famously insists, "It is the innocence which constitutes the crime" (*Fire* 5-6). Pease's and Baldwin's respective critiques of national innocence speak to why Winfrey's selection of Faulkner's work was, I would argue, especially perspicacious. Many of the well-marked commonplaces of his oeuvre---his exposure of the

[18] See Helen Oakley's essay, "William Faulkner and the Cold War: The Politics of Cultural Marketing" in which she writes: "Parallels can therefore be drawn between the emphasis that the mass media placed on the ethical guiding role of the United States and the way in which journals such as Partisan Review presented Faulkner's work as to some extent morally redeeming. The C.I.A. was well aware of the ideological power of the media in shaping international public opinion, and it funded magazines in Europe and Latin America." Helen Oakley, "William Faulkner and the Cold War: The Politics of Cultural Marketing" *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies*, eds. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham: Duke UP, 2004). 405-18. p. 411.

redacted genealogies of the American South and, more expansively, the nation; his critical portrayal of the white American South's nostalgia for the Confederacy and his own, ambivalent attachment to the idea of white sovereignty---speak to the affective circuits of resentment, anger, and shame, that circa 2005, undermined the fantasies that Pease and Baldwin identify.

On this latter point, it is significant that Winfrey's readers entered Yoknapatawpha County not through the archive of the plantation that haunts the novels that I principally examine in this chapter---*Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942)---but through what, for some of her readers, may have been the more palatable access point of the white, rural family of the Bundrens who are read, as Jolene Hubbs points out, through an "urban gaze" that regards them as "inherently and unvarying archaic---as, that is, obsolete" (465). While America's neoconservative Empire during the early aughts could hardly be characterized as obsolete, the reigning discourse of "red state/blue states" that was intensified in the aftermath of the 2004 presidential election, bore traces of the rhetoric that Hubbs identifies in *As I Lay Dying*. The town/rural and modern/ "backwards" binaries that recur throughout the novel were mirrored in the pronounced districting of the country into progressive, coastal cities and flyover country with its neoconservative voting patterns.

Moreover, within the context of the U.S.'s failed mission in Iraq, the novel furnishes the most immediate point of connection through its oblique references to the Great War that, as Patricia E. Chu describes in her essay on Faulkner's 1941 short-story, "Tall Men," reflected the "massive conscription and deployment of men . . . . amid skepticism about the war being the result of international business practices" ("Faulkner and Biopolitics" 65). Chu's description of World War I could easily be repurposed as a criticism of Operation Iraqi Freedom and its underwriting neoliberal policies that effectively conscripted soldiers into serving multiple tours.

On this latter point, we can further extend the commonalities. As readers have long observed, the undisclosed traumas that Darl Bundren might have suffered during the Great War are overshadowed by the trauma that he experiences as a civilian---first by witnessing the ways in which as, John T. Matthews reflects, “money silently constitutes and openly mediates the family in the agrarian South” (“Machine Age” 76), and the resulting violations that his siblings suffer on their long journey to bury their mother. The effects of this trauma come to a head when he becomes a ward of the state. Describing the faceless officers who escort him on his train-ride to a state asylum in Jackson, Darl reflects:

> Their necks were shaved to the hairline, as though the recent and simultaneous barbers had had a chalk-line like Cash’s. . . . One of them had to ride backward because the state’s money has a face to each backside and a backside to each face, and they are on the state’s money, which is incest. A nickel has a woman on one side and a buffalo on the other; two faces and no back. I dont know what that is. Darl had a little spy-glass he got in the France at the war. In it it had a woman and a pig with two backs and no face. I know what that is. (*ALD* 253-54)

Under the careful watch of men who are simultaneously on the state’s payroll and bear the imprimatur of its investment in correcting and containing deviant subjects who fall outside of the standardized notions of sanity, Darl plays head or tails with the first person and the dissociated third. The “little spy-glass,” a mass-produced, pornographic souvenir that serves as a token reminder of Darl’s survival of the Great War, is the commodity that he *can* make heads or tails of because it depicts the animalized threat of sodomy. As a soldier who served as human fodder for the Great War and a poor, rural white subject whose destruction of property has led to him becoming a ward of the state, whatever scopic mastery Darl is promised through the figures of

the bestialized woman and pig is undermined by his identification with them. His narration shifts from a first-person assertion of recognition "I know what that is," back to his dissociated, third person when he envisions himself as an encaged spectacle of degeneration whose animality compromises his kinship with his family, "Our brother Darl in a cage in Jackson where, his grimed hands lying light in the quiet interstices, looking out he foams" (*ALD* 254). Looking out and adopting the choral voice of his family, Darl is a liminal creature whose madness and labor are marked with the entangled signifiers of animality and blackness.

In sum, within modernity's biopolitical *dispositifs* the Bundrens are positioned as a species of white-trash defined by their socioeconomic and evolutionary delays. Their decomposing matriarch poses, the marshall informs them, a threat to "public health" (*ALD* 204) and, in painfully gendered ways, Dewey Dell and Cash are respectively violated and maimed when their poverty prevents them from being able to obtain the medical care that they need. Elsewhere, Chu tracks these *dispositifs* in Faulkner's short-fiction and invites us to situate his corpus in an "Anglo-American modernist movement that collectively (if not always accurately) expressed anxieties about new state strategies of governance" ("Faulkner and Biopolitics" 59). These anxieties were, she observes, often expressed through the figure of the zombie that served as "an avatar for the modern self that elite modernists feared they had already become" ("Faulkner and Biopolitics" 72). Doubling down on that claim, Chu wonders, "More specific to Faulkner's South, might it not be the case that that avatar is often a black person, tying race and racial figurations more tightly in some of his works to the psychology of the white modern democratic subject rather than to the defeated plantation owner?" (72).[19] Chu's suggestion is apt

[19] Chu's question might appear to introduce a false schism between the modern, white subject and "the defeated plantation owner," but it is one that her larger and earlier study refuses. There, she heavily emphasizes how white subjectivity was forged in the crucible of the plantation. See Patricia Chu, *Race, Nationalism, and the State in British and American Modernism*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006).

but it requires some modification if we apply it to *As I Lay Dying*. There, it is not the "black person" but *blackness* and animality that function as appropriative signifiers of white precarity and labor. After Cash and Jewel are severely injured, Vardaman gazes upon Cash's gangrened leg, encased in cement, and Jewel's burned back, and reflects that their bodies, blackened by injuries determined by their poverty, resemble "a nigger's" (*ALD* 224). Significantly, the one noteworthy encounter that the Bundrens have with black subjects occurs when Jewel misattributes their insult to a white man with greater socioeconomic capital than his family. This ostensible misreading, as numerous critics have observed, correctly registers their subjugation as working class, rural subjects but, read alongside the novel's other episodes where "nigger" denotes the injured, white body, it reduces blackness to a trope of white abjection. [20]

Indeed, the first two Faulkner novels that Winfrey selected primarily explore how white, Southern subjects are targeted as, to recall the marshall in *As I Lay Dying*, a "threat" to the public health and experience themselves as alienated anachronisms within the larger body politic of the nation. Readers enrolled in Winfrey's Faulkner 101 course moved from Addie's decomposing body to Benjy Compson's tenuous relationship to the category of the human--demonstrated both through his mother's renaming of him and his castration. Yet, in *The Sound and the Fury,* Quentin Compson's self-negating obsession with Caddy's sexual purity masks an investment in whiteness whose pathology Faulkner more fully explores in the final novel in Winfrey's line-up, *Light in August*.[21] That readers followed the story of Joe Christmas as Hurricane Katrina hit New

[20] In John T. Matthews's essay, "*As I Lay Dying* in the Machine Age," he nicely summarizes this encounter by writing, "the moment spotlights the relation between racial and class strife. In Darl's judgment, Jewel would have to be 'blind' to identify a white man as his adversary. . . . At moments like these, the novel makes us sort out the way racial conflict is an ideological construct that deflects potentially more productive class conflict in the South." John T. Matthews, "*As I Lay Dying* in the Age of the Machine," *boundary 2* (Spring 1992): 69-94. p. 92.
[21] In Richard Godden's *Fictions of Labor*, he notes how each of the brothers in *The Sound and the Fury* associates sexuality with blackness, stating, ". . . for the brothers, the sister's hymen is also a colorline. In taking Caddy's

Orleans and inaugurated, as Jelani Cobb trenchantly reflects, a "referendum on black citizenship" ("Race and the Storm"), was fitting. Throughout *Light in August*, the ambiguity of Christmas's racial identity is stabilized through violence and his movements are largely propelled by the threat of that violence, and his defiant activation of that threat. While he is variously read as white, black, and Mexican (the latter of which was introduced as a racial category in the national census in 1930), in death, he is definitively racialized as black when Percy Grimm, a self-appointed, petty sovereign, castrates him and thereby unleashes his "pent black blood . . . like a released breath" (*LIA* 465). The mutilation of Christmas's body produces a "black blast" that, we are informed, will remain with the men responsible for his lynching, "soaring into their memories forever and ever. . . . It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant" (*LIA* 465). The "black blast" of Christmas's murder serves as a disembodied, archival remnant that will endure, whereas he, and the other definitively black subjects of Faulkner's works, are largely silenced. In Yoknapatawpha County, as critics have long remarked, white subjects are haunted by the historical crimes that have produced their whiteness; black subjects, "these others [who] were not Compsons" as Faulkner's 1946 Appendix to *The Sound and the Fury* characterized them, merely endure them.

The transformation of Joe Christmas's body into an archival remnant and the act of white terrorism that killed him are suggestive of the larger concerns that I explore in this chapter. As I earlier mentioned, I do not offer a sustained examination of the texts that made Winfrey's list. Instead, I situate Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* and his adjacent short

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virginity, no matter at what distance, each of them, metaphorically turns 'black.'" Richard Godden, *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the Long Southern Revolution,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), p. 22.

fiction within both the shifting epistemologies of race that his works so famously explore and twenty-first century theorizations of biopower and memory. In this chapter, as throughout the rest of "Disciplines of Memory, Zones of Life" I examine traumas of racial violence that are contained within what I, following Derrida, term "phantasmagorical archives" or, narratives whose specters and ghostly traces recall and return us to what Jacques Derrida identifies in *Archive Fever*: *a Freudian Impression* (1995) as the orders of time (sequential) and law (jussive) of the archive's etymological root, *arkhē*. Indebted to Derrida, my dissertation is oriented to the *biopolitics* that the law of the archive engenders and reinforces----that is, how the *memory* of the law that the archive simultaneously shelters and denies, is co-constitutive of the zoning life and death that occurs through the biopolitical apparatuses, or, what Esposito terms biopower's *dispositifs,* of racializing capitalisms that were born out of the plantation state and the colony. My use of the term "zone" alludes to Esposito's imagining of biopolitics as an immunitarian enclosure, or the privatization of life and its sustaining resources, and its consequent foreclosure of the ethical obligations of *communitas*.[22] I capitalize on the spatial dimensions of biopower by putting into play the meanings that the word "zone" assumes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a demarcated region of that allows for warfare or for the optimization of life and, beginning with early twentieth-century American discourses of urban-planning, as a signifier for the regulatory design of neighborhoods in which only certain populations and practices are permitted.

[22] In *Bíos*, Roberto Esposito tracks the etymology of "immunity" and "community" and writes, "If *communitas* is that relation, which in binding its members to an obligation of reciprocal donation, jeopardizes individual identity, *immunitas* is the condition of dispensation from such an obligation and therefore the defense against the expropriating features of *communitas*." Robert Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy,* trans. Timonthy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 50.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*, the zoning of life and the racialized distinction between human and animal is determined by the plantation ledger. It inscribes and reinforces the caesura between human subjects and humans rendered as animals. Its columns add up, as Cheryl I Harris tracked in her path-breaking study, whiteness as a qualifying property of the human and the legally-sanctioned ability to seize land and peoples.[23] Whereas the long eighteenth century that was forged through the transatlantic slave trade saw the balanced ledger as an emblem of, Erik Dussere observes, a just marketplace, in the twentieth century, it is emblematic of the atrocities inscribed as transactions. Symptomatic of this reading, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1901), Marlow observes the impeccably outfitted British bureaucrat tallying up profits from the ivory trade while the Congolese workers responsible for these gains die in the forests. "[he was] bent over his books, was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep, I could still see the tree-tops of the grove of death" (38). Likewise, Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) also suggests this re-reading of the ledgers when Anna tells her lover that she read her mother's plantation ledgers as a child and later, during their assignation, thinks back to an entry, "Maillotte Boyd, aged 18, mulatto, house servant" that simultaneously alludes to her own suspect whiteness as a creole subject from the fallen white aristocracy of Jamaica and her status as an amateur sex-worker which effectively positions herself as another commoditized body and product of the British empire (54). Like Conrad and Rhys, Faulkner's use of the ledger seeks to, in Dussere's phrase, "unbalance the books."[24] Faulkner's novels, he observes, undermine the promise of the ledger to

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[23] See Cheryl I. Harris's canonical "Whiteness as Property," where she argues that whiteness has been cultivated and protected through legislature as an attribute or property and as a form of sovereignty. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 106.8 (June: 1993): 1710-1791.

[24] In Erik Dussere's discussion of Faulkner's ledgers he observes that Faulkner plays with the association of the marketplace as a "model for justice," writing, "As a narrative of past events, the ledger insists not only that those events have been recorded accurately and honestly, but that they have been literally 'done justice' . . . Thus accounting posits the economic domain of the market as ethical and, indeed, as a model for justice, a paradigm of

provide an accurate account of events. Instead, the ledger records the debts of the past that cannot be expunged or forgiven. Like Dussere, I track Faulkner's returns to the ledger as the site of a traumatic inheritance that the (white, male) post-Reconstruction subject must confront.[25] I do so, however, with the larger aim of positioning the plantation ledger as a corrective to the circumscribed genealogies of biopower that were advanced in Foucault's Collège de France lectures and, more pronouncedly, in Agamben's bare life triology. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, where the ledger serves as the narratological scaffold, the activation of "bare life" is not, as Jason Compson and Rosa Coldfield purport in the accounts that they offer of Charles Bon's murder, an exceptional mystery, but the predicative condition of black subjects. Both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* are ostensibly organized around and propelled by the imperative to uncover the exception that is not an exception, the mystery that is not a mystery, or as George B. Handley writes, "the oedipal responsibility to investigate a crime that has resulted in a plague in the polity" (32). Like many of the texts that I examine throughout my dissertation (Coetzee's novel *Age of Iron*; Parks's play, *Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom*; and Michael Haneke's film *Caché*), the plagued polity is represented through the house that, as Derrida observed of the archive, both houses and shelters itself from the memory of the crimes that are foundational to its laws and inscribed and authorized in its ledgers. As Rosa Coldfield famously tells Quentin Compson, in a warning that speaks to Michael Haneke's *Caché*, "'There's something in that house. . . . Living in hidden in that house'" (*AA!* 140).

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right and proper action." Erik Dussere, "Accounting for Slavery: Economic Narratives in Faulkner and Morrison," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 47.1 (Summer 2001): p. 332.

[25] In his introduction, Dussere argues that Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust (*1948) is indicative of Faulkner's configuration of debt as "not a monetary debt but a 'debt of honor' on the model of the debt that were owed between gentlemen of the antebellum Southern aristocracy. Acknowledging that Southern honor is built on a foundation of ownership, Faulkner's characters nonetheless attempt to preserve the form of honor as an act of resistance to the 'Northern' capitalist ideology that privileges money and business." Erik Dussere, *Balancing the Books: Faulkner, Morrison, and Economies of Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 12.

That the body that Quentin Compson is ultimately confronted with and, in his exchanges with Shreve, inhabited by, is that of the traumatized Henry Sutpen, come home after a long exile, speaks to one of the prevailing and well-rehearsed criticisms raised by Faulkner scholars: Faulkner's staging of the post-structural crisis of whiteness and his accompanying elision or outright evacuation of black subjects' interiorities veers dangerously close to depicting white subjects who are victimized by histories their own hegemony.[26] As I argue, though, Faulkner's works dramatize one of the enduring aporias in trauma and memory studies---the politics of paying witness to traumas in which one is complicit. Contrary to the distinctions that Skinner and Tyree draw between a contemporary understanding of trauma advanced by Winfrey's show in the early twenty-first century and the theorization of trauma and memory that Faulkner's works enable, Faulkner may be our contemporary. Quentin Compson's often-cited reflection that he is "not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts" (*AA!* 7) who is occupied by the histories that precede him resonates both with Marianne Hirsch's theorization of postmemory and with Jacques Derrida's suggestion in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001) that to live in the late twentieth century is to be generationally implicated in and marked by its atrocities. Derrida writes, "We are all heir, at least, to persons or events marked, in an essential, interior, ineffaceable fashion, by crimes against humanity" (*Cosmopolitanism* 29). Elsewhere, Derrida troubles the "we" that might be consolidated through national statements of apology, but his formulation "we are all heir . . . to crimes against humanity," highlights why we must consider the relationship between biopolitics

[26] See Edouard Glissant's *Faulkner, Mississippi*, Trans. Barbara B. Lewis and Thomas C. Spear, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Thadious M. Davis's *Games of Property: Law, Race, and Gender in Go Down, Moses*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); and Philip M. Weinstein's *What Else But Love?: The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1996). I will address their criticisms more fully throughout this chapter.

and memory. In the columns of the ledgers we find the atrocities, the mundane transactions that determined the category of the human. In the ledgers that circulate within and constitute the phantasmagorical, archival bodies in Faulkner's works, we are required scrutinize the *archons* who claim guardianship over the historical traumas that these transactions yielded.

II. "That Porto Rico or Haiti or wherever it was we all came from": Remapping Foucault's Elsewheres

> "[There] were also techniques for rationalizing and strictly economizing on a power that had to be used in the least costly way possible, thanks to a whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and report—all the technology that can be described as the disciplining technology of labor. It was established at the end of the seventeenth century, and in the course of the eighteenth." Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*

Absalom, Absalom! is Faulkner's master work about the economies of memory and violence comprised of phantasmagorical archives, which are inherited by the ghostly figure of Quentin Compson. As Quentin and his fellow *archon*, Shreve, review once more the history of Sutpen's disavowed son, Charles Bon, Shreve, in one of his authorial flourishes, contemplates how Bon might have assumed that all sons were betrayed by their fathers and left to receive their mothers' implacable sense of betrayal. Fleshing out Bon's early biography, Shreve imagines:

> . . . jealous rage was a part of childhood which all mothers of children had received in turn from their mothers and from their mothers in turn from that Porto Rico or Haiti or wherever it was we all came from but none of us ever lived in . . . and hence no man had a father, no one personal Porto Rico or Haiti, but all mother faces which ever bred swooping down at those almost calculable moments out of some obscure ancient general affronting . . . (*AA!* 239-240)

As often occurs in the narrative exchanges that occur throughout and comprise *Absalom*, Shreve's playful slip from a speculative generalization about Bon's childhood to an encompassing abstraction "wherever it was we all came from but none of us ever lived in" tells more than he knows. Thomas Sutpen's fear that his first wife and son might compromise the racial purity of his design and his paranoid repudiation of them serves as an allegory of the plantation state and its creation of whiteness. Shreve's flippant geographical mapping of Bon's origins condenses and aligns the U.S.'s seizure of Puerto Rico as an "unincorporated territory" in 1898 with its nineteen-year-long occupation of the first successfully decolonized nation. From this consolidated territory, Shreve envisions a race of bastardized children who are only able to lay claim to the facial imprintaeur of their mothers. Shreve's narrative of the redacted genealogies of the Caribbean and a race of children that follow their condition of their mothers serves as something of a companion piece to Zora Neale Hurtson's ethnographic study of Haiti and Jamaica, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938), in which her opening vignette, "Rooster's Nest," addresses the common practice amongst Jamaicans of bribing British census takers to record them as "legally white" or "census white" (7-8). Their attempts to not "follow the condition of the mother" produce curious genealogies that Hurston likens to a rooster's nest: "When a Jamaican is born of a black woman and some English or Scotsman, the black mother is literally and figuratively kept out of sight as far as possible, but no one is allowed to forget [the] white father. You get the impression that virile Englishmen do not require women to reproduce. They just come out to Jamaica, scratch out a nest and lay eggs that hatch out into 'pink' Jamaicans" (8-9). Hurston recasts this practice as a perverse Aesop's fable of British imperialism. Through a mode of reproduction that is animalized, colonized Jamaicans attempt to access the privileges of British whiteness by entirely erasing the black, Caribbean

mother. The act of paying to be recorded as "census white" is a doomed petition to be registered as a citizen rather than the bastard child of Empire. Hurtston's fable is the inverse of Shreve's Greek myth of a tribe of Charles Bons who are marked by the repudiation of their mothers.

Both Hurston's wryly sardonic "Rooster's Nest" and Faulkner's Greek tragedy reflect that "Porto Rico or Haiti or wherever" is, indeed, the crucible where whiteness was forged. In Patricia Chu's study of biopolitics in modernism, she advances Susan Buck-Morss's insights in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009) by emphasizing, "The modern Western citizen was born as white in the Caribbean. It was only after the establishment of the Caribbean economic system that slavery took on its modern racial dimensions" (*Race, Nationalism* 10). Chu explores the manufacturing of the white subject in part through Victor and Edward Halperin's monster movie, *White Zombie* (1932) which, she notes, established the genre of the zombie film by probing the fear of the white subject becoming a mindless instrument (for labor and, the film suggests, for sexual exploitation) of a lascivious, pan-European plantation owner. This is in keeping with her argument in "Biopolitics and Faulkner" that the zombie/blackness functions as a valve for anxieties about the regulation of the white subject as a member of a managed population. Both Chu's work and her debt to Buck-Morss's pathbreaking reading of the Haitian revolution as a world event that shaped Western philosophy in previously untold ways invite a consideration and brief review of what, at this writing, is something of a well-established point: how Michel Foucault's and Giorgio Agamben's respective theorizations of biopower advance their own redacted genealogies of race, racism, and the regulation of life at the level of the species.

For Foucauldians and critical race theorists, this redaction has a date-stamp. In his 1975-1976 lectures at the Collège de France, given, as Ann Laura Stoler notes, when *History of*

Sexuality, Volume 1 was in press, he anatomizes what he characterizes as the recuperation of the sovereign power to take life with impunity and specifies that "If the power of normalization wished to exercise the old sovereign right to kill, it must become racist" (*"Society"* 256). His phrasing---"it must become racist"---is curious (was the Western nation state ever without a racialized exception to its Enlightenment tenets?) and it hints at how his installation of the paradigmatic example of Nazi Germany evacuates its relationship with other histories of racial violence. As I mentioned in my introduction, Foucault's own awareness of his evacuation of these histories is betrayed in one of his hesitant caveats, "I am certainly not saying that racism was invented at this time. It had already been in existence for a very long time. But I think it functioned elsewhere" (*"Society"* 254).

In Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), the first study to critically examine Foucault's lectures of the 1970s before they were translated into English and published by Picador, she rightly cautions that Foucault's truncated genealogy of racisms only addresses the internal divisions drawn within the enfranchised population of citizens already included---however nominally--- within the category of the human. She summarizes, "In the lectures, state racism is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary oppositions, a means of creating biologized internal enemies . . . Racism is not based on a confrontation of alien races, but on the bifurcation within Europe's social fabric" (59-60). Stoler was among the first Foucauldian scholars to masterfully demonstrate that Foucault's theorization of "the bifurcation[s] within Europe's social fabric" failed to account for how these bifurcations were informed and determined by the discursive relays between Europe and its colonial "elsewheres." Broadening the insular scope of Foucault's study of the nineteenth-century regulation of sexualities and its discursive construction of race as "blood," she identifies the obvious error of

simply tracing this back, as Foucault does, to aristocratic notions of purity and legitimacy. Instead, she shows, we can more productively (and accurately) situate these discourses in context of the Virginia laws of the 1660s prohibiting interracial sex and the conduct manuals that instructed the bourgeoisie in colonial outposts as premiere sites of the regulation of the species.

As I discuss in my introduction, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the roughly coterminous rise of Giorgio Agamben's academic star, the lacunaes that Stoler identified and corrected in Foucault's genealogy of biopower were reproduced, in a more intensified form, in Agamben's work. Agamben's ahistorical detachment of the "unexceptional histories" of slavery, imperialism, and apartheid from Nazi Germany and the U.S.'s post-9/11 counter-terrorism regime has, as of this writing, been extensively catalogued. To briefly review, though, in contrast to Foucault's lectures on biopower, which first grapple with how the sovereign power to kill is mobilized by the threat of racial contamination and later, in *The Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, attend to how biopower is directed along vectors of capital, for Agamben, bare life is not tethered to or activated by a specific construct. He, of course, acknowledges that the eugenics movement contributes to the *neomort* condition of the Jewish refugee just as he later mentions in *State of Exception* (2004/2005) that the U.S.'s internment of Asian-American citizens in 1942 was motivated "solely by race" (*State* 22) Yet, his universalizing teleology of bare life seeks to override the episteme of race. "Bare life is no longer confined," he warns us, "to a particular place or a definite category. It now dwells in the biological body of every living being" (*HS* 140). In his anthology of case studies in which bare life is activated---from the U.S. prisoners who were infected with malaria plasmodia by medical researchers during the 1920s, to the death-row prisoners in Manila who were infected with beriberi bacillus, and the disseminated images of orphaned Rwandans in the aftermath of the genocide 1994---he refuses to address how race,

class, evolutionary discourses, and colonialism determined the allocation of death and the preservation of life.[27] At various turns, it appears that these matrices of power are too self-evident or too outdated to warrant explication and that they have been entirely subsumed within his overarching framework in which, Wendy Brown acerbically quips, "sovereignty and bare life are as eternal and timeless as the Latin Mass" (*Walled States* 61).

Brown's one-liner summary and critique of Agamben's paradigm nicely typifies how criticisms of his work have been fully absorbed into scholarship on biopower and the network of disciplines connected to it (animal studies, memory and trauma studies, the medical humanities, and critical race theory).[28] More recently, these criticisms of Agamben, and to a lesser degree, Foucault, were distilled in Alexander G. Weheliye's incisive *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014), which opens with his indictment of theorizations of biopower that have willfully ignored the scholarship and archives of black and ethnic studies. "Bare life and biopolitics discourse," he writes, "not only misconstrues how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human, it also overlooks or perfunctorily writes off theorizations of race, subjection, and humanity found in black and ethnic studies, allowing bare life and biopolitics discourse to imagine an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization" (4). Refusing biopower's ahistorical attempts to go beneath the epidermis of race, Weheliye instead installs Hortense Spillers' concept of *habeas*

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[27] Agamben writes, with evasive diction here, "Outside of the United States, the first experiments with cultures of the beriberi bacillus were conducted by R.P. Strong in Manila on persons sentenced to death. . . . In addition, the defense cited the case of Keanu (Hawaii), who was infected with leprosy in order to be promised pardon, and who died following the experiment." These two examples, though, derive from sites of imperial occupations, something which Agamben does not address. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), p. 157.
[28] See Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40; Reid Miller, "A Lesson in Moral Spectatorship," *Critical Inquiry* 34.4 (Summer 2008): 706-728. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009), and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, "Bare Life on Strike: Notes on the Biopolitics of Race and Gender," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107.1 (Winter 2008): 89-105.

viscus ("you shall have the flesh") to better account for the ways in which bodies are racialized, subjugated through their racialization, and the sites of resistance---which, I argue, we can read as sites of memory and mourning---that defy what Weheliye terms as the "sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (4).

From the outset of this project and throughout its long development, I have sought to place critical race theory in conversation with theorizations of biopolitics with the aim of pursuing something similar---albeit far afield from its mastery---to the critique and corrective that Weheliye has created with *Habeas Viscus*. Like Weheliye, I was frustrated by the post-9/11 Agambenian exceptionalism model that neglected the deep kinship between counter-terrorism regimes and the disciplinary categories of the human that were culled in the Middle Passage, the plantation state, and the apartheid townships. With that said, though, I think Foucault's and Agamben's post-9/11 purchase on critical theory and the humanities cannot be entirely attributed to Foucault's enduring relevance or to what Weheliye rightly condemns as the disciplinary ghettoizing of black studies scholars (to cite one example among many, Slavoj Žižek remains something of a global academic star while Sylvia Wynter is largely unknown outside of critical race theory and black studies circles). Part of what Foucault's theorization of biopower offers us, even if his lectures and his most prominent successor did not deliver on this promise, is a more refined analytic for the approaching the regulation of life. Dana Seitler, at the close of her study of science and the animalization of modernity's "belated" subjects, *Atavistic Tendencies: the Culture of Science in American Modernity* (2008) makes this point when she briefly summarizes the critique of liberal humanism advanced by post-colonial theory. After first acknowledging its absolute necessity, she remarks, "No matter how important the critique of the universalizing tendencies of liberal humanism may have been (and still are), a limit has been produced, and it is

a constraining, falsely consoling thing to be always limited to two opposing identifies and/or groups: I and you, outer me and inner me, colonizer and subject of colonization" (Seitler 235). To be clear, in citing Seitler's familiar frustration with the discursive cul-de-sac produced by such binaries, I do not mean to introduce a false rift or suggest a conflict between Weheliye's critique and Seitler's work where one does not exist. Rather, I wish to use Seitler's observation as a lever for my own claim that, as she, Stoler, Weheliye, and numerous others have shown, we should examine how life is monitored, how subjects are excluded from the human, how they are positioned as outside of the chronology of civilization, and how subjects resist such chronologies and exclusions, without either resorting to the binaries of colonizer/colonized or making the far more egregious move of bypassing the contributions of black studies and critical race theorists.

Faulkner's works are informed by the evolutionary discourses that, Seitler compellingly argues, determined which subjects were modern and early twentieth-century understandings of race as simultaneously a biological contagion and an unstable sign. Written during the rise of European fascism and the Nazi death machine that, for Foucault and Agamben, serves as the paradigmatic instantiation of biopower, Faulkner's "That Evening Sun," (1931), *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *Go Down, Moses*, reflect these overlapping discourses of race and the politics of witnessing the historical traumas that they produce.

In the pages that follow, I track the ledger as a narratological technique in "That Evening Sun" and *Absalom, Absalom!* and as a contested, archival site in *Go Down, Moses*.

III. "You'll See What You'll See": Shadow Signifiers and Debts in "That Evening Sun"

> ". . . not a ledger but THE ledger . . . a ruled, paper-backed copybook such as might have come out of a schoolroom, in which accrued, with the United States as debtor . . the crawling list of calico and gunpower . . . drawn from Ratcliffe's shelves by her descendants and subjects and Negro slaves." William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951)

The returns of Faulkner's ledgers are anticipated in one of the early sites of textual interplay in his corpus. His short-story "That Evening Sun" mirrors the double book-keeping system of the ledgers in which a property entered yields a loss or a profit in the opposite column. Written two years after *The Sound and the Fury*, where we first receive the accounts of each of the Compson brothers and published five years before his more radical rewriting of Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner returns to the Compson family through Nancy, a black servant. Throughout the story, Nancy's story parallels Caddy's in *The Sound and the Fury*. Like Caddy, whom Quentin admonishes for meeting with Dalton Ames "*like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods*" (*SAF* 92), Nancy has dubious sexual relationships with white men in which money changes, and more pointedly, fails to change hands. Like Caddy, Nancy, becomes pregnant with another man's child and she is ultimately rejected and threatened by her husband, Jesus. These parallels, though, are routed through Nancy's racial identity as a light-skinned black woman. She is arrested, presumably for sex work, publicly beaten after confronting one of her clients, jailed, attempts suicide, and is later left fearing the wrath of her husband. Whereas Caddy returns in Faulkner's 1946 *Appendix* where she is identified and mourned by a Jefferson librarian who sees her face in the magazine image of a woman "ageless and beautiful and cold serene and damned" who is in the company of a Nazi officer, "a handsome lean man of middleage in the ribbons and tabs of a German staffgeneral" (*SAF* 339), Nancy only reappears in Faulkner's works as Nancy Mannigoe, whose execution in *Requiem for a Nun* is the sacrificial death that secures the redemption or, at least, repentance of the sexually wayward Temple Drake.

These parallels, though, between Caddy and Nancy, are further extended through the frame that Quentin's narration furnishes; just as he is installed as what Jean-Paul Sartre famously

characterized as a ghostly narrator who recounts Caddy's marriage, disgrace, and banishment from the family in *The Sound and the Fury*, in "That Evening Sun" we receive Nancy's story through Quentin's childhood recollections of her.[29] Following the circuits of revision that structure much of Faulkner's oeuvre, *The Sound and the Fury* informs our reading of "That Evening Sun" just as "That Evening Sun" compels us to recall and recalculate Quentin's racial investment in his sister's sexuality that Faulkner more prominently foregrounds through Henry Sutpen's and Judith Sutpen's relationship in *Absalom, Absalom!*. The textual revisions and parallels that structure "That Evening Sun," predict the relationship between parent texts and their uncanny offspring at work in *Absalom, Absalom!* and anticipate Quentin's role as the narrator of traumas in which he and the Compson family are complicit and culpable.

Symptomatic of Faulkner's body of work, in "That Evening Sun," he revises *The Sound and the Fury* by excavating and giving flesh to its buried and attenuated elements. While Nancy does not appear in *The Sound and the Fury*, the signifier "Nancy" is attached to a silhouetted set of bones belonging to the carcass of a mule that a young Caddy and Benjy notice as they play outside during their grandmother's wake. Overhearing and disavowing the outpouring of grief from her family, Caddy informs Frony and Versh, black servants of the Compson family, that the sound could not be attributed to her grandmother's death because, she explains, "White folks dont have funerals," (*SAF* 33). From this statement follows an exchange between Caddy and Frony in which Frony contests Caddy's exclusive attribution of mortality to black and animal bodies:

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[29] In Jean-Paul Sartre's famous essay on *The Sound and Fury*, he writes, "all Faulkner's art aims to suggest to us that Quentin's soliloquy and his last walk *are already* his suicide. . . . When Quentin's memory begins to enumerate his impressions . . . *he is already dead*" (230). Jean-Paul Sartre, "Time in Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury*," *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, Eds. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963): 225-232.

> 'I like to know why not. . . .White folks dies too. Your grandmammy dead as any nigger can get, I reckon.' 'Dogs are dead.' Caddy said. 'And when Nancy fell in the ditch and Roskus shot her and the buzzards came and undressed her.' The bones rounded out of the ditch, where the dark vines were in the black ditch, into the moonlight, like some of the shapes had stopped. Then they all stopped and it was dark . . . (*SAF* 33-34)

Caddy's refusal to acknowledge Frony's corrective that "white folks dies too," lends a greater weight to Faulkner's intertextual assignment of "Nancy" to a dead animal and the racialized body of a black servant. With a sinister precocity, Caddy's association of death with "niggers" and domesticated animals correctly pinpoints how, as Shukin summarizes, "The biopolitical production of the bare life of the animal subtends, then, the biopolitical production of the bare life of the racialized other" (Shukin 10). Faulkner's inter-textual use of "Nancy" as a floating signifier that can be attached to the body of an animal bred for plantation labor and the body of a racialized subject emphasizes how blackness is inscribed with animality and zoned by its precarity. The shift between "Nancy," the animal carcass that lies in the ditch, at once "undressed" and partly obscured by darkness and "Nancy," whose body is alternately publically displayed and who later appears at the end of the story as a silhouette fading across the divide of the ditch that separates what Faulkner terms "Negro Hollow" from the white section of town where the Compsons live, reveals the exposure to death and violence that binds them together.

To be sure, Faulkner's attachment of the signifier "Nancy" to the body of the mule is in keeping with his use of the animal to emphasize the abjection of women who are sexually exploited by white patriarchs and whose offspring, following the racial and socioeconomic status of their mothers, are subsequently disowned or only precariously placed within the white,

plantation family. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Jason Compson imagines Charles Bon telling Henry Sutpen that his octoroon mistress is an exotic delicacy who has been more carefully bred than any "blooded mare" (*AA!* 93). Later, when Sutpen fails to produce a son with Milly, Wash Jones's white-trash grand-daughter, Jason Compson recounts the black midwife's testimony that after Milly gives birth to a daughter who can neither repair nor advance his design, Sutpen informs her that her use-value and humanity are now exhausted: "'Too bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable'" (*AA!* 229). Within a matrix of race, gender, and class, the women are designated as subhuman and the offspring they produce---Charles Etienne and Milly's unnamed daughter---cannot be fully incorporated into the human family.

However, whereas *Absalom, Absalom!* treats Thomas Sutpen's repudiation of Milly as a tragic disavowal of his own poor, white rural origins which justifies Wash Jones's murder of him, Nancy is animalized by her deviant sexuality and the sexual availability (read: exposure, vulnerability) of her body. As Sharon Desmond Paradiso remarks, Nancy is positioned against the asexual, black mammy, Dilsey, who is defined by her selfless care for the Compson children.[30] Demonstrative of this point, after Nancy has been publically beaten for confronting the father of her child who owes her money, Jason Compson Sr. consoles her by saying, "'There's nothing for you to be afraid of now. And if you'd just let white men alone,'" ("That Evening" 295). Bestialized by her sexual misconduct, Nancy, who is abused in the public square, is read as the sexual aggressor.

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[30] Sharon Desmond Paradiso describes the pairing of Dilsey Gibson and Nancy Manigoe in "That Evening Sun," writing, ". . . while Dilsey represents the fantasy of the good mammy, selfless, giving, wholly devoted to the wellbeing of her charges . . . Nancy is the projection of the fears of white female sexuality run amok" (26). Sharon Desmond Paradiso, "Terrorizing Whiteness in Yoknapatawpha County," *The Faulkner Journal* 23.2 (2008): 23-42.

Yet, much like Faulkner's portrayal of Rider in "Pantaloon in Black," in "That Evening Sun" the text highlights the Compson family's collective misreading of her. Framed by Quentin's adult narrative voice, the story alerts us to its white hermeneutic through Jason Compson Jr.'s persistent refrain, "Are you a nigger? . . . I ain't a nigger." The question that Jason poses to Nancy and his uncertain repudiation of his own racialization ("I ain't a nigger") is reiterated, with a radically different inflection by Nancy's repeated defense of her actions "'I ain't nothing but a nigger . . . It aint none of my fault'" ("That Evening" 293). These symmetrical utterances cite the bifurcation of life that was forged within the ledgers where the word originated. "Nigger" first appears as "negars" in the 1619 ledgers of the Virginian colonialist John Rolfe to denote the reduction of African lives to bare capital and later, in its first iteration in the Supreme Court records, it signifies the protection of white sovereignty in the 1872 *Blyew v. the United States* Supreme Court case, when the successful conviction of two white men who had massacred a black family in Kentucky was overturned due to the fact the court's use of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was interpreted as an encroachment on state sovereignty.[31] In the first instance, "nigger" signifies the treatment of subjects as commoditized flesh; in the second iteration, it effectively authorizes violence against racialized subjects. Through its recurrent use of the word (it is deployed thirteen times by various characters within the span of twenty pages) "That Evening Sun" enunciates its continued currency.

Indeed, Jason Jr.'s hesitant yet insistent "I ain't a nigger" conveys his precocious mastery of the national racial codes. However uncertain he may be in determining Nancy's racial identity as a light-skinned woman and in asserting his own racial identity, he knows enough to know that

[31] On *Blyew v. the United States*, Randall Kennedy notes that this is the first case where the word "Nigger" is recorded in Supreme Court records. Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: the Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, (New York: Vintage, 2003), p. 4, 33.

whiteness *is* property. Talismanic in its repetition, his declaration seeks to inoculate himself from the dangers that he associates with blackness. In contrast, Nancy is subject to violence with little if any recourse to the law and her familial relationships are only nominally recognized. Underlining the precariousness of the private, domestic sphere for black subjects, her husband Jesus tells her, "'I cant hang around white man's kitchen. . . . But white man can hang around mine. White man can come in my house, but I can't stop him. When white man want to come in my house, I aint got no house'" ("That Evening" 292). Here, of course, Jesus's complaints about the invasion of his home contain a deeper criticism of the invasion of Nancy's body.

Jesus's assertion that a domestic space for the black subject is an impossibility points to the binaries of exposure and immunity, darkness and light that recur through the text. The story's title, taken from the W.C. Handy blues song, "I Hate to See That Evening Sun Go Down," prefigure, Robert M. Slabey observes, its associations of death with "racial darkness."[32] These associations established through Jesus's threatening presence (Quentin describes him with a razor's scar running down the length of his face) and Nancy's fears that he will attack her "in the dark" are undermined by the acts of brutality that we do see. The assaults that Nancy suffers do not occur in the darkness nor in the easily invaded domestic sphere of her cabin with its faltering firelight, but in the town's center, during the business day, and at the hands of white men who represent the intersecting legal and economic institutions. As she is escorted to the county jail for reasons that are alluded to but never explicated, she accosts Mr. Stovall, in front of the county bank where he works. Confronting him with his debts, she yells:

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[32] Slabey writes, "The darkness alluded to in the story's title, derived from W.C. Handy's Blues 'I Hate to See that Evening Sun Go Down,' is not just physical darkness but death and nothingness as well as racial darkness" (411). Robert M. Slabey, "Faulkner's Nancy as 'Tragic Mulatto,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 27.3 (Summer 1990): 409-13.

> 'When you going to pay me, white man? . . . When you going to pay men, white man? It's been three times now since----' Mr. Stovall kicked her in the mouth with his heel and the marshal caught Mr. Stovall back, and Nancy, lying in the street, laughing. She turned her head and spat out some blood and teeth and said, 'It's been three times now since he paid me a cent.' ("That Evening" 291)

Nancy's demands for payment and adjoining demand that the town recognize her claim against Stovall, "It's been three times now since he paid me a cent," are notably aligned with her pregnancy. Uttering the name of the white patriarch that is forbidden to both the black female subject and her miscegenated offspring, she publicly charges Mr. Stovall with the payment of his debt for their sexual assignations and his paternity. Although she is arrested prior to her public confrontation of Mr. Stovall, Nancy is silenced for addressing him as an indebted subject. The crime which warrants her arrest is never explicitly named; we are left to presume that her crime is either what Jason Sr. calls her refusal to "let white men alone," or her alleged use of cocaine, a white drug that whitens the black subject; as the jailer reflects, "a nigger full of cocaine wasn't a nigger any longer" ("That Evening" 291).

More to the point, a black subject who speaks out of turn is not "a nigger any longer." Her voice must be muted and her presence must be concealed from the white public's view. Notably the jailer's reading of Nancy as whitened by her cocaine use occurs after her loud protests and subsequent attempted suicide in prison. In a passage that anticipates Uncle Buck's response to Eunice's suicide, recorded as a baffled entry in the family ledgers, "*Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self*" (*GDM* 256), the jailer refuses Nancy's emotional interiority and maintains that "no nigger could try to commit suicide unless he was full of cocaine" ("That Evening" 291). The parallels between the misreading of Nancy's suicide attempt

and Eunice's successful suicide are further advanced by their causation; in Isaac's interpretation of Uncle Buck's entry, Eunice kills herself in response to Old Carothers's incestuous rape of their daughter just as Nancy presumably tries to take her life because of her pregnancy. Significantly, it is during Nancy's aborted suicide that Faulkner reveals her pregnancy:

> The jailer cut her down and revived her; then he beat her, whipped her. She had hung herself with her dress. . . . So the jailer heard the noise and ran up there and found Nancy hanging from the window, stark naked, belly already swelling out a little, like a little balloon. ("That Evening" 291-92)

Framed by the window, Nancy's naked body appears in the silhouetted form of its outline; we do not see her face, only the shape of her swollen belly. Uncannily similar to the pornotropes of Kara Walker's silhouetted tableaus of the plantation South, Nancy's silhouette demands that the white residents witness that which they have seen yet not seen. Signaling his, and the town's, collective refusal to recognize her suffering even as they are confronted with it, the jailer beats Nancy only after she acquires an audience for her cries. "And all that night," Quentin informs us, "the ones that passed the jail could hear Nancy singing and yelling. . . . a lot of them stopped along the fence, listening to her and to the jailer trying to make her stop" ("That Evening" 291).

Faulkner does not inflect Quentin's description of the beatings Nancy endures with any moral outrage; the force of the image is exerted through the banality of its reportage. Following these second-hand reports, in which her testimony from the jail cell is reduced to a piece of folklore transmitted from the jailer and the anonymous white residents of Jefferson County to Quentin, Nancy is increasingly cast as a shadowed and silhouetted figure in his descriptions of her. Formerly appearing as a transgressive sign of her demand that the county recognize Mr.

Stovall's debts, the silhouette to which her body is reduced by the end of the story, she is simultaneously exposed and omitted from the visual horizon.

After her arrest and release from jail, her body and voice slowly disappear from the text. Using the Compson children's whiteness as a shield against what she imagines to be Jesus's impending attack on her, Nancy keeps them at her cabin and tries to entertain with them with a story that, in the telling of it, empties out her body, ". . . her voice talking to us did not belong to her. Like she was living somewhere else, waiting somewhere else. . . . Her voice was inside and the shape of her, the Nancy that could stoop under a barbed wire fence with a bundle of clothes balanced on her head as though without weight, *like a balloon* was there. But that was all" ("That Evening" 302, emphasis mine). Quentin's placement of Nancy's voice, first heard by him as a sound that "did not belong to her" and later as a voice that she reclaims only to name herself as "nigger" astutely registers the evacuation of her interiority. The "balloon" that previously described her pregnant belly is reinscribed as sign of her natural proclivities for domestic labor as a black mammy; Nancy appears before the Compson children only in the shape of her prescribed role and her voice, anxiously engaged in entertaining her doubtful charges, does not, indeed, belong to her.

If we read "That Evening Sun" for its disjointed relationship to the parent text of *The Sound and the Fury* where "Nancy" signifies the decaying corpse of a mule and the association of death with animal and racialized bodies, Nancy's suffering is paradoxically public yet also that which is not witnessed by the white, narrative gaze. As she disappears from the horizon of Quentin's narrative into the spatially constructed darkness of "Negro Hollow," the voices of the Compson children are once again foregrounded in the story. Mimicking the bemused indifference of their father, the children exhibit a childish and sinister disregard for what they can

no longer see or hear; Quentin wonders who will do the family's laundry and Jason declares once more that he is not a nigger. The Compson family's indifference to Nancy's fate and Jason's assertion of his whiteness mirrors the racialized division between the life that must be protected and witnessed from the life that can be, as Faulkner demonstrates through Nancy's public beatings, permitted to die. When Jason Compson, Sr. dismisses Nancy's fears of her impending death by stating, "'You'll be the first thing I'll see in the kitchen tomorrow morning,'" she responds "'You'll see what you'll see, I reckon'" ("That Evening" 308). Within the zoned spaces of the post-Reconstruction South, the white gaze sees what "it sees," and the racialized, black subject can be allowed to die.

Its nebulous lines traced by Quentin's narration, Nancy's silhouette in "That Evening Sun" prefigures the shadow subjects and silhouetted figures that haunt the shifting tableaus created by Jason and Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* Just as "That Evening Sun" is the uncanny, textual offspring of *Sound* that, in its structural parallels, returns to and alters its origins, *Absalom, Absalom!* is a novel of returns that revises the parent text of *The Sound and the Fury* by enunciating Quentin Compson's complicity in the histories that he receives and constructs. While in "That Evening Sun," Quentin presides over the story as a disembodied and detached narrator who recalls a memory of his family's failure to respond to Nancy or intervene on her behalf, in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin is more immediately placed as a recipient and inheritor of narratives he would prefer to "not hear again." Exchanging narratives organized around what his fellow narrators actively construct as the "mystery" of Charles Bon's murder, he is unraveled and arrested by that which he "cannot pass": how his subjectivity is indebted to the continuing biopolitical economies that reduce the racialized son to bare capital or to a threat of contamination that must be eradicated.

IV. What "the intelligence and the senses refuse": The Returns of the Ledgers in *Absalom, Absalom!*

If the travels "Nancy" embarks upon from *The Sound and the Fury* to "That Evening Sun" reflect the kinship between the bare life of the animal and the abjection of the racialized subject, then the inter-generational mutations of the signifiers "Bon" and "Bond," attached to Charles Bon and his descendant, Jim Bond, index the debts produced by the traumatic division between family and property in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Melanie R. Benson has observed that Sutpen's repudiated, Haitian son, "Charles Bon, Charles the Good," is "quite literally, a product of Supten's botched books": a paranoid translation of a son into disowned property (Benson 47). Compounding the mistake of his botched books with an even more egregious correction, Sutpen's act of naming his first son "Bon" serves as a signature for a debt that he presumes to have paid in full by making good or correcting "what injustice I might be considered to have done by so providing" for his repudiated wife and child (*AA!* 213).

"Bon" and his grandson "Jim Bond" signal the return of Sutpen's debts and, more expansively, the economies of slavery and colonization. If Charles Bon represents the return of repressed Haitian revolution and, George B. Handley argues, requires Sutpen and his descendants to "confront their kinship with the demonized Caribbean" (Handley 139), Jim Bond suggests the policing of black subjects in the Jim Crow South. Quentin first encounters "the Jim Bond, the hulking slack-mouthed saddle-colored boy" as an uncanny figure in the Sutpen family graveyard (*AA!* 173), where, in Shreve's telling, Quentin stumbles over the mutation of Bon's name. Asking Luster to spell it, he responds: "'Dat's a lawyer's word. Whut dey puts under when de Law ketches you. I des spells readin' words.' And that was him, the name Bond now and he wouldn't care about that, who had inherited what he was from his mother and only what

he could never have been from his father" (*AA!* 174). Spelled out for Quentin, "Bond" is the indentured condition of the racialized subject under Jim Crow law just as it is a citation of the bondage that simultaneously produces the miscegenated son and prohibits him from inheriting the name and property of the white patriarch. Spelled out for the reader, however, "Jim Bond" serves as a signpost for what white narrators actively repudiate and repress. Notably, Quentin recalls his childhood encounter with Jim Bond by first remembering the Sutpen graveyard where the headstones of Ellen and Thomas Sutpen, Charles Bon, Judith Sutpen, and Charles Etienne comprise an integrated and partially restored familial genealogy similar to the completed one Faulkner appends to the end of the novel. These headstones form an archive that alerts us to what the narrators strenuously evade. As Jason Compson often remarks throughout the novel, things do not add up, they do not explain.

In their influential readings of the novel's inexplicabilities, Richard Godden and John T. Matthews point out that *Absalom, Absalom!* is a text in which narrators avoid what they already know. Godden's Hegelian reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* maintains that Jason Compson and Rosa Coldfield know that Charles Bon is Sutpen's son.[33] The novel repeatedly alerts us to the likelihood of their knowledge when Shreve skeptically remarks of Jason Compson's revised narrative of Thomas Sutpen, "'Your father . . . seems to have got an awful lot of delayed information awful quick, after having waited forty-five years. If he knew all this, what was his reason for telling you that the trouble between Henry and Bon was the octoroon woman?'" (*AA!*

[33] In Richard Godden's *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution*, he provides a catalogue of instances in which, early on within the novel, Jason Compson and Rosa Coldfield, allude to Bon as Sutpen's offspring. He notes that Rosa Coldfield tellingly refers to Henry's murder of Bon as "almost a fratricide," "a phrase whose reservation may be inflected one of two ways, either as indicating that the friendship between Bon is close to brotherhood, or as suggesting that when a white brother shoots a black brother, he commits partial fratricide." Richard Godden, *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997), p. 81.

214). Moreover, despite Rosa Coldfield's descriptions of Sutpen as a demon who emerges as a nefarious intruder upon a town "as peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize watercolor," (*AA!* 4) and Jason Compson's treatment of Sutpen as a mythic and fascist patriarch,[34] Godden notes that Coldfield and Compsons alike are indebted to his career and owe their socioeconomic positions to the economies in which he trafficked.[35] Occupying epistemic and material (albeit, in Quentin's case, liquidated) ground that is tied to Sutpen's crimes, Quentin, his father, and Rosa Coldfield know and actively deny the answer to the novel's ostensibly governing question: "why did Henry Sutpen kill Charles Bon?" They exchange, Godden contends, "unreadable" histories," marked and betrayed by their occlusions and omissions, in order to maintain coherent fictions of themselves as subjects who have not been determined by plantation economies (*Fictions* 78).

That the novel's narrators know more than they are willing to say is mirrored by the novel's placement of Haiti as the tell-tale beating heart of Sutpen's origin story. To recount: Sutpen acquires his wealth and enters into his first marriage by defeating a plantation rebellion in 1827 roughly twenty three years after the Haitian Revolution that so terrified the U.S. South. In Quentin's heavily mediated telling of it, Sutpen re-establishes the threatened sovereignty of the plantation class by simply displaying his white skin. "Maybe by standing," Quentin speculates,

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[34] See Jeanne A. Follansbee, "'Sweet Fascism in the Piney Woods': *Absalom, Absalom!* as Fascist Fable," where she argues that Thomas Sutpen portrayed as a charismatic, fascist leader and that "Absalom dramatizes the circular structure of identification by showing how the narrators' desire for Thomas Sutpen simultaneously constructs him as a leader and produces their allegiance to him. Absalom bears a complicated relationship to its contemporary moment by combing the Civil War and Reconstruction-era plot of Sutpen's failed dynasty with the 'action' of telling Sutpen's story at the apogee of the New South in the fall and winter of 1909-10." Jeanne A. Follansbee, " 'Sweet Fascism in the Piney Woods': *Absalom, Absalom!* as Fascist Fable," Modernism/Modernity 18.1 (January 2011): 67-94. p. 68.

[35] Godden writes: "With the exception of Shreve, those who tell Sutpen's story are, in class terms, his inheritors---General Compson is a planter (it is he who 'loaned' Sutpen his first seed cotton); his son practices law but does so from a house founded on slave wealth, and it is a portion of these monies, released by the sale of Grandfather Compson's pasture that sends Quentin to Harvard." Richard Godden, *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997), p. 116.

"bearing more than they believed any bones and flesh could or should . . . maybe at last they themselves turning in horror and fleeing from the white arms and legs shaped like theirs" (*AA!* 205). Tellingly, his vision of Sutpen's white body as indomitable figure that terrified the Haitians is sharply undercut by his parenthetical acknowledgment that these same awe-struck Haitians almost castrated Sutpen, thereby potentially foreclosing the possibility of his white dynasty: "(he showed Grandfather the scars, one of which, Grandfather said, came pretty near leaving that virgin for the rest of his life too)" (*AA!* 205). Here, as throughout the novel, the partitioned aside undermines the credibility of the unbracketed text. Scrutinizing the mythology surrounding Sutpen's career in Haiti, Matthews, echoing Godden, has argued that Rosa Coldfield's and Jason Compson's respective accounts provide an alibi for the town's involvement in Sutpen's criminal activities. Moreover, Matthews recalls us to the inherent implausibility of Quentin's and Rosa Coldfield's naïve explanation that Sutpen received his Haitian slaves as a gift from his contrite ex-father-in-law who wished to repay him for a marriage Sutpen dissolved on account of his daughter's supposed black blood.[36]

Like Godden and Matthews, I read the novel's glaring impossibilities within the context of the U.S.'s nineteen-year occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) in which the U.S. seized control of the country's finances and used conscripted, Haitian laborers to carve modernity into the land by building roads and laying railroad tracks. The lesson that Sutpen receives in his Appalachian schoolhouse that "there was a place called the West Indies to which poor men went in ships and became rich" (*AA!* 195) is one that was born out in the U.S. imperial occupation of the nation

[36] Matthews rightly points out that the dates, for one, simply do not add up; Sutpen repudiates his wife in 1831 and appears in Jefferson two years later, outfitted with his Haitian slaves that Jason and Quentin maintain he obtained from his former father-in-law. "It is nearly impossible to imagine," Matthews astutely remarks, "20 slaves being held in Haiti by Sutpen's former father-in-law for pickup two years after the divorce" (251). John T. Matthews, "Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back," *American Literary History* 16.2 (Summer 2004): 238-62.

that it referred to during this period as "American Africa" (Renda 34). "American Africa" was a place where "poor men went in ships" to shore up their white, national identity while also pursuing wealth. As Mary Renda emphasizes in her history of the occupation, the U.S.'s imperial mission in Haiti coincided with the first wave of the Great Migration and the subsequent attacks on black communities above and below the Mason-Dixon line (Renda 58). "The social dislocations," she remarks, "that would inflame racial hatreds were well under way in the North, and some of the racial and ethnic habits of the mind that proved fertile ground for the Klan in years to come were already well-entrenched" (Renda 58). The fear of African Americans getting "out of place" excited anxieties of white working class men who then attempted to recuperate their white masculinity as soldiers serving in Haiti. These efforts to shore up white masculinity abroad were reinforced by domestic policies within the U.S. that sought to more vigilantly police color-lines and, by extension, nationalities. In conjunction with the 1930 anti-miscegenation laws enacted in Mississippi, health departments in Louisiana, particularly those in New Orleans, Carolyn Vellenga Berman reports, "began 'race-flagging' and withholding birth certificates from parents of 'white' children suspected of having some 'black' ancestry until these parents accepted a different racial designation" (Berman 37). Berman does not explicitly link the reinvigoration of race-flagging to the U.S.'s nineteen-year occupation of Haiti to the accompanying fears of porous national borders and unstable color lines, but *Absalom, Absalom!* does supply us with this connection through the routes (New Orleans by way of Haiti) that Charles Bon and, later his son, travel to Sutpen's Hundred. Foregrounding this historical context, the omissions and evasions that define the archival exchanges that comprise *Absalom, Absalom!* merely mirror the biopolitical *dispositifs* of the early twentieth-century and the U.S.'s attempts to overwrite and override the first successful decolonization.

Mindful of these revisions, I would offer we can approach *Absalom, Absalom!* as a fable of bare life in which narrators ostensibly attempt to heed the writ of habeas corpus while evacuating the body, and the adjoining threat, of the racialized subject. Indeed, Rosa Coldfield ultimately enlists Quentin Compson's help to find the "something . . . living hidden in the house" (*AA!* 140). The "something hidden," though, is the body of the white, bereaved lover, Henry Sutpen. Charles Bon's body, which activates the racial circumscriptions of natal citizenship that Agamben fails to address, is rendered as a shadow and translated into an object of desire. Significantly, Rosa Coldfield makes this translation when she recounts Bon's funeral:

> '*I tried to take the full weight of the coffin to prove to myself that he was really in it. And I could not tell. . . . .Because I never saw him. You see? There are some things which happen to us which the intelligence and the senses refuse . . . One day he was not. Then he was. Then he was not. It was too short, too fast, too quick . . . a space too short to leave even the imprint of a body on a mattress, and blood can come from anywhere---if there was blood, since I never say him. For all I was allowed to know, we had no corpse. . . He was absent, and he was; he returned, and he was not; three women put something into the earth and covered it, and he had never been.'* (*AA!* 123)

In the repeated additions and subtractions of Rosa's confession, Bon's life is reduced to a repetitive cycle of absence and erasure, concluding, with Rosa's final redaction of him, "he had never been." But the repetition of this sequence draws attention to its failures. The fort/da cadences of her account can be read as a shift from one column of the narrators' ledgers to another. Bon is Charles the Good; then he is not. Bon is the beloved fiancé and then he is the "black son of bitch" who was, in Wash Jones's report, "kilt dead as beef" (*AA!* 106).

These shifts from beloved object to an eliminated threat leave a trace. As the shadow son of Thomas Sutpen's first marriage, Bon casts numerous and long shadows over the archival accounts of his murder. Jason Compson first puts the word into circulation by musing that he (Bon) is "shadowy, almost substanceless" (*AA!* 74), and he describes the "something missing" that so troubles his explanation of Bon's murder as a shadow (*AA!* 80). Similarly, when Shreve imagines Bon reading Henry Sutpen's face for the trace of their shared father whom Bon cannot claim, he describes the mysterious contaminant in Bon's blood that prevents him from doing so as a shadow. Gazing at Henry, Shreve's Bon reflects: "*this flesh and bone and spirit which stemmed from the same source that mine did, but which sprang . . . and ran in steady even though monotonous sunlight, where that which he bequeathed to me sprang in hatred and outrage and unforgiving ran in shadow*" (*AA!* 254). Earlier, Quentin breaks from his father's narrative and imagines Henry's final warning to Bon, "Don't you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles" (*AA!* 106, *emphasis* mine). This short excerpt from a larger catalogue of iterations of the term repeatedly and simultaneously names the shadow subjects of the ledger. Bon is, as Stuart Burrows observes, "'a passing shape,' since he appears to be---the novel never allows us to be certain---a legally black man passing as a white one" (Burrows 138). The uncertainty surrounding his racial identity reflects the paranoid fear of contamination that underwrites and immunizes whiteness.

The novel's well-remarked refusal to verify Bon's racial identity dramatizes the paranoia of whiteness. Elsewhere, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines the "temporality of paranoia" as the constant anticipation of a catastrophic event. "No time could be too early," Sedgwick writes, "for one's having-already-known, for its having already-been inevitable, that something bad would happen" (Sedgwick 131). Biopower's imperative to make live and protect the population

designated as fully human is underwritten by this same anticipation of the catastrophic event of contamination. In *"The Birth of Biopolitics,"* Foucault itemizes the disciplinary mechanisms (among them, insurance policies, bank accounts, hygiene programs, and notably, the detective story) of the nineteenth century that produce subjects who were "conditioned to experience their situation, their life, their present, and their future as containing danger" (*Birth* 66). "Containing danger" that must forever be anticipated, expelled, and if possible, vanquished, blackness---that passing shadow---is that which must always be anticipated, always guarded against.

The novel plays with this paranoia and theorizes whiteness both as the accumulation of property and a property that can be divested through one of Shreve's more fantastical embellishments. He essentially inverts the plantation ledger and calculates whiteness as a property to be lucratively threatened. Imagining Eulalia Bon's New Orleans lawyer recording the potential profits to be made from blackmailing Sutpen, he describes a document that is a hybrid of a plantation ledger and an insurance policy whose entries add up speculative gains: "*Today he finished robbing a drunken Indian of a hundred miles of virgin land, val. 25,000. . . . Son. Intrinsic val. Possible though not probably forced sale of house & land plus . . . Emotional val. 100% times increase yearly for each child plus intrinsic val. plus liquid assets plus working acquired credit*" (*AA!* 241). At this juncture, Shreve may imagine that the threat to the white family is one of sexual degeneracy (the threat of incest rather than the threat of miscegenation that he and Quentin later diagnose), but he accurately configures whiteness as both the ability to obtain property and as a currency that constantly experiences itself as under siege.

Written in a satiric key, Shreve's ledger nonetheless identifies the high-stakes of whiteness that the other narrators evade in the family romance that they construct of Bon's murder by insisting, as Jason Compson repeatedly does, that Bon was beloved. Compson repeats

this phrase or variations on it throughout the novel, " 'Because he loved Bon/Because he loved Judith/Yes, he loved Bon/Now you can see why I said that he [Bon] loved her'" (*AA!* 72, 75, 102). Indeed, collectively the narrators insist that Henry loved Bon and in doing so, they move him from one column to another and read Henry's murder of Bon as crime demanded by familial love and Bon's own act of defiance as one of self-sacrifice.

In the section that follows, I look at how the other archive that we receive in *Absalom, Absalom!*---the burial stones----contests the dominant archive comprised of the oral histories that are exchanged throughout the novel.

V. What is "Paid Out": Subversive Burial Plots and the Limits of Reparative Kinships

> "'They lead beautiful lives---women. Lives not only divorced from, but irrevocably excommunicated from, all reality. . . . yet to them their funerals and graves, the little puny affirmations of spurious immortality set above their slumber, are of incalculable importance'" *Absalom, Absalom!*

If *Absalom, Absalom!* depicts the profits of Sutpen's ledgers as the traumatic debts of plantation slavery, then how does the novel envision its payment? The question of payment arises just before Quentin's interview with Henry Sutpen. As Quentin enters the "dark familiar" of the Sutpen house, he meets Clytie, who attempts to shield Henry from Rosa Coldfield's gaze by telling him, "'You go up there and make her come down. Make her go away from here. *Whatever he done, me and Judith and him have paid it out*'" (*AA!* 296, emphasis mine). Clytie's refusal to acknowledge Henry's crime and her insistence that she and her siblings, "have paid it out" constitutes a troubling (re)address of Henry's murder as that which must remain within the family. Burning not the pages of the ledger but their symbol, Clytie's final act is circumscribed by the very familial structure that it critiques. She may burn the Sutpen house in an act of defiance yet she destroys the edifice of her white father's legacy in order to protect Henry Sutpen

and keep the story of his crime within the family. Her declaration "we paid it out" and her suicide corroborates and complicates Edouard Glissant's observation that Faulkner's black female characters are only positioned as those who must silently endure and bear witness. "They are the keepers of the suffering" Glissant writes, "guardians of the temple of the unspeakable, but not . . . an oppressed population that has the right to rise up against its oppression" (94). To be sure, Clytie is a far cry from Faulkner's black mammies, paragons of infinite patience and endurance, to whom Glissant alludes and whom we find figured in Dilsey in *Sound* and Mollie Beauchamp in *Go Down, Moses*. Clytie bears a stronger kinship with Nancy in "That Evening Sun," which is even more pronounced in the miniaturized plotting of *Absalom* in Faulkner's short-story, "Evangeline." Written in 1931 (the same year "That Evening Sun" was published), "Evangeline" casts Clytie as the unnamed *archon* who tells the story of the Sutpens to an intrusive reporter. When the reporter questions her attachment to the haunted space of what will later be "Sutpen's Hundred," by asking, "'Didn't you have your own life to live, your own family to raise,'" she declares, "'Henry Sutpen is my brother'" ("Evangeline" 604). Her act of claiming Henry Sutpen as her brother and the conflagration that Clytie ignites at the close of the *Absalom, Absaom!* reflect a circumscribed rebellion. Ultimately, both the unnamed sister in "Evangeline" and Clytie keep the story of Charles Bon's murder within the family.

Nonetheless, Clytie points us towards a counter-narrative of kinship structures that are suggested by the other "triumvirate-mother-daughter" of the novel: Judith Sutpen, Clytie, and the largely unnamed racialized mothers. As the novel's Antigone, Judith Sutpen protests the murder of her brother by bearing witness to his body, which in the narrators' accounts, appears as a shadow. Mourning the loss of life that only enters into her father's calculations as a wasted investment that mars his career, Judith's acts of mourning, Deborah Clarke observes, contest and

revise her father's design.[37] Like Antigone, who, in Judith Butler's analysis, interrupts heteronormative kinship structures by insisting upon the singularity of her relationship to her brother, Judith, the would-be-widow, who, in Quentin's estimation, "*not bereaved, did not need to mourn*" (*AA!* 157), resists the patriarchal economy in which she is positioned. For Butler, the pivotal drama of *Antigone* emerges "when kinship comes to pose a threat to state authority and the state sets itself in a violent struggle against kinship" (*Antigone's Claim* 5). Pursuing this same reading, Judith's burial of Bon, and the invitation that she extends to Bon's widow to visit his grave, legitimates family ties that pose a threat to the white, propertied family. Unlike the narratives assembled by Rosa Coldfield, Jason Compson, and Quentin and Shreve, where queer desires are subsumed beneath the heteronormative exchanges and foreclosed by the paranoia of whiteness, Judith's burial of Bon challenges "the limits of intelligibility exposed at the limits of kinship" (*Antigone's Claim* 23).

Indeed, Jason Compson may derisively postulate that, for women, mourning is of "incalculable importance" as its rituals endow their trivial lives with greater significance, but the headstones that he dismisses as "little puny affirmations of spurious immortality" (*AA!*156) are, as Dussere observes, the only reliable source of information in the novel. Judith procures headstones for Bon and Charles Etienne through monetary transactions that admit their deaths and their existence into the oral histories of the country. She gives a letter that she receives from Bon to Quentin's grandmother that serves a similar purpose of making an "undying mark," not, as Jason Compson maintains, on the "blank face of oblivion to which we are all doomed" (*AA!* 102), but on the faces of the community who, through Grandmother Compson, are enlisted to

[37] Deborah Clarke writes, "by honoring his unacknowledged descendants with tombstones, [she] recast[s] the Sutpen family through her actions rather than those of her father." Deborah Clarke, *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), p. 143.

witness Bon's life. If, to bear witness is to, in Ian Baucom's words, "serialize the event, and its affect, and also to elongate its temporality, to stretch its time along a line of an unfolding series of moments of bearing witness" (Baucom 177), then Judith serializes the event of Bon's murder and complicates the later revisions of his death. Unlike Rosa Coldfield, who attempts to "undo" Henry's murder of Bon through what she insists is a collective enterprise of repression assumed by herself, Clytie, and Judith, "*we declined, refused, robbed the brother of the prey, reft the murderer of a victim for his very bullet*" (*AA!* 127), Judith's actions trouble the translation of him from animalized prey into beloved object. Quentin may reflect that Judith must have longed to inscribe the headstone with the epitaph "Beloved Husband of . . ." but her decision not to position him as an intended, matrimonial possession honors the claims of his wife and child and refuses the revisions the other narrators perform.

These refusals form a "mute letter" that undermines the authority of Quentin's and Shreve's narrative which is all too often presumed to be definitive. In Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Literature*, he cites Plato's suspicions of the errant written word and remarks that the "'mute letter' was the letter that went its way, without a father to guide it . . . a letter that spoke too much and endowed anyone at all with the power of speaking" (Rancière 12). In defiance of the father who would guide it and in conflict with the *archons* whose oral histories comprise the novel, Judith's inscribed headstones and her use of the photograph of Bon's wife tell what Rosa Coldfield and Jason Compson would conceal. Significantly, Rosa Coldfield curiously omits both the photographic portrait of Bon's unnamed wife and their son from her narrative. Shreve construes the tell-tale photograph of Bon's wife and son as a sign that unequivocally communicates his worthlessness to Judith: "'[I know] why the black son of a bitch should have taken her picture out and put the octoroon's picture in . . . he said to himself . . . *it will be the*

only way I will have to say to her, I was no good; do not grieve for me'" (*AA!* 286-87). By replacing Judith's photograph with that of his unnamed wife, however, Bon forces the Sutpen family to bear witness to kinship ties that Thomas Sutpen demonstrates and Rosa Coldfield, Jason Compson, and Shreve collectively assume, are not binding.

Shreve's speculation of what the image must have conveyed to Judith (sexual deviance and a loss of love not to be grieved) is symptomatic of how the narrators inscribe Judith's actions within racial and eugenics discourses of the early twentieth-century that render biracial subjects unintelligible. In chapter six, where the voices of Jason Compson, Shreve, and Quentin Compson form an echo chamber, Shreve picks up the refrain of Jason Compson's narrative and imagines Charles Etienne being interpellated by the law as a creature that is outside the recognizable norms of the human. After Charles Etienne is apprehended for attacking black men in a gambling circle, Justice Jim Hamblett first reads him as white. When he is corrected by General Compson, he cries out in bewilderment, "'*What are you? Who and where did you come from?*'" Shreve extends this scene by imagining Quentin's grandfather's later encounter with Judith Sutpen in which General Compson silently reflects, "Better that he [Charles Etienne] were dead, better that he had never lived: then thinking . . . [she] doubtless had already said it, thought it, changing only the person and the number" (*AA!* 166). Quentin, too, pursues this storyline as he imagines a scene in which Judith, by way of atoning for the past, encourages Charles Etienne to abandon his dark-skinned wife and pass as white in the North:

> *'I was wrong. I admit it. I believed that there were things which still mattered just because they had mattered once. But I was wrong. Nothing matters but breath, breathing, to know and to be alive. . . . The paper is between you and one who is inescapably negro; it can be put aside. . . And as for the child, all right.*

> *Didn't my own father beget one? And he none the worse for it? . . . I will raise it, see that it . . . It does not need to have any name.*" (*AA!* 168)

In this scene, Quentin rehearses a story that strongly resembles Thomas Sutpen's life: an ostensibly white man of dubious parentage acquires a racially suspect wife, produces a child, and abandons them both. Like all acts of ventriloquization, though, Quentin's narrative draws attention to the mimicking subject. Quentin and Shreve's narratives are shaped by racial discourses in which miscegenation is read by the law as a violation of the norms of the human and, echoing the discourses of eugenics, that the *biracial subject should not have been born*. The proposal that Quentin imagines---in which the "fact" of life is the only thing that matters---only applies when blackness is overlooked or its threat is contained.

Quentin's and Shreve's speculative accounts sharply conflict with the few facts that we do receive of Judith's life and her relationship with Bon's widow and child. That said, Judith's "mute letters" of mourning are framed by the text's more oppressive silences and omissions. She may legitimate the claims of Bon's widow and son but her later assumption of the consolidated roles of aunt/mother to Charles Etienne draws attention to the omission of the black mothers from the novel's ostensibly marked, archival materials. The name of Bon's widow, the attached genealogy informs us, was not recorded, and she does not appear in the chronology. Likewise, Charles Etienne's "full-blooded negress" is defined solely by her definitively black, reproductive body; she gives birth to the mentally degenerate Jim Bond, and then disappears from the novel. In the chronology she appears only as the matrimonial possession of Charles Etienne; in the genealogy, she is not listed.

The named exception to these omissions, Eulalia Bon, whose racial identity is never verified, is telling. Painted by Shreve's rhetorical flourishes, her maternal body is equated with

the tropically suspect motherland. Similarly, Shreve and Quentin can imagine Bon's demand for justice from his father, but, employing a civilizational logic, Shreve maintains that despite being the daughter of an affluent plantation owner, Eulalia is illiterate and is only able to read the most pertinent signifiers in her lawyer's letters: "Sutpen" and the accompanying estimate of his wealth. Eulalia may employ the lawyer but in Shreve's thinking, white property can only be seized by other white men.

The collective silencing of these mothers, whose unspoken traumas are articulated largely through Judith's acts of mourning, typify the familiar limitations of Faulkner's treatment of race. Their silences are marked as a trace within the archive but that trace is not fleshed out. Instead, these women, who mark the divide within the ledgers between humans and animalized property and who represent the foundational exception to what Agamben identified as democracy's guarantees of natal citizenship, constitute a deficit that returns in *Go Down, Moses*. The novel's title vignette is dominated by Molly Beauchamp's refrain, "Go down, Moses/Tell Old Pharaoh, let my people go"; famously, Faulkner dedicates the text to his former mammy, Caroline Barr, who died before its publication and who, as he states in the novel's dedication, "gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense" (*GDM* x). His tribute to Ms. Barr may ostensibly seek to locate their relationship outside of the economies and institutions that determined it, but, his language "without stint or calculation of recompense" alerts us to the reparations that might have been sought. Moreover, the black mothers in the *Go Down, Moses* challenge the ethical white subject's fantasy of existing outside of these economies.[38]

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[38] As Philip Weinstein thoughtfully remarks, ". . . Faulkner had taken over the role of both wounded subject and grateful offspring, organizer of her funeral and spokesman of the grief her death caused others. In none of this do we register the reality of her own black culture, the friends and relatives who likewise (and surely with equal intensity) suffered her loss." Philip Weinstein, *What Else but Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison,* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), p. 12.

Through the black maternal subject who frames the novel, *Go Down, Moses* further advances the critique of the white hermeneutic that we find in *Absalom, Absalom!*. In contrast to Faulkner's earlier novel, though, *Go Down* questions both the ethical valences of the white subject's account of himself as he confronts what Agamben termed the "anthropological machine" and his assumed monopoly over paying witness to its traumas. As Isaac McCaslin heeds the injunction contained within the novel's title and reads his family's ledgers for the crimes of his abusive, patriarchal grandfather, Old Carothers, he crafts a narrative of himself as an ethical steward of the land that is dependent both upon the silenced, martyred black mother and, as Richard Godden has underlined, the body of the animal. In "The Bear," Isaac's ethical event of reading the ledgers is framed by the hunt. His relationship with Sam Fathers and the bear, Old Ben, allows him to fabricate what Godden and Catherine Gunther Kodat have identified as a false binary between the queer and primordial relations of the Big Woods and the exploitative, heteronormative economies of the plantation that have produced the inheritance Ike renounces.[39] Indeed, when Isaac explains to his cousin Cass Edmonds why he must renounce his property, he justifies his actions by aligning himself with the noble creatures, Old Ben, the bear, and Sam Fathers, the Native American elder who initiates Isaac into the rite of the hunt. Borrowing their ennobled authority, Isaac solemnly delcares to his cousin, "Sam Fathers set me free" (*GDM* 286). Sam Fathers is aligned with his mongrel dog, Lion, and Old Ben, all of whom, the omniscient narrator informs us at the beginning of "The Bear" share the same "taintless and incorruptible" strain of blood (*GDM* 183). Faulkner's depiction of Sam Fathers as

[39] See Richard Godden's "Bear, Man, and Black: Hunting the Hidden in Faulkner's Big Woods," *The Faulkner Journal* 23. 1 (Fall 2007): 3-26, and Catherine Gunther Kodat's "Making Camp: *Go Down, Moses*," *American Literary History* 19.4 (Winter 2007): 997-1029.

the Noble Savage participates in modernism's nostalgia for the "vanished Indian"[40] who, as Cass tells Isaac, "knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago" (*GDM* 161) and participates in the racial iconography that we find in Old Ben, who, Thadious Davis rightly points out, is a stand-in for the black, male body.[41]

In the section that follows, I argue that the animal functions as, to borrow from Dominick LaCapra, a failed *traumatrophism* in Isaac's account of himself and the biblical history he constructs of the post-Reconstruction South. LaCapra's *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (2009) examines the prevalent tendency to render the traumatic event through a sublime aesthetic that creates "traumatrophisms" or recurrent figures that appear in narratives of trauma. LaCapra observes that there is a conceptual proximity between trauma and the sublime---both are "unrepresentable . . . beyond the ordinary, and somehow elevating---even redemptive---in its very excess," but he warns us that such "transfigurations" of trauma as the sublime lend themselves to fantasies of "a radical, even total, rupture with the past" (92). In "The Bear" the animal's gaze is admitted to support Isaac's fantasy of radically breaking with the economies of the ledgers and existing in the "communal anonymity of brotherhood" (*GDM* 246) of a reconfigured Eden. However, the anthropological tramatrophisms that buttress Isaac's pastoral fantasy of existing in a space where all the debts of biopower are cancelled and its hierarchical

[40] In Annette Trefzer's *Disturbing Indians: the Archaeology of Southern Fiction* (2007),Trefzer writes: "In modern American society, the so-called pre-industrial lifestyle of Native American cultures was often used as a standard by which national progress could be measured. But for many American intellectuals, such 'progress' based on materialism and the cultural of capital became increasingly suspect during the ostentatious celebration of the national business culture during the 1920s . . . Modernists in the United States now celebrated 'primitive' cultures as an antidote to bourgeois modernity, and they increasingly perceived Native Americans as 'inheritors of ancient wisdom' (Car 200)." Annette Trefzer, *Disturbing Indians: the Archaeology of Southern Fiction* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007), p. 11.

[41] In her study of *Go Down, Moses*, Thadious Davis states, "Every time I read 'The Old People' or 'The Bear,' I configured Old Ben, the bear, with a black man's face. . . . Old Ben loomed as that mighty abstraction, 'The Negro,' the trope par excellence of endurance and suffrance." Thadious Davis, *Games of Property: Law, Race, Gender, and Faulkner's Go Down, Moses* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), p. 7.

divisions of man, animal, and human are collapsed, is undermined by the sovereign hold he has on the category of the human. By admitting the imagined, interpellative gaze of the animal (as opposed to the response and gaze of black, female subjects who repeatedly undermine Isaac's narrative of himself), Isaac retains his purchase on a mode of responsibility that, as Derrida notes in *The Animal That I Therefore Am* (2006/2008), has been used to distinguish the human from the animal and the subhuman that is animalized. To put it more starkly, the divide forged through the ledgers "iron thread as strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony" (*GDM* 285-86), is reconfigured in Isaac's narrative as the divide between the ethical, white witness and the racialized subjects of that response. As I will show, though, Isaac's pastoral tableaus and the novel's apocalyptical fantasies of forgiveness are disrupted by the voice and gaze of the racialized mother whose presence calls into question the white sovereignty that undergirds his ethics and recalls us to what is omitted from the archive.

V. "Not Repudiate": Ethical Sacrifices and Sovereign Utterance in *Go Down, Moses*

> "what humans do with certain words, but also, and for some time yet, to track, to sniff, to trail, and to follow some of the reasons they adduce for the so confident usage they make, and which for the moment we are making together, of words such as, *therefore*, *animal*, and *I*." Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006/2008)

If the narrators in *Absalom, Absalom!* attempt to account for a crime that indicts them by shifting the body from one column of the ledgers to another (from bad property to a beloved object), then *Go Down, Moses* returns us more directly to the site of the anthropological machine. To review, in the novel's central story, "The Bear," Isaac McCaslin returns to his family's ledgers at the age of twenty-one and reads of the crimes that constitute his inheritance: Old Carothers' incestuous rape of his daughter, Tomasina, and her mother, Eunice's subsequent suicide on Christmas morning in 1832. In one of the most rehearsed scenes of Faulkner's

oeuvre, Isaac reads with horror: "His own daughter His own daughter. No No Not even him" (*GDM* 259). Although his father's entry denies Eunice's emotional interiority and Old Carothers' culpability by disputing the cause of her death ("23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self), Isaac imagines her suicide and attempts to graft familial categories onto a scenario where they have no application. "He seemed to her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christmas day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (*Her first lover's*, he thought. *Her first*) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudiation of grief and despair who had already had to repudiate belief and hope" (*GDM* 259). After what is pointedly staged as an ethical event of reading in which Isaac still tries to gentrify the trauma by referring to Old Carothers as Eunice's lover rather than owner, his subsequent decision to "relinquish but not repudiate" his family inheritance constitutes his endeavor not to stop the operations of the anthropological machine but to divorce himself from it.

It is well-established among Faulkner scholars that Isaac's efforts to pay the debts in the ledgers conspicuously fail. His suspect renunciation has served as critical fodder for Richard Godden and Noel Polk, and Catherine Gunther Kodat, all of whom have respectively scrutinized how his redemption story depends upon his equally suspect reading. Godden and Polk caution us that his reconstruction of Eunice's suicide does the double duty of enabling him to assume the role of the outraged reader and of evading evidence of the more immediate transgressions of his own father and uncle that he initially encounters in the ledgers. The first entries that we are privy to, they remind us, document not the incestuous rape of Tomasina's body and Eunice's response, but instead suggest the violation of his father and uncle's slave, "an anomaly calling itself Percival Brownlee" whom, Isaac reflects upon his initial reading, his father and uncle had

purchased "[although] neither he nor his brother knew why apparently" (*GDM* 252). Isaac's professed confusion masks, they persuasively suggest, avoidance of the possibility that his father engaged in the same acts as his grandfather.[42]

Godden and Polk themselves make equally speculative—and at times, frustrating---conjectures in their reading but they rightly point out that *Go Down, Moses* does not furnish us with a facsimile of the McCaslin ledgers. *Go Down, Moses* instead shows Isaac's interpretation of them and invites us to read against his self-affirming analysis. On this point, Kodat remarks that his "cold pastoral" or drama of self-sacrifice still keeps faith with an understanding of whiteness as that which must not be contaminated. She observes, "In order for this scenario of 'blood redemption' to work, the races must remain separate: to blend or to combine 'blood' would introduce confusion into the heavenly 'ledgers' that God's ability to keep track of each 'blood's successive attempts and failures to redeem the land would be severely compromised" (Kodat 1003). Like Quentin before him, Isaac may pay witness to his family's crimes but he retains a biological understanding of race as blood that must remain pure. Indeed, in "Delta Autumn" he is tasked with paying off his nephew's lover, James Beauchamp's unnamed granddaughter, and responds with the terrified and terrorizing signifier of the ledgers. "You're a nigger!" he exclaims when he learns that she is biracial. "Delta Autumn" thus recasts Isaac's reading of the ledgers; he is confronted with the racialized mother as an agent rather than as an abstract figure. After she refuses his money, Isaac declares that she is a creature beyond saving, "'I can't do nothing for you!'" he tells her, "'Cant nobody do nothing for you!'" (*GDM* 344).

[42] Deciphering a queer inheritance in these cryptic records, Godden and Polk make the case that Ike sees but evades his father and Uncle Buddy' sexual exploitation of Brownlee, whom the brothers later rename "Spintrius" and determine they must sell after he sexually violates a mule. "The Brownlee material," they write, "runs counter to the narrative Isaac wants to tell and deploy in a condemnation of his grandfather: his own father has committed the same sins (as a homosexual) that Isaac condemns his grandfather for committing as a heterosexual." Richard Godden and Noel Polk, "Reading the Ledgers," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 55.3 (Summer 2002): 301-360. p. 303.

Arguably, though, Beauchamp's granddaughter does not need Isaac to do anything for her. As an educated woman who supports herself with her own labor, she is not the abjected figure that inspires his renunciation of his inheritance.

In the absence of black subjects who can serve as grateful recipients of his charity, he relies on the traumatrophism of the animal that still betrays the power to allocate the norm of the human elsewhere distributed and calculated in the ledgers. Notably Isaac's narrative in "The Old People"---where he is located in the space of the Big Woods that is presumed to be divorced from the plantation economies---is preceded by the lynching of Rider, a black day-laborer, in "Pantaloon in Black" where animal names signify the violence to which black subjects are exposed. After killing his white supervisor "Birdsong," who runs a rigged dice game amongst his predominantly black staff, Rider is tracked and captured by a police officer ruefully named "Ketcham," and later murdered at the "hands of a person or persons unknown" (*GDM* 149). In the sheriff deputy's account of Rider's murder, he misreads Rider's grief for his wife and justifies his murder by citing his discernible absence of human emotion, "'when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might just as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes'" (*GDM* 105).

We are invited, of course, to contrast the crude and hackneyed animal tropes that the sheriff deputy uses with Isaac McCaslin's initiation into the hunt in "The Old People" which strongly echoes the Book of Genesis. "The Old People," which precedes Isaac's return to the ledgers, mimics the cadences of Genesis's opening scriptures, "At first there was nothing . . . Then the buck was there . . . as if all of light was condensed in him" (*GDM* 157). Sam Fathers, later described as "the mouthpiece of the host" baptizes Isaac in the blood of the buck he kills by marking his face with it (*GDM* 165). Isaac is later interpellated by Old Ben's gaze and locates

himself in the "shadowy . . . limbo from which time emerged and became time: the old bear absolved of mortality and himself who shared a little of it" (*GDM* 195). His relationship with Old Ben (already always a substitute for the black, male subject), recalls Derrida's reflection in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008) that sovereign utterance or the ability to formulate an "I" depends on the body of the animal. Providing a sustained reading of the Book of Genesis and Adam's divinely awarded power to name the animals in his dominion, Derrida writes: "Power over the animal is the essence of the 'I' or the 'person,' the essence of the human . . . which can only be effected through the infinitely elevated power of presenting himself as an 'I'" (*Animal* 93). "The Old People" and "The Bear" both reflect how Isaac's "I" is secured through the baptismal blood and gaze of the animal which secure his place outside of the history of the plantation.

Overwrought with ironized, messianic cadences, Isaac's exegetical return to the ledgers is cast as a return to the scene of genesis after the Fall. He aligns the ledger with the bible, set upon "some apocryphal Bench or even Altar or perhaps before the Throne itself" (*GDM* 205). He reads its transactions as evidence of the broken covenant originally established in Eden: "He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it . . . to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee he asked was pity and humility" (*GDM* 246). After Isaac announces his decision to renounce his inheritance---a decision that, tellingly, is only paraphrased by Cass rather than pronounced as a declarative utterance by Isaac---he configures the fee of creation as a debt of responsibility on the part of God and man. God, he tells Cass, "*must accept responsibility* for what He Himself had done *in order to live with Himself* in His lonely and paramount heaven" (*GDM* 270, emphasis mine). Through this Judeo-Christian framework, Isaac conceives of

himself at varying turns as a contrite Adam, a grandson of Noah who inherited the flood of post-Reconstruction violence, a Jesus Christ, and a sacrificial Isaac who must atone for the sins of man in order not to be defined by them. Isaac sees himself as a divine extension of fathers' previous efforts to atone for the crimes of slavery by manumitting their slaves: "He must have seen me too---an Isaac born into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid" (*GDM* 270-1). Declining the altar, but retaining the animal, Isaac posits an ethical "I" by sacrificing but "not repudiating" his white sovereignty which is reconfigured as his merciful sovereignty over the anthropomorphized animal. His debate with Cass about his decision to disavow his inheritance ends when they both recall the hunt and Isaac's refusal to kill Old Ben. Cass shores up Isaac's understanding of himself as the good steward when he reflects, "'And it took Him a bear and an old man and four years just for you. And it took you fourteen years to reach that point and about that many, maybe more for Old Ben'" (*GDM* 286). Conceiving of himself as a compendium of the histories of the Big Woods and a payment towards the debts in the ledgers, Isaac's overarching claim that "it was more than justice that only the white man's blood was available and capable to raise the curse . . . He used the blood which had brought the evil to destroy the evil as doctors use fever to burn up fever" elides the fact that, throughout the novel, only the blood of animals and animalized, black subjects, is actually spilled.

Further, the creatures---the anthromorphized animal, Old Ben, and the animalized Noble Savage, Sam Fathers---that he cites as the cause and evidence of his liberation, betray his firm grasp on the inheritance that he claims to abdicate. Indeed, as critics have observed, Isaac may relinquish his property but he retains the executer's rights as he attempts to distribute Old

Carothers' wealth to his biracial relatives.[43] This observation requires some extension. Just as his inventory of the ledgers is framed by the hunt of Old Ben, Isaac's distribution of his family's wealth is marked by the language of the hunt. In a hand that resembles "neither his father's nor his uncle's nor even McCaslin's, but like that of his grandfather save for spelling" (*GDM* 261), Isaac records that he "*traced* [James Beauchamp] *to Jackson Tenn*" after Beauchamp rejects his grandfather's reparations by fleeing on the eve of his twenty-first birthday in 1885 (*GDM* 261), but "tracked" rather than "traced" appears to be the more appropriate term. Likewise he tracks Fonsobia in hopes that he can purchase absolution by distributing her inheritance, but here, too, the transaction is unsuccessful:

> Because the woman he found at last five months later was no one he had ever known. . . the coffee-colored face which he had known all his life but knew no more, the body which had been born within a hundred yards of the room he was born in and in which some of his own blood ran but which was now completely inheritor of generation after generation to whom an announced white man on a horse was a white man's hired Patroller wearing a pistol sometimes and a blacksnake whip always. (*GDM*, 265-66)

Pursuing Fonsobia in hopes that she will accept Old Carothers's money, and more importantly, recognize the difference between him and his predecessors, Isaac attributes her reading of him as a potential threat to "black blood" that has overpowered their ties to one another. From another angle, though, the white hunter is always the white Patroller. Lending credence to this, Isaac is

[43] Godden and Polk write: "Isaac's attitude to his executor's task is proprietorial: he can and does dress it up in an echo of the gospel: 'suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come onto me,' . . . But apparently the black inheritors must actually ask for the money to get it." Richard Godden and Noel Polk, "Reading the Ledgers," *Mississippi Quarterly* 55.3 (Summer 2002): 301-360, p. 352.

always in pursuit of those beings excluded from the human on which his humanity and whiteness are predicated.

VI. "Vanish like dust": Fantasies of the Anthropological Machine and the Power of Mourning

> "Q How would you pray to God for human justice and racial salvation? A. I don't believe man prays to God for human justice and racial salvation. I believe he affirms to God that immortal individual human dignity which has always outlasted injustice and before which families and clans and tribes talking of themselves as a race of men and not the race of Man, rise and pass and vanish like so much dust."
>
> William Faulkner, "A Letter to the Leaders of the Negro Race" (1956)

I conclude this chapter with the above epigraph because I want to consider how Isaac's transcendent narrative of opting out of history, which the novel enables us to scrutinize, returns, in a non-ironzied fashion, in Faulkner's epistolary addresses of the 1950s. In his 1956 letter, originally published in *Ebony magazine*, he claims that man's immortal dignity will be affirmed when the "families and clans and tribes talking of themselves as a race of men and not the race of Man, rise and pass and vanish like so much dust" ("To the Leaders" 110-111). Salvation, in his vision, travels along a horizontal axis rather than a vertical one; God does not redeem man, rather, man's immortal dignity (the immortal dignity that is elsewhere attributed to the animal in "The Bear") endures past the demarcations between the human, the subhuman, and the animal forged in the ledgers. Evocative of Genesis 3:19 "for dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return," Faulkner looks to a future where all debts and profits would be cancelled out. Like Isaac, though, his reach exceeds his grasp. Through the category of "man" and his advocacy of a politics of endurance or "go-slowism," he seeks to maintain a category of the human that, in the aftermath of World War II, had been rendered utterly bankrupt.

Faulkner's gesture toward a post-apocalyptic relation in which racial distinctions are erased by time, bears, I want to suggest, an uneasy kinship with Agamben's fantasy of the saved night. Situated between *Homo Sacer* (1995/1998) and *State of Exception* (2003/2005), *The Open* rearticulates bare life as the kernel of animality or zoe that must be disavowed and expelled in order for man to become fully human. What "political mystery of separation," Agamben asks us to consider, severs man as a living being from the animal and the non-man?" (*Open* 16).[44] After troubling Martin Heidegger's famous distinction between the animal's captivated state ("poor in the world") and man's ability to form his world, Agamben advances a series of axioms and proofs that he deploys under the auspices of a chapter aptly titled, "Anthrogenesis." Asserting that every Western (a modifier that, once again, is never problematized in his work) political conflict is driven by the divide between "the animality and humanity of man," he concludes that Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* leaves us with two possibilities, "(a) Posthistorical man no longer preserves his own animality as undisclosable, but rather seeks to take it on and govern it by means of technology; (b) *man, the shepherd of being*, appropriates his own concealedness, his own animality, which neither remains hidden nor is made an object of mastery, but is thought as such, as pure abandonment" (*Open* 80, emphasis mine). Option B is, of course, the only viable route we can pursue, and from his Heideggerean impasse he shifts to Walter Benjamin's concept of the saved night in which man and animal exist outside of being. For Agamben, this experience is a negative Enlightenment or "a zone of nonknowledge---or better, of a-knowledge" wherein the very categories of man and animal produced by the anthropological machine are voided

[44] In his exploration of this mystery, he acknowledges, through an abbreviated and redacting chronology, the connection between the modern anthropological machine that produced the *Muselmann* of the concentration camps and the earlier production of the slave as humanized animal, "the man ape, the *enfant savage* or *Homo ferus*, but also and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form." Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal,* Trans. Kevin Attell, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004), p. 37.

(*Open* 91). Our tasks as theorists, he insists, is to enter into the saved night. New and more inclusively recalibrated definitions of the human will not correct the biopolitical crimes committed in service of eradicating the animal within man. We must empty out the signifiers of man and animal of their politicized meaning (*Open* 92).[45] In Agamben's reading of Benjamin, he insists that neither he nor his predecessor is proposing that there is a primordial or Edenic relation between man and animal that is available for recuperation, "The salvation that is at issue here," Agamben writes, "does not concern something that has been lost and must be found again, something that has been forgotten and must be remembered; it concerns, rather, the lost and forgotten as such—that is, something unsavable" (*Open* 82). He supplies an ekphrastic description of the saved night through Titian's *Nymph and Shepherd*, where a woman, naked, lounges next to a clothed shepherd, while a fawn looks on in the background atop the shorn trunk of the Tree of Knowledge. Reading this as a scene after the Fall, Agamben claims that the gaze exchanged between the lovers is one that approximates Benjamin's theorization of the saved night. "In their fulfillment," Agamben supplies, "the lovers who have lost their mystery contemplate a human nature rendered perfectly inoperative---the inactivity {*inoperosita*} and *desoeuvrement* of the human and of the animal as the supreme and unsavable figure of life" (*Open* 87).

I rehearse Agamben's vision of a zone of non-knowledge and what I read as his revision of the Book of Genesis to situate it, in an admittedly unlikely pairing, with and against

[45] Agamben's injunction to empty out the signifiers of "animal" and "man" elides how he himself installs the animal as a figure for bare life. The animal, LaCapra notes, serves as the privileged lever in Agamben's vision of a negative transcendence of the anthropological machine. LaCapra writes: "[Animals] serve as vehicles for a conception of modernity as a posthistorical age of accomplished or completed nihilism marked by the reduction of being to mere or naked life, a kind of ground zero or Stunde null of existence. . . . What is of general interest and concern here is the linkage among an extremely negative if not nihilistic conception of existing social, political, and cultural reality, blank utopian longing, and desire for re-enchantment of the world." Dominick LaCapra, *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009), pp. 166-67.

Faulkner's pastoral tableaus of forgiveness in "Delta Autumn" and his own fantasies of entering a zone of "non-knowledge" in which the categories from the ledgers would be nullified. At the beginning of "Delta Autumn," Isaac embarks upon what will likely be his final hunting expedition. After a discussion of the U.S.'s entrance into the war, Isaac tells the young men, "'The only fighting anywhere that ever had anything of God's blessing on it has been when men fought to protect does and fawns'" (*GDM* 323). His proclamations, derisively rejected by his nephew, continue and he declares that God is made manifest in the moment of heteronormative climax, "'at the instant when it don't even matter whether they marry or not, I think that whether they marry then or afterward or don't never, at that instant the two of them were God'" (*GDM* 332). At first glance, these similarities may appear to be merely superficial and organized around particular figures---the fawn, the scopic exchange of forgiveness that occurs between man and woman after the Fall. Yet, much like Agamben's interpretation of Benjamin and Titian's painting, Isaac envisions a relation outside of the State's sanction of sexuality. His vision chimes with the moment in Agamben's reading of the Titian painting when he addresses the solution Benjamin offers to stop the anthropological machine. "What severs---not solves---this secret bond that ties man to life, however, is an element which seems to belong totally to nature but instead everywhere surpasses it: sexual fulfillment.'" Citing Benjamin, he continues, "'. . . he is reborn, and as his beloved frees him from the mother's spell, the woman literally detaches him from Mother Earth'" (*Open* 83-84).

Much like Agamben's configuration of the saved night as Eden after the Fall and divorced from reproductive economies, Isaac imagine a relation between man and woman, who is more closely aligned with the animal, that transcends discourses of shame. Yet, his encounter with James Beauchamp's granddaughter, who is first referred to as a doe, results in him reading

her as “a nigger!” and recalling us to the limits of his transcendent vision. Much like the black mothers in *Absalom, Absalom!* who prevent the ledgers from being balanced, the granddaughter is suggestive of the other black mothers who refuse the zone of non-knowledge in which their exclusion from the category of the human erased as so much dust. The novel’s final and title vignette “Go Down, Moses” is haunted by Mollie Beauchamp’s accusatory refrain “‘Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin. Sold him in Egypt. Pharaoh got him.’” In the novel’s final story, we are left with an uneasily communal act of mourning which in the animalized (her son is referred to as “ ‘a slain wolf’”) subject is reincorporated into the community after his death even as his mother continues to insist, in her gospel song, that the debt has not been paid.

Mollie Beauchamp’s grief for her son, who is executed after shooting a police officer in Chicago, speaks to one of Faulkner’s other, famous dispatches, his address of Emmett Till’s death in 1955. Writing to the United Press after the 1955 brutal murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi and Mamie Till’s public burial of Till’s body in Chicago, Faulkner asks: “So, when will we learn that *the white man can no longer afford*, he simply does not dare, to commit acts which the other three-fourths of the human race can challenge him for, not because the acts are themselves criminal, but simply because the challengers and accusers of the acts are not white in pigment” (“Emmett Till” 222, emphasis mine). Consonant with his rhetoric of debt and depiction of ledgers, Faulkner does the numbers for his readers and reads the murder of Emmett Till not simply through the accelerating demands for socioeconomic justice in the American South but within the context of the global South or “the other three-fourths of the human race,” who have been subjugated by ongoing regimes of colonization and apartheid. Faulkner acknowledges their charges, however, only to frame them as a Cold War concern of all Western, democratic nations. Towards the end of his letter, he expresses his fears that the U.S.’s ideals of liberty and justice

might no longer have any currency beyond the nation's borders and cautions his (white) readers that those other three-fourths know that "when we talk of freedom and liberty, we not only mean neither, we don't even mean security and justice and even *the preservation of life* for people whose pigmentation is not the same as ours. And not just the black people in Boer South Africa, but the black people in America too" ("Emmett Till" 223, emphasis mine). Faulkner's open letter is, at turns, moving in its deep-seated frustration, and much like his rhetoric of debt, paternalistic. What interests me, though, is how his letter, like the final vignette of "Go Down, Moses," registers the demand for justice as an expense or a demand for reparations that cannot be ignored. That he acknowledges the global reach of this demand across the global South, "the 3/4ths of the human race" speaks to the decolonizing movements during this period. Indeed, the nation-state that, Faulkner warns, will perish if they continue to commit such crimes against people of color, is the colonial state that, Aimé Césaire diagnoses as diseased in his *Discourse on Colonialism* (*Discours sur le colonialism*), published in English the same year as Till's murder. Césaire warns that whenever colonial powers commit crimes against those deemed outside of the human, "civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread" (Césaire 36). His understanding of civilization as an infected body that has been poisoned by its violent pursuit of its immunity anticipates the tropeology of the apartheid nation-state as cancer-ridden that we see in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron: A Novel*. In this next chapter, I turn to Coetzee's work and consider how, like Faulkner, he dramatizes the difficulties of the ethical relation across the zoning of life that originated in the ledgers and was spatialized through the divides within apartheid.

Chapter Two: " 'Not grace, then, but at least the body': Accounting for the Self in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*"

> "If I look back over my fiction, I see a simple (simple-minded?) standard erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not 'that which is not,' and the proof that it is is the pain that it feels . . . Not grace, then, but at least the body." J.M. Coetzee, "Autobiography and Confession: An Interview" *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*.
>
> "no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a cilization which justifies colonization---and therefore force----is already a sick civilization."
>
> Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism (1955/1972)

I. Of World Literature and Colonial Immunities

Like his fellow Nobel laureate whose work I examined in the previous chapter, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, J.M. Coetzee's fiction had a strong purchase over what is sometimes termed "world literature" (read: literature translated into English and/or literature written by cosmopolitan authors who found backers within the Anglo-American academy). In 2003, when the Swedish Committee announced Coetzee as the recipient of the prize in literature, they praised his "portray[al] of the surprising involvement of the outsider" ("Nobel Prize") a description that aptly spoke to not only his work but the conditions of its production. Coetzee's first novel, *Dusklands* (1974) was written in the late 1960s during his time as a doctoral student at the University of Texas-Austin, published at the close of the U.S.'s disastrous war in Vietnam

and after Coetzee had his visa application denied by the U.S. where he had previously worked as a professor in the English Department at the State University of Buffalo.[46] The novel is heavily informed by the war that Coetzee himself protested while at the State University of Buffalo and it begins with American military bureaucrat, Eugene Dawn, addressing a report he has been commissioned to produce for Jacobus Coetzee under the auspices of the "New Life Project" in Vietnam (*Dusklands* 1). With strong echoes of Conrad's Kurtz, Dawn hopes that "The truth of my Vietnam formulations already begins to shimmer, as you can see, through the neat ranks of script. When these are transposed into print their authority will be binding" (*Dusklands* 14-15). Dawn carries with him an archive of his materials and takes pleasure from looking at the photographs documenting some of the atrocities of the war.

Later, in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), an allegory of Empire that appeared on numerous college syllabi in the aftermath of the U.S.'s invasion of Iraq, the Magistrate, after his imprisonment and torture, sits down to write the history of the colonial settlement. Instead of documenting the crimes committed against its indigenous communities, he initially writes, "'This was paradise on earth'" (*Waiting* 151) and immediately recoils from his own domestication of horrific events in which he both participated and suffered.

Both *Dusklands*, in terms of the conditions of its production, and *Waiting for the Barbarians* corroborate the Nobel Prize Committee's description of the hallmarks of Coetzee's work. These novels illustrate Coetzee's career-spanning depiction of the complicity of the "outsider" and how the archival bodies of knowledge that they produce reflect their positions

[46] Noting that Coetzee worked in the Africana archives in the University of Texas-Austin and in those at the British Museum in London, Hermann Wittenberg reflects, "*Dusklands* can therefore in a sense be understood to have been born of the archive, specifically of a colonial South African archival record dispersed across several continents." Hermann Wittenberg, "Towards an Archaeology of *Dusklands*," *English in Africa* 38.3 (October 2011): 71-89, p. 74.

within biopolitical zones (the colonial settlement, the imperial nation). In this chapter, I examine the archival production that occurs in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, a text that is significantly labeled as "A Novel," and more specifically, how the philosophy and theory used in readings of the ethics of the text are also implicated in the zoning of life that Coetzee explores in the text. As Wittenberg remarks, Coetzee's position within the pantheon of "World Literature" can be partially attributed (again, like his fellow Nobel laureate) to the degree to which their complex narratological structures lend themselves to post-structuralist readings. "These theoretical approaches have also served well to position Coetzee not so much within the narrow national category of South African literature, but more within a global, or certainly Western, intellectual milieu that has emphasised a strong reciprocity between text and theory" (Wittenberg 72). With this positioning in mind, it behooves us as scholars to not only engage in these readings but to consider the discordances that might exist between the histories that Coetzee's work depict and the continental philosophy with which we approach them.

Upon its publication in 1990, *Age of Iron: A Novel* further fueled enduring critical discussions of ethics and responsibility in Coetzee's fiction. Foregoing both the allegorical time of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and the postmodern architecture of *Dusklands* and *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* more directly addresses one of the governing concerns of Coetzee's oeuvre: how does the white, South African subject, and by extension, the white, South African writer, respond to the crimes of apartheid in which she is biopolitically implicated?

Written as an elongated letter from Elizabeth Curren, a former classics professor who is dying of cancer, to her expatriated daughter, *Age of Iron* offers an uneasy exploration of this question. As Elizabeth Curren witnesses the eruptions of violence that occur during South Africa's 1985-1988 States of Emergency, she attempts, from what Coetzee in interviews has

characterized as a "historically untenable position," to account for herself and offer a response to an historical juncture that demands violent justice ("Interview" 250).

Critics Michael Marais and Derek Attridge have read the epistolary and confessional structure in *Age of Iron* through the work of Emmanuel Levinas, observing that Levinas's concept of responsibility to the other speaks to both Elizabeth Curren's act of writing to and from her historical moment and her relationship with Mr. Vercueil, a homeless man in whose care she entrusts her letter. Marais, in particular, maintains that the novel's epistolary form instantiates the Levinasin act of substituting the self for the other; Elizabeth Curren's letter to her daughter, he asserts, is an act of generosity and a "performance of the ethical relation" between the subject and the other.[47] Complicating their readings, Gilbert Yeoh has recently countered that the moral ambiguities and prejudices that underlie Elizabeth Curren's narration suggest that Curren is engaged in self-deception rather than a Levinasian ethics of responsibility to the other.[48] Yeoh carefully attends to the contradictions in Elizabeth Curren's narration that have been largely neglected in criticism on the novel and contends that Coetzee installs Elizabeth Curren as a compelling authorial surrogate only to invite the reader to question the empathetic valences of her narrative. The ethical move for the "vigilant reader," Yeoh argues, is to read *against* Curren's

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[47] See Michael Marais, "'Little enough, less than little, nothing': Ethics, Engagement, and Change in J.M. Coetzee"s Writings," *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (Spring 2000): 159-182 and Derek Attridge, "Trusting the Other: *Age of Iron*." *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. 91-112.

[48] In Gilbert Yeoh's "J.M. Coetzee and Samuel Beckett: Ethics, Truth-telling, and Self-Deception," Yeoh argues that Coetzee offers a " . . . critique of white South-African writing as a form of self-deception. In Coetzee's critique, that writing is self-deceived by producing self-consoling narratives of false empathy and identification." Yeoh's reading usefully identifies the contradictions and ironies that undermine the narratives of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron*, but he fails to note how Elizabeth Curren repeatedly acknowledges the problems with the narrative she tries to construct. Gilbert Yeoh, "J.M. Coetzee and Samuel Beckett: Ethics, Truth telling, and Self-Deception." *Critique* 44.4 (Summer: 2003): 331-348, p. 337.

rhetorically seductive but ultimately suspect response to the suffering of her apartheid neighbors.[49]

By reducing the flaws in Curren's narration to mere "ironies" that the astute reader should identify, however, Yeoh's formulation diminishes the significance of these ambiguities, and, by extension, the ethical stakes of the novel. I argue that the contradictions that puncture Elizabeth Curren's narrative are better characterized as ruptures that occur when she questions her own response to the violence she witnesses and the legitimacy of the universal humanism that shapes her response. Curren endeavors to articulate a response to "this world, in this time" with the tenets of universal humanism and metaphors of maternity that form her authorial identity both as a former classics professor and mother, yet she repeatedly acknowledges the *failure* of these narratological tropes to function as ethical guideposts that might tether her to a stable point (9). Reading these failures as narratological fissures rather than ironies, I contend that *Age of Iron* troubles Levinas's phenomenological model of ethical responsibility. For Levinas, ethics is my responsibility to the other, described as the neighbor, the widow, the orphan, whose profound destitution places my very being into question. In contrast to Levinas's insistence that the other "orders me before being recognized . . . assigns me before I designate him," (*Otherwise* 87), and thereby forbids my incorporation of him into an epistemological economy of what he calls "sameness," Coetzee's novel reveals that my exposure to the other as my neighbor is irrevocably determined by and tied to the epistemic ground that I occupy. In

[49] In "Love and Indifference in *Age of Iron*," Yeoh writes: "Coetzee"s text confronts the reader with a profoundly persuasive narrative that, the vigilant reader slowly realizes, she ought to be suspicious towards rather than readily yield to." Gilbert Yeoh, "Love and Indifference in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38.3 (2003): 107-134, p. 118.

answering “Here I am” to the inescapable call of the other, both the “I” and the “here” one must account for how this “I” who answers, responds from a biopolitically-zoned “here.”

To the end of tracking how the “I” is produced by the biopolitically-zoned “here”, I place Coetzee in dialogue with, and ultimately against, Emmanuel Levinas, focusing in particular on *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* where Levinas imagines responsibility as a traumatic experience of exile in which the self is called into question or accused by the other. While Levinas has been embraced for offering a post-structuralist ethics that emerged from and attempts to answer to the profound failures of Western humanism in the twentieth century, his discussions of the ethical relation to the other are haunted by the very cultural and ethnic circumscriptions of universal humanism that his work so strenuously tries to reject.[50] As I will show, Coetzee’s work both demands and enables us to more closely attend to the cultural and racial limitations that undermine Levinas’s ethics of responsibility. Consistent with much of Coetzee’s fiction, *Age of Iron* portrays a white subject, trained in classical humanism, who attempts to navigate the shifting sociopolitical terrain of South Africa with what she comes to recognize as flawed, ethical abstractions. Exposing the historical complicities that shadow our abstractions, Coetzee theorizes what responsibility to the other means when we respond from a concrete time and place rather than the transcendent realm that Levinas privileges in his work.

[50] In his introduction to *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Levinas notably associates war with totalizing frameworks that would reduce individuals to their social roles. Levinas writes: “The visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy. Individuals are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves. The meaning of individuals . . . is derived from the totality.” Levinas then argues that the ethical relation to the other is that which precedes and exceeds this totality. While Levinas’s formulation carefully negotiates the concrete and the abstract, as I will show, his writings and interviews reveal that his categories of the subject and the other are still tied to the totality he associates with war. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969, p. 22-22.

In Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) she also abjures Levinas's transcendent realm in order to consider how we might approach Levinas's ethical relation to the other, and more specifically the answer one must give to the other, in an epistemologically-bound world where the subject is formed by disciplinary norms in ways that always exceed her knowledge. Arguing that the act of responding to the other is one that also entails that the subject offer an account of herself, Butler proposes that this act produces a crisis as the subject can never give a complete and unified account of her own formation. Butler writes, "I am giving an account of myself, but there is no account to be given when it comes to the formation of this speaking 'I' who would narrate its life. . . . The 'I' ruins its own story, contrary to its best intentions" (67). Butler's theorization of responsibility as accountability provides a useful framework for approaching *Age of Iron*. Throughout the novel, Curren strives to offer a coherent account of herself but her narrative falters, shifts, and doubles back on itself. Despite the governing conceit of Curren's authorial mastery over the text, she repeatedly questions her own narrative and how its organizing tropes are underlined by historically determined complicities that compromise her response to the violence around her. Coetzee ruins the story of Elizabeth Curren's authorial "I" by showing how her "I" is tethered to and determined by the biopolitical histories of South Africa in which she, as a white, middle-class subject, is complicit. Instead of inviting the reader to trace the ironic valences of Curren's narrative, Coetzee reveals that the act of responding to the neighbor is a deeply unsettling confrontation of the histories and the social norms that, in ways one can never fully account for, inform one's response to one's neighbor. As a witness, one is always complicit. Curren may initially divorce herself from the ruling Afrikaner party by "the disgrace of the life one lives under them: to open a newspaper, to switch on the television, like kneeling and being urinated on," she is unable to sustain such an easy

separation from apartheid rulers (*Age* 10). Concurrently, as a white, middle-class subject living in an immunized and gated space of Capetown, she is unable to fully empathize with her black South African servants and neighbors whose families are traumatized rather than merely disgraced by the unchecked violence of the apartheid regime. As she later tells Mr. Vercueil, "A crime was committed long ago. How long ago? I do not know. But longer ago than 1916, certainly. So long ago that I was born into it. It is *part of my inheritance*. It is part of me, I am part of it" (*Age* 164, emphasis mine). Echoing, with a difference, Quentin Compson's and Isaac McCaslin's respective understandings of their inheritance, Curren's admission that the crimes of colonization and apartheid have determined her authorial self is symptomatic of her shifting apprehension that her response to the crimes of apartheid is always delayed and always insufficient.

It is through these shifts in Curren's narrative that Coetzee suggests that the ethical relation is the experience of vertigo that occurs when one sees the limitations of one's response to the pain of others. Coetzee shows that the witness always responds to the neighbor from an unsurpassable remove that cannot be transcended through empathy or the universalizing abstractions. In his often-quoted interviews with David Attwell, significantly recorded after his completion of *Age of Iron*, Coetzee parenthetically admits, "I, as a person, as a personality, am overwhelmed, . . . my thinking is thrown into confusion and helplessness, by the fact of suffering in the world . . . These fictional constructions of mine are paltry, ludicrous defenses against that being over-whelmed" ("Interview" 248). *Age of Iron* overturns the authorial abstractions of maternity and universal humanism that so dominate Curren's narrative. Rejecting the tenets of universal humanism, Coetzee shows that the act of responding to the other is an experience of being overwhelmed by both a sense of one's complicity as a witness and one's helplessness in

the face of the undeniable reality of the neighbor's suffering. *Age of Iron* unravels Elizabeth Curren's narrative only to offer us a difficult ethics that is rooted not in dubious metaphors but in an experience of the poverty of one's response to the bodily suffering of one's neighbor.

II. Ethical Limitations: Questioning 'Humanity' in Levinas and Coetzee

Elizabeth Curren's shifting and partial comprehension of the poverty of her response to the other resonates with Levinas's conceptualization of responsibility as a debt that one can never pay to the other. Levinas remarks that responsibility to the other is an exposure to pain that is registered as a debt: "Pain is a pure deficit, an increase of debt in a subject that does not have a hold on itself, does not join up the two ends" (*Otherwise* 55). Echoing Faulkner's leitmotif of debt, Levinas, too, conceives of the subject as irrevocably imbalanced and fragmented by its deficits but, also like Faulkner, he attends to the pain of the witness. Taking a brief detour, I want to rehearse the movements in Levinas's writings on responsibility and then, examining the cultural and racial modifiers that surround his definition of the other and the neighbor, stage a more cautious dialogue between Levinas and Coetzee.

In the Levinasian scene, I am radically interpellated by the other, who calls me to an asymmetrical responsibility that I cannot evade. I am responsible to the other but she is not responsible for me. This moment precedes and "breaks up" totality; it exceeds and defies my conceptualization of the encounter. Levinas maintains that it is an experience of "a duty that did not ask for consent, that came into me traumatically. . . came as election where my contingent humanity becomes identity and unicity, through the impossibility of escaping from election"

(*Humanism* 7). In Levinas's account, my humanity arises from my inescapable responsibility to the other; my very subjectivity *is* my susceptibility or exposure to the other.[51]

Well-acquainted with the limitations of the very category of "ethics" and the dangers of universal humanism, Levinas is very careful to assert that the responsibility to the other is not a moral stance that I consciously assume. Nor, he maintains, can the other be reduced to a theme of my invention or a set of (cultural) characteristics that I recognize or assign. Levinas's insistence on the "otherwise" nature of my relation to the other seeks to evade the problems of cultural circumscription and moral narcissism that Nietzsche and Freud attribute to ethics, particularly when he writes:

> To reduce men to self-consciousness . . . is, under the pretext of not caring about the inefficacity of 'good intentions' and 'fine souls' and preferring 'the effort of concepts' to the facilities of psychological naturalism, humanist rhetoric . . . to forget what is better than being, that is, the Good. (*Otherwise* 18-19)

Levinas's repudiation of self-consciousness as the totalizing Western philosophical vehicle for an ethical relation further evinces his concern with the *failure* of abstractions commonly associated with universal humanism—'good intentions' and 'fine souls,'---to be anything more than empty and ineffectual signifiers. Positioning himself against this model, Levinas argues for an ethics that precedes consciousness and haunts the self. He describes the relation to the neighbor as "a modality not of a knowing, but of an obsession, *a shuddering of the human quite*

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[51] While in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas writes that my subjectivity is a welcoming or hospitality to the Other, I want to focus on his later works, *Otherwise Than Being* in particular, as they offer what I read as a much more urgent theorization of subjectivity as an exposure to the neighbor and responsibility as trauma. In *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence,* Levinas writes: "It is because subjectivity is sensibility—an exposure to others, a vulnerability and a responsibility in the proximity of the others." Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being Or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2006, p. 77.

different from cognition. . . . I am as it were ordered from the outside, traumatically commanded, without interiorizing by representation and concepts the authority commands me" (*Otherwise* 87).

Without interiorizing by representation, Levinas's conceptualization of the encounter with the neighbor gives us a humanism that would appear to transcend the narrow definitions of the human; I am responsible to the other but I cannot know her within a totalizing schema. As the visceral inflections of his prose suggest, the self is conjugated in the accusative; one experiences an intimation of one's humanity as a traumatic subjection to the other. Imagining a responsibility that is experienced in a corporeal register, Levinas carefully negotiates the abstract and the concrete: the encounter with the neighbor precedes any cultural categories the subject might ascribe to the other yet the subject's responsibility is an experience that is tied to the body. The ethical relation is, in Levinas's description, the shuddering of the human, the sleepless night of insomnia, the experience of exile, and, in his stunning conflation of responsibility with maternity, the gestation of the other.

Yet as Derrida famously observed, Levinas's use of what are notably ontological terms relies on the very order of representation and discursive systems that he tries to transcend.[52] Despite his repeated insistence that the other cannot be "thematized" or assimilated into a pre-existing cognitive scheme that I possess, many of Levinas's readers, from Luce Irigaray to Alain Badiou to Slavoj Žižek and Judith Butler, have observed that Levinas's writings contain ethnic,

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[52] In Jacques Derrida‟s "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," he writes: "By making the origin of language, meaning, and difference the relation to the infinitely other, Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse. The latter is understood, and instructs, only by first permitting the same and Being to circulate within it. . . . And the profundity of the empiricist intention must be recognized beneath the naivete of certain of its historical expressions. It is the dream of a purely heterological thought at its source. A pure thought of pure difference." Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79-153, p. 151.

monotheistic, and gendered qualifiers that suggest that the neighbor/other is far more socially circumscribed than Levinas would have us believe.[53]

Tracing these qualifiers in Levinas's work and interviews, Robert Bernasconi has questioned the ethics of transcending the other's cultural identity. Levinas cautions us that we need not concern ourselves with the cultural context of the other's identity; the subject need only know that the neighbor or other is the persecuted one for whom the subject is responsible.[54] However, the underlying logic of this movement betrays both a troubling disavowal of difference and a culturally specific conception of humanity that is, through a sleight of hand, posited as being universal. Citing a series of interviews that Levinas gave between 1989 and 1991, Bernasconi quotes Levinas as stating: "'I often say, though it's a dangerous thing to say publicly, that humanity consists of the Bible and Greeks. All the rest can be translated: all the rest—all the exotic—is dance'" (Bernasconi 14). In a wounding economy of words, Levinas's remarks reiterate the all too familiar limitations of universal humanism that his work strives to repudiate. Locating humanity in a European, Judeo-Christian tradition, "all the rest" is dismissed as that which can only be made human through the translation of its difference. Significantly, the time period in which Levinas gave these interviews (1989-1991) roughly coincides with Coetzee's writing and publication of *Age of Iron* (1986-1990). A more important coincidence, though, resides in the context of Levinas's remarks themselves; Levinas's dismissive characterization of "all the rest" as dance is a very pointed reference to televised images of South African mourners

[53] See Luce Irigaray's "Questions for Emmanuel Levinas: On the Divinity of Love," Alain Badiou's *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Slavoj Zizek's "Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence," and Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

[54] Levinas writes: "The suspicions engendered by psychoanalysis, sociology and politics weigh on human identity such that we never know to whom we are speaking and what we are dealing with when we build our ideas on the basis of human facts. But we do not need this knowledge in the relationship in which the other is the neighbor, and in which before being an individuation of the genus man, a rational animal, a free will, or any essence whatever, he is the persecuted one for whom I am responsible to the point of being a hostage for him" (*Otherwise* 59).

dancing at funerals. Bernasconi explains that Levinas describes his discomfiture at watching these images, "Without any hint of the power of Westerners to understand other cultures, Levinas simply reiterated his surprise: 'Have you seen it? That is some way of expressing sadness'" (14). Dismissing the performance of mourning as that which is outside of the civilizational framework of "the Bible and the Greeks," Levinas reveals, in a stunning fashion, the circumscriptions of his ethics of responsibility.

I address the ethnic and cultural problems in Levinas's work not to dismiss critics who have persuasively mapped points of commonality between Coetzee's work and Levinas's writings but in order to read Coetzee's *Age of Iron* against Levinas in a more contextualized way. Both Coetzee and Levinas are deeply suspicious of the concept of an ethical self, or the 'fine soul,' and both conceive of an ethical relation as that which is rooted in the body and occurs as a corporeal trauma. Indeed, Levinas's conceptualization of responsibility as an experience of gestating the other is arguably mirrored in Elizabeth Curren's associations between maternity and bearing witness. Coetzee directly confronts, however, the ethnocentric failures of universal humanism that Levinas's remarks unfortunately reiterate. Whereas Levinas writes of subjectivity as an experience of "a body suffering for another," and problematically focuses on the pain experienced by the subject who suffers *for the other*, Coetzee is wary of the danger of eliding the differences between the subject who, in witnessing, suffers for another and the other or neighbor who is suffering. Certainly, as a woman dying of cancer, Elizabeth Curren is a subject who suffers, but as with David Lurie in *Disgrace* and the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the suffering she experiences does not allow her to fully comprehend or imaginatively appropriate the suffering of her neighbors across the apartheid checkpoints and zones that divide South Africa during the states of emergency. In Coetzee's careful refusal to conflate experiences

of suffering, his works maintain that there is a remainder of difference between subjects that cannot and should not be translated through universalizing metaphors or transcended through empathy. Although Curren may declare to her servant, Florence, "There are no rubbish people. We are all people together," her words are greatly undercut by the ways in which they have been exposed to death (*Age* 47). Situating Coetzee's concern with the historical complicities that haunt the ethical abstractions of universal humanism against the complicities that emerge within Levinas's theorization of responsibility, I argue that we can, and should, retain the radical spirit of Levinas's ethical relation to the other as an experience of exile and self-doubt. We must, though, be mindful that its letter, and by extension, the language in which the subject responds to the neighbor, cannot transcend its histories. When Curren feebly insists to Mr. Thabane that, in order to speak of the horrors of apartheid, she must "find my own words . . . Otherwise, it is not the truth," she is unable to find her own words and ultimately concludes: "To speak of this . . . you would need the tongue of a god" (*Age* 99). Just as the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* yearns and fails to assume the role of the just orator when he witnesses prisoners being beaten before a crowd, Coetzee implies it is not a matter of speaking in a transcendent tongue but, following Derrida, recognizing that we need to instead practice a necessary and unavoidable economy of violence by considering the "irreducible complicity, despite all of the philosopher's rhetorical efforts . . . between historical languages and philosophical language" ("Violence and Metaphysics" 113). Elucidating the contradictions that both govern and fragment Curren's narrative, Coetzee invites us to consider how Levinas's concept of responsibility as "putting the self into question" might also be more expansively thought of as questioning how the histories of biopolitical violence have shaped that self and the response she gives to the apartheid neighbor.

III. 'Fine Souls' and Abject Bodies: Revising the White, Redemptive Mother

Framed by Elizabeth Curren‟s maternal address to her daughter, *Age of Iron* is from its inception an impossible confession and an anxious narrative that shifts between clinging to its narratological tropes and acknowledging them as, in Coetzee's phraseology, "paltry defenses." Refusing to rely on her expatriated daughter to care for her as she succumbs to the terminal stages of cancer, Curren writes her daughter a letter, "all she will accept, coming from this country" (*Age* 31). Her letter, as Derek Attridge observes, is defined by its implausibility; it adheres to few of the conventions of epistolary fiction and it includes that which cannot be narrated, the event of her death.[55] Even the receipt of the letter by her daughter remains an unanswered question; Curren entrusts the care of her letter (only after the event of her death) to Mr. Vercueil whom she meets the day she receives her terminal diagnosis.

It is through this epistolary structure, though, that Curren tries to author and tie herself to a maternal, narrative "I." The very modality of her address is predicated on the discursive gestation of her daughter. Writing to her daughter, she explains: "To whom this writing then? The answer: to you but not to you; to you in me" (*Age* 6). The "you in me" to whom Curren addresses her words shifts throughout the novel from the memory of her daughter as a young girl to an imagined, admonitory voice that forces her to question how her empathetic inclinations are culturally choreographed. Conjuring the image of her daughter as a warm-bodied child, Curren is able to align the acts of writing and bearing witness with the benevolent and naturalized acts of maternity. As she begins her account, Curren promises her daughter that her letter will only

[55] In Derek Attridge's "Trusting the Other: *Age of Iron*" he observes that "we are given little in the way of realistic reinforcement that might enable us to imagine the words appearing on paper at the end of a pen" (91). David Attridge, "Trusting the Other: *Age of Iron*." *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. 91-112, p. 91.

contain "Home truths, a mother's truth: from now to the end that is all you will hear from me," and she conflates the act of writing to her daughter with breast-feeding by describing her letter as "words out of my body, drops of myself, for her to unpack in her own time" (*Age* 5-9). Extending this analogy to her relationship with Mr. Vercueil, Curren rhetorically asks, "Why do I give this man food? . . . For the same reason I gave you my breast. To be full enough to give and to give from one's fullness: what deeper urge is there? Out of their withered bodies even the old try to squeeze one last drop. A stubborn will to give, to nourish" (*Age* 7-8).

Elizabeth Curren's "stubborn will to give, to nourish," has been alternately read as an echo of Levinas's theorization of responsibility as a substitution of the subject for the other and as a suspect construction of "the maternal as a site of transcendence," but these readings fail to note how the maternal discourse that Curren employs is marked by its *inability* to transcend the violence of apartheid and its residual history of colonization.[56] The analogy that Curren draws between breast-feeding and charity and the leitmotif of the mother-child relation that dominates much of her narrative recall nineteenth century tropes of the white, compassionate, colonial mother. This trope, as Anne McClintock has argued, reifies a white mother/black mammy binary that positions the white colonial mother as a source of emotional nourishment and guidance while depicting the black, colonized mother as merely a source of maternal labor.[57] Coetzee

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[56] In Michael Marais's "'Little Enough, Less than Little: Nothing': Ethics, Engagement, and Change in J.M. Coetzee's Fiction," he argues that "Mrs. Curren's relationship with her daughter implies that the novel is structured as the writer's generous substitution of himself for the reader-as-Other" (169). Gilbert Yeoh, in "Love and Indifference in *Age of Iron*," challenges this view and argues that "Her pervasive rhetoric of children infantilizes the other characters, sentimentally constructing them as needy persons obligated to her largesse" (123). I argue that Marais's reading fails to interrogate the "generosity" of such substitutions, while, on the other hand, Yeoh's reading fails to attend to the moments in the text when Elizabeth Curren is critical of her own rhetoric.

[57] In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock argues that in the nineteenth century, white children must disavow the black servants and nurses who reared them and instead identify with the white mother. McClintock specifically examines the black servants and white mothers in Olive Schreiner's work and observes, "The white mother . . . can redeem African childhood but only at the expense of black motherhood." Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 273.

recalls this historically specific trope only to revise it. Curren's adoption of a maternal voice is coupled with her (mis)reading of her servant, Florence, a mother whose children are targeted by apartheid police. In Curren's descriptions of her, Florence is a condemning figure rather than an affectively attentive mother. Repeatedly referring to her as "the Judge," Curren thinks of Florence as an allegorized figure of justice who could evaluate her acts of atonement but only acknowledges her motherhood in order to characterize it as emotionally hardened. Even after Florence's son, Bheki, is murdered by apartheid police, Curren does not imagine Florence's interiority as a mother.

Her inability to incorporate Florence into her maternal and humanist framework reveals how her schema is determined by her comparatively sheltered position in the geopolitical landscape of South Africa. Curren herself implicitly acknowledges this when she tries to think beyond the borders of her protected enclave in Capetown and imaginatively recreate Florence's family life in Brackenfell. Constructing a very detailed account of Florence's weekend, Curren reflects: "While I was driving back to this empty house, William took Florence and the children to the living quarters. He washed; she cooked a supper of chicken and rice on the paraffin stove, then fed the baby. . . . All of this happened. All of this must have happened . . . Almost it is possible to say: This is how life should be" (*Age* 43). Curren's imagining of Florence's domestic routines approaches a naïve reading of Florence's life in the apartheid slums as "how life should be," yet her increasingly hesitant diction disrupts the scene she creates, signaling that Florence's life and experiences far exceed the authorial scope of her knowledge. The qualifier "almost it is possible" reveals her recognition of how the governing regimes of police violence and censorship determine and police the divide between Capetown, carefully presented to the white middle classes as "a land of smiling neighbors," and the impoverished, black townships of

Brackenfell and Guguletu. As Rita Barnard has extensively shown, these townships were designed to facilitate police surveillance and quarantine residents. Writing of the townships, she notes, "The broad streets permitted access to armored vehicles (they were wide enough to allow a Saracen tank to make turn); buffer zones and limited road access allowed the townships to be sealed off from the citizens in times of unrest; and the orderly repetition of identical houses on a geometric grid facilitated surveillance by police and informs" (Barnard 7). Stumbling over her own suspicion that Florence's home life may be far removed from the domestic idyll she imagines, her account of Florence's weekend is punctuated by a return to what she does directly witness: the slaughter of chickens and the spatial economies of apartheid that exert violence on black South African families, producing what she describes as a "universe of labor . . . killing the seconds as they emerged, counting one's life away" (*Age* 44).

Oscillating between a longing to cling to the pronouncedly middle class assumptions that inform her maternal framework and an awareness that the social norms by which she navigates are not applicable to the apartheid realities she cannot fully perceive, Curren repeatedly misreads and then doubts her interpretation of what she witnesses. After asking Florence if she approves of the destructive actions of her son's generation, to which Florence responds, "'I cannot tell these children what to do . . . It is all changed today. There are no mothers and fathers'" (*Age* 39), Curren challenges what she views as a dangerous abnegation of parental responsibility:

> Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers. The burnings and the killings one hears of, the shocking callousness . . . whose fault is it in the end? Surely the blame must fall on parents who say 'Go, do as you wish, you are own master now, I give up authority over you.' . . . Surely he will turn away in

> confusion, thinking to himself, 'I have no mother now, I have no father: then let my mother be death, let my father be death.' (*Age* 49)

Curren pathologizes the black activists and fails to consider how the continuing history of police state violence has traumatized black, South African families. Instead, she attributes the political struggles of the anti-apartheid revolutionaries to parental neglect. Eliding the trauma of the Soweto rebellion of 1976, in which apartheid police killed 575 protestors, many of whom were schoolchildren,[58] Curren refuses to see that, as Florence tells Curren, the Afrikaners and the English-speaking white, middle-class, too, are responsible for producing a generation of iron-willed young activists: "'It is the whites who made them so cruel!'" (*Age* 49). Psychically and physically brutalized by apartheid rule, South African children are already socially conceived as "children of death," whose lives may be killed in order to preserve the dominant order of white rule in the apartheid state. Both Bheki and John, Bheki's friend and comrade, seek refuge in her house in Capetown before they are attacked and later shot by apartheid police.

Curren returns to her conversation with Florence and questions the validity of her bourgeois norms and maternal framework. Reflecting on Florence's response, Curren tries to locate herself in light of Florence's different reading of the anti-apartheid revolutionaries: "And I? Where is my heart in all of this? My only child is thousands of miles away, safe; soon I will be smoke and ash; so what is it to me that a time has come when childhood is despised?" (*Age* 50). The shift in her narration is telling; Curren moves from her authorial self to a sentimentalized and corporeal construct, "Where is my heart?", and falls briefly on the image of her own

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[58] Susan VanZanten Gallagher recounts, "Official figures list 575 dead and 2,389 wounded in riots during the sixteen months of protest; most of the victims were schoolchildren." Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991, p. 2.

daughter as a child who is safely divorced from the political and police violence to which Florence's children are subjected. But rather than rest upon this image, Curren considers how the "time in which childhood is despised" is historically determined. Echoing Florence's earlier and more direct reading of her son's generation, "'It is the whites would have made them so cruel!'" Curren admits: "What, after all, gave birth to the age of iron but the age of granite? Did we not have Voortrekkers . . . grim-faced, tight-lipped Afrikaner children . . . saluting their flag, vowing to die for their fatherland?" (*Age* 50-51). Departing from her earlier attempts to divorce her "heart" from these histories and take refuge in the image of her daughter, Coetzee indicates through Curren's sudden adoption of an ambiguous "we" ("we" who witnessed the Voortrekkers but who were not of them; "we" who, in witnessing and being formed by the age of granite, are complicit) that she cannot separate herself from the violence that surrounds her. While her reflections are immediately punctuated by a return to the image of her daughter, "How fortunate you are to have put all this behind you!" her abrupt address enunciates her own imbrication; her daughter may have put "all this" behind her, but she cannot (*Age* 51).

Notably, Curren's repeated and defensive turns to her daughter and her daughter's image do not stabilize her increasingly questioned identity. Anticipating his later novels, *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) and *Disgrace* (1997), in which the politics of the father are questioned and critiqued by the succeeding and more radical generation, in *Age of Iron*, Coetzee complicates Curren's ostensibly sentimental address of her daughter by underlining geographical and political divides that separate them. Like Florence's son, Bheki, Curren's daughter is also a "child of iron," who, in her radical opposition to apartheid, has repudiated her mother country of South Africa and has also implicitly rejected her mother. "'She is not an exile,'" Curren informs Mr. Vercueil, "'I am the exile'" (*Age* 76). Indeed, Curren's decision to shield her daughter from

her death is partly determined by her daughter's refusal to return to what she regards as the diseased body politic of South Africa. Curren recalls her daughter telling her, "'Do not call me back, Mother,' you said, 'because I will not come back'" (*Age* 139). Her daughter's rejection of apartheid South Africa is later echoed when Curren tells Mr. Vercueil of her daughter's relationship to the country:

> She says, 'I was born in Africa, in South Africa.' I have heard her use that phrase in conversation. It sounds to me like the first half of a sentence. There ought to be a second half, but it never comes. So it hangs in the air like a lost twin. 'I was born in South Africa and will never see it again.' 'I was born in South Africa and will one day return.' Which is the lost twin? (*Age* 75-76)

The daughter's rejection of her (mother) country of South Africa and her implicit rejection of her mother point us to the fragility of Curren's maternal identity. Her narrative is predicated on a maternal address that will not be answered; the letter functions as both a confession and, as Thangam Ravindranathan remarks, an act of mourning the loss of her daughter and her own impending death.[59] Coetzee deploys the historically fraught figure of the colonial, white mother, only to complicate it. Through the allegorization of her cancer as the disease of apartheid, Curren's maternal body, and by extension, her maternal, narrative "I," is tied to the body politic of the (mother) country that her daughter repudiates.[60] Stemming from her maternal breast,

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[59] Thangam Ravindranathan reads Elizabeth Curren"s letter as a melancholic text in which "her mourning of the loss of her child finds itself variously conflated through the novel with an anticipatory grief over her death" (397). Thangam Ravindranathan, "Amor Matris: Language and Loss in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *Safundi*. 8.4 (October 2007): 395-411, p. 397.

[60] Fiona Probyn has written on the allegorization of Elizabeth Curren's cancer. In her analysis, she reads Curren's cancer as a metaphor that problematizes the racial boundaries and the binary between the self and the other. Fiona Probyn, "Cancerous Bodies and Apartheid in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *Critical Essays on J.M. Coetzee*. Ed. Sue Kossew. New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1998. 214- 225.

Curren's cancer is configured as both an abject gestation of "the second [child], the afterbirth, the unwanted," and the manifestation of her shame of living under apartheid rule (83). Like South Africa, Curren's dying body is the shameful thing that can be written about but not exposed to her daughter's gaze.

This conflation between Curren's cancer-ridden body and South African apartheid invites the accusation that Coetzee is revising the trope of the white, colonial mother at the expense of maternity itself by forming a dubious analogy between abjected, white mother and the act of bearing witness to South African crimes. To be sure, Curren's repeated associations of the horrors of apartheid violence with her afflicted body lend themselves to such a reading. After viewing Bheki's murdered corpse lying in the rain, Curren yearns to physically confront the police officers patrolling the roads. As she faces the police, Curren's fingers fumble at the top buttons of her dress where the scars of her mastectomy are concealed and she reflects that she longs to "bring out a scar, a hurt to force it upon them, to make them see it with their own eyes: a scar, any scar, the scar of all this suffering . . . my scar" (*Age* 106).

Such passages lend credence to the argument launched by several feminist critics that Coetzee's work problematically inscribes the scars of apartheid suffering onto the white, female body.[61] In both *Disgrace* and *Age of Iron*, these scars are more particularly inscribed upon the white, maternal body. Lucy Lurie and Elizabeth Curren bear witness to the sins of the nation through their abject maternity. In *Disgrace*, Lucy Lurie is raped; refuses to report the crime,

[61] In "Sorry, Sorrier, Sorriest," Elleke Boehmer argues that atonement and contrition are problematically gendered in *Disgrace*: "The novel moves through its graduated chains of association of contrition and of scapegoat (imposed sacrifice, suffering, purgation), to attribute both the role of carrier and the state of sorriness directly to her [Lucy]. . . . She physically, if not verbally, accepts the burden of accountability for wrongs past" (144). Elleke Boehmer, "Sorry, Sorrier, Sorriest: The Gendering of Contrition in J.M. Coetzee‟s *Disgrace*." *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*. Ed. Jane Poyner. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2006. 135-147, p. 144.

realizing that her story cannot be told “in this place, at this time,” (*Disgrace* 112); and her subjectivity as a queer subject is overwritten by the heteronormative relationship she enters into with Petrus. As Meg Samuelson has argued, Lucy chooses not to speak of her rape in part because she seeks to “evade the inscription of her as a white woman within a racialised patriarchy” (148); she refuses to have her experience translated into narrative of the aberrant, black man violating the body of the white, colonial woman. While I share the same objections to how Lucy’s refusal is articulated, I would argue that Coetzee’s novel raises questions about what can be said “in this place, at this time.”[62]Along these same lines, in *Age of Iron* Coetzee engages the figure of the white, redemptive colonial mother not to create a dubious analogy between maternal bearing and bearing witness, but to show that such metaphors carry residual traces of histories of colonization and apartheid. Coetzee’s suspicion of such metaphors anticipates his more explicit repudiation of them in *Disgrace* when Lucy tells David that her decision to refrain from reporting the rape cannot be understood through the concepts of “guilt and salvation” (*Disgrace* 112). Lucy’s adamant rejection of David Lurie’s paradigm of “guilt and salvation” relies on the same logic that determines her decision not to report the crime to the police: she does not want the experience of her suffering, inextricably tied to the compounded histories of colonization and apartheid, incorporated into the narrative that would reify the cultural politics of those histories.

[62] In Georgina Horrell’s essay, “Postcolonial *Disgrace*: (White) Women and (White) Guilt in the ‘New’ South Africa,” she notes that David Lurie initially reads Lucy’s relationship to the land as a happy revision of the white settlers’s relationship to the land: “Lucy is described in terms that initially inscribe her as a link to the colonial past of Africa . . . An idyllic, pastoral picture is what Lurie paints of his ‘throwback’ daughter: a new kind of settler, repeating and yet rewriting ‘history.’” Georgia Hornell, “Postcolonial *Disgrace*: (White) Women and (White) Guilt in the ‘New’ South Africa,” *Bodies and Voices: the Force-field of Representation and Discourse in Colonial and Post-colonial Studies*. Eds. Mereta Falck, Eva Rask Knudsen, Martin Leer, and Bruce Clunies. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 17-31, p. 21.

Lucy's refusal to reduce her experience to a story in which the white subject obtains redemption through suffering allows us to better read what Curren acknowledges to be her failed attempts to organize her experiences into a coherent narrative of shame and redemption. Coetzee intimates that the constructs of guilt and salvation, or, in Curren's narration, shame and maternity, are deeply suspect when they organize the deeply incoherent and disorienting experience of witnessing the crimes of apartheid into a cogent and historically determined story that leaves a coherent, white subject at its center. As Curren assembles a concatenation of failed analogies, in which she links her maternity to cancer, cancer to shame, and, dubiously, her feelings of shame to an honorable self, Coetzee reveals that the metaphor of maternity as responsibility, which works to tether the ethical relation to the maternal body, too easily lends itself to the uncritical abstractions of universal humanism.

The alignment of maternity with responsibility uncannily recalls Levinas's thematization of responsibility as maternity. In *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence,* Levinas asserts that responsibility *is* maternity; responsibility is an exposure to and a painful gestation of the other:

> It is being torn up from oneself, being less than nothing, a rejection into the negative, behind nothingness; it is maternity, gestation of the other in the same. . . . In maternity what signifies a responsibility for others, to the point of substitution for others. . . Maternity, which is bearing par excellence, bears even responsibility for the persecuting by the persecutor. (*Otherwise* 75)

Levinas's imagining of maternity as responsibility is a specific reference to a biblical appropriation of maternity that occurs in the Book of Numbers, in which Moses asks God why

he must bear those others whom he has "'neither conceived nor given birth to.'"[63] His theorization of maternity as responsibility, then, appropriates the maternal to posit a corporeal ethics that would require one to bear those to whom one does not have a naturalized or familial relation. In doing so, he conceives of responsibility as an abject maternity---bearing par excellence---which is then elevated through a discourse of ethics and the experience of suffering. A dual appropriation is at work here. Levinas's discussion of responsibility-as-maternity is certainly in keeping with his formulation of subjectivity as an exposure to the suffering of the other (the other calls to me from her destitution), however, the trajectory of his thinking dangerously implies that the suffering of the other, and, most importantly, the difference of the other whom the subject has "neither conceived nor given birth to" is translated into a familial register through maternal bearing. Although he states that responsibility as maternal bearing maintains the difference of the other as "the other in the same," his diction suggests that the difference of other is incorporated *into* the maternal body just as the suffering of the other is appropriated as maternal suffering. Identifying maternal bearing as the ultimate form of suffering for the other, Levinas reflects: "Is not the restlessness of someone persecuted but a modification of maternity, the groaning of wounded entrails by those it will bear or has borne?" (*Otherwise* 75). As Levinas uncritically installs maternity as the ultimate suffering, the suffering of the other who is being maternally borne by the subject disappears in this passage; his macabre

[63] See Lisa Guenther's "'Like a Maternal Body': Emmanuel Levinas and the Motherhood of Moses." Guenther reads Levinas's reference to the Book of Numbers as an indication that Levinas is not installing a naturalized, maternal body that is made to bear the suffering of responsibility, but rather that, through his appropriation of maternity, he imagines a maternity-as-responsibility that might be experienced by men as well as women. I do not adopt such an optimistic view of his use of maternity. Lisa Guenther, "'Like a Maternal Body': Emmanuel Levinas and the Motherhood of Moses," *Hypatia* 21.1 (Winter 2006): 119-136.

phrasing focuses exclusively on the suffering of the subject who assumes both the scars of the other and, in Curren's words, responsibility for the *affliction* of the scars of "all this suffering."

The problems that arise from Levinas's configuration of maternity and responsibility speak to Coetzee's concerns about encapsulating the suffering of others into metaphors or narratives that would allow the white subject to assume some imaginative mastery over the suffering of others. Significantly, the biblical verse that Levinas cites in *Otherwise Than Being* is echoed in *Age of Iron*. After Bheki and John are hit by a police van, Curren tends to John's gaping wounds and, addressing her daughter, reflects that his blood is indicative of the blood that is "one . . . a pool of life dispersed among us in separate existences, but belonging by nature together" (*Age* 63). Such corporeal metaphors allow Curren to aestheticize the experience of gazing at John's wounded body and to read John's wounded body in a maternal and corporeal register. Curren's maternal framework is shaken when she has a less sentimental image of herself as "a crone crouched over a boy, her hands sticky with his blood" (*Age* 64). Later, she reprimands Florence for leaving her to care for John, asking, "'*Why must I be the one to take care of him? He is nothing to me*'" (*Age* 65, emphasis mine). Turning from her humanist ideals, which are both naturalized in a maternal register and addressed to the familial image of her daughter, to an unsentimental image of herself as an elderly woman with blood on her hands, Curren defensively clings to the boundaries between the familial and the strange which have already been breached. Hearing the shrill tenor of her question, she rhetorically asks, "I sounded querulous, certainly, but for once was I not in the right?" (*Age* 65). The abrupt shifts between Curren's universalizing and decidedly naturalized metaphors and her attempts to police the boundaries between herself and John reveal the instability of the maternal framework that provides the scaffolding to her narrative. Unable to sustain an aestheticized image both of John's

suffering body and of herself as mother, Curren is overwhelmed by the experience of witnessing suffering that she can neither alleviate nor make sense of. As the boundaries between those whom she imagines she possesses through a familial relation and those whose suffering calls her maternal self into question become increasingly tenuous, the self that Curren tries to author is overwhelmed and unraveled.

IV. Ethical Instabilities, or, Failures of the Maternal "I"

Tellingly, Curren's shifting sense of disorientation is registered through her awareness of the insufficiency of her words and metaphors. Describing her cancer to John as the manifestation of the shame she has endured from living under apartheid, Curren acknowledges the insufficiency of her metaphors:

> I have cancer. I have cancer from the accumulation of shame I have endured in my life. This is how cancer comes about: from self-loathing the body turns malignant and begins to eat away at itself. You say, 'What is the point of consuming yourself in shame and loathing? I don't want to listen to the story of how you feel, it is just another story, why don't you do something?' And when you say that, I say, 'Yes.' I say, 'Yes.' I say, 'Yes.' (*Age* 145)

Mapping her shame onto her body, or, more pointedly, gestating that shame, Curren concedes that her corporeal metaphors are a poor substitute for the political action that John and his fellow revolutionaries demand. Her narrative, she admits, is still "just another story" for them.

Yet, her insistent affirmation of the "I" alerts us to Coetzee's concern with the easy slippage between responsibility, shame, and self-affirmation. Slavoj Žižek's cynical reading of Levinas's asymmetrical modality of responsibility is useful here. In "Neighbors and Other

Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence," Žižek questions whether the asymmetrical nature of Levinas's theorization of responsibility (I am responsible to my neighbor but my neighbor is not responsible to me) might not install a privileged, responsible subject. Žižek asks: "In other words, do we not get here . . . a necessary passage from simple and developed form (I am responsible for you, for all of you) to the general equivalent and then its reversal (I am the privileged site of responsibility for all of you, which is why you are all effectively responsible to me.)?" (Žižek 155). At first glance, Žižek's analysis may be vulgar, but his suspicions of the privileging of the responsible subject correspond with Coetzee's own misgivings. Exhibiting similar reservations about the easy passage from responsibility to the other to the establishment of a privileged, responsible subject, Coetzee shows how the abstraction of shame evokes a Judeo-Christian narrative in which the admission of guilt leads to salvation, and ultimately, an honorable self who obtains redemption through the admission of guilt.

Curren relies on the concepts of guilt and salvation, particularly during her discussions of shame and her imagined acts of atonement but she ultimately rejects them as deeply flawed. After apartheid police invade her home and kill John, who briefly seeks refuge with Curren, Curren offers a contradictory confession to Mr. Vercueil, stating:

> Where did the mistake come in? It had something to do with honor, with the notion I clung to . . . *from my education, from my reading*, that in his soul the honorable man can suffer no harm. I strove always for honor, for a private honor, using shame as my guide. As long as I was ashamed I knew I had not wandered into dishonor. That was the use of shame: as a touchstone, something that would always be there, something you could come back to like a blind person, to tell you where you were. . . . Shame never became a shameful pleasure; it never ceased to

> gnaw me. I was not proud of it, I was ashamed of it. My shame, my own. (*Age* 165, emphasis mine).

Echoing her earlier longing to "bear the scar of all this suffering . . . my scar," Curren clings to her feelings of shame in order to organize her experiences into a coherent narrative of redemption. Through her expression of shame, Curren attempts to recuperate her identity as one who "has not wandered into dishonor." Here, her attempt to construct a redeemed self departs from her dominant tropes of maternity and instead employs an Enlightenment trope, inflected with Judeo-Christian overtones, of the disembodied kernel of the soul. Curren tries to reproduce her honorable soul without grappling with how those very ideals of the Enlightenment have propagated a racialized notion of the human that, historically, determined which bodies had souls and psyches that would "suffer no harm." Evoking the Judeo-Christian paradigm of guilt and salvation, Coetzee intimates that such narratives and abstractions dangerously reduce the suffering of black apartheid subjects to the source of both the white subject's shame and redemption.

Indeed, her confession courts an absolution that she never receives. Mr. Vercueil falls asleep or feigns sleeping as Curren talks to him, causing her to wonder, "Had he heard about goodness and heroism? About honor and shame? Is a true confession still true if it is not heard? Do you hear me, or have I put you to sleep too?" (*Age* 166). As she wonders about the validity of her confession, her account of herself is reduced to a series of ineffectual moral signifiers, "goodness and heroism" and "honor and shame," that are hollowed by their very repetition. The enunciation of "shame" as the final abstraction points to the inversion of Curren's own formulation; when offering her confession to Mr. Vercueil, Curren establishes a signifying chain, linking shame to honor to goodness and finally to heroism, but when she summarizes it, the

paired words appear in reversed order, moving from "goodness and heroism" to "honor and shame." Dislodged from its rhetorical moorings, the final pairing of "honor and shame" is left as a naked contradiction; the two terms annul one another, leaving Curren with a disconcerting silence.

Revealing the repeated failures of her universalizing abstractions, Coetzee creates a widening rift between the authorial self Curren endeavors to create through the writing of her letter and the self that, in ways Curren cannot fully account for, has been authored by the histories of South Africa. After viewing Bheki's murdered body, she reflects that the self that she has experienced in her life is a plastic copy of an embodied, and vulnerable, human being, "From the cradle a theft took place: a child was taken and a doll left in its place to be nursed and reared, and that doll is what I call I" (*Age* 109). No longer able to sustain the maternal "I" whose authority is rooted in her body and her familial relation to her daughter, Curren turns back to herself only to reflect that her self is a simulacrum. Rather than being ideologically divorced from a violently policed and racially circumscribed definition of the human, Curren's self is the uncanny child of colonization. Most importantly, the living doll that is Curren's authorial "I" recalls a childhood that the mother cannot redeem. Trying to locate herself in a familial relation that would precede and therefore nullify her State-issued doll-self, Curren's narrative reaches for a tenuous, matriarchal genealogy. As she confesses to her daughter, "This is the reason—I bring it forward now for you to see—why I cling so tightly to the memory of my mother. For if she did not give me life, no one did. I cling not just to the memory of her but to her herself, to her body, to my birth from her body into the world" (*Age* 110). Constructing an untenable binary between a primordial, maternal relation and the histories of colonialism and apartheid that have given birth to her "doll" self, Curren's narrative reaches for a self formed by a pure, familial relation,

but she cannot invent one. She is estranged from her narrative and must account for that which she cannot fully calculate—her reception of her apartheid neighbors who call her into question.

V. Betraying the Face: Camera Obscura and the Neighbor

Coetzee stages Curren's shifting recognition of these frames through her engagement of photographs. Photographs appear at the moments when Curren's epistolary address and maternal self are particularly vulnerable; when Curren asks Mr. Vercueil to mail her letter to her daughter, thus ensuring that her narrative of herself will be futurally cosigned by a reader, she first presents him with photographs of her unnamed daughter and grandchildren. Later, after seeing young, Bheki's murdered body, Curren is overwhelmed by the impossibility of fully responding to his murder and accounting for herself in the face of such a crime; she reviews photographs of her own, sheltered childhood and reads them for the black, South African subjects that are occluded by their frame. Finally, before her death, photographs are again evoked when Curren considers Mr. Vercueil's face and the surprisingly estranged images of her daughter and grandchildren. Reaching for a medium that, as Roland Barthes famously argued, promises a trace of the desired Real---leading "the corpus I need back to the body I see," Curren attempts to repair the ruptures in her narrative with images only to realize that the photographs cannot authenticate the stable and definitive account that she attempts to construct.[64]

Recalling Barthes's discussion in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* of the punctum or wound of the photograph, "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me)" (27) Curren reads and conjures images that puncture her narrative as she recognizes both the mediated

[64] In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes reflects, "In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photography always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular . . . in short, what Lacan calls the *Tuché*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 4.

production of the photographs and her mediated reception of them. By reaching for images as both facsimiles of reality and a trace of humanity divorced from the crimes of apartheid (tellingly, Curren looks at photographs of herself as an innocent child), Curren is forced to consider how her subjectivity has always been implicated in the visual economies of apartheid that demarcate the human from the subhuman along racial lines.

Here, I want to return to Levinas's suspicion of representation and his assertion that the face of the other---both a citation of the infinite and the cry of human vulnerability---is betrayed by any depiction of it.[65] In *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas warns us that "The thematization of the face undoes the face," subjecting it to a "mathematical functionalism, which . . . suppl[ies] the norms of intelligibility" (*Otherwise* 94-95). Yet, as I have argued, the "human" and even more pronouncedly, the face of human vulnerability, is inextricably tied to "norms of intelligibility" that Levinas dismisses. As I examine Curren's encounters with images, I want to consider how Coetzee and Butler use photographs to theorize the biopolitical "norms of intelligibility" that determine which faces can function as "traces" of human vulnerability, or, in Butler's parlance, precarity. In *Frames of War* Butler urges us to approach the "human" as "a value and a morphology that may be allocated and retracted, aggrandized, personified, degraded and disavowed . . . The term 'human' is constantly doubled, exposing the ideality and coercive character of the norm: some humans qualify as human; some humans do not" (76). The use of photographs in *Age of Iron* shows how the personification and disavowal of the human that occurs within the apartheid State.

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[65] While Levinas defines ethics as "an optics" he insists that the encounter with the other is "a „vision" without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision" (*T.I.* 23). Later, in *Totality and Infini*ty, Levinas remarks: "The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense, it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed" (194).

After seeing Bheki‟s murdered body, Curren returns to her house and looks at photographs from her childhood that, much like her narrative "I," are denaturalized and revealed to be produced by the overlapping histories of colonization and apartheid rule and their attendant social norms. Gazing at a picture of herself as a child, she reflects:

> We were photographed, that day, in a garden. . . . Who clipped the hollyhocks? Who laid the melon seeds in their warm, moist bed? Was it my grandfather who got up at four in the icy morning to open the sluice and lead water into the garden? If not he, then whose was the garden rightfully? Who are the ghosts and who the presences? . . . Dies irae, dies illa when the absent shall be present and the present absent. No longer does the picture show who were in the garden frame that day, but who were not there. (*Age*, 111)

Although her questions retain the pastoral tonality of the image, they address the histories of colonization and apartheid that have violently carved out the pastoral space depicted in the interior of the photograph. As Curren's reading of the photograph shifts from the manicured interior of the garden to the more sinister and policed geopolitical frame of South Africa, Curren moves from the familial and domestic space to the ghostly absences that haunt the photograph. Viewing the photograph as "a new kind of negative in which we begin to see what used to lie outside the frame, occulted," she reads the photograph for those who are violently excluded from its interior (*Age* 112).

Curren's attempt to read for the subjects who have been excluded from the interior of the image is later echoed in her reflections on Mr. Vercueil's photograph. Regretting that she cannot send her daughter Mr. Vercueil's picture, she resigns herself to this loss by stating, "He is not the kind of person who photographs well. I have seen the picture on his identity card. He looks like a

prisoner torn from the darkness of a cell, thrust into a room full of blinding lights, shoved against a wall. . . His image raped from him, taken by force" (*Age* 193). Initially naturalizing and eliding her own gaze, she attributes the violence of Mr. Vercueil's image to his identity, "He is not the kind of person who photographs well," but her reading shifts to an imagining of the violent conditions that produced his image. Her description of the prison cell is particularly apt as the prison that she imagines is one that, in 1986, was forcibly excluded from the public's visual landscape. In Coetzee's 1986 essay, "Into the Dark Chamber: The Writer and the South African State" he discusses the prohibition against photographing apartheid prisons, explaining, "The response of South Africa's legislators to what disturbs their white electorate is usually to order it out of sight. . . . If black townships are in flames, let cameras be banned from them" ("Dark Chamber" 361). While Curren's reading of Mr. Vercueil's photograph may be reliant on racist assumptions (we receive very little information about Mr. Vercueil's past), her association of police brutality and Mr. Vercueil's picture aptly identifies the production of both the image she imagines and her own vantage point as a white middle-class subject living in Capetown. As a black, homeless South African, Mr. Vercueil is constantly surveyed by the apartheid state; his movements are curtailed by its biopolitical zoning of life and he is constantly exposed to the threat of police violence. Like Nancy in Faulkner's "That Evening Sun," a secure, domestic space is not available to him.

Moreover, his life, to borrow from Butler, does not constitute a grievable life. His face, as depicted in his State-issued photograph, is the face of the subhuman subject who must be monitored and who may be tortured and killed in order to protect the body politic of the apartheid State. Curren's description of Mr. Vercueil's photograph and Coetzee's discussion of apartheid censorship resonate with Judith Butler's discussion of the irresponsibility of images in

Precarious Life. Encouraging us to look to the normative schemes that frame images purporting to capture human suffering, Butler notes that violent capabilities of the photograph reveal themselves in both the photograph's production of the less-than-human and its glaring omissions:

> Sometimes they produce images of the less than human, in the guise of the human, to show how the less than human disguises itself . . . But sometimes these normative schemes work precisely through providing no image, no name, no narrative, so that there never was a life, and there never was a death . . . radical effacement, so that there never was a human . . . and no murder has, therefore, ever taken place. (146-7)

Butler observes that these normative frames silence the cry of human vulnerability by reifying the visual economy of the human. Coetzee's representation of photographs---from the images of Curren's daughter to the identification card that Mr. Vercueil is required to carry in order to pass between zones---cites the caesura between the human and the inhuman occluded face. Mr. Vercueil is not simply "the kind of person who does not photograph well." Addressed and positioned as a biological threat, his face has been denied by the frame that captures him.

In the final movement of the novel, Coetzee returns to these images as Curren reconsiders her relation to Mr. Vercueil and to her daughter. Reflecting on her dependency upon him, she writes, "I have fallen and he has caught me. It is not he who fell under my care when he arrived, I now understand, nor I who fell under his: we fell under each other" (*Age* 196). Curren's reflection is then paired with a final and distorted image of her daughter, "I whispered your name. 'My daughter, my child,' I whispered into the darkness: but all that appeared to me was a photograph: a picture of you, not you" (*Age* 197). Reduced to an image of an unnamed child, the daughter, the interlocutor to whom Curren's narrative is addressed, is finally imagined as an

abstract and attenuated familial tie that fails to hold. No longer held by a familial relation, Curren is no longer anchored to a stable point. As Mr. Vercueil envelops Curren in a suffocating embrace that kills her, Coetzee would appear to suggest that the ethical relation is one in which there is "no warmth" of abstractions to be had. Yet, Mr. Vercueil's final embrace of Curren--- simultaneously an act of violent mercy and an act of witnessing Curren's death--- also points us towards the possibility of a reciprocal witnessing through a limited recognition of ourselves as bodies exposed to and dependent upon one another.

Coetzee does not install the body as a conceptual substitute for Levinas's humanism of the face; as I have shown, he carefully attends to how the vulnerability of bodies is differentially calculated along the biopolitical zoning of the human. The body, tied to and forming the subject who responds to the suffering of another, cannot alleviate or elide these complicities that haunt her response. In contrast to Levinas, Coetzee demonstrates that we can never transcend the realm of representation. Yet we can, as Butler and Coetzee intimate, think of responsibility as both the compromised answer one gives to the other and as an accountable appreciation of creaturely precarity. Butler cautions us that precarity is not an abstraction but rather, "designates that politically-induced condition in which certain populations . . . become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (*Frames* 25). In Butler's attempts to conceive of a Levinasian responsibility that is emphatically rooted in sociopolitical realities, she reflects ". . . the ontology of the body serves as a point of departure for such a rethinking of responsibility . . . because, in its surface and in its depth, the body is a social phenomenon: it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition" (*Frames* 33). Like Butler, Coetzee intimates that we can approach the precarity of the body, differentially recognized, as a relation of a responsiveness between subjects that would not elide the differences between them. For Coetzee, sensitive to the limitations of humanism

and the inability of an abstract ethics to alleviate those limitations, recognizing and witnessing one another's precarity---that continuing experience of being overwhelmed and undone by one another---constitutes a small point of resistance to the radical effacement of life.

Chapter Three: "'For years, I had known these scenes': Race in the Neoliberal Marketplace"

"since Turner's days I have learnt to count,/Weigh, measure, abstract, rationalise." David Dabydeen, *Turner*

"just swallow this wafer of state and be swallowed/open your heart to the god of gladstone dis-/raeli and Churchill must jesus bear this cross alone/devil on the deep blue sea just one more bon voyage/across the atlantic the pacific the world awaits you'd/not have thought death had unhomed so many." Evie Shockley, "london bridge" (2006)

Over-seer: "Thats your self youre looking at! Wonder #1 of my glass-bottomed boat. . . . I'm going to yell 'Land Ho!' in a month or so and all of this will have to stop. I'm going to yell 'Land Ho!' in a month or so and that will be the end of this." Suzan-Lori Parks, *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*

I. "Never Forget"/"Get Over It": Unhoming Race and Memory

Within the largely drowned archives of the transatlantic slave trade, the *Zong* endures as one of the few, distinguished case studies among the numerous ships that traveled the Middle Passage. In 1781 Captain Luke Collingwood, who had previously served as a surgeon and medical examiner aboard other slave-ships, jettisoned 133 enslaved Africans to what David Dabydeen, following innumerable Afro-Caribbean writers, has theorized as "the graveyard of the Atlantic." Valued at 30 pounds per body in the insurance contracts that underwrote the trade networks that bound Liverpool, Bristol, and London, to the West African slave ports of St. Thomas (where the *Zong* acquired its cargo) and Jamaica, their bodies were reduced to/redeemed for bare capital. This moment of reduction in which humans, rendered as mere units of flesh, were transacted as capital, has been seized upon as the most legible and deeply carved tile among, in Derek Walcott's phrasing, the lost mosaics "mantled by the benediction of a shark's shadow" that line the bed of the Atlantic.[66] Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), M. NourbeSe Philip's lyric novel *Zong!* (2011), and, to a lesser degree, Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984) and David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) locate the *Zong* as the indexical

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[66] Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History," *The Collected Poems, 1948-1984*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986). p. 364.

trauma of the Middle Passage. In Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: an American Lyric* (2014), she concludes her rumination on the institutional and quotidian acts of racism experienced by black subjects with an inclusion of JMW's portrait of the massacre, *Slave Ship: Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and the Dying, Typhon Coming On* (1840). In British director Amma Asante's biopic of Lord Mansfield's biracial niece, *Belle* (2014), the insurance fraud case is positioned as the central event that determines Britain's multicultural future. In sum, the *Zong* archive has been approached as containing, in Ian Baucom's words, "the truth event of modernity." Baucom's magistral *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005) argues that the its traumatic history and its status as a defining, transatlantic event reflects its paradoxical singularity and seriality: it was a singular event that was but one transaction among many violent transactions that went unremarked. As the case that propelled the British abolitionist movement, it served as the precursor to the twentieth-century human rights case. As a crime, Baucom thoughtfully explores, it was financed by the highly abstract, financial networks that continue to structure our contemporary epoch of neoliberal global capitalism.

I review what Baucom identifies as the defining paradox of the *Zong*---its dual status as both a rupturing event and a quotidian transaction in a network of racializing capitalisms that, in a mutated form, endure in our present---to introduce another paradox that marks the circulation of post-colonial and contemporary re-imaginings of transatlantic slavery: narratives that address the intergenerational traumas of slavery and racial violence enter a discursive field that fixes a date-stamp on the racializing capitalisms that they analyze. In this chapter, I examine two texts that appeared within a larger wave of late twentieth-century American neo-slave and post-colonial narratives of the black diaspora: David Dabydeen's poem on the *Zong* atrocity, *Turner* (1995/2002) and Suzan-Lori Parks's Obie-awarding winning play 1986-89 *Imperceptible*

Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom.[67] Both works trace and flesh out the imprimatur of the inherited scenes of slavery while sharply critiquing the domestication of its histories within the academic and public cultures of the U.S. and Britain.

To elaborate on their shared critiques of this domestication, I want to first map the temporal and historical markers signaled by the terms "post" and "neo." Throughout this project, I have examined trauma narratives of racializing capitalisms that have been canonized within the modern and neoliberal marketplaces. As I address in my introduction, many of the questions that I have explored regarding the guardianship of archives and the formation of public memory build upon Marianne Hirsch's work on Holocaust memory. Her definition of "post-memory" as the inheritance of images and narratives of traumas one did not directly experience and the ethico-political concerns she has raised about this inheritance overlaps and intersects with similar concerns raised by critical race and cultural studies theorists.[68] By placing her work in conversation with theorizations of neoliberalism (the underwriting economies of biopolitical governmentalities), I want to hone on the concerns of the appropriation of memory and the urgency of crafting narratives and archives that, as Jack Halberstam and Sarah Ahmed have respectively argued, angrily and willfully resist their co-opting.[69] Following the metabolization and, following that, ironization, of the insights and interventions made by memory and trauma studies in the 1980s-1990s, I advance the question of what it means to pay witness to inter-generational traumas when the act of "paying witness"—a phrase that increasingly draws attention to its inadequate executions—is frequently equated with historicizing racial violence. To

[67] I borrow this term from Ashraf H.A. Rushdy's landmark study, *Neo-slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999).
[68] See Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Post-memory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust,* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012).
[69] See Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure,* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), and more, recently, Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects,* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014).

reiterate, this is an elaboration of an enduring question. Cultural and memory studies theorists Sara Ahmed, Jenny Edkins, and E. Ann Kaplan, have long argued that the act of remembering to "never to forget" can advance a national narrative (or a quasi-cosmopolitan, American-inflected narrative) in which crimes of systemic violence and exploitation are safely located in a past that the now-reformed nation-state has overcome.[70]

I augment this observation by noting that the injunction to "remember never to forget" (what a national/nominally cosmopolitan "we" have already overcome) is often silently paired with the imperative to "get over it," particularly, and almost exclusively, when the euphemistic referent "it" refers to histories of colonialism and slavery. This silent imperative signals, David Theo Goldberg observes, how race and memory function within a neoliberal marketplace where "anthrax racisms" operate even as calls for the "conceptual . . . death of race" are sounded (Goldberg 33). These conceptual calls identify racial injustices as a largely anachronistic phenomena that no longer needs to be corrected by economic and state policy changes such as Affirmation Action that, as Abigail Fischer's lawyers argued, discriminates against qualified, white candidates, and, as some conservative judges have recently argued, the Civil Rights Voting Protection Act.

Put differently, "the conceptual call for the death of race" might be thought of "racism is dead; long live the market!" And an insidious contradiction is thus at work in the post-racial promised-land that our neoliberal age advertises: the global market responsible for the discursive production of race is now credited as the vehicle of its erasure. In this brave new neoliberal marketplace, histories of slavery and Jim Crow are repurposed to illuminate the

[70] See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), and E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: the Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, (Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2005).

virtues of our global market. Neoconservative representatives liken regulations of the financial industry with racial apartheid. A stunning example of this was furnished by Benjamin Shapiro, a conservative pundit partially bankrolled by the think-tank Freedom Center, who likened the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Affordable Health Care Act with the 1857 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* ruling.[71] Shapiro's statement is a repurposing of the 80s Reagan/Thatcher refrain: society does not exist---only the (neo) liberal and implicitly deracinated individual exists whose freedom is largely imagined as a freedom to navigate the market.

To be sure, Shapiro's analogy between regulating the health care market and the denial of citizenship to black subjects reads like a Fox News headline that pre-empts its own satirization---an admittedly too-convenient example of the valorization of the market and the appropriative use of traumatic histories. Yet, it has a less hyperbolic and unlikely corollary in the popularity of American neo-slave narratives and British post-colonial fiction in our neoliberal age. In Jodi Melamed's *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (2011), she alerts us to the relationship between multicultural literature produced from the 1980s through the post-9/11 era and the advancement of U.S.-led neoliberalism. A sleight of hand has occurred; the consumption of multicultural, anti-racist texts has often served, in book clubs and undergraduate University courses, as a substitute for a more engaged critique of "institutional power and privilege" (Melamed 92). These texts ease this substitution by being already aligned with the values of neoliberalism (free markets, property rights, etc.), and its recalibrated matrix of race, class, and gender. "Neoliberalism multiculturalism has created new privileged subjects,"

[71] On his Twitter Feed, Benjamin Shapiro wrote, "This is the greatest destruction of individual liberty since *Dred Scott*. This is the end of America as we know it." Shapiro, Benjamin (benshapiro), "This is the greatest destruction of individual liberty since *Dred Scott*. This is the end of America as we know it. No exaggeration," 28 June 2012 7:43am. Tweet.

she writes, "racializing the beneficiaries of neoliberalism as worthy multicultural citizens and racializing the losers as unworthy and excludable on the basis of monoculturalism, deviance, inflexibility, criminality, and other historico-cultural deficiencies" (xxi). Neoliberalism's "losers" then, are those who have not yet arrived at the "post" moment; they remain mired in an iteration of *their culture* that cannot be readily commodified *or their past traumas* (i.e. the feminist killjoy, the angry black/Latino subject, the Muslim terrorist, etc.).[72]

Melamed's concerns chime with those long expressed in postcolonial studies about the selective canonization of post-colonial literature that, in Gayatri Spivak's trenchant phrasing, "feeds the missionary impulse" and the ways in which a curriculum of multiculturalism worked in tandem with an aggressive policing of the racialized poor in England.[73] With the rise of 1980s neoliberalism under the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, the social contract was revised and retracted for large swaths of the working poor.[74] In Britain as in the U.S., this revision was brokered by the defining characteristics of late-twentieth century neoliberal policy: the auctioning off of government industries to the private sector, the dismantling of labor unions, and the racialization of immigrant communities and the working poor as a parasitic population that would overwhelm and drain the nation of its resources. This latter fear shaped the British

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[72] Sara Ahmed, in both *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) and *Willful Subjects* (2014), has made a similar argument. In *The Promise of Happiness*, she takes up the figures of the feminist killjoy and the angry black woman as subjects who interrupt the normative paths of happiness and the hegemonic communities that they engender. She writes, "The feminist killjoy 'spoils' the happiness of others; she is a spoilsport because she refuses to convene, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness." Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), p. 72.

[73] Spivak writes of the dangers of, "taking the novels as direct expressions of cultural consciousness, with no sense of the neocolonial traffic in cultural identity and the slow and agonizing triumph of the migrant voice, would simply see them as repositories of postcolonial selves, postcolonialism, and even postcolonial resistance." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "How to Read a 'Culturally Different' Book," *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012), 73-96, p. 74.

[74]As both Loïc Wacquant and Lauren Berlant have remarked, in the 1970s, the American profile of the poor shifted from being "white and rural," to "black and urban". See Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), and Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2008).

Nationality Act of 1981, which restricted citizenship to those whose parents were born in the U.K., effectively conceptualizing citizenship as a racial inheritance. Its passage signaled what Salman Rushdie, in his widely anthologized 1982 essay, famously dubbed, “The New Empire” and was partially framed as a response to the need to retract the formerly capacious borders of the old Empire. In Rushdie’s response to the Nationality Act, he cites the conservative defense that the Nationality Act was not racist (“Britain is not South Africa . . . nor is it Nazi Germany,”) and notes that multiculturalism (in the classroom and governmental programs) is often pointed to as a corroborative evidence of this fact:

> A whole declension of patronizing language can be found in the language in which inter-racial relations in Britain have been described. After 'integration' came the concept of 'racial harmony'. Now once again, this sounded virtuous and desirable, but what it meant in practice was that blacks should be persuaded to live peaceably with whites, in spite of all the injustices done to them every day. . . . And now there’s a new catchword: multiculturalism. In our schools, this means little more than teaching the kids a few bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari, and so forth. In the police training programme, it means telling cadets that black people are so 'culturally different' that they can't help making trouble. (137)

Rushdie’s criticisms ironically forecast how the reception of his own work was later used to distinguish the good, secular, British Muslim from the bad, “fundamentalist” Muslim and how the pathologization of the racialized poor as “culturally different” still retains a purchase on the national discourse in both England and America (its more recent and popular iteration is “culture

of poverty”).[75] His remarks draw out, in broad, polemical lines that mirror those drawn by Melamed and Spivak, the alibi of the neoliberal nation, or New Empire: racism is an anachronism of nations with a biological understanding of race (Nazi Germany and South Africa) or a vestigial prejudice of the poorly educated (read: uncivilized) fringe groups. Globalizing and global capital does not see race. Within the marketplace, the classroom, and managerial sites of knowledge production, multiculturalism evidences the nation’s commitment to moving past race.

Dabydeen’s work, which found a foothold in British academic circles during the 1980s, repeatedly addresses the literary and academic marketplaces fostered by the New Empire in which post-colonial “peasantry is in vogue” (1). His 2002 edition of *Turner* ends with his 1988 poem, “Coolie Odyssey,” where the speaker mines the subaltern and diasporic histories of his native Guyana and later reflects:

> We mark your memory in songs
> Fleshed in the emptiness of folk
> Poems that scrape bowl and bone
> In English basements far from home,
> Or confess the lusts of beasts
> In rare conceits
> To congregations of the educated
> Sipping wine, attentive between courses---

[75] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: the John Hopkins UP, 1993).

See the applause fluttering from their fair hands

Like so many messy table napkins. (142-151)

In the performance that he envisions, the speaker situates himself within a generation post-colonial authors whose parents "hacked and ploughed and saved/To send [us] to faraway schools" (116-117) so that they might later provide "a display of suffering, or an archive of one's victimization" for predominantly white, academic audiences whose liberal pieties are reaffirmed through the act of listening.[76]

"Coolie Odyssey" is a familiar portrait of the geographical and temporal divides that exist between the post-colonial generation and the generation whose memories and stories they both preserve and sell. Casting his speaker as a complicit actor within this market, Dabydeen draws our attention to the question of which subjects can be incorporated into the progressive and linear timeline, alternately known as "multicultural," "post-racial" that Melamed, Spivak, and Rushdie criticize. As I will argue throughout this chapter, Dabydeen's *Turner* and Parks's *Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom* contest and disrupt the linear narrative of progress that inheres in the signifier of "post". In Dabydeen's poem, he responds J.M.W. Turner's 1840 depiction of the Zong atrocity *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and the Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* and indicts John Ruskin's celebration of Turner's work in his 1843 *Modern Painters I,* where, Dabydeen underlines in his prescriptive introduction, Ruskin relegated the subject of the painting to a footnote. Imagining the ships that continued to carry human cargo after the *Zong*'s passage, Dabydeen repeatedly stages the scene of a child being orphaned by a future ship. Parks's *Imperceptible* likewise engages the footnoted history of the transatlantic

[76] David Dabydeen, "Interview with Wolfgang Binder." *The Art of David Dabydeen*, Ed. Kevin Grant. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1997. 159-176. p. 172.

slave trade as one which positions black subjects as the exclusive bearers of the "dark chapters in our nation's history" that the rest of the country (imagined as white, nominally multicultural, emphatically middle-class) has advanced beyond. Her play moves between periods that have been hailed as harbingers of a post-racial future: the 1807 abolition of the British slave-trade, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, World War II, and the neoliberalism of the 1980s. Refusing this zoning of history, Parks draws the continuities between the Middle Passage and the reduction of black, urban populations to an infestation that occurred during the rise of the workfare/prison industrial complex of the 1980s which preceded the 1996 Clintonian dismantling of welfare.

As performative and ekphrastic texts, *Turner* and *Imperceptible* claim space, on the canvas and the stage, for the inherited "scenes" of slavery and colonialism. While my pairing of these texts draws upon the transnational nature of this inheritance, I do not wish to sideline the differences between the national literary marketplaces in which these texts first appeared. *Turner* is, Dabydeen's introduction states, a project of archival repair; it vividly recaptures what has been erased within British culture. Much like his study, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art* and his anthology, *Black Presence in English Literature* (both published in 1985), his poem contests a redacted national history in which black subjects only appeared in England with the 1948 arrival of *S.S. Windrush* and, following their disembarking, constituted a troublesome population to be repatriated (as advocated by Enoch Powell and the National Front) or corralled into ghettos. Moreover, as I earlier noted, Dabydeen's work appears within a larger wave of Afro-Caribbean literature whose voices and insights, Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace posits, were not metabolized within public memory until the 2000 Parekh

Report.[77] Parks, in contrast, is writing during the post-Soul, post-Civil Rights era, when American histories of slavery are not so thoroughly repressed but selectively recalled and strategically deployed. These differences between their national contexts, though, warrant rather than detract from the comparative dialogue that I create between them. Both works demand that we consider how and when subjugated archives emerge into public view.

II. "A great howl of pessimism": Between Mourning and History in Dabydeen's *Turner*

"The intent of this practice is not to give voice to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between two zones of death---social and corporeal death---and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance. . . . It is a history of unrecoverable past; it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history *written with and against the archive*" Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" (2008).[78]

Dabydeen's *Turner*, as numerous critics have observed, responds more to the unveiling and transatlantic reception of Turner's *Slave Ship* as a sublime seascape and a historical document of the success of the British abolitionist movement than the painting itself.[79] *Slave Ship* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy during the World Antislavery Convention of 1840, subsequently housed as a fetishized work in Ruskin's private collection for twenty eight years (as Ruskin famously stated, "I shall want no other"), later displayed at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art seven years after the Civil War, and finally acquired by the Boston's Museum of Fine Arts where it remains today.[80] For visual art theorists Marcus Wood

[77] In her introduction, Kowaleski Wallace notes that the Parekh Report addressed the question of what constituted British identity and, in its twenty-one chapters, distilled many of the insights from post-colonial artists and theorists. Representative of this collective, Stuart Hall contributed to the report. Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2006).

[78] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *small axe*. 26 (June 2008): 1-14. p. 12, emphasis mine.

[79] See Hillary Gravendyk, "Intertextual Absences: 'Turner' and Turner," *The Comparatist*, 35 (2011): 161-69. "In the absence of the painting, Ruskin's description of the work became authoritative. . . . In other words, the painting circulated widely for years not as image but as ekphrasis" (164). Sarah Fulford makes this same point in her essay on Dabydeen's critique of the sublime aesthetic. Sarah Fulford, "David Dabydeen and Turner's Sublime Aesthetic." *Anthurium: a Caribbean Studies Journal*, 3.1. (2005): 1-15.

[80] In Marcus Wood's *Blind Memory*, he notes that John Ruskin's acquisition of Turner's *Slave Ship* coincided with Adele Domeque's refusal of his marriage proposal. Wood highlights the intimate relationship Ruskin developed

and Nicholas Mirzoeff, Turner's work is distinguished from that of his contemporaries by its refusal to engage in the sentimental and often pornographic imagery found in works like François Auguste Biard's more popular anti-slavery painting *Slave Trade, Slaves on the West Coast of Africa* (1833), where the evils of slavery are lasciviously detailed and conveniently projected onto the French (see figure 1).[81]

Figure 1: François Auguste Biard's *Slave Trade, Slaves on the West Coast of Africa* (1833)

A study in contrasts, in Biard's sensationalistic tableau the Africans appear as a mass of suffering flesh individualized only by the ways in which their bodies are exoticized and eroticized. The Orientalized African, smoking an opium pipe, sits before the white trader who indolently lounges with his ship ledger open before him. The African woman is exposed to the gaze of the standing

with the painting "*The Slave Ship*, placed on his bed, washed, hung in his bedroom and then hung in the hallway; a middle passage between his bedroom and his dining room, became in the end a domestic presence he could not bear to live with, and he sold." Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865*, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), p. 57.

[81] As Christina Sharpe notes, Biard's painting, which is owned by the William Wilberforce House Museum, "helped establish the perspective that England was not the primary force in the Atlantic trade." Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-slavery Subjects,* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), pp. 113-116. Perhaps more pertinently, Marcus Wood notes that Biard's *Scene* was more favorably received than Turner's seascape. In William Thackeray's review of these works, he praises Biard's depiction of the slave trade (focusing in particular on the African woman whose arm is branded). Wood summarizes that "Thackeray demands that this image be bought as England's just inheritance in its post-abolitionist phase." Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865*, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), p. 43.

French sailor; and the bound men are beaten by a trader whose whip cuts into the background. Turner's portrait of the *Zong* contains no such eroticized scenes of suffering; no bodies---neither captor nor captive---are on display. Despite the latter half of the painting's title, *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and the Dying*, we see no individuated figures and the ship itself appears as a silhouette receding into the background. The drowned Africans who have been expelled from the ship are depicted as a collection of fragmented and partially submerged, shackled limbs. A series of hands extend from out of the waves and, in the lower foreground of the painting, an enchained leg appears among fishes (the only coherent bodies we do see in the painting) whose curiously pronounced eyes, Wood observes, gaze out at the viewer (see figure 2).[82]

Figure 2: J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and the Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* (1840).

During its unveiling at the Anti-Slavery World Convention, Turner's comparatively more subdued seascape served, Baucom notes, as a document of an atrocity that had been addressed and corrected with the British abolition of the slave trade. He emphasizes that as Turner prepared his contribution to the Convention, he was influenced by Thomas Clarkson's triumphalist 1808

[82] See Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and North America, 1780-1865*, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000).

History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade by the British Parliament (reissued one year before the Convention) and its broadsheet portrait of the *Brookes* (1789). Notably, *Slave Ship* was paired with Turner's *Rockets and Blue Light* (1840), a painting that alluded to the coterminous rise of British steam power and the expansion of its Empire (Baucom 282). Together, these works advanced a pictorial history of Britain's maritime Empire and, more importantly, a visuality for understanding its operations. Baucom suggests that "[Turner's painting] renders visible is not the Zong massacre . . . but . . . the very mind of romantic liberalism, contemplating such things" (288). The seascape allows viewers to participate in an ethically guaranteed act of witnessing an event in its aftermath. I augment Baucom's observations here only to note that the convention was promoted within transatlantic abolitionist circles as an event of Anglo-American cosmopolitanism. In New Hampshire abolitionist Nathaniel Peabody Rogers's attempts to rally support for the event, he predicted that the event's commitment to universal human rights would unite the transatlantic community, "It will not be a national meeting . . . It will be Humanity's first conference. . . . It will teach people that there is no such thing as FOREIGNER on the earth, and that there need be no such thing as ENEMY or STRANGER" (91-92). Although the event's promised universalism was undercut by the organizers' refusal to admit Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other female abolitionists, Rogers's initial hopes that the event would lead to similar conventions now that ocean steamers allowed for more frequent transatlantic passages, speaks the cosmopolitan narrative in which Turner's *Slave Ship* participated. The evils of the Middle Passage had and were being addressed; viewers could now move confidently into a more ethically sound future of global capitalism that was advanced by Victorian imperialism rather than slavery.

Dabydeen's *Turner* interrupts the imperial time of ethical progress and national forgetting. Unlike Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts*, which ends with the 1833 British abolition of colonial slavery and shows Mintah, a woman who survived the Zong massacre, commemorating the dead, Dabydeen's speaker is unable to sustain the fantasy of a past or a future community that exists beyond the expanse of "the white enfolding/Wings of Turner" (XXV, 19-20).[83] As his introduction informs us, his speaker is unable to begin anew in the sea. His efforts to mother the drowned child are answered with the interpellative accusation, "Nigger," "naming itself, naming the gods,/The earth and its globe of stars" (XXV, 14-15). The poem is, as he has remarked in interviews, a "great howl of pessimism" and its howl famously ends by sounding a catalogue of devastation, "No men to plough, corn to fatten their herds,/No stars, no land, no words, no community,/No mother" (XXV, 40-42).[84]

Accounting for the losses that the poem mourns, I offer that Dabydeen's "great howl of pessimism" recalls us to the dangers of presuming that mourning, sadness, or rage have circumscribed potentialities. In Mirzoeff's *The Right to Look* (2011) he assembles a history of "counter-visualities" or a visual archive of works and acts that have resisted those modes of surveillance and obfuscation (typified by the police officer's demand that bystanders should "move along, there's nothing to see") which so organized the plantation state of the New World and continue to determine our contemporary technologies of counter-terrorism. He then remarks, "I'm tired of mourning. I would like to know what it would feel like to be *so engaged with history rather than death*" (emphasis mine, 187). One can sympathize with his stark lamentation;

[83] Stef Craps has argued that D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* ends on a much more ambivalent note with Mintah awakening from a dream of commemoration. See Stef Craps, "Learning to Live with Ghosts: Post-colonial Haunting and Mid-Mourning in David Dabydeen's 'Turner' and Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts*" *Callaloo*, 33.2 (Spring 2010): 467-475.
[84] David Dabydeen, "Interview with David Dabydeen 1994," *The Art of David Dabydeen*, ed. Kevin Grant, (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1997). p. 200.

it is expressive of a desire to engage with archives of resistance and revolution rather than what can often feel like relentless histories of war, genocidal violence, and reparative mourning. Along archival lines more directly related to those that I engage in this chapter, historians have likewise criticized the dominant scholarship on the transatlantic slave trade for its failures to examine how the threat of slave resistance and piracy, or how the incalculable factor of "excessive rage," shaped insurance contracts and troubled its supportive categories of the human and the commodity. Anita Rupprecht remarks that the history of the *Zong* in particular was incorporated into enduring sentimental abolitionist histories in which the captive Africans are only imagined as passive victims.[85]

To contrast, however, the exhaustion of mourning with the experience of being captivated by history is to approach archives with prescriptive emotional and narratological demands or desires. And while our projects are inevitably partially (or fully) organized by these desires, as Halberstam reminds us, there are potentialities in anti-social archives that capture "anticolonial despair, racial rage, counterhegemonic violence," and that refuse progressive temporalities often advanced in narratives of optimism or renewal (Halberstam 110). In its ekphrastic response to Turner's *Slave Ship*, Dabydeen's work very obviously falls within Mirzoeff's model of countervisuality but it refuses the messianic temporalities that implicitly underwrite his model.[86]

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[85] Rupprecht writes, "The fact of resistance during the Middle Passage is deeply embedded in the genealogy and historical codification of marine insurance and life insurance as they both came to be mobilized in the service of the slave-trade. . . . They struggled, rebelled, mounted insurrections, mutinied, took over ships and embraced the outlandish freedoms of piracy. Underwrites tried to keep pace, but if we go back to the history of marine insurance it becomes clear that, in a context of violent rebellion and disorder, they could never settle the uncertainty of whether slaves were commodities or human beings." Anita Rupprecht, "Excessive Memories: Slavery, Insurance and Resistance," *History Workshop Journal*, 64.1 (2007): 6-28, p. 15. For more on the 2007 bicentennial anniversary of the abolition, see Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation,* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

[86] In Mirzoeff's own reading of Turner's *Slave Ship*, published an article that predicts his argument in *The Right to Look* (2011), he suggests that it captures a moment when the drowned captives were "no longer slaves and not yet the object of an insurance claim." Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Sea and the Land: Biopower and Visuality from Slavery to Katrina." *Culture, Theory, and Critique*. 50.2 (2009): 289-305, p. 296.

Its unrelenting and anguished howl of pessimism sounds the phantasmagorical archive of the atrocities of the Middle Passage that followed after the *Zong*'s passage.

Written in the ghostly voice of one of the Africans jettisoned from the *Zong*, *Turner* captures not simply the atrocity of the *Zong* but the ships that continued to travel its routes and the captives that continued to be jettisoned into the sea after its passage. In the poem's opening movement, the speaker reports on a scene that begins with the cry of a woman whose voice and body are absorbed into the familiar metaphor of the slave ship as the violated black female body.

> sobs from the depths of true
>
> Hurt and grief, as you will never hear
>
> But from woman giving birth, belly
>
> Blown and flapping loose and torn like sails,
>
> Rough sailors' hands jerking and tugging
>
> At ropes of veins, to no avail. (I, 3-8).

Her cries are located within a gendered soundscape of suffering that depends upon an interpellated reader's recognition of the specificity of that cry ("as you will never hear/But from woman") even as the woman is unindividuated and unseen. The enjambment of lines 4 and 5, "as you will never hear/But from woman," takes the addressed "you" to the common demarcation of "unspeakability" of trauma only to refute that designation by demanding that we locate her cries within the larger chorus of unheard cries that occurred within that space.

Her stillborn child, too, appears as a unprofitable unit, indexical of other, bastardized cargo similarly discarded, "The part---born, sometimes with its mother,/Tossed overboard" (I, 16-17). Distinguished by the speaker as his fable and adopted child, the sound of the child being consigned to the water recurs throughout the poem. Alluding to the etymology of the word "diaspora," (from the Greek, *dia* "across" and *speirein* "to scatter") the child is repeatedly likened to a discarded seed spent into the sea. In movement II, the speaker again marks the child's death, "It plopped into the water and soon swelled/Like a brumplak seed that bursts buckshot/From its pod" (II, 1-3). This movement repeats in part IV where the child is again likened to a seed: "It plopped into the water from a passing ship/Like a lime-seed spat from the scurvied mouth/Of a sailor, shooting out between/A gap in his teeth" (IV, 1-4). Still later in part XVI, the speaker lovingly gathers the child to his breast, "this grain,/This morsel slipped from the belly of the moon," (XVI, 1-2). The child's repeated entrances into the sea, registered as a sonic break, signal a traumatic return to a primal scene where, as the speaker later recounts, "I too was a morsel of flesh when first drowned/At sea" (VIII, 3-4). These sounds and the memories they trigger recall the repeated transactions (humans into cargo, cargo into profitable units) that resulted in the black diaspora.

The child's expulsion into the sea alternately disrupts or activates a different episode within the history that the speaker fashions of his lost community---his invented sisters, Rima and Ellar, his tribal elder, Manu---and the invaded land where they once resided. The act of reimagining the lost family and home inevitably collapses, though, into an act of mourning their brutal unmaking and the construction of the New World black subject through his/her sexual violation. In movement XII, the speaker recalls the scene of their abduction and reduction from humans into commodified, racialized flesh:

Chained in fours and children subtracted

From mothers. When all things tally

He snaps the book shut, his creased mouth

Unfolding in a smile, as when, entering

His cabin, mind heavy with care, breeding

And multiplying percentages, he beholds

A boy disheveled on his bed). (XII, 41-47)

Like the ledgers of Faulkner's works, Turner's book subtracts subjects, itemizing them as bodies according to the workings of transatlantic liberal economies, and its tallies yield the commoditized flesh that he later violates.

Dabydeen's depiction of Turner's sexual violation of the enslaved boys aboard his ship and his eroticized torture of the speaker's invented, "second-born" sister, Ellar (XXIII, 6), indicts and mimics the pornographic imagery found in eighteen and nineteenth-century accounts of slavery.[87] Like many late twentieth-century neo-slave narratives (Toni Morrison's 1987 *Beloved*, Caryl Phillips's 1993 *Crossing the River*, Valerie Martin's 2003 *Property*), he lifts the veil on the sexual violation of enslaved women while also refusing the fiction of the inviolable, black masculine body. In doing so, he participates in the theorization of the enslaved body as, following Hortense Spillers, a mere object of flesh, that "zero degree of social conceptualization," whose radical thing-ification overwrites gender identities (Spillers 67). Advancing Spillers's work on the "pornotroping" of black suffering, Alexander G. Weheliye

[87] See Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), Saidiya V. Hartman's introduction in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), and Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: the Making of Post-Slavery Subjects*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2010).

makes a compelling case for understanding such illustrations as "not a mere by-product of an already existing state but integral to the creation of the flesh" (110). That is, "pornotroping," captures the reduction of a racialized subject (an ontological and scopic event occurs, in his examples, with the slave, the Jewish subject existing in the dead zone of the concentration camp, the prisoner at Abu Ghraib) to mere flesh.

Dabydeen's work illustrates the reduction of the body to mere flesh, and, as with his use of Turner as a signifier that is attached to the stillborn children of the New World and the captain of the unnamed *Zong*, implicates the imagination of romantic liberalism. In movement XXIII, the speaker imagines Turner's benevolent admiration for the musical talents of his sister Rima, whom the speaker endows with "a clear voice, fingers/That coax melody from the crudest instrument" (XXIII, 2-3). Ellar, the second-born, does not fare as well.

> He will ravish [her] with whips, stuff rags
>
> In her mouth to stifle her rage, rub salt
>
> Into the stripes of her wounds in slow ecstatic
>
> Ritual trance, each grain caressed and secreted
>
> Into her ripped skin like a trader placing each
>
> Counted coin back into his purse. (XXIII, 7-12)

Ellar's eroticized wounds mark the place where the liberal and libidinal economies of Empire meet. Her black body is rendered as an un-gendered repository of flesh and the capital that she has been made to embody. When Ellar's ungagged mouth continues to be silenced by the torture she endured ("It open and closes. No word comes"), the speaker reflects, "It keeps his

treasures./It will never tell their secret burial places" (XXIII, 16, 17-18). Indeed, her flesh is the "keeper" of the aberrant desires and sexual deviancies projected onto the black body.

The pornotropic imagery that recurs throughout Turner thus forms the poem's counter-portrait of Empire. The speaker recalls gazing at maps and landscapes of England which were integral to shoring up national identity and its global dominance while Turner raped him and the other, young boys. With an ironic inflection, the speaker recounts: ". . .we lay freely in his bed, gazed at/Pictures on his wall . . . England's/Robe unfurled, prodigal of ornament" (XVI, 6-8, 12-13). As the speaker attempts to insert himself into the national portrait, though, he gazes into reflective surfaces that refuse to return his image.

> The water will not see me, nor the villagers
>
> In whose midst I stray, pausing before
>
> The butcher's shop hung with goose and pheasant,
>
> But its window will not see me though it shines
>
> With other faces. (XVI, 24-29)

These erasures and refusals are countered by the speaker's misrecognition of an effigy of the tortured body of Christ as an image of Turner. Haunting the landscape as a ghostly presence, the speaker enters the Church where he sees: "Turner nailed to a tree, naked for all to see/His back broken and splayed like the spine/Of his own book, blood leaking like leaves" (XVI, 40-42).

Queering the body of Christ as the sadistic captain and reading the Bible as Turner's ship ledger, *Turner* critiques the civilizational path to redemption which Empire offered to its benighted subject from the Dark Continent and its revision of the histories of slavery and

colonialism as benevolent institutions. In movement XXIV, the speaker aligns his body with the violated body of Ellar by informing us, "Turner crammed our boys' mouths too with riches" (XXIV, 1), and recounts the catechism of Empire that they were forced to recite:

> Each night
>
> Aboard ship he gave selflessly the nipple
>
> Of his tongue until we learnt to say profitably
>
> In his own language, *we desire you, we love*
>
> *You, we forgive you*. He whispered eloquently
>
> Into our ears even as we wriggled beneath him,
>
> Breathless with pain, wanting to remove his hook
>
> Implanted in our flesh. (XXIV, 4-11)

Both Christ and Madonna, who gives "selflessly/the nipple of his tongue," Turner imbricates the eighteenth-century religious and moral discourses in eroticized yet quotidian acts of torture and sexual exploitation, Dabydeen's poem revisits and re-inscribes the violence into scenes that, as Sharpe points out, and as the children's words demonstrate, have been fictionalized as ones of "consent and affection" (4).

Working, as Hartman writes, with and against the archive, *Turner* refuses both the revised and largely redacted British history of the transatlantic slave-trade as one which was corrected shortly after the *Zong*. In the speaker's failed attempts to mother the stillborn, New World black subject who "will not bear the future/Nor its inventions" (XXV, 7-8), Dabydeen demands that we hear the unheard cries constitute the post-memory inheritance of the Middle Passage.

The deep and unrelenting howl that Dabydeen's poem emits has a kinship with the voices that comprise *Imperceptible*'s chorus of the Third Kingdom. In *Imperceptible*, Parks's movements between the present, the post-Civil War era, and World War II are intercut with a chorus of comprised Over-Seer, Kin-Seer, Shark-Seer, Us-Seer, and Soul-Seer. Prophets of a future determined by the traumas of the Middle Passage, they collectively recall and envision the time when, as the Over-Seer says, "Half the world had fallen away making 2 worlds and a sea between. Those 2 worlds inscribed the Third Kingdom" (*Imperceptible* 39). Inscribed subjects of the Third Kingdom who recall past ships and lost homelands, they wave and smile from their ship at fully constituted subjects (kin) who do not yet appear on the horizon. Their own selves, however, are fragmented and fractured by their many passages.

> Kin-Seer: My uther me then waved back at me and then I was happy. But my uther me whuduhnt waving at me. My uther me was waving at my Self. My uther me was waving at uh black black speck in thuh middle of thuh sea where years uhgoh from uh boat I had been---UUH!
>
> Over-Seer: Jettisoned. (*Imperceptible* 38)

The "me" that is briefly unified by the mirroring exchange falls apart, falls into apartness, when the Kin-Seer's split self instead recognizes his abjected, imago in the reflective surface of the sea. A similar moment occurs in *Turner* when the speaker gazes into the eyes of the orphaned child, longing for an image of "beyond/Memory of obscene human form" (XVIII, 13-14) and instead its eyes forecast the scenes that inevitably unfold for bodies excluded from the category of the human: "The shapes of death revolving in its eyes:/Bullwhips that play upon the backs of slaves" (XVIII, 27-28).

As I will argue in the following sections, like Dabydeen's *Turner*, Parks's *Imperceptible*, writes from the zones between "social and corporeal death." Parks's work is divided into parts that cite the taxonomies contained within natural history catalogues, the subdivisions of real estate and insurance contracts, and the neighborhoods created by urban planning policies and zoning laws---from the residential security maps of the 1930s to the coterminous gentrification of cities and the displacement of poor, black and Latino residents in the 1980s. The sum of *Imperceptible*'s parts yields a fragmented whole that contests a national narrative in which the historicization of racial capitalisms is used to zone black subjects into spaces of slow death.

III. "This isn't a special case": Vermin Infestations and Uncertain Humans in *Imperceptible*

"There is the massacre that leaves physical carcasses and corpses; then there is the massacre that spares the body but kills the person," Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, "Vermin Beings: On Pestiferous and Human Game" (2011)

"The sighing is a worry exhale of an ache. You wouldn't call it an illness; still it is not the iteration of a free being. What else to liken yourself to but an animal, the ruminant kind?" Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: an American Lyric* (2014)

Just as *Turner* is organized by the repeated scene of a child being jettisoned into the sea like "a brumplak seed" (*II*, 2), the first part of *Imperceptible* (to review, the play's concern with space is reflected in its terminology---its acts and scenes are classified as parts and sections) is punctuated by the report of falls---the splats---that have occurred and will occur. In Part 1 "Snails," section A. a slideshow plays before the audience. The two women captured in the photographs, Mona and Chona, termed and later addressed by names that are not theirs, "Molly" and "Charlene," remain in semidarkness. Mona contemplates suicide and recounts her humiliations within the white spaces of the classroom and low-wage call service work from which she has been expelled. Chona listens and asks her how she likes her eggs:

> CHARLENE: How dja get through it?
>
> MOLLY: Mm not through it.

> CHARLENE: Yer leg. Thuh guard. Lose weight?
>
> MOLLY: Hhh. What should I do Chona should I jump should I jump or what?
>
> CHARLENE: You want some eggs?
>
> MOLLY: Would I splat? . . . Twelve floors up. Whaduhya think?
>
> CHARLENE: Uh-uh-uhn. Like scrambled?
>
> MOLLY: I diduhnt quit that school. . . . Shit. Failed every test he shoves in my face. He makes me recite my mind goes blank. . . . He throws me out. Stuff like this happens every day y know. This isnt uh special case mines iduhnt uh uhnnn. (*Imperceptible* 25)

To borrow from Claudia Rankine, Mona is a creature of a "ruminant kind." As Mona tells Chona, she is not over it, not through it and her final "uh uhnnn" burrows into a deeper, ever-accumulating history. Mona's and Chona's staggered exchanges are heavily weighted; "yer leg. Thuh guard" recalls the still-shackled protruding leg of a drowned African among the fishes in Turner's seascape. Mona's question, "should I jump?" is posed over the lip of the windowsill of their infested, apartment and the slave ship's railing. It anticipates the Third Kingdom chorus that later sings from the space of the Middle Passage where Shark-Seer and Kin-Seer ask the others, "Should I jump? Shouldijumporwhut?" (*Imperceptible* 40). Mona's "splat,"---an answer to their later echoing of her question in the play's opening scene---marks a post-memory trauma that repeats in the precarity that she experiences in the present.

Acoustically, this trauma has faded into background noise; in stark contrast to the splashes in Dabydeen that ripple outward into a lyrical fantasy of a lost motherland, Parks's "splat" lands as a cringing punchline. Its slapstick echo recurs throughout "Snails" as a repeated beat in Mona's conversations with Chona. In Section A, Mona tells Chona, "Once there was uh

me named Mona who wanted tuh jump ship but didn't. HHH. Ya got thuh Help Wanteds? . . . Splat" (*Imperceptible* 26). Traveling from Mona's contemplated suicide to Chona's preparation of the eggs, the signifier "splat" crudely announces the death and use of creatures (human and animal) that can be casually killed or left to die. In sections C and E, it reports the death of lower, un-individuated creatures: the cockroaches that infest Mona, Chona, and Verona's apartment. Marveling at their ability to live and breed in the most inhospitable of environments, Mona exclaims, "Splat! Diduhnt move uh muscle even. . . . Splat! Shit. I woulda been uhcross thuh room out thuh door n on tuh thuh next life. . . . Splat! I cant even talk. I got bug bites all over! I need new styles" (*Imperceptible* 28).

In its repeated iterations, "splat" is, seemingly, a sound effect that performs its own reading. More than a self-evident wink at the audience, though, it marks Parks's genealogy of colonial and neoliberal governmentalities of pesticide. In Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga's work on colonialism and pesticide, he studies British travelogues and diaries and notes that their entries frequently refer to the "Native" as a subspecies or vermin population that had to be cleared away to ensure a path for civilization and the health of the social body. Again, one might be tempted to read this only as a familiar trope and immediately catalogue numerous instances of it (Kurtz's manifesto in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* serves as a more obvious candidate for this kind of catalogue). Like Parks, though, Mavhunga's work rebukes this temptation. He tracks colonial biopower from the British colonization of Rhodesia and South Africa to the post-World War II imagining of guerilla fighters as carriers of communist ideologies. Building on the work of Edmund Russell, Richard Waller, and Kathy Homewood, Mavhunga observes that the colonial investment in "disease control" frequently served as an alibi for the seizure of the livestock and land, and the reduction of African populations to "human game." He writes, "The

reduction of humans to pests . . . blurs the division in weapons required to police people and to police nature. The term *pesticide* might be innovatively used to encompass not only the substances used to kill pests but also the theory and practice of killing them" (Mavhunga 152). Within this elaboration, the theory and practice of eradicating pests first begins with managing or preventing the intrusive "mobility of species" that reside outside of, or with a shifting relationship to, the category of the human (Mavhunga 155).

Mavhunga's expansive reading of pesticide as the practice of curtailing the movements of subaltern subjects chimes with Parks' repeatedly deployments of "Splat" as a biopolitical idiom. For Parks, it punctuates the neoliberal management of life that flattens the black subject from a disciplinary case study into a troublesome population. In Sections A-F of "Snails", Mona exists as a type; much like the animal and insect life with which she is aligned, she indexes a problematic population. Mona tells Chona of how she was expelled from what sounds like a remedial English or, as she terms it, Basic Skills course for her failure to approximate white, middle class locutions and consequently fired from her job for slipping out of her "phone voice." She recounts, "'Talk right or youre outta here!' I couldn't. . . . Job sends me there. Basic skills. Now Job don't want me no more. Closely-behind-at-Marys-heels. HHH. Everythin in its place" (*Imperceptible* 25-26). Everything in its place, the black urban poor are pestiferous subjects to be treated by a disciplinary welfare-workfare network or relegated to prison. As Sylvia Wynter remarks in her landmark essay, "'No Humans Involved': an Open Letter to My Colleagues" (1992), in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement and the expansion of the black middle class, "the jobless category has been made to bear the weight of the Deviant status that, before the Sixties, had been imposed on all Americans of African and Afro-mixed descent" (45-46).

Within the neoliberal marketplace, the governmentalities of pesticide are devoted to eradicating the deviance to override the offensive black body or eradicating the subject entirely.

Parks more thoroughly explores these case studies of black deviance that are not "special cases" in her later, Red Letter plays, *In the Blood* (1998) and *Fucking A* (2000). There, Parks repurposes Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlett Letter* (1850) and recasts Hester Pyrnne as Hester La Negrita, an illiterate "welfare queen" who lives underneath a bridge where she attempts to raise her five children. Unlike Hawthorne's Hester, whose race, literacy, and entrepreneurship guarantee her redemption, Parks's Hester La Negrita is, as the Chorus in the Prologue decries, doomed by her monstrous fecundity and lack of middle class discipline. Echoing the all-caps anti-welfare rhetoric that continues to retain a firm grip on the national discourse in the U.S. and England, the Chorus proclaims: "SOMETHINGS GOTTA BE DONE TO STOP THIS SORT OF THING/CAUSE I'LL BE DAMNED IF SHE GONNA LIVE OFF ME" (*ITB* 7). Later, Hester's caseworker, Welfare Lady, admonishes her by holding herself up as a model of proper, middle class femininity: "Three meals a day. Strict adherence to the food pyramid. Money in my pocket, clothes on my back, teeth in my mouth, womanly parts where they should be, hair on my head, husband in my bed" (*ITB* 56). When Hester tentatively ventures that her own problems may be socially-determined with the comical understatement, "I dont think the world likes women much," (*ITB* 59), the Welfare Lady debunks her theory by countering, "Im a woman too! And a black woman just like you. Don't be silly" (*ITB* 60). As Welfare Lady explains in her later soliloquy, though, her own multicultural success story of being incorporated into what Wynter terms the "sanctified category of Americans 'just like us'" (46) exemplified by the Cosby-Huxtables, depends on maintaining the "well-drawn boundary line" (*ITB* 61, 62) between herself and those on the dole who drain society. And much like

Mona's failure to keep a place/keep pace by mimicking white middle class locutions to retain her low-wage job, Hester is, above all, a disorderly subject who falls to adhere to the boundaries drawn for her by the welfare-surveillance net. She alternately refuses or is unable to remain in the spaces prescribed for her: she leaves the housing shelter where her children are vulnerable to sexual abuse and the school programs where she is presumably humiliated. Despite Hester's repeated insistence that she just needs to "get a leg up," she is exploited by the various representatives of the institutions designed to support her and treated as a biological threat who is so beyond the civilizational pale that she must be sterilized. Recalling the scene in *Imperceptible* in which the exterminator, Dr. Lutzky, sprays Mona and Chona instead of the roaches, Hester has her eyes examined by her doctor who asks her to read the letters that spell "SPAY" (*ITB* 41). This threat, stripped of the sinister sight-gag of the eye-chart, is violently realized at the close of the play when Hester awakens in her prison cell after her murder of her son and her subsequent hysterectomy.

Situated alongside the Red Letter plays (note: I will later address *Fucking A*), *Imperceptible Mutabilities* evinces Parks's career-spanning exploration of the treatment of the black subject as a deviant subject to be corrected and specimen to be extinguished. Her work dramatizes Foucault's insight that the end-game of biopower (and, borrowing from Mavhunga, we can read "game" as both project and animalized population) is the population. More urgently, though, Parks's work, and the archives it draws on, demonstrates, as others have, the necessity of extending the parameters of Foucault's lectures. Her examination of how black subjects, and particularly black women, are rendered as sites of commoditized flesh, [88] uncertain

[88] Here, I refer to Hester La Negrita's policed, reproductive body in *In the Blood*, Aretha Saxon's hollowed and displaced body in Part 3: "Open House" of *Imperceptible*, and Parks' re-imagining of Saartjie Baartman's life in *Venus* (1990).

personhood, and targets of necropolitical violence resonate with Alexander G. Weheliye's study of the "racializing assemblages" that so determine the categories of bare life and the human. Defining these assemblages as "a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans," (4), he trenchantly argues that these processes require us to consider the conditions under which a body is understood as a coherent, legal subject (under the writ of *habeas corpus*) and when a body is understood (and the "when" predates a state of exception that designates bare life), *pace* Hortense Spillers, as *habeas viscus* or flesh. Parks's *Imperceptible* provides both an object lesson and argument for the expansion of Foucault's paradigm that Weheliye's work provides. Part 1: "Snails" traces the neoliberal governmentalities that reduce Mona and her roommates to a pestiferous population to the liberal, eighteenth-century disciplines and the visualities which underwrite them.

In "Snails" the welfare pedagogies and the police surveillance system that so define neoliberal policies of pest control are tracked back to the colonial order of seeing and knowing racialized subjects. Dr. Lutzky "exterminator professional with uh Ph.D" first appears in section B as the Naturalist who plants a camera in a cardboard cockroach to observe the women. When we return to him in Section D, he stands at the podium and he informs the audience that we have been conscripted into his surveillance project, "Thus behave our subjects when they believe we cannot see them when they believe us far far away when they believe our backs have been turned" (*Imperceptible* 29). Dr. Lutzky's combined roles of exterminator and scholar-charlatan in "*behavioris distorionallus-via-modernus*" (*Imperceptible* 29) collapses the short distance between the eighteenth-century systems of classification and practices of pesticide. Prior to his entrance in Section E, Chona recalls a story that will unfold in the next scene: "[He] comes tuh take the roaches uhway. Knew us by names that whuduhnt ours. Could point us out from

pictures that whuduhnt us. He became confused. He hosed us down" (*Imperceptible* 28). Her observation, "[He] could point us out from pictures that whuduhnt us" directly picks up and continues the thread of Chona's earlier story of a robber who later enters their apartment to steal the camera-roach. Chona states, "Once there was uh one Verona named 'Mokus.' But 'Mokus' whuduhnt his name. . . . He had his picture on file at thuh police station. Ninety-nine different versions. None of um looked like he looked" (*Imperceptible* 28). Both stories circle the same loop in which black subjects are preceded, framed by images produced about them. Writing of the same loop but in a different register, Claudia Rankine reminds us in the "Stop and Frisk" movement of *Citizen: an American Lyric* (2014), "And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description" (Rankine 105).

Rankine's *Citizen* captures the exhaustion that this story engenders through its inevitability and deadening repetition. Each testimony from black men accosted by police officers returns to the line, "And you are not the guy" as Rankine recites their stories to demonstrate how they are viewed as a criminal population---the "only guy who is always the guy fitting the description." A study in tonal contrasts, Parks's "Snails" cycles through the familiar scenario of black subjects being targeted by descriptions that they do not match, but she plays these scenarios for laughs that escape the lips as a hard and uncomfortable expulsion of a long-held breath. As Sara L. Warner remarks of the alienating humor in Parks's *Venus*, Parks's works regularly forego straight tragedy which "purges and liberates" and instead opts for the "farce [which] contaminates and implicates" (Warner 196). While "Snails" is not exactly farce, it escalates into a surrealistic, slapstick humor that demands that the audience keep up. Dr. Lutzky's treatment of Mona and Chona, whom he has difficulties distinguishing from one

another, is intercut with Verona's alarmed response to a re-run of *The Wild Kingdom* that screens in the background. As the pacing of the scene accelerates, Dr. Lutzky lines up Mona, Chona, and, for good measure, "Mokus," to spray them with his exterminator's gun and Verona frantically attempts to alert the police that the show's host, Marlin Perkins, is taking aim at the animals within his dominion. Verona yells into the phone: "I-am-telling-you-Marlin-Perkins-has-a-gun! . . . You listen tuh me! I pay yuh tuh listen tuh me! . . . We diduhnt pay our taxes, Chona" (*Imperceptible* 34-35). The punchlines of their conversations collide into one another. Mona manically reviews the lessons from her employer-mandated English course and corrects a confused Dr. Lutzky by identifying all the subjects with his view: "Mona Mokus robbery. . . . Robbery Mokus Mona. Everything in its place" (*Imperceptible* 33). Stringing together and then reversing the signifiers, Mona underlines how both she and "Mokus" have been respectively captured within the overlapping white, disciplinary networks designed to manage them. Introductions made, Dr. Lutzky later addresses Mokus, "Hello Sir. Parents of a Muslim faith? My father used to frequent the Panthers. For sport. . . . Give us a grunt. I'll give you a squirt" (*Imperceptible* 34). His line keeps time with the rat-a-tat-tat rhythm of this scene and links F.B.I's aggressive campaign against the Black Panther Party to the governmental practices of pesticide that he represents. To return to Warner's observations about Parks's use of humor to implicate the audience, Dr. Lutzky's exchange with Mokus transforms the play's obvious metaphors into jokes that rely on the audience's knowledge of the continuities Parks tracks. Similar to Mona's experience in the workfare system that expels her for her inability to sustain a middle class self that does not "splat," "Mokus" is not a special case, either.

Imperceptible thus elucidates the ways in which Reagan-era governmentalities are undergirded by and constitute a theory of pesticide by depicting its visual technologies and

bodies of knowledge. In the play's opening scene Mona and Chona compete with images of themselves; they speak in semi-darkness as a slideshow depicts them as subjects who have been catalogued in photographs that simultaneously recall photos included in social case workers' files and those "ninety nine" different versions on file within the police state's archives.[89] As the Naturalist explains at his lectern, his work is guided by a paternalistic concern with sustaining Western civilization (here and always defined against the atavistic African): "How. Should. We. Best. Accommodate. Our subjects. If they are all to live with us---all in harmony---in our modern world. . . . The great cake of society is crumbling. I ask us to realize that those who do not march with us do not march not because they will not but because they cannot" (*Imperceptible* 29). In a winking line, the Naturalist clarifies that he means "them roaches" rather than the apartment's residents that he later treats---a distinction that Mona refutes with her insistent answer of "splat" to every question posed to her.

Most obviously, the Naturalist/Dr. Lutzky is installed as a snake-oil salesman pushing (to canned applause) colonial discourses whose civilizational distinctions still continue to shape neoliberal distinctions between disciplined, middle-class subjects who can keep pace with the market and vermin populations of urban, black subjects who must be "accommodated." Here, again, though, I want to read Parks's winking-lines (the metaphors that perform for us) for the early modern and colonial histories that they activate. Just as the word "Splat" announces Parks's theorization of governmental necropolitics, the other bug in the room and its signifier "camera," emerges from a history of population management in the metropolitan spaces of Western Europe. In Ed Cohen's study of immunity and the construction of the modern, human body, he underlines

[89] In Wacquant's *Punishing the Poor* he notes that by the mid-1990s the U.S.'s prison system had assembled fifty five million files on roughly one third of its adult male population. p. 135.

that in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, Western European governments adopted the practice of "cameralism" (derived from the Greek and Latin 'camera' or 'room') to "encompass the state's entire domain and all its inhabitants, not as singular citizens but as an aggregate whose collective life activities it channels, directs, enhances" (92). Building on the genealogy of cameralism that Foucault surveys in his 1977-1978 lectures collected as *Security, Territory, and the Population*, Cohen notes that it informed the emergence of a fifteenth century Polizei, Politia, Politeia (police) which sought to regulate subjects of the sovereign as a population whose human capital (health, economic stability, reproductive capabilities) contributed to the health of the state.[90]

I review the early modern history of cameralism to both capitalize on Cohen's insight that surveillance has always been driven by the cultivation of human capital and to emphasize how modernity's invention of race as capital (whiteness as the right to property; black flesh as property), and, alongside that, its circumscription of the category of the human, compels us to consider the mutations of cameralism. In Wynter's open letter, she borrows the concept of "inner eyes" from Ralph Ellison's 1952 *Invisible Man* (a novel that famously begins with the narrator's desperate attempt to opt out of the visualities of whiteness by telling his story from his self-constructed chamber of lights) and asks us to consider "what inner eyes" produced the acronym, "N.H.I," employed by public officials in Los Angeles to describe cases that involved young black men. What "inner eyes," limited the category of the human to "not only optimally white terms," but further qualified it with the "optimally middle-class" terms of "suburban and

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[90] See also Robert Bernasconi, "The Policing of Race Mixing: The Place of Biopower Within the History of Racisms," *Bioethical Inquiry* 7. (2010): 205-216. p. 208. Later, as Robert Bernasconi fleshes out, the police in France, England, and Prussia served as a vehicle for monitoring the reproductive health of its citizens and, he stresses, ensuring the vitality (and purity) of the nation-state's race. Bernasconi cites Friedrich Ludwig Jahn's 1810 treatise, *Deustsche's Volkstum*, which warned against the enervating affects of racial mixing.

college-educated" (42-44). Within our long neoliberal present, the theory and practice of cameralism is advanced in the coded, moral and/or cultural distinctions between the middle class, imagined, Wynter points out, as "metonymically white" (53) and the urban poor who game the system by living on the dole and nurse old grievances of racisms that have been rendered anachronistic by the promise of class mobility. More than a clever stage prop, the Naturalist's bug in the room serves as a stand-in for the "inner eye" that applies the criteria of race and class to distinguish the human from the subhuman. Mona's and Chona's repeated and faltering gestures towards the stories that they might have told about themselves, "Once there was uh me named Mona who wondered what she'd be like if no one was watchin" (*Imperceptible* 27), simultaneously express an unfulfilled longing to imagine themselves as subjects outside of its gaze and classificatory taxonomies. Mona's later elaboration, "Once there was uh me named Mona who wondered what she'd talk like if no one was listenin'" (*Imperceptible* 28) and her repeated rifts on the locution lessons that she failed in her education program again alerts us to how these classificatory systems articulate the human as a middle-class, disciplined subject. We can situate Parks's and Wynter's respective indictments of these articulations of the human alongside Rey Chow's critique of the "anthropological culturalisms" that all too often function as an alibi for institutional racisms. Enduring income inequality is not racism, we are told, it is an issue of class. It is not racism that drives the disproportionate policing of young black men, but an issue of endemic criminality within predominantly black urban neighborhoods.

Parks's play stops this alibi in its tracks by linking these "anthropological culturalisms" to the colonial racialization of the human. The play's title is a nod to Mutual of Omaha's television series, *The Wild Kingdom* (1963-1988), a show that, as Verona tells the audience, provided American children with their first images of Africa. Notably, *Wild Kingdom* debuted

under the auspices of the U.S.'s and U.N.'s shared "decade of development" program which spearheaded and sponsored infrastructure-building projects in what were often recently decolonized nations in Africa and South America.[91] To be sure, Marlin Perkins and his crew traveled to exoticized locations within the U.S.'s national borders (the backwater bayous of Louisiana, for example), but across its various locations, *The Wild Kingdom* adhered to a standardized formula that alarmingly endures in contemporary nature shows: white celebrity zoologists or biologists guide viewers through vast savannahs and help local populations in "underdeveloped" regions manage their natural resources and creatures.[92] *Imperceptible* draws parallels between Perkins's dominion over the creatures he catalogues and the conceptualization of black working classes as a problematic population. However, the punchline of this section reveals the kernel of violence within Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* and anthropological culturalisms: the disciplinary power to catalogue and regulate life within prescribed spaces (the wildlife reserve, the zoo, the prison, government subsidized housing, etc.) often conceals the power to take life---at a gradual or more accelerated pace.

Consistent with the play's theorization of the pesticide and the linkages it makes between the white paternalism of colonialism and welfare pedagogies, *Imperceptible*'s use of the *Wild Kingdom* as an intertext highlights the continuum between the human, the subhuman, the animal, and the insect. In doing so, it forecasts Parks's later plays, *Fucking A* (2000) and *Venus* (1996) where Parks examines how black bodies are rendered as animalized prey and commodified flesh.

[91] At the beginning of the November 6, 1969 episode, "Beneath Kilimanjaro," Marlin Perkins states that he will be joined by the "U.N.'s arranged development team" as he and Jim Fowler travel to the Amboseli Game Reserve.

[92] In Elizabeth Garland's work, she notes that the white biologist/black fieldworker persists in the ecological tourism and conservationist circles. "The inequalities that exist between the foreigners (and descendants of white settlers) who are the global fare of African wildlife conservation, and the Africans who sacrifice and work to make conservation a reality on the ground, are a shockingly stable feature of the African wildlife field" (59). Elizabeth Garland, "The Elephant in the Room: Confronting the Colonial Character of Wildlife Conservation," *African Studies Review* 51.3 (December 2008): 51-74. p. 59.

In *Venus*, Parks moves through Saartjie Baartman's biography of being sold in various venues as a sexual sideshow and a medical curiosity. In *Fucking A*, Parks reimagines the war-torn stage of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* as the militarized police State's war against black families.[93] Young black men are processed as fodder for the prison industrial complex; Parks's police officers are known as "Hunters" who, in a Brechtian chorus, clarify: "We do/Not/Eat what we catch/That'd be a little much/Dontcha think?" (*FA* 147).[94] At the close of the play, Hester Smith (Mother Courage), slits the throat of her son, "Boy Smith," an escaped convict who is targeted by the Hunters as a dangerous predator, "Monster," whose comically long-rap sheet includes "Murder, necrophilia, sodomy, bestiality, pedophilia . . . diddling in public, cannibalism" (*FA* 143). Killing him to save him from being more brutally ravaged by the Hunters, she employs the same method her lover, Butcher, uses to humanely slaughter his pigs.

While *Fucking A* situates the relationship between the rendering of meat and the rendering of prisoners' bodies within the police state, *Imperceptible* is concerned with how the operations of the anthropological machine of neoliberalism recall histories of colonialism and neocolonialism in which the animal acts as a meta-text for the African.[95] When Verona speaks of her enduring fascination with the *Wild Kingdom*, she explains that Marlin Perkins schooled his audiences in their dominion over animals: "[Marlin's] guides took his English and turned it into local lingo so that he could converse with the natives. . . . He tagged the animals and put them

[93] Significantly, Parks portrays this war both through the prison system's incarceration of Hester Smith's son and through the play's depiction of reproductive justice. Hester Smith works as an abortionist who serves predominantly poor, black women. Similar to *In the Blood*, where Hester La Negrita is sterilized by the close of the play, Parks approaches reproductive justice as the right to be able to sustain a family.

[94] Carol Schafer writes, "Parks forces the audience to question the difference between animal meat and human flesh and to recognize society's dehumanization of its outcasts," *Comparative Drama* 42.2 (2008): 181-201. p. 198. I would argue, though, that Parks's concern with animal bodies extends beyond "society's dehumanization of its outcasts" and instead signals a concern with the conditions under which bodies and subjects are permitted to live.

[95] Achille Mbembe writes "discourse on Africa is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes) of a meta-text on the animal---to be exact, the beast." Achille Mbembe, *On the Post-colony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 9.

into zoos for their own protection. He encouraged us to be kind to animals through his shining example" (*Imperceptible* 36).

Verona absorbs these lessons of sovereignty. In her final monologue, she takes her place at the Naturalist's podium and confesses how she has abused animals within her care---first as a child with her dog, Namib (named after the "African sands"), who refused to be trained, and later, as an euthanasia specialist at an animal clinic. Her monologue---simultaneously a confession and a lecture---begins with the opening line earlier uttered by Mona and Chona, "Once there was uh me named Verona":

> VERONA: Someone brought a stray dog in one day and I entered 'black dog' in the black book and let her scream and whine and wag her tail and talk about me behind my back and then I offered her the humane alternative. Wiped her out! I stayed late that night so that I could cut her open because I had to see I just had to see the heart of such a disagreeable domesticated thing. But no. Nothing different. Everything in its place. Do you know what that means? Everything in its place. Thats all. (*Imperceptible* 36-37)

Here, we have another tale of a disobedient creature speaking out of turn. Echoing Mona's opening story in which she is displaced by her inability to repeat her speech lessons of lower animals obeying their owners---"The-little-lamb-follows-closely-behind-at-Marys-heels," the stray dog within Verona's care speaks out of turn. Like the Naturalist who suggests to his audience that Mona and Chona behave so "naturally" only because they believe that "our backs have turned" (*Imperceptible* 29), Verona's anxiously guarded sovereignty is simultaneously undermined and necessitated by the insurgent voice that she attributes to the animals under her

care (first Namib and then the stray with whom she reenacts her relationship with Namib).[96] As with the Naturalist, the power to name is secured through a violence that is alternately gentrified as a methodology of "best accommodation" or, here, "the humane treatment" or explicitly named as the extermination of a troublesome population of creatures who will not be disciplined.

Within this vein, the play's use of Mutual of Omaha's *The Wild Kingdom* invites us to consider how the show and its sponsor are engaged in material and symbolic economies that map the colonial and neoliberal spaces in which lives can thrive or be voided. As I earlier noted, Mutual of Omaha's *The Wild Kingdom* broadcast images of white American biologists confidently navigating exoticized landscapes of recently decolonized countries. At a time when black subjects were overthrowing colonial regimes and protesting the living conditions in Northern American cities, the show allowed viewers to conflate white dominion over animals (silent and vulnerable creatures existing outside of the political sphere and outside of time) with America's stewardship of an emergent, post-World War II order. Airing between Walt Disney's showcase and the CBS evening news, the show highlighted the U.S.'s role as an ethical guide navigating underdeveloped (and politically dubious) terrains.[97] This role was reflected in the branding of the show's sponsor. Mutual of Omaha's logo, which consisted of a white silhouette of an Indian Brave in a feathered headdress against a black background, was prominently

[96] In my previous chapters, I have engaged Jacques Derrida's lectures, *The Animal That Therefore I Am.* For my purposes here, I only wish to remark that Verona's monologue follows after the animal---both as the creature that precedes her and as the creature that she, like Perkins, seeks to track and catalogue. Derrida repeatedly notes that the "animal" is a category by which man "institutes what is proper to man, the relation to itself of a humanity that is above all anxious about, and jealous of, what is proper to it." Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Trans. David Wills, (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), p. 14.

[97] In one episode featured Marlin Perkins and his crew in the Soviet Union and was lauded as a sign of the U.S.'s ongoing efforts to overcome the global spread of communism.

displayed in the *Wild Kingdom*'s credit titles along with Mutual's slogan, "The People Who Pay."

Both the profile of the Indian and the company's slogan emphasized Mutual's pioneering (imperial) ethic and its company's enduring investment to developed peoples and lands.[98] This investment, moreover, warrants a further word about *Wild Kingdom's* sponsor. Just as eighteenth-century maritime insurance contracts underwrote the transatlantic slave trade and sponsored imperial geographies, health and real estate insurance markets developed local, biopolitical geographies. Founded in 1909 as Mutual Benefit Health and Accident Association, Mutual of Omaha entered the insurance market at a time when insurance and city planning in the U.S. underwent a dramatic turn.[99] In the early twentieth century, urban planning and zoning policy makers increasingly adapted a Western European model that was heavily determined by eugenics. In historian David M.P. Freund's study of twentieth-century American zoning policies, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (2007), he emphasizes that the practice of excluding Eastern-European, Asian immigrants, and black and Latino subjects was often rationalized within, to return to Rey Chow, "anthropological culturalisms," of "practices and behaviors". He highlights the landmark Supreme Court case *Euclid v. Ambler* (1926), that established "nuisance abatement," (a statute that originates in the feudal economies of medieval England)---the idea that owners of more expensive properties or homes could exercise the right to determine the character of their neighborhoods and exclude properties or prospective residents that might threaten their communities (Freund 84). A

[98] Mutual of Omaha's website reports that the Indian Brave logo was commissioned by art designer Floyd Wilson in 1949 and debuted in the January 14, 1950 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*.
[99] Indeed, as David M.P. Freund reports, in the early twentieth century, zoning became a discipline. Harvard University offered its first urban planning course in 1909. David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property*: *State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 50.

nuisance, the Court specified, "'may be a right thing in the wrong place, like a *pig in the parlor instead of the barnyard*'" (Freund 85, emphasis mine). Everything in its place, *Euclid v. Ambler* laid the foundation for later zoning polices from the federal inventions made in the Depression-era home insurance markets and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board's residential security maps of the mid-1930s which notoriously colored-coded neighborhoods that had been "'infiltrated by a lower-grade population.'"[100] Significantly, though, in the aftermath of World War II, the practice of red-lining was rationalized as part of the *natural workings of the market*. As biological racism became associated with Nazi Germany and fascism, the real estate industry and white, middle-class home owners insisted that the discriminatory practices that so structured cities like Detroit, New York, and Chicago, were an apolitical economic phenomenon rather than a sign of institutional racism and segregation. Within the free market, the white home owner had a right to determine the character of his neighborhood. That federal agencies intervened in the free market to ensure white homeownership was a fact that was elided.[101]

At first glance, my brief detour into the twentieth-century history of the racial politics of real estate insurance may appear to be of limited relevance to a discussion of Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom*. The company was principally involved in the life and medical insurance markets and it did not extend its operations to the home insurance market until well after World War II. However, the company's Indian Brave logo (notably adopted in 1949) and its sponsorship of

[100] Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Research and Statistics Review 1937, Qtd. in Amy E. Hillier, "Residential Security Maps and Neighborhood Appraisals: The Home Owners' Loan Corporation and the Case of Philadelphia," *Social Science History* 29.2 (Summer 2005): 207-233. p. 217.

[101] Freund addresses how the HOLC (Home Owner's Loan Company) set the precedent for this logic when he writes, "the HOLC provided a powerful forum for the argument, first codified by economists and realtors, that racial discrimination was not a matter of ideology or personal preference but of economics. . . . It helped give birth to a market that created more wealth for whites while providing a state-sanctioned platform for housing experts to argue that racial discrimination was simply a by-product of impersonal economic processes." David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 114.

Wild Kingdom reinforce the discourses of race, property, and civilizational boundaries that underwrote the policies that Freund's study examines. Broadly speaking, both *Wild Kingdom* and the company's logo that was prominently featured in its opening credits, promised a reconfiguration of spaces (or a geopolitical order) through which capital and (white, American) bodies may confidently move toward guaranteed, risk-adverse, futures. The company's post-war adoption of the Indian Brave image cites the displacement and extermination of a pestiferous, Native population (cleaning out space) and the subsequent narrative that the Indian was the predecessor of white pioneers who were themselves natives of the U.S. Notably, *Imperceptible* briefly refers to this foundational, national narrative figured in the logo when, in Section D, the Naturalist recalls for his audience, "our founding father went forth tirelessly crossing a vast expanse of ocean . . . The wilderness was vast and we who came to teach, enlighten, and tame were few in number" (*Imperceptible* 29). Like the Naturalist's history of the founding fathers taming the wilderness and its indigenous creatures, the silhouette of the Indian Brave against a black background attests to the operations of whiteness, as the ability to seize property and draw the boundaries between the civilized and the uncivilized.[102]

From another angle, though, namely one where we read the logo as the letterhead for the *Wild Kingdom*'s post-war mission of extending American goodwill to exotic regions, the Indian Brave is the romanticized "vanishing Indian" and expresses nostalgia for primitive cultures uncorrupted by modernity and more ethically oriented to the land. Read within this vein, Omaha's logo perversely advertises the U.S. as a multicultural nation (a nation of immigrants; a nation of noble savages) best equipped to care for other primitive cultures/lands and

[102] In chapter 1, I discuss Cheryl L. Harris's path-breaking "Whiteness as Property" at greater length. Here, I would simply note her varied discussion of the relationship between race and property. Cheryl L. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review*, 106.8 (1993): 1707-1791.

consequently, the nation best placed to invest in and secure a decolonized global order.[103] It gestures towards imperial histories repurposed as a promise of a more just and more developed Americanized world order---one in which, as an awed Verona tells the audience, white guides and African tribal leaders speak to one another in an improvised lingo.

I foreground these two available readings of Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* to emphasize how they reflect the relationship between the management of memory and property. In the following section, I examine how *Imperceptible* stages the U.S.'s management of black life and death from the Reconstruction era to the gentrification of New York. As I will argue, Parks's play shows that the dispossession of black subjects is partially secured through the *historicization* of racial injustices (as that which has happened but happens no longer) or the "unhoming" of racism in the lived present, in what Parks elegantly measures out as the "now+."[104]

III. "Where would we go if we did not extract?": Zoning Bodies, Displacing Racisms

"At root, precarity is a condition of dependency---as a legal term, *precarious* describes the situation wherein your tenancy on your land is in someone else's hands," Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*

". . . the legacy of slavery, as communicated through racial hierarchies, reduces black people to materiality—walking archives—reflecting the assumption that at one point the ancestor of a black person was literally property," Soyica Diggs Colbert, *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage*

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[103] This narrative, of course, is a familiar one. The defeat and further displacement of Native American nations in the late nineteenth century coincided with the expansion of the U.S.'s empire into Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. In Bonnie Miller's study of the ethnographic exhibits at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898 and the Omaha's 1899 Greater American Exposition, she notes that many of these exhibits shifted between the theory that the assimilation of Native Americans demonstrated the U.S.'s obligation to undertake a similar civilizing mission in the Philippines and a greater ambivalence about the violence of Empire. The Indian Congress exhibits were especially fraught as some anthropologists claimed that this would be the last opportunity to document "vanishing" cultures. Bonnie Miller, "The Incoherencies of Empire: the 'Imperial' Image of the Indian at the Omaha's World Fairs of 1898-99," *American Studies* 49 (Fall/Winter 2008): 5-28.

[104] In Parks's "Elements of Style" essay, she provides a time-line for our experience of time with markers like "Way Back When", "Olden Days", and "Now+". Suzan-Lori Parks, "Elements of Style," *The America Play and Other Works*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995), 6-18. p. 11.

Zones and subdivisions organize *Imperceptible*. To review: Parks's play is divided into parts and sub-sections that refer to the taxonomies contained within natural history catalogues, the subclauses of contracts, and the neighborhoods created by urban planning policies and zoning laws---from the residential security maps of the 1930s to the coterminous gentrification of cities and the displacement of poor, black and Latino residents in the 1980s. The sum of *Imperceptible*'s parts yields a fragmented whole in which the spaces of the slave ship, the colony, the managerial classroom, and the tenement apartment are aligned by the bodies of knowledge and the systems of capital which have produced them. In Part III, "Open House," Mrs. Aretha Saxon, a newly emancipated black woman, leaves her master's house. In section B, her mouth is metonymically outfitted as the belly of a slave-ship; she extracts her teeth to accommodate a "Whole hold full" of new arrivals, possibly "kin," possibly "strangers" from the First Kingdom (*Imperceptible* 43). Later, she is displaced from her apartment by her former master's children, Anglor and Blanca Saxon, whose names and seizure of her home spell out, in winking letters, an American genealogy that guarantees the inheritance of property for white subjects.

As with Part I, "Snails," Part II, "Open House," shows how the knowledge produced about black subjects allows for their dispossession. Like Mona and Chona, who first speak beneath a slideshow of images and who are known by names and photographs that are not theirs, Aretha is introduced to the audience through the footage produced about her. A double-slideshow of domestic harmony and antebellum understanding depicts her embracing the white children she serves. As slide after successive slide clicks above them that focuses on their increasingly wider, bordering on grimace, grins, she takes a hand in curating these images by encouraging the children to smile for the camera. Playing with the consoling fiction of the

shuffling and grinning slave who is "happy to serve," Aretha instead demands an affective performance from the children by urging them to show their "pretty white teeths" as she confirms that she is leaving. The children protest her departure and predict that, like their dolls, they will fall into disarray in her absence, "Who's going to clean our commodes? . . . We'll be sitting in our own filth because we won't have been changed we won't have been fed" (*Imperceptible* 42). The Saxon children's question speaks to the pivot that occurs in this act: whereas the first act, "Snails," is concerned with the taxonomies of lowly creatures and the spaces to which they have been confined, "Open House," addresses the ordering of the national body politic that depends on the labor and, later, erasure of the black female body. As enslaved flesh, Aretha Saxon is there to make things (commodes) and subjects (Anglor and Blanca), white. As a newly enfranchised black subject, she must be omitted from the record.

Leaving her assigned place as the guarantor of whiteness, Aretha tells the children that she is "going uhway tuh—tuh swallow courses uh meals n fill up my dance card! Goin uhway to live, I guess" but her vitality is questionable (*Imperceptible* 42). Like the ghostly speaker in Dabydeen's *Turner*, who recounts his stolen life from the maritime zone of death to which he has been consigned, Aretha's expiring self is, as Philip C. Kolin points out, of a piece with the many dead and phantasmagorical characters that we see throughout *Imperceptible* (Kolin 46). In the subsequent section, Aretha's mouth is metonymically linked with the belly of the slave ship that births socially dead slaves. Under the guidance of Miss Faith (performing the triangulated roles of nurse, historian, and later, real estate agent), she extracts her teeth to accommodate newly arrived captives from the first kingdom. Her mouth is imagined as a Noah's Ark of the Middle Passage that, with each extracted tooth, will allow her to accommodate kin, or strangers, or animals. Counting the cavernous spaces within her tongue, she anticipates that she will need

space for “hole house full. . . . Whole hold full” (*Imperceptible* 42-43). Linking the homophones “hole” and “whole,” Parks enunciates the irreparable loss that Aretha has suffered in which her house will always be marked by absence/hole (the family that she could not claim as family) and seizure of these “kin” or “strangers” as an endless supply of commoditized flesh that can fill a “whole hold full.” After Aretha reports the dimensions of the now-vacated spaces in her mouth, Miss Faith overrides her calculations by citing the dimensions of the iconic English slave-ship, the *Brookes*.

> Miss Faith: Footnote #1: The human cargo capacity of the English slaver, the *Brookes*, was about 3,250 square feet. From James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, G.J. McLeod Limited, 1981, page 283. . . . I calculate---we’ll fit six hundred people. Six hundred in a pinch. Footnote #2: 600 slaves were transported on the *Brookes*, although it only had space for 451. *Ibid.*, page 14. (*Imperceptible* 44)

Whereas Dabydeen’s *Turner* elegantly rehearses the metonym of the womb of the slave ship as the violated, maternal body in order to mourn the unrecoverable loss of the mother which frames and punctures the poem, *Imperceptible* collapses the minstrel fantasy of the obsequious, grinning black Mammy with the iconic, abolitionist print that, for two centuries, has served as a visual shorthand for the horrors of the Middle Passage. Based on numbers collected by Parliament’s Sessional Papers of the House, the *Brookes*, Amanda T. Perry has observed, sought to translate the statistical data increasingly used in the abolitionist debates to a more human scale.[105] The

[105] Perry notes that in 1787, British abolitionists began compiling data from Bristol, London, and Liverpool and used statistics and the mortality rates of slaves in their writings. Perry writes that their use of statistics demonstrates, “a very specific construction of the number as a transparent bearer of information, and second, a massive effort of data collection that tightened the link between estimates and documented accounts while depicting verifiable trading

broadsheet's famous rows of miniaturized, black figures, with narrow slivers of white space between them retains the trace of the data it illustrates; its tightly arranged and interchangeable figures, Perry writes, demonstrates the "violence of converting human beings into numbers" (93). Parks reverts this conversion and demands that we read the image as the devouring mouth of transatlantic capitalism.[106] Aligned with Aretha's hollowed mouth, the *Brookes*'s uniform, black figures are so many emptied cavities to be repeatedly and endlessly filled with new arrivals that could be "kin" or "strangers" to Aretha Saxon.

That this image is introduced after Mrs. Aretha Saxon first appears on stage as a newly emancipated subject no longer bound to the space of her master's home, speaks to the play's disruption of the "empty, homogenous time" of national progress.[107] Parks undermines the *Brookes*'s pride of place as the image that illustratively propelled the 1807 Abolition of the British Slave Trade and instead repurposes the image as a performance piece of racial kitsch emblematic of ongoing racializing capitalisms.[108] As both historian and nurse, Miss Faith is the audience's contemporary; she does not cite Clarkson's 1808 *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade* where the diagram of the *Brookes* was later published, but, instead, she refers to Rawley's study whose publication date

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practices." Amanda T. Perry, "A Traffic in Numbers: The Ethics, Effects, and Affect of Mortality Statistics in the British Abolitionist Debates," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 12.4 (Fall 2012): 78-104, p. 80.

[106] In Marcus Wood's *Blind Memory*, he observes that the drawing of *Description* employed eighteenth century naval drafting techniques but instead populates its normally "clean lines" with rows of bodies. In doing so, he writes, "the print questions the relation of the slave trade to British maritime history. The conjunction of technical engraving with the depiction of a mass of black human flesh is a superb semiotic shock tactic" (26-27). Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000).

[107] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 2006).

[108] I borrow this salient term, "racial kitsch" from Tavia Nyong'o who builds on Clement Greenberg's definition of kitsch as that which "attempts to say something profound, but can utter only clichés," by defining "racial kitsch" through its "failed effort to move unobtrusively among the objects of our everyday encounter, [it] unwittingly reveals itself to be profoundly laden with meaning" (371). Tavia Nyong'o, "Racial Kitsch and Black Performance," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15.2 (2002): 371-391. p. 371.

(1981) only predates the 1989 Brooklyn premiere of Parks's play by a few years. Throughout "Open House," Miss Faith's spoken and properly formatted footnotes are cited as facts that, having been committed to canonized works within academia, can be returned to their rightful place at the bottom of the page, thus allowing the national narrative to proceed towards its assured, post-racial future, and, more importantly, for capital to flow unimpeded. In *Imperceptible*, spoken footnotes act as signposts for events within Anglo-American national histories (the British abolition of the slave-trade, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution) which have been installed as the definitive endpoints of racializing systems of capitalism.

Parks's citation and interrogation of these sign posts recurs throughout her body of work. In *Venus*, a Negro Resurrectionist (who acts as historian and later, the guard who sells Venus's body) counts down through the chapters of Saartjie Baartman's biography. In his spoken footnotes that punctuate her freak-show performances and her sexual encounters with the men who exploit her, he recounts for the audience how Baartman's body was dissected and studied for its abnormalities. In Footnote 3, the Negro Resurrectionist situates Baartman's performances in Piccadilly circus by citing Robert Chambers's mention of her in *The Book of Days* (1864) and, after this citation, more heavily underlines the historical context of her biography, "The year was 1810, three years after the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade had been passed in Parliament, and among the protests and denials . . . The Venus show went on" (*Venus* 36). He repeats these lines after the trial in which the judge ruled that Baartman's performances did not violate the 1807 law because she engaged in these performances of her own volition.[109] Parks's

[109] Warner writes: "The judge in the court case found that, based upon her own testimony, Baartman willingly entered into contractual arrangement, freely exhibited herself, and had no desire to dissolve the business or return to South Africa." Sara L. Warner, "Suzan-Lori Parks's Drama of Disinterment: A Transnational Exploration of *Venus*," *Theatre Journal*, 60.2 (May 2008): 181-199. p. 184.

treatment of the Baartman archive can be read as a probing of this ruling. *Venus* imagines Baartman as both coerced by her white exhibitors and as an agent who, confronted with impossible choices, attempts to gain something (payment, affection, comfort) from her inevitable exploitation. Premiering only two years after Nelson Mandela had requested that Saartjie Baartman's remains be returned to South Africa, Parks's complex depiction of Venus, Warner remarks, constitutes a "drama of disinterment" that "actively thwarts catharsis and rejects reconciliation in favor of a theatre of resurrection and dis(re)memberment" (189). By denying the audience catharsis, Warner argues, Parks refuses to lay history to rest.

Parks's "drama of disinterment" in which archives of colonialism and slavery are excavated and are engaged as both remnants of histories that are actively revised and a means of profit is likewise staged in her 1990 *The America Play* and in her reprisal and revision of it, *Top Dog/Underdog* (2001). Set in the "Great Hole of History," the *America Play* follows the career and the abandoned family of the Foundling Father, a grave-digger and an Abraham Lincoln impersonator. As his son, Brazil, recounts, "Diggin was his livelihood but fakin was his callin" (*America* 179). A hustler in the post-memory marketplace, the Foundling Father invites paying customers to re-enact (with their own, improvised embellishments) John Wilkes Booth's assassination of the Great Emancipator. Casting a black man as a presidential impersonator who, for a fee, allows white patrons to violently protest the enfranchisement of black subjects by re-enacting Lincoln's assassination, Parks, Soyica Diggs Colbert remarks, links "the hole the bullet bored in President Abraham Lincoln's head [to] the one resulting from the trans-Atlantic slave trade that the Middle Passage symbolizes" (2). Complicating the postmodern truism that history is a collection of narratives undergoing constant revision and erasure, Parks's work stages the violent fantasies, sold and bought, in the Great Hole of History.

Placed alongside the Foundling Father's vaudeville re-enactment of President Lincoln's assassination, Miss Faith's citation of Rawley's study of the *Brookes* is another moment of excavation and exposure that occurs in Parks's body of work; her stated footnote uproots what is presumed to be sedimented knowledge. In contrast, though, to Dabydeen's radical revision of Ruskin's footnote, which corrects Ruskin's misreading of Turner's painting, and, Karen McIntyre points out, "signal[s] and attend[s] to the always-already-there absences or gaps the main text perpetuates and supports," (147), Parks's staging of the footnote as an uttered claim (instead of the muted, parenthetical aside at the bottom of the page) draws our attention to how histories of slavery and racial violence have been co-opted in their canonization. Parks's engagement of Rawley's work simultaneously reflects the invaluable interventions black studies scholars made in academia from the 1970s onwards and alerts us to how these bodies of knowledge have been used. The violent transactions that take place in "Open House"---the extraction of Aretha's teeth, the record produced of her life and body, and her eviction from her home---are enabled by the *historicization* of slavery and the assumption that what has been historicized has been fully corrected.

In her dual roles of historian and real estate agent, Miss Faith's correctly cites the record to create new spaces for capital. She recalls the numbers of bodies stored on the *Brookes* only to authorize a more expansive and productive mining of Aretha's mouth. Later, in section D, she extracts Aretha's teeth herself and informs her that they will be photographed and archived in the Book---a seemingly infinite compendium of pro-slavery interpretations of the Bible, British and American abolitionist histories, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal's paperwork, and the red herring pamphlets. Aretha's teeth are filed as forensic and ethnographic evidence in

the Book in which her remains will only appear as historical artifacts of a period that has now ended. Expounding on the virtues of the Book, Miss Faith states:

> MISS FAITH: The power of the book lies in its contents. . . . Through the examination of the facts therein we may see what is to come. Through the examination of what comes we may turn to our book and see from whence it came. Example: The book has let us know for quite some time that you expire 19-6-65, do you not, Mrs. Saxon. You expire. (Footnote #5: 'Juneteenth,' June 19th in 1865, was when, a good many months after the Emancipation Proclamation, the slaves in Texas heard they were free.) You expire. Along with your lease. Expiration 19-6-65 with no option to renew. . . . Youre expiring. . . . Amendment 1807. (*Imperceptible* 47)

In the footnotes that constitute the chapter and verse of the Book, the legislation that enfranchised black slaves as subjects perversely serves as the justification for their eviction and extinction.[110] Miss Faith's parenthetical and staggered definition of Juneteenth ("was when, a good many months") mimics an enduring reading of that event as a sad punchline that confirmed reigning discourses about black laziness. Her lapsed phrasing is sharply punctuated by her repeated and clipped declarations that Aretha's life and lease expire. By referring to British abolition of the slave trade by its year ("Amendment 1807") and the belated news of the Emancipation Proclamation, Miss Faith reifies a time-line in which the crimes of slavery have

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[110] Parks makes a similar move in her 1989-1992 play, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*. There, each act is divided into a panel discussion comprised of "figures" named after egregious stereotypes (among them, "Black Man with Watermelon"). In the play's Overture, "Black Woman with Fried Drumstick," announces, "Yesterday today next summer tomorrow just uh moment uhgoh in 1317 dieded thuh last black man in thuh whole entire world." Suzan-Lori Parks, "The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World," *The America Play and Other Works*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995), 99-131, p. 104.

been addressed and the nation-state is absolved of any responsibilities who are both presumed to be too unworthy, too late, to receive its gifts of freedom and to no longer exist.

The gospel of Miss Faith's Book echoes the post-slavery pedagogies of the Reconstruction-era. In Saidiya V. Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) she documented how post-Civil War textbooks and pamphlets produced by the Freedmen's Bureau served as a vehicle for "How You Became Free" stories addressed to emancipated blacks. The moral of these stories was one of debt; newly freed readers were advised that the U.S. had sacrificed the lives of valiant (white) Union soldiers and a considerable portion of its financial resources to secure their freedom. Hartman cites the *Freedmen's Advice* and *Plain Counsel* as texts that addressed newly emancipated blacks as indebted subjects. She writes, "Emancipation instituted indebtedness. Blame and duty and blood and dollars marked the birth of the free(d) subject. . . . Indebtedness was central to the creation of a memory of the past in which white benefactors, courageous soldiers, and virtuous mothers sacrificed themselves for the enslaved" (131). This storyline forwarded a national narrative in which black subjects were obligated to prove their worthiness through displays of self-reliance, deference, and the adoption of middle-class values.

Parks's "Open House" engages this narrative and provides a subsequent chapter to the "How You Became Free" stories: "How You Became an Artifact (How You Became Displaced)." After Aretha reads in the scripture that God, with his "azure eyes" and "toothsome smile," will only guarantee her former master, Charles Saxon, a place in his kingdom, Charles appears as a representative from the Housing Division (*Imperceptible* 44). He answers her entreaty, "What proof can you give me, Lord? I wants uh place," by demanding her RS-26 form (rent stabilization application) (*Imperceptible* 45). Still later, Charles appears in Dreamtime and, as he fondles her, instructs Aretha to smile for the camera while she nurses his offspring. Like

Miss Faith, he advises her on the importance of memory: "Memory is a very important thing, don't you know. Without it we could be anybody. . . . You would not know that you're my---help, you'd just be a regular street and alley heathen. I would not remember myself to be master" (*Imperceptible* 48). Charles's warning that failing memory, Aretha might roam outside of her assigned place like a feral creature, recalls Molly/Mona and Charlene/Chona's shared refrain in "Snails": "once there was uh me who wondered what she would sound like if no one was listening/watching." Charles's gaze, extended through the archival lens of the camera, seeks to foreclose the futures and the other, acoustic and visual, selves that can be generated through calculated or, as is sometimes the case with traumatized subjects, involuntary, acts of forgetting.[111] His threat-disguised-as-a-lesson further illustrates how histories of slavery are used to bind black subjects to the histories that have racialized them, flattening them, in Colbert's phrasing, "to materiality—walking archives" (4). Colbert's observation speaks to Sharpe's elaboration of these same concerns when she reminds us that "post-slavery subjectivity is largely borne by and readable on the (New World) *black* subject" (3). Both insights have bearing on the homing and unhoming of Aretha. She is treated as a fragmented collection of evidence (her teeth extracted and itemized; her image captured as the figure of the happy and compliant mammy) at the post-Emancipatory moment where she is enfranchised as a citizen and the post-Civil Rights moment when the project of the Civil War is presumed to have been completed.

Similar to "Snails" where Parks links the colonial ordering of racialized bodies to neoliberal policies of pesticide, "Open House" ties the historicization of Aretha Saxon to the

[111] In Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*, she very carefully acknowledges that while we are right to associate forgetting with the historical amnesias of dominant cultures, forgetting also "allows for a release from the weight of the past and the menace of the future." Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), p. 83.

nation's preservation of white property and the gentrification of its cities. In Section F, Miss Faith gives Blanca and Anglor a tour of the apartment that Aretha occupies and when Aretha introduces herself to the couple, Miss Faith simply states the Juneteenth date to nullify her claims to the apartment: "Expires 19-6-65" (*Imperceptible* 49). As Miss Faith itemizes the features of an apartment that recall those of a ship, "views of the land, and of the sea, a rotating northern exposure," Blanca assures her that they are familiar with its selling points, "We read the book. The red-letter edition. The red herring. Cover to cover. We read the book" (*Imperceptible* 49). The "book" is a lower-case text that discretely usurps the authoritative historical record of the Book. Unlike Miss Faith's description of the *Brookes's* layout, the red herring reference is a silenced footnote that is not unpacked for the audience. A companion to Charles Saxon's request for the Division of Housing and Community Renewal's application forms, the sly allusion to the red herring sales-book relies on the audience's knowledge and mimics how these documents operate as invisible mechanisms that guarantee the white inheritance of property. In *Urban Outcasts: a Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (2008) Wacquant notes that during the 1980s, public discourse on Northern cities shifted from the post-war understanding of them as "irrelevant for access to valued social locations and the attendant bundle of life chances" to spaces that needed to be reclaimed from dangerous populations (15). During the 1980s when euphemisms like "the underclass" and the "inner city" circulated in a larger storyline that conceptualized the urban spaces as, in Wacquant's words, "a dumpster for the poor" (30). Residents of spaces often referred to as "war zones" (language that, as Ferguson has demonstrated, still retains its strong purchase on the national discourse) were demonized as degenerate populations occupying real estate that could be better developed for the benefit of multinational corporations, tourists, and the upper middle class.

Refusing to explain the bureaucratic and real estate forms that allow for the contingent incorporation of indigent, racialized populations or their eviction, Parks instead exposes gentrification's alibi as a natural development within the market. Aretha's newly re-zoned apartment is yet another space whose parameters and residents are shaped by the Middle Passage. Put differently, it is a non-boat that is, as the Us-Seer of the Third Kingdom insists, in fact, a boat. As Miss Faith gives the Saxons a tour of Aretha's apartment, she assures Blanca and Anglor that they can remove her from the apartment to make new closets. Anglor responds by echoing Miss Faith's earlier mention of the 2:1 ratio of men to women on the *Brookes*: "Thus says the book. Amendment 2.1. Always liked that amendment. It's very open—open to interpretation" (*Imperceptible* 50). Histories of slavery outfitted for the continued transfer of property among white subjects, Parks shows that gentrification is the replication of domestic plantation relations within the city where Aretha's former master stands outside as a police officer directing traffic. Aretha can only be accommodated in her co-opted apartment by reprising her prescribed role as a Mammy to the Saxon brood. Anglor Saxon tells her, "You seem like a sturdy help type. I suppose you can shuffle and serve simultaneously? . . . A help like you would be in accordance with the book. Make things make sense. Right along with the record. More in line with what you're used to" (*Imperceptible* 51). By the book and following a linear and well-worn line of white inheritance and black displacement, Parks underlines a familiar lesson: whiteness is the gift that keeps on giving, or, *pace* Ahmed, the gift that white, middle-class subjects keep inheriting.[112] The feedback loop of this inheritance swiftly circles and, like the surrealist humor in "Snails," achieves a manic pitch. Like Faulkner, Parks stages

[112] In Sara Ahmed's queering of the concepts "orient" and "orientations" she compellingly elucidates that the heteronormative imperative to reproduce (the nation, the family, the race) is an imperative to return "the gift" of one's inherited spaces. See Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).

the white genealogies of the nation as a will to incest; Anglor and Blanca Saxon are childhood sweethearts who meet, as Blanca tells Aretha, in the womb. When they gleefully assure her that their marriage is "by the book," Aretha responds with the punchline: "We got different books" (*Imperceptible* 51).[113]

Aretha's punchline is later borne out in dreamtime when, repeating her earlier exchange with him, she takes photographs of Charles Saxon that, she informs him, will be stored in her own archival record. As Charles Saxon increasingly adopts the prescribed mannerisms and postures of a Mammy (addressing Aretha as "Ma'am" and lamenting that the children won't smile), Aretha tells him, "You say its uh cry I say it uh smile. . . . Smile or no smile mm gonna remember you. Mm gonna remember you grinnin'" (*Imperceptible* 54). While James Frieze has read this scene as a sign that she has "swallowed whole the rhetoric that validated slavery," (528), his reading overlooks Aretha's earlier questioning of the Book and her reversal of its prescribed roles. In Colbert's study, *The African American Theatrical Body* (2011), she reminds us that African American drama generates "reparative spaces" where the "epistemological scripts" that have so defined the histories and lives of black subjects are flipped. Through these reversals, "[narratives of] homelessness [are rewritten] into modes of finding a home . . . disenfranchisement into rites of repairing" (8). These rites, moreover, are staged at historical junctures (pre-Harlem, post-War, and post-Soul, in her organizing examples) that prompt black dramatists to cultivate "modes of performance to manage the physical loss of space" (12). Of

[113] Regrettably, the "book" that Parks cites in this scene introduces a violent competition between the historical traumas of the Holocaust and slavery. Later in this scene, Aretha uses the name of a concentration camp, "Buchenwald" to point out an estimated nine million Africans were kidnapped from Africa. Blanca counters this claim by stating the number "six million." A footnote in the text of the play positions these events against one another. As I have noted in my introduction, numerous scholars and artists have argued against a reductive, competitive model within trauma studies (Michael Rothberg and Sylvia Wynter among them). Many of the authors I cite in this chapter, Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen among them, have urged that we must think the racialization of Jewish subjects and black subjects alongside one another.

Parks's plays, Colbert only engages *The America Play* and *Topdog/Underdog* (2001) but her observation aptly speaks to both the space that Parks occupies as a prominent African American female dramatist (the first to receive the Pulitzer Prize for drama) and to how Parks's play outlines and thus reclaims the spaces zoned by ongoing racializing capitalisms. Parks's depiction of Aretha as a subject who is only afforded physical and discursive space as a footnoted collection of bodily artifacts and as the "expired" figure of the plantation Mammy, contests the date-stamp affixed to her body and redraws the spatial and epistemic dimensions to which she has been confined.

To be sure, the space and time of self-making that Aretha claims in her Dreamtime exchange with her former master is tempered by Parks's depiction of the racializing capitalisms of the long twentieth century. Although Aretha defiantly tells Charles that she going up North to assume her "place aside thuh most high," a brief glance back at the play's first zone, "Snails," ironizes her celebratory conflation of heaven and the northern promised land of the Great Migration. The enlightened North, we are reminded by Mona's opening contemplation of whether she should take her life ("would I splat?"), is defined by its own restrictions.

The play's final zone, "Slugs," routes these restrictions through the enduring promise of middle-class respectability and full civil enfranchisement that the U.S. military has extended to black subjects from the Emancipation Proclamation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Parks explores the World War II-era extension of this promise through Mr. Sergeant Smith, a black Marine stationed on an island located in a time-zoned somewhere away from his family. Unlike Aretha's well-footnoted biography in "Open House," "Slugs" gives us few historical coordinates but its period and roughly defined geopolitical coordinates, I argue, provide us with an opening for considering the largely unremarked history of the transatlantic policing of black soldiers. In

Hazel V. Carby's "Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects," she cites Stuart Hall's canonization of 1948 arrival of the *S.S. Empire Windrush* as the "'birthdate of the Afro-Caribbean black diaspora'" and, more expansively, the birthdate of a post-war British blackness.[114] 300 West Indian migrants paid the fare of 28 pounds 10 pence to travel to the seat of the diminished Empire and disembarked at the Tilbury docks in London.[115] Carby argues, though, that the history of post-war British blackness predates the *Windrush*'s arrival and begins with the black Caribbean and U.S. soldiers (130,000 from 1942 onwards) stationed in Britain. England's "modern, racialized state," she argues was forged during this period when black soldiers were viewed as a population to be quarantined from white, female civilians. Based on the racial ideologies of British imperialism and the segregation practices imported from their American ally, "government, military, national and local practices that produced racialized subjects as external to ideologies of what constituted acceptable conventions of British/English subjecthood and citizenship" (Carby 644). As governmental and local practices go, so goes national public memory. Just as black subjects were posited as foreigners to the native, white, British citizen, the service of black soldiers in England was erased from local and national memory. Carby movingly recounts her childhood lesson in this erasure. Recalling the framed photograph of her father "in his uniform, RAF cap at the correct jaunty angle . . . the epitome of British heroic manhood, I thought," she recounts how her teacher sharply corrected her reading of the photograph (Carby 642). When she proudly told her classmates of her father's service in the

[114] Stuart Hall qtd. in Hazel V. Carby, "Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects," *Cultural Studies*. 23.4 (July 2009): 624-657. p. 639.

[115] Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace recounts, "The decommissioned warship had originally been sent to islands of the British commonwealth to collect soldiers at the end of World War II. With space remaining, passage to England was offered to anyone who could raise the fare of twenty-eight pounds ten. About three hundred West Indian men made the journey" (3). Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2006).

Royal Air Force, her teacher reprimanded her and informed the class that there were no black people in England during the war let alone serving in their army.

Her description of the photograph of her father, later followed by a photograph of her parents together---her white mother, smiling, with her arm encircling the slim waist of Carby's uniformed father---serves as a bridge to Parks's depiction of Mr. Sergeant Smith. In the first scene, he stands in front of a desk---omitting the mop and broom that characterize his rank and duties---and narrates his pose of ascendant whiteness for the unseen photographer. "Hands in pockets. No—out. Ready for work. Here is Sergeant Smith at his desk. Ready. Ready for work. Next, second shot: right hand on the desk. Like on the Bible. God and Country. Here is a man who loves his work" (*Imperceptible* 58). Whereas Mona, Chona, Mokus, and, to a lesser degree, Aretha, are preceded and catalogued by images not of their making, Sergeant Smith's self-directed photographs are imbued with the promise and the *punctum* of recognition by the nation-state and the civilian middle-class to which he and his family aspire. Like Carby's father and the thousands of black soldiers who served in World War II with the expectation of being respected for their service, Sergeant Smith's photographic essay/epistle to his family tells a familiar story of advancement through assimilation. And like the erasure of Carby's father, Sergeant Smith's story is countered by the slow erosion of the Smith family's domestic space and his estrangement from them. Despite the military's promise of a meritocratic space in which, as Sergeant Smith later tells his wife, he can be "uh mister[s]" and provide for his family, their home is slowly dismantled---domestic piece by domestic piece---collected by the 0-800 on behalf of "the Effort." When Sergeant Smith returns to his family as a ghostly presence, his identity as a soldier on the verge of promotion and assured patriarch is nullified. The ledger itemizing the contents of his letters to his family was, he is informed, repossessed by the Effort and his blinded wife

speculates that he could be just another Smith. The story of his heroism---that he saved a fellow soldier who fell from an airplane---is undermined by his daughter, Muffy, who corrects him, "You stepped on a mine. I read it in the paper. . . . The mine blew off his legs" (*Imperceptible* 70). Capitalizing on the homonym, he, in turn, poses the question, "You one uh mines?" to each one of his children. Mr. Smith's final words complete Parks's play and sound its final, entomological note when he answers his son Duffy's repeated question: "are we turtles?" "We ain't even turtles. Huh. We'se slugs. Slugs. Slugs" (*Imperceptible* 71).

Reunited with his family under the classificatory heading of legless and homeless insects, Sergeant Smith's story is of a piece with Parks's other characters---all of whom are discarded, extracted, and maimed by the enduring mutations of racializing capitalisms. Like Dabydeen, who revisits the drowned archive of the slave trade by imagining the ships that continued to pass and the child who was jettisoned after the *Zong*'s voyage, Parks refuses the "land ho!" cry of the post-racial promise-land. Challenging their audiences with remembered and unfolding scenes that cannot be safely consigned to an expired history nor easily consumed in the neoliberal marketplace, Parks and Dabydeen show how the "two words/two worlds" of Old and New Worlds forged by the Middle Passage continue to inscribe the third Kingdom of our present.

Chapter Four: Genres of Trauma, Zones of Life in Post-9/11 Cinema

"I could even understand how our friends of the West coast, during the curfew, should have had such curious notions as to believe that we are not only 'prospective citizens' but present 'enemy aliens.' In daylight, of course, we become only 'technically' enemy aliens---all refugees know this. But when technical reasons prevented you from leaving your home during the dark hours, it certainly was not easy to avoid some dark speculations about the relation between technicality and reality." Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees" (1943)

In Caryl Phillips's November 17th, 2001 essay, "Strangers in a Strange Land" (originally published in the *Guardian* and later included in his 2011 collected essays, *Color Me English: Migration and Belonging Before and After 9/11*), he recounts his experience of visiting a contested Red Cross refugee center in Sangatte, France near the ports and stations of Calais. At the time of his writing, the center houses predominantly Afghan, Iraqi, and Iranian refugees and migrants (terms he uses interchangeably, later qualifying "migrant" as either "political migrant" or "classic economic migrant"), displaced by successive waves of U.S. military and economic aggressions. At the center, these migrants exist in a pattern that holds through deadening repetition; they petition for British or French asylum, and, while they wait, participate in what Phillips identifies as a nightly ritual wherein they attempt a dangerous passage to the U.K. by jumping the Chunnel trains. Their attempted crossings sometimes end in death or, more frequently, they are forcibly apprehended by the Eurostar's private security officers whose presence frames Phillips's essay.

The painful familiarity of the scene that Phillips documents---a migrant subject violently displaced by neocolonial geopolitics and then prevented from crossing a border---contributes to the origami-like temporal folds of past and future in his essay. Its title, "Strangers in a Strange Land," is a reference to Robert Heinlein's 1961 science fiction novel, and like its sci-fi predecessor, it predicts the disasters to come. Broadly, it forecasts the post-9/11 aggressive policing of racialized immigrants in France, the U.K., and the U.S. More locally, it anticipates

the later closure of Sangatte and Nicholas Sarkozy's 2009 razing of the makeshift encampments in Calais known as "The Jungle" which were formed after the Red Cross Center was shuttered.[116] These past futures rush forward to meet us as we read.

Phillips's gaze, though, is fixed on the disasters that have already occurred; throughout, his encounters with the asylum seekers are routed through, to borrow from Nicholas Mirzoeff, colonial visualities. Passing as a West African migrant to enter the Red Cross center, he describes its interior as a stock-image from the long, twentieth century: "At the entrance to the warehouse, men squat idly in a scene that rekindles memories of prisoner of war films. . . . I look around and feel as though I have entered a vast exhibition hall where the tents and the Portakabins are the exhibits and the refugees have been assigned the part of extras adopting poses of extreme boredom, misery and anxiety" (4). In this living tableau, the refugees appear as figures stationed in numbered stalls in a neocolonial world's fair carefully curated to inform the citizen-viewer of global humanitarian crises. They are simultaneously positioned as subjects *outside of time* who have fled or been evicted from the chronology of the nation-state *and* as anachronistic persons burdened by a surplus of history that, Phillips's uneasy phrasing suggests, *should be* obsolete---it is shocking in its historicity---yet it persists.

The shock of the historicity of the migrant/refugee is mitigated by the contemporary, neoliberal border regimes, comprised of governmental and private security teams often working on behalf of corporations (in this instance, EuroStar rail) as well as the nation-state, devoted to selectively policing these subjects. He begins by remarking the uncertain legality and legibility of a border patrol guard ("He *looks* like a police officer") and ends by returning to his interview

[116]For more on British and French news media coverage of the "Jungle," see Anita Howarth and Yasmin Ibrahim, "Threat and Suffering: the liminal space of 'The Jungle,'" *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience, and Spaces in-between*, eds. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, (New York: Routledge, 2012): 200-216.

with this officer who justifies his assigned mission by explaining to Phillips that falling house prices demand a more militaristic pursuit of the "illegals." In his portraiture, Phillips captures what Wendy Brown, in *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (2010), has diagnosed as the one of the governing paradoxes of this, our latest era of globalized capitalism: even as neoliberalism has rendered national economies porous and "demote[d] the political sovereign to managerial status," (22), nations fortify their borders to police the movements of populations that are imagined to threaten their security.

The threat ascribed to the refugee (as contagion and/or as a parasitic population that will drain the nation-state of its resources) that Phillips documents in his interview with the guard speaks to Hannah Arendt's and, later Giorgio Agamben's, argument that the refugee has been and will continue to be the determinative figure of the political history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; s/he would throw the very concept of the nation-state and its adjoining legal-political categories into crisis. In Arendt's 1943 essay "We Refugees," written after her own flight to the U.S., she trenchantly criticizes the "insane optimism which is next door to despair" required of Jewish migrants who are encouraged to completely assimilate into their adopted nation-states.[117]

Such assimilationists, illustrated through her example of Mr. Cohn, must prove themselves to be 150% German, then, later, loyal Czechs, and still later, patriots of France, maintaining their fidelity even as their civil protections are stripped away from them and they are subjected to violence in service of protecting the national body to which they do not belong.

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[117] Before the war, Arendt writes, "We declared that we had departed of our own free will to countries of our choice, and we denied that our situation had anything to do with 'so-called Jewish problems.' . . . We wanted to rebuild our lives, that was all. In order to rebuild one's life one has to be strong and an optimist. So we are very optimistic." Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, ed. Mark Robinson, (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1994), pp. 110-119. p. 110.

Confronting these successive nullifications and the accompanying demand that Jewish émigrés should forget the regimes of violence that continue to exile them, Arendt urges her readers instead reject the false optimism of assimilation. The term "refugee," she argues, should be embraced as an entry point for a political future in which "history is no longer a closed book" (119). Inviting us to more expansively imagine the plurality of these futures, she starkly concludes that refugees are "the vanguards of their peoples" (119). Agamben takes up this invitation in his 1995 lecture on Arendt's essay (given the same year that *Homo Sacer* was first published in Italy) by situating her argument within the 1990s-era siren calls of the death of the nation-state. He augments her designation of refugees as the "vanguard of their peoples" by suggesting that the refugee intimates the future of the commons. "The refugee is," he writes, "perhaps, the only *imaginable* figure of the people in our day. At least until the process of the dissolution of the nation-state and its sovereignty has come to an end, the *refugee is the sole category in which it is possible to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come*" (114, emphasis mine).

To be sure, Phillips does not make such prophetic claims for the asylum-seekers he meets. But, reading Agamben's statement that the refugee is the only "imaginable" figure of the future, returns us to Phillips's imagining of the migrants he encounters and the temporalities (past and future past) that operate in his essay. Running through a declension of decidedly national, visual analogs, Phillips first likens the Center to the 1950s prisoner of war films intended to showcase the code of honor shared by British and American soldiers. His later comparison of the interior of the warehouse to "vast exhibition halls" recalls the World's Fair exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that, to build on Walter Benjamin, served not only as a place of pilgrimage for the commodity fetish but as a spectacle that enabled

patrons to conceptualize the world and, more pointedly, colonized peoples, as so many catalogued objects of knowledge and consumable goods. Phillips himself engages in a variation of this cataloguing. As he interviews two unnamed men from Cameroon and Benin, his gaze strays out into the distance at "an Afghani [who] squats on his haunches and contorts his body into a twisted sculpture that describes misery. Cars, many with British plates, flash by, but the man does not move a muscle or blink his eyes" (6). His description of the Afghan man's stylized postures of abjection---"twisted sculpture"---effectively locates him as an artifact within the exhibit to which he earlier likens the camp.

Notably, Phillips's historicization of the migrants at Sangatte or, better, his conceptualization of his experiences at camp as scenes from different geopolitical eras, is activated by and centers on Muslim subjects. In sharp contrast to the Afghani man whose posture he reads as a still-life of misery, Phillips confidently predicts a viable future for the African man he interviews who, in his home country of Cameroon, was a history lecturer. His disparate allocation of futurity for these two men threatens to collapse into a latent reading of the Muslim as divorced from modernity's procession---an orientalist tropeology that he earlier criticizes in the title essay of his *Color Me English* collection.[118] I would suggest, though, that it is more illustrative of the historical vertigo at work in his essay than a re-drawing of civilizational lines that he has devoted his career to aggressively critiquing. As I observed at the outset, time is out of joint at Sangatte. The date-stamp for the article, 2001, and the national identities of the asylum seekers locate us in the blowback of already activated and soon-to-be-

[118]Notably, the first essay in Phillips's *Color Me English*, which shares the title of the collection, concerns his experience of learning the limitations of racial solidarity when one of his fellow classmates, Ali, is mercilessly harassed by their predominantly white peers. Caryl Phillips, *Color Me English: Reflections on Migration and Belonging*, (New York: New Press, 2013), pp. 3-18.

drawn historical fault-lines. As readers, we are caught up not just in the overwhelming aftermaths that underwrite the refugees' presence at Sangatte, but in the future anteriors that rush forward: the bombing of Baghdad that will have occurred; the intensification of anti-immigration discourse that will have happened in France, England, and the U.S. after 9/11. To all of this, we must add Phillips's position as an established cosmopolitan author and a member of the post-*Empire Windrush* generation, who has successfully navigated a transnational marketplace that has produced the new diasporas experienced by the asylum-seekers. He reflects that they simply want the opportunity to reset the clock on their human capital or, to begin "a new life at the bottom of the pile" (7). Writing from a different height, Phillips manages his experience of dislocation or, rather, his experience of the geopolitical uncanny, by stabilizing himself with familiar visual coordinates for witnessing global(ized) disasters.

I begin this chapter by mapping these coordinates because the past and future crises that Phillips's essay simultaneously marks and predicts speak to the post-9/11 cinematic narratives that I examine in the pages that follow. Here, I study post-9/11 films that depict the traumas of the border experienced by colonial and migrant subjects whose status often blurs the divisions between the categories of "migrant" and "refugee": Michael Haneke's canonical (and now, canonically maligned) art house thriller, *Caché* (2005), Nina Davenport's documentary, *Operation Filmmaker* (2007), and Alex Rivera's sci-fi dystopian film, *Sleep Dealer* (2008). As my descriptors acknowledge, these films belong to starkly different genres, geopolitical milieus, and have enjoyed vastly different audiences. While *Caché* was recently hailed by the *New York Times* as a cinematic guide to the Paris attacks in late November, *Sleep Dealer* and, more

pronouncedly, *Operation Filmmaker* are relatively little-known films.[119] Without glossing over their differences, I stress that they are imbricated in compounded histories of West European and American imperialism and their successive regimes of neocolonialism and neoliberalism that so often work in tandem with one another.

Of the films that I study, Haneke's detective thriller of the post-colonial haunting of France shares the most obvious commonality with Phillips's portrait of the displaced persons in Sangatte. In addition to their shared geography, both appear to forecast, most especially in the case of Haneke's film, the October 2005 protests in the banlieues of Clichy-sous-Bois. Yet, all of these films are situated within genres that are principally defined by temporalities and which, in turn, mirror the palimpsest of colonial visualities that shape Phillips's essay. Haneke's use of a detective conceit---that genre that, as I mentioned in my chapter one discussion of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Foucault characterized in his lectures as the privileged, Victorian narrative of biopower; Davenport's focus on the conflict between the real-time unfolding of the disasters of the Iraq war and narrative demands placed on the traumatized refugee as *an archival subject*, and the speculative futures of Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* all depict traumas of the border as both an event that ripples outwards and as a series of violent yet muted episodes. Their respective depictions of what I am calling border traumas resonate with the more expansive understanding of both the temporalities of trauma and, *pace* Berlant, trauma as a narrative genre. As I addressed in my introduction, E. Ann Kaplan, Lauren Berlant, Jill Bennett, and Ariella Azoulay, among others, have argued for a more capacious understanding of trauma in the present and future tense that would allow for the ways in which memory is, in Bennett's phrasing, "inhabited in different

[119] See Wesley Morris and A.O. Scott, "Six French Films that Speak to the Identity of the Nation." *The New York Times.com*. 28 November 2015. New York Times.

modalities by different people" (11). Collectively, their interventions have elaborated and complicated the Caruthian model that interprets trauma as the reverberating event of the wound that unmoors the subject from a present that, as Berlant points out, she is presumed to be otherwise able to coherently narrate. Following their interventions, we should think of trauma as not only an historical event but an ongoing crisis of precarity in which violence becomes muted in its recurrence and, as Azoulay observes in her study of the enduring state of emergency in which Palestinians live, "emptied of any dimension of urgency."[120]

The films that I examine are organized around fantasies of archives---the hidden archive that re-emerges in *Caché* and the video-archive of the Iraq war that Muthana Mohamed is expected to provide in Davenport's *Operation Filmmaker*---which attempt restore this dimension of urgency for viewers watching (or, misreading) these crises in their excavation and unspooling. Their varied, attempted restorations give me ground to advance my main inquiries in this chapter: To return to Phillips's visual analogs for understanding the scene of Sangatte, what visual tropes and figures do we reach for as we conceptualize a crisis? If, as Domietta Torlasco reminds us in *The Heretical Archive* (2013), the archive is organized to instruct future generations, how are trauma narratives, authored in the present, real-time of the disaster, shaped by these expectations of inheritance? And, to contain this Russian nesting-doll set of questions within its overarching inquiry: how have the conventions of trauma as an "affective genre" that, as Berlant argues, have "induced a periodizing norm for writing about the history of the present,"(80) trained us to read different scales of disasters? How do these reading practices

[120] In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Azoulay writes that the "systemic vulnerability" experienced by "flawed citizens" and non-citizens are "conceived of as part of the routine, not as an exceptional event, and the situation is emptied of any dimension of urgency." Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, (New York: Zone Books, 2008), p. 35.

cohere into pedagogies of cosmopolitan memory that sometimes work in tandem, sometimes in conflict, with biopolitical forms of governance?

To better explain the pedagogies of memory that I examine within these films, I will provide a rough sketch of their commonalities. In Haneke's *Caché*, a series of video surveillance tapes record and frame Haneke's paradigmatic, white, bourgeois couple, Georges and Anne. Their episodic entries lead Georges (and the viewer) to Majid, a French-Algerian man, whom Georges had expelled from his family's estate as a child after Majid's parents were killed in the October 17th, 1961 FLN protests in Paris. Within the substantial body of scholarship produced on *Caché*, the critical consensus maintains that it is limited by its exclusive focus on the white, complicit subject and the culpability of white, upper-middle class France. Majid and his enigmatic son are cast as object lessons rather than characters. I largely concur with these criticisms, but I wish to focus on how this object lesson of failed, post-colonial responsibility/responsiveness is advanced through a fantasy of an archive that would serve as a corrective to what is cast as the lies of the nation-state. The testimony of the 1961 massacre and its aftermath is effectively supplied by the wordless narrative advanced by the surveillance tapes that arrive on Georges and Anne's doorstep as so many indicting letters from the past. These surveillance tapes and the film's famous, opening sequence of collapsed frames, reveal a fantasy for a disappeared archive that, in its re-emergence, would exercise a retributive violence.

If *Caché* dramatizes a fantasy for a phantasmagorical archive that would indict those complicit in colonial crimes, Davenport's *Operation: Filmmaker* (2007) is a documentary whose organizing premise is based on the failure to produce such an archive. Davenport's documentary follows an Iraqi film student, Muthana Mohamed, who is invited to work as an intern on the set of Liev Schreiber's 2005 film adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's best-selling,

novel of Holocaust post-memory, *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). Schreiber learns of Mohamed after randomly stumbling upon an episode of the MTV reality television drama, *True Life,* titled "I'm Living in Iraq" (2004). In the *True Life* episode, Mohamed gives his (presumably), predominantly American audience a ground-level tour of the bombed out cityscape of Baghdad and speaks of his forestalled aspirations to become a Hollywood filmmaker. Schreiber enlists Davenport to film Mohamed both to complement the cross-cultural memory work his adaptation of *Everything* exemplifies and in order to produce an archival corrective to the circumscribed (redacted/embedded) coverage of the U.S.'s occupation of Iraq. As the film's title announces, though, Davenport instead depicts the increasingly strained relationship between Mohamed and his American patrons as "the perfect metaphor" for the Bush administration's mission of democratic uplift through violent occupation. After Mohamed is effectively abandoned by his patrons and must move from application scene to application scene to maintain tenuous footholds within the Czech Republic and England, Davenport, alternating between caretaker and director, depicts him as a neocolonial mimic man: a self-interested actor well-versed in the codes of American, consumer culture yet a disappointing object of study. A perfect metaphor but a bad documentary subject, Mohamed's story does not to adhere to the conventions of the immigrant or survivor narrative and his oftentimes deliberately muted responses to the occupation evoke feelings of disappointment and frustrated annoyance. These feelings of disappointment that permeate Davenport's documentary reveal the disciplinary effects of the conventions of trauma as a genre.

I move from my examination of the real-time archive of the occupation that Mohamed fails to provide to Rivera's dystopian *Sleep Dealer*, which conjugates the corrosive effects of U.S. neoliberalism and the intensified post-9/11 regimes of border control in the speculative

anterior (what will have happened). Foregoing the story-line of the migrant whose attempt to build a life for himself after crossing into the U.S. advances a plea for tolerance and immigration reform, Rivera's film instead depicts supranational American corporations' invasions of Mexico. Throughout, we see the U.S.'s privatization of Mexico's water supply (courtesy of Del Rio Inc.), its militarization of the border through drones and biometric scanning, and its outsourcing of corporeal labor to Mexican subjects. The film's lead character, Memo, moves to Tijuana to work in a Cybracero factory where he and his co-workers hook up to channels that funnel their energy to work-sites in the U.S. As his supervisor tells him, they realize the American Dream by "giving the U.S. what they always wanted: the work without the worker." *Sleep Dealer* critiques and disrupts these channels and, in its final frames, points towards a coalitional politics that would short-circuit the exploitative networks that U.S. neoliberalism celebrates as the optimistic index of a more connected, global economy.

In sum, these films all showcase the post-9/11 biopolitics and necropolitics of the border and the zones of life and border-line subjects that they produce. A consideration of these subjectivities requires a word about nomenclature. In my discussion, I refer to the subjects that these films portray as "migrants" rather than "refugees"---although this latter term does, at points, accurately describe Mohamed's crisis of displacement in *Operation Filmmaker* and the heading under which his visa applications to the U.S. are filed. Mindful of the dangers of installing the "refugee" as a messianic figure of the commons to come (as Agamben does in his elaboration of Arendt's essay), I take my cues from Mimi Thi Nguyen's *The Gift of Freedom* (2012). There, she argues that the diagnosis of the traumatized refugee often serves the disciplinary function of treating her as an anachronistic subject who needs to be rehabilitated and reincorporated into the time-zone of the nation-state (a track that Phillips appears to follows in

his characterization of the Afghan man as frozen in a posture of abjection).[121] Expressing these same concerns in their *Border as Method* (2013), Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson explain that they use "migrant" as the grounding term for their investigations of subjects who "cross or negotiate the world's borderscapes" in order to avoid terms like "refugee, asylum seeker, or 'illegal' migrant [which were] invented by state bureaucracies or their international counterparts" (142) to distinguish those who are worthy of aid and those whose movements should be curtailed and tracked. I only append their shared concerns here by underlining that the entanglements of war, transnational circuits of capitalism, and the private security firms enlisted to protect these circuits, all of which were intensified by the enduring aftermath of 9/11, very frequently destabilize the categorical distinctions between migrant and refugee. The films I study here all feature subjects whose conditions of precarity reflect these instabilities. Majid is the son of colonial migrants who is orphaned by an act of state violence. While he and his son are citizens of France, their marginalization speaks to what Mezzadra and Neilson identified as one of the driving questions of the 2005 riots: how long are postcolonial subjects racialized as foreigners whose very bodies represent the imagined vulnerability of national borders? (132). In *Sleep Dealer*, Memo's father is identified by a private security firm as an "aqua terrorist" and executed in a drone attack as if he were an enemy combatant of the corporation. Memo's consequent move to the industrial-techno space of Tijuana is determined by Del Rio Water, Inc.'s act of neoliberal warfare and reflects the blurred distinction between the asylum seeker exiled by the disasters of war and the labor migrant displaced by economically engineered catastrophes.

[121] Mimi Thi Nguyen writes, "the racialized story of anachronism reenters through the diagnosis of abnormality, in which the refugee condition, described as a state of arrested development or traumatic compulsion, is a target of disciplinary knowledge and power." Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012), p. 35.

Collectively, these films register the traumas, repercussive and serial, that occur when racialized subjects are actively displaced and read as bodies out of place by post-9/11 border regimes. By placing these films in conversation with one another, I continue to pursue the through-line of racializing systems of capitalism and the discipline of memory that runs throughout my previous chapters. Throughout, I have explored these networks of biopower that, Mezzadra and Neilson observe, forwarding the insights of Yann Moulier, bind "the slave, the indentured coolie, or the labor migrant who negotiates today's fractured borderscapes as much as for the industrial worker chained to the factory" (100). Without leveling the differences between these figures, I have examined these bindings through narratives specifically concerned with archives (domesticated and undomesticated) that contest the zones of life created by the systems of racializing capitalism. From the inherited ledgers that do not add up in Faulkner's works, to Elizabeth Curren's account of the South African states of emergency, to Dabydeen's and Parks's repudiation of the gentrification of transatlantic histories of slavery and, now to the imagining of the past and future disasters of the border in *Caché*, *Operation Filmmaker*, and *Sleep Dealer*, I have examined how histories of racializing capitalism have been metabolized in public memory. By turning to the more immediate medium of film, I want to consider this absorption of memory and its generation through visual tropes and narrative modes. Particularly in the case of *Operation Filmmaker*, where Mohamed's crisis unfolds before Davenport's camera in real-time, these films capture how trauma and the discipline of memory operates in the historical present.

II. "Faults of their fathers": Pedagogies of the Disappeared Archive in Michael Haneke's *Caché*

> “The violence of the archive is first and foremost the violence pervading the threshold between visibility and invisibility, the membrane through which colors and forms appear and disappear, withdrawing into an invisibility that most noticeably becomes erasure under certain historical conditions.” Domietta Torlasco, *The Heretical Archive: Digital Memory at the End of the Film* (2013)

> “ ‘I would like to say to all the adepts of repentance, who rewrite history and judge yesterday’s men without acknowledging the conditions in which they lived and the challenges they faced . . . by what right do you ask sons to repent for the faults of their fathers, for sins that were committed often only in your imagination?’”
>
> Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy, November 24th, 2005

> “The facts I have in mind are publicly known, and yet the same public that knows them can successfully, and often spontaneously, taboo their public discussion and treat them as though they were what they are not—namely, secrets.” Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics” (1967)

The well-remarked, first four minutes of *Caché* have been characterized within film studies criticism as a clever post-modern card-trick that establishes the film’s economy of the seen and the unseen, in which, Max Silverman remarks, “what is visible is haunted by what is off-screen and out of the frame” (58). After the opening credits have scrolled across the screen, we endure the stationary shot of an upper-middle class Parisian neighborhood to the point of tedium. Alerting us to the temporal disjunction at work in the scene (what ostensibly occurs in real-time has already happened), an unseen Georges and Anne voice their confused frustration. “So?” Georges inquires. “Nothing,” Anne replies. Their real-time entrance into the street that we have been watching continues to be filmed from the removed vantage point of the surveillance camera. Then the lesson begins in earnest: we are returned to the sustained surveillance shot of their home which is scrambled as they rewind a video that, Anne reports, goes on “for two hours.” The film-within- the-film unfolded, we are alerted to how our gaze is aligned with and trained by a clandestine surveyor/archivist. In the detective fiction that follows, the video-letters that arrive at Georges’s doorstep and the film’s removed, static shots, repeatedly fold us back into this gaze. Exemplifying Haneke’s oeuvre-defining move, these shots force us to question

whether what we are watching is occurring within the narrative time of the film or if it has already happened and already been archived by the anonymous auteur.

These video-entries that lead us back to Georges's childhood and, more expansively, the nation's crime almost exclusively consist of footage of domestic spaces (Georges and Anne's Parisian home, Georges's family estate, and the exterior and interior footage of Majid's tenement apartment). Haneke's installation of the domestic space as a metonym for the nation repeats a familiar movement that I have tracked in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, and Parks's *Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom*, all of which tell stories of home invasions that address the violence with which the space of the nation/domestic is secured and aggressively policed.[122] Their shared plot-lines of domestic terrorism are organized around racialized domestics whose labor, culled from systems of slavery and colonialism, can be incorporated into the nation but whose claims as enfranchised citizens with their own domestic spaces are nullified.

The video footage of Georges's childhood home and his final, drug-induced dream of Majid being forcibly committed to the care of the State that orphaned him, captures this violent nullification, which, as the film's title suggests, has been redacted from the national/domestic memory. Indeed, the over-arching claim made in readings of *Caché*---that it stages the return of the colonial repressed---would appear to merely be a diegetic reading of the title itself. On this point, Haneke's overt didacticism and his often violent methods of instruction, have elicited

[122] As Jennifer Burris, following others, has remarked, this violence is reflected in the very architecture of Georges's neighborhood which has the qualities of a gated community. She writes: "The built environment saturates almost every frame, implying that there is a no 'outside' to this endless proliferation of boxes within boxes, windows within walls and rooms within other rooms. . . . Homes, cars, windows and apartments buildings stack on top of one another. . . . In discussions of this shot, numerous commentators have noted that this framing helps give the home the appearance of a fortress or prison." Jennifer Burris, "Surveillance and the indifferent gaze in Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005)" *Studies in French Cinema*, 11.2 (2011): 151-63. p. 157.

criticism from weary viewers tired of being positioned as his errant students. Among them, Moira Weigel has situated his oeuvre within a wave of late twentieth and early twenty-first century, European auteur-directors, comprised mainly of Lars von Trier, Catherine Breillat, and Gaspar Noé, whose respective bodies of work she characterizes as "Sadomodernist" cinema. "Ascetic in its forms and rigorously unpleasant in its subject matter," she writes, "the films this unacknowledged movement has produced suggest that the only honest and decent thing for art to do is inflict pain" (Weigel). Like his contemporaries, Weigel argues, Haneke strives to dramatize the complicity of and punish his audience. In short, his films reformulate T.S. Eliot's lamentation, "after such history, what forgiveness," as: "after such history, what punishment?"

That this punishment is directed towards white, middle class audience members has prompted the criticism that, Weigel claims, his sadomodernist aesthetic ultimately hits up against a dead end. Like his 1997 Austrian and 2007 American *Funny Games*, where we see two white young men senselessly torture an affluent family and then, in the film's final scenes, effectively hit the re-start button with a different family, Haneke's films set up a contained loop of violence. Weigel's criticism of almost all of his films (she maintains that his 2012 *Amour* is an exception) chimes with Paul Gilroy's famous dismissal of *Caché* as "an empty exercise," (234) and, Mirzoeff's and Ipek A. Celik's more recent complaints that the film effectively works within and reinforces a solipsistic echo chamber of white, European-American guilt.[123]

My aim here is not to rehearse points in this echo chamber, but rather to consider how the film's conjuring of a phantasmagorical archive strives to offer a pedagogy of reading across

[123] Paul Gilroy, "Shooting Crabs in a Barrell," *Screen*, 48.2 (Summer 2007): 233-35. p. 234. See also: Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: a Counter-history of Visuality* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011) and Ipek A. Celik, "'I Wanted You to Be Present': Guilt and the History of Violence in Michael Haneke's *Caché*," *Cinema Journal*, 50.1 (Fall 2010): 59-80.

scales of trauma that cannot simply be reduced to the empty didacticism of which his critics have accused him. In *Caché*, the lessons are advanced in its opening frames which, as I earlier remarked, train the viewer how to read its repeated surveillance shots, and, as with Amadou (a school-teacher whose father, an older taxi-driver, ultimately leaves his family and returns to Mali) education itself constitutes the institutional force that distinguishes the post-colonial generation. After his father's suicide, Majid's son confronts Georges and informs him, "You deprived my father of a good education; the orphanage only teaches hatred." The closing shot of the unlikely meeting between Pierrot and Majid's son on the steps of Pierrot's school, in which Majid's son appears to instruct Pierrot, hints at the different education that both might receive. We are asked to weigh these scenes against Georges's and Anne's roles as cultural gatekeepers of an upper-middle class intelligentsia wherein French culture is defined by Georges's public access show on Baudelaire (in a winking irony, his roundtable discussions are shot against a backdrop of blank books) and the presumably left-leaning book on globalization that Anne's publishing firm launches. The video-letters that arrive at their doorstep comprise a subversive archive that contests the slickly-packaged one of progressive French identity (nominally multicultural or "ascendantly white" in Rey Chow's phrase) that Georges and Anne actively market within their fields.

My characterization of the surveillance tapes as "video-letters" that constitute a subversive archive borrows from Torlasco's *The Heretical Archive*: *Digital Memory at the End of Film* (2013), where she offers a sustained, feminist response to Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression* (1996). Torlasco looks at digital film installations that disrupt and betray the archive's futural guarantees of patriarchal inheritance. Through their disruptions, they invite viewers not, Torlasco maintains, to imagine new stories but to envision that canonical

narratives "could have been told otherwise, spoken by other speakers, and thus unfolded differently, become other than they what they ended up being" (14). Unlike the installations Torlasco analyzes, *Caché* maintains the patriarchal line---as with the other films I discuss here, citizenship is gendered as masculine (the mother of Majid's son, for example, is an unexplained absence)---but, the film does attempt to stage a betrayal of the law of the archive and to dismantle the national edifice that it supports. The surveillance video footage of Georges's homes inverts the post-9/11 intensified monitoring of racialized civilians and, preceding this, the policing of the racialized poor of the banlieues, whose neighborhoods, Mathieu Kassovitz demonstrated in his 1995 *La Haine* (heavily indebted to Spike Lee's 1989 *Do the Right Thing*) are treated as militarized zones. Moreover, these video-letters allude to the disappeared archival footage of the 1961 massacre that was largely destroyed by Maurice Papon's police regime. Further still, Haneke's exploration of this lost evidence implicitly recalls France's other, fraught acknowledgement of the crimes it committed during the Vichy regime. Michael Rothberg and Silverman have both reminded us that we must read France's repression of the crimes committed against French-Algerians under Maurice Papon's tenure as police prefect alongside his attempts to conceal his collaboration the Vichy regime.[124]

The historical echo that sounds within Georges's repeated disavowals of responsibility, certainly lends credence to complaints of Haneke's dead-end cynicism and to Gilroy's criticism that *Caché* denies its viewers the possibility of another world. Yet, I maintain that, similar to

[124] On this point, Silverman identifies a compelling parallel between Georges's repeated disavowals of responsibility (a word, that along with the word "terrorism" recurs throughout the film) and Alain Resnais's repeated shots of various Nazi bureaucrats stating "I am not responsible" in his 1955 *Night and Fog* (59). Silverman continues: "On a broader level, the themes of complicity, responsibility and guilt in relation to crimes against humanity in the past that have been repressed in the present bind the 'Algeria syndrome' to the earlier 'Vichy syndrome' in the French cultural imaginary." Max Silverman "The Violence of the Cut: Michael Haneke's *Caché* and Cultural Memory," *French Cultural Studies*, 21.1 (2010): 57-65. p. 59. In Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*, he makes similar but more historically grounded claims for this correspondence.

Suzan Lori Parks's *Imperceptible Mutabilities*, we can read Haneke's work as a refusal of the French nation-state's violently circumscribed archive. I underline this commonality between Parks and Haneke with the italicized caveat that the governmental and cultural milieus in which their texts are embedded differ in significant ways. In Achille Mbembe's sweeping survey of France's resistance to post-colonial critique, he underlines that France has jealously guarded its "secular and color-blind" identity through both the waves of stringent anti-immigration legislation it passed in the 1980s and 1990s and its long-standing prohibition against governmental bodies of knowledge or "'ethnic statistics,'" (92) that would account for the ethnic populations living within its borders. To be sure, as I addressed in my first chapter, such censuses have their own dubious heritage in the U.S. and the colonized Caribbean. Yet, France's policy of color-blindness has produced compartmentalized racisms in which only racialized subjects who insist neither upon a non-commoditized form of their difference (i.e. the cultural lightening rod of the hijab) or on their post-colonial grievances may be incorporated, in Jacques Chirac's words, as "sons and daughters" of the Republic. The racialized poor, whom Mbembe defines as the *sans-parts* "those who, despite being nominally French, were nevertheless deprived of the symbolic attached to citizenship" (92) are relegated to the banlieues that line the outskirts of the city with large, crowded tenement apartments like the one Majid occupies. The *sans papiers*, likewise, comprise an invisible pool of labor and a hyper-visible target of police surveillance---as occurs in *Code Inconnu* when Maria is deported after failing to provide documentation. For Majid the exposure to police violence constitutes the inter-generational trauma that so determines his life; the resigned posture that he falls into when he and his son silently ride in a police van after being wrongly charged with kidnapping Georges's son, Pierrot, telegraphs an untold lifetime of being vulnerable to such indignities. That Georges remains

steadfast in his stance of absolute irresponsibility for these indignities speaks to the post-9/11 politics of resentiment that have taken root in, to borrow from Mbembe, the aftermath of France's long "imperial winter." Georges's initial reading of the surveillance footage of his home is marked not by terror but by his annoyance: "So?" Forced to explain his relationship to Majid after a videotape of their conversation arrives at his house, he tersely recounts the disappearance of Majid's parents and simultaneously imports the film's history lesson): "October 17, 1961. Enough said. Papon. The police massacre. They drowned about 200 Arabs in the Seine." While Georges derisively recalls the police's racist response to his parents' inquiries about the disappearance of Majid's parents, "they said they were lucky to be rid of a couple of 'jigaboos,'" his reluctant recitation of this history and his insistence that it should have no claims on him in the present eerily forecasts Nicholas Sarkozy's 2007 Toulon campaign speech in which he criticized those who located the grievances expressed by the disenfranchised youth of the banlieues within France's colonial history. In Celik's thoughtful analysis of Haneke's film, she notes how it predicts the conservative, anti-immigrant turn that occurred under Sarkozy's presidency and underlines that the specter of 9/11 authorized an unapologetic racial profiling of French Muslims.[125] I augment her reading of *Caché*'s prescient commentary on a post-9/11 politics of resentiment in which formerly colonial and neocolonial powers have "apologized enough" or, as Georges tells Anne, "enough [has been] said" by considering how the film's ethics is forwarded, through its fantasy of a subversive archive, resembles and, in its resemblance, is limited by an Arendtian conception of truth and lies.

[125] Celik writes: "It is no coincidence that UMP's revisionism follows September 11, when French Muslims (the largest Muslim population in Europe) became 'a security concern' as well as an 'immigration concern.'" Ipek A. Celik, "'I Wanted You to Be Present': Guilt and the History of Violence in Michael Haneke's *Caché*," *Cinema Journal*, 50.1 (Fall 2010): 59-80. p. 62.

One of the film's irritant curiosities (or curious problems), second only to the film's refusal to reveal who sent the video-letters, is the fact that much of its plot is driven by Georges's childhood lies and his repetition of them, when confronted by Anne, as an adult. These lies, told when Georges is six, prevent us, Gilroy argues, from approaching him as a "culpable moral actor," and are held in too-close a proximity to the event of the massacre and the adult, political actors (beyond Papon) who were culpable.[126] On one hand, we can locate Georges's childhood lies within Haneke's numerous story-lines about kids who are not all right: the titled, young sociopath in *Benny's Video* (1992), the adolescent disciples of violence, Peter and Paul, in *Funny Games*, and the proto-Hitler's youth children in *The White Ribbon* (2009). Reading Haneke's catalogue of bad children alongside Alain Badiou's reflection that cinema is to the twentieth century what the *bildungsroman* was to the nineteenth (training for the subject to become a citizen of the nation-state), the interrupted and thwarted biographies of Haneke's characters and his bad, white, bourgeois children signal a degenerate, and predominantly, white, middle-class, civil body.[127] On this point, it is worth noting here that *Caché* roughly mirrors, albeit in a segmented form, the trajectory one associates with the *bildungsroman*: Georges is the only one of Haneke's children whom we see as both a child, entering into a larger, civil sphere by acting as a petty sovereign and telling a lie that leads to Majid's expulsion from his parents' home, and

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[126] For Gilroy, this component of the film's plot---its nomination of a six year old child as "a culpable moral actor" attests to its own, shallow responsibility to the history that it addresses. Gilroy writes: "In what sense are the unintended consequences of his juvenile decision his own responsibility? . . . This confusion is important. The relationship of the colonial past to the postcolonial present is perverted and confused by the idea that today's complacent and indifferent adults bear no more responsibility for their resignation, inertia and poisonous choices than a conflicted six year old." Paul Gilroy, "Shooting Crabs in a Barrel," *Screen*, 48.2 (Summer 2007): 233-35. p. 235.
[127] In his interview, "Cinema Has Given Me So Much," Badiou states, "The fundamental indicator of the nineteenth century was the novel, in particular the coming-of-age novel. And the cinema has been playing that essential role from at least the years following World War II." Alain Badiou, "Cinema Has Given Me So Much," *Cinema*, trans. Susan Spitzer, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 1-20. p. 18.

who adopts this role again as an adult who tells lies to cover the tracks that the video-letters expose.

Georges's bad education is evidenced by, and his ability to shape his world as a child is realized through, a lie. Being mindful of the film's engagement with its post-9/11 moment, we can say it alludes to another series of lies, told by another George. In the essay from which I lift Derrida's designation of post-war modernity as "our political, technomediatic, testimonial modernity" (42), "History of the Lie: Prolegomena," (2002)---a title that could very well serve as a subtitle for Haneke's film---he reminds us that the post-war and specifically, post-Nuremberg period which advanced the legal concept of "crimes against humanity" correspondingly opened up "the problematic of the lie or the confession" (50) of the nation-state. Hesitantly, interrupting himself by acknowledging reservations that he more fully itemizes and elaborates in his conclusion, Derrida tracks the elevation of the lie from what Hannah Arendt conceded was a banal commonplace of politics to an object of study in post-war political philosophy that examines totalitarian regimes and twentieth-century politics. His two case studies are Arendt's 1967 *New Yorker* essay "Truth and Politics" (published, he underlines, in response to some of the negative reviews of her 1963 *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) and Alexandre Koyré's lesser known article, "The Political Function of the Modern Lie," (1943).[128] In both, Arendt and Koyré argue that the lie has experienced a more complete realization in modern politics as evidenced by, Arendt writes, "the rewriting of history, in image-making, and in actual government policy" (70).[129] Derrida warns us, though, that neither offers a definition of the lie

[128] Derrida writes: "Its first English version appeared in 1967 in the *New Yorker* magazine and was a response to a journalistic polemic that had followed the publication of Eichmann in Jerusalem." Jacques Derrida, "History of a Lie: Prolegomena," *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), pp. 28-70. p. 39.
[129] Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics." *The New Yorker*. 25 February 1967. Web. p. 70. *All quotations from Arendt are mine.

nor do they consider that what they term a lie might be more accurately thought of as the workings of ideology. On this point, though, his reading neglects the more stunning curiosity of Arendt's selective acknowledgements of the ideological. She repeatedly designates totalitarian governments as "ideological" and a stunning passage where she mentions ideology not, as we would expect, in relationship to lies that must be demystified and corrected, but as a possible successor to the no longer viable notions of religious and philosophical truths. She immediately disqualifies this possibility by remarking that we cannot approach "modern ideologies as seriously as [philosophical truths]. . . since their adherents openly proclaim them to be political weapons and *consider the whole question of truth and truthfulness irrelevant*" (51). Her disqualification, of course, immediately points to ideology's relationship to or kinship with lies but this is an avenue of argument that she does not travel down. The closest that she comes on this point, as Derrida observes, is in her illustrative examples of self-deception which she characterizes as an "indispensable tool in the trade of image-making" (Arendt 74). Moreover, he notes, just as Arendt and Koyré do not completely theorize the lie as a category, both proceed as though "truth" were a hard, ultimately irrefutable reality.

In sum, Arendt's and Koyré's comparative treatments of truth and lies as stable concepts run counter to so many of our established post-structuralist and deconstructive truisms about the production of knowledge. And yet, Derrida repeatedly reminds us that the historical moment that they occupy demands that they maintain the concept of an irrefutable truth, to say nothing of our moment where, he underlines, the viability of ethics and international law depends upon these concepts as their foundational ground. Moreover, his characterization of the time of his writing as our "technomediatic, testimonial modernity" (illustrated by his primary example of President Jacques Chirac's 1995 acknowledgement of the crimes France committed during the

Vichy regime) proceeds from the logic of the lie that Arendt and Koyré advance---a fact that he acknowledges even as he sharply questions whether we can describe the silences of Chirac's predecessors as "lying."[130] This testimonial modernity roughly follows the time-line in which a crime is committed; its existence as a crime is denied and evidence of its occurrence is concealed. Later (a later that can be largely dated to the public memory cultures of the 1980 and 90s), a representative or head of a nation-state acknowledges that a crime was committed and an attempt is made to restore a disappeared history to the nation's archives. On this latter point, Derrida and Arendt are most closely aligned when he forwards her distinction that the "traditional lie" attempts to "*hide*" (a word choice whose obvious relevance to Haneke's film I will address in a moment) whereas the "modern lie" endeavors to destroy. "The process of the modern lie," he elaborates, "is no longer a dissimulation that comes along to veil the truth; rather, it is the destruction of reality or *of the original archive*" (42, emphasis mine).

As its title implies, *Caché or Hidden* blurs these distinctions between the traditional lie that seeks to hide something and the modern lie that is world-destroying. Through its phantasmagorical archive, comprised of video-letters, post-cards, and the dream sequences that dramatize the lies that Georges invented (imagined) to have Majid expelled, it makes the fantastical promise to unveil the truth that Georges's lies concealed. The archive's status as an unsolved mystery and its ability to "out" the lies that Georges tells as a child and clings to as an adult reflects an unlikely optimism very similar to the "indestructible optimism" that Derrida locates in Arendt's "Truth and Politics." Despite identifying the lie and image-making as the

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[130] Derrida forwards a series of questions: "By not declaring officially what is now a historical truth of state, were former presidents, from de Gaulle to Mitterrand, lying or dissimulating? Does one have the right to say that? . . . Can one speak here of lie?" Jacques Derrida, "History of a Lie: Prolegomena," *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), pp. 28-70. p. 50.

dominant forms of mass manipulation in modern politics, Arendt's formulations presuppose, as Derrida remarks that "The truth must always win out and end up being *revealed* because . . . in its structure it is assured stability, irreversibility; it indefinitely outlives lies, fictions, and images" (68). Illustrative of his reading, Arendt ends her essay by insisting, "Persuasion and violence can destroy truth, but they cannot replace it" (Arendt 83). Similarly, Haneke's archive, with its *J'accuse* address, embodies a truth that cannot be disappeared completely. Like Arendt, Haneke's *Caché* maintains the belief that the truth can simply be unveiled or disclosed.

My analogy here may prompt the obvious objections: Derrida's characterization notwithstanding, neither Arendt's work nor Haneke's films lend themselves to the optimistic hope that the truth will win out and wield the kind of world-forming authority that modern lies do. In *Caché*, Georges remains unrelenting in his denial of Majid's claims and refers to his suicide as a "sick joke" intended to indict his childhood lies that we learn of in the film's dream sequences. And yet, the faith in a "biblical revelation or a philosophical concept of the truth" that, Derrida implies, undergirds or lingers as a residual concept in Arendt's and to a lesser degree, Koyré's work, is apparent in Haneke's installation of the archive of the image in *Caché*.[131] As Celik highlights in her examination of the differing reviews of *Caché* in France, Germany, and the U.S, Haneke diplomatically maintained in his interviews with the French press that his film's story had a larger, European scope that was rooted in Europe's presumed, shared "origins" of Judeo-Christianity and the religious narrative of culpability.[132] Despite his oeuvre-

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[131] Derrida writes of the contribution that the term "ideology" would make to Arendt's and Koyré's essays, stating, "Even if the word and concept of ideology risk remaining still inscribed in the space that they exceed, there is no doubt that they point toward the place of this problematic to come---which would be rooted in neither a truth of biblical revelation nor a philosophical concept of truth." Ibid, p. 68.

[132] Celik writes: "Haneke's description of his film underlines the inherently European appeal of its overarching theme---culpability. . . . The director's statement implies an exclusion of the inherently non-European from the 'native' European." Ipek A. Celik, " 'I Wanted You to Be Present': Guilt and the History of Violence in Michael Haneke's *Caché*" *Cinema Journal*, 50.1 (2010): 59-80. p. 69.

defining suspicion of, in Derrida's phrasing, the "artifactual archive" whose "filtering, selection, editing, [and] framing" (65) banalizes at best and omits at worst the events it documents---a reality that he marks through George's work of editing the digital files of his show---Haneke elevates the status of the film's archive of surveillance tapes and post-cards to that of a biblical truth (and on this point, we can extend Moira Weigel's observation and specify that Haneke a modernist of the Faulknerian mold). They are ransom notes for witnessing that position the veracity of the image (the video-letters in *Caché*) over and against the lie of authoritative discourse.[133]

This primacy of the image over discourse is established in the film's opening video-letter. Later, a video surveillance tape arrives wrapped in a crude drawing of a child vomiting blood, followed by postcards sent to both Georges's office and his son's school, depicting a crayon portrait of a young Majid vomiting a smear of red paint. The allusions to Georges's childhood lies that these video-letters and postcards make are then explicated by his dreams. The first does not immediately announce itself as a dream sequence. The organizing shot of the street scene outside Georges and Anne's home is inverted (night instead of day, filmed from a vantage point within their home instead of from without) and as it turns from the familiar street scene into an interior that we do not yet recognize, the camera hunts a young, largely unclothed, Majid sitting in the window-sill coughing blood into his hands. He looks up terrified into the camera that has found him. The report of Georges's second lie unfolds in the nightmare that more overtly

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[133] Derrida again notes that the image and the archive far exceed the parameters that the category of the lie would place on them. Taking up the image, he rehearses points that echo and anticipate those made by Sontag and Butler: "One must take here into account the artifactuality that presides over the constitution of images of so-called information, that is, those that are in principle subject to the principle of truth and veracity and that, all the same, through filtering, selection, editing, framing, substitution of the artifactual archive for the thing itself, 'deform' in order to 'inform' without it being possible to assign or vocalize an intentional lie in the mind of a single individual or even in a delimitable group of individuals, albeit an international corporation." Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi*, p. 65.

announces itself as such: we see an axe hacking into the throat of a rooster, its blood leaving a streak of red within Majid's right eye and across his face. A young Georges watches the rooster's erratic, final movements before the life fully drains from its body. His gaze then anxiously shifts to Majid, menacing and indifferent to the blood staining his face and eyes. Framed by the darkness of the barn, Majid approaches him with his axe raised, until the adult Georges awakens. Only the film's final dream sequence deviates from the dramatization of Georges's lies and shows us, from the removed vantage point of the barn, the State's seizure of young Majid.

Both Georges's dreams and the video-letters are almost completely devoid of any verbal discourse. Moreover, in the two exceptions to this where we do hear spoken testimony---the video-letter of his interview with Majid and his final dream sequence in which we hear and see Majid's violent protestations---there is a greater emphasis placed on the visual and the film's unanswered question of who is sending the tapes. After Georges leaves Majid's apartment, Majid folds into himself and weeps, shielding his face with his hands. Anne's voice (transcribed on-screen) then cuts into his testimony and asks if Georges would like to see how Majid feels as the video continues for an hour. Likewise, the final dream sequence, in stark contrast to the previous two which featured ominous close-ups of Majid's threatening and bloodied body, is filmed in a stationary shot from the removed vantage point of the barn, suggesting Georges's own remove from the events that he has set into motion. While we hear Majid's protestations as he runs out of the frame before being forcibly placed in the car, we are not privy to the final words between Georges's mother and Majid.

These visual testimonies are leveled against Georges's lies. "He was sick," Georges explains to Anne when, after viewing the recording of his interview with Majid that betrays

Georges's lie that no one occupied Majid's apartment, she questions him about his relationship with the man in the video. His explanation ("he was sick") which notably occurs against the backdrop of a news report on a viral outbreak in Asia, is a reiteration of the lie that he first tells as a child to target Majid as a biological and civilizational threat to his and his family's well-being. First, he informs his parents that Majid is ill and coughs up blood. After a family doctor ("an old fool," Georges recounts) disproves his diagnosis, Georges persuades Majid to slaughter a rooster and, following the animal slaughter, tells his parents that Majid threatened him. Georges only admits (we cannot call his statements a confession) to these lies, when, after learning of Majid's suicide, Anne questions his once again about their childhood relationship.

Honing and homing in on Georges's address, the video-letters and postcards that come forth from an unknown origin comprise a *cache* that reveals film's fantasy of an archive that would unveil what was destroyed and negated----Majid's disappeared parents and the slow disaster of what the film reductively suggests is his biography of denied opportunities. Unveiling, though, does not repair the original negation, and the film's conflation of the traditional lie that hides with the modern lie that destroys rests on the definitive negation of Majid. His protest of Georges's lies, and more expansively, Georges's erasure of him is, Celik rightly notes, spectacularized as the film's organizing, ethical event. The plume stain that splatters across the wall behind Majid in the aftermath of him slashing his throat is reproduced for the film's ad-copy in its promotional posters and DVD editions; the red slash against the stark, white background forms, Celik writes, "a surrealist painting" (75) brandishing the traumatic wound that the film probes. The often-remarked fact that Majid's suicide is shot from the same removed vantage point as the surveillance footage leads us to question whether this event, too, has been, or is in the act of being recorded, and will be, or is being re-played by Anne

and this temporal confusion is compounded by the fact that this scene (the video-letter that is not a video-letter) both solves the mystery and leaves it unresolved. The cache of the video-letters and post-cards that has been produced by a human hand and gaze are de-corporealized through the negation of their suspected author/archon; the archive acquires its phantasmagorical status through the hard body of evidence (the body as evidence), produced by Majid's suicide.

His request of Georges, "I wanted you to be present," articulates the demands of the archive and, more expansively, the film itself, which he himself has not assembled. Lending credence to Arendt's claim that the liar is the true political actor in the world, Majid's denial and his death, unlike Georges's childhood lies and his adult accusations, do not affect any discernible change. Immediately afterwards, Georges flees to the cinema to overwrite what he was forced to witness and the law is curiously absent. Anne advises Georges to go to the police, but we never see his interview with them or any repercussions from Majid's death beyond Georges's confrontation with Majid's decidedly emotionally composed son whose middle-class dignity the film affirms at the expense of his grief. An object lesson that is not heeded by Georges and a body of evidence, Majid's suicide is thus used to substantiate the film's archive to the status of the philosophical or biblical truth that, as Arendt states, no longer has any purchase on the marketplace and, more importantly, is divorced from the political and commercial marketplaces. In contrast to Georges's public access show and Anne's book on globalization, the memories recorded and conjured in the video-letters are positioned outside of the post-memory marketplace. Likewise, Majid's death and the charges that he might have directed towards the nation-state are divorced from the political realm. Haneke only alludes to a political future to come through the final, *bildungsroman*, scene in which Majid's son and Pierrot are positioned on the steps of Pierrot's school as unlikely collaborators. Educated by the archive, the final scene

suggests a lesson being imparted from Majid's son to Pierrot yet withheld from the audience that will inform their lives as citizens in a post-colonial France.

In the section that follows, I turn from Haneke's pedagogies of a phantasmagorical archive to Davenport's exploration the unfolding of trauma in real-time and the serial disasters that occur when a neocolonial subject is reduced and flattened to the digital archive of the war he is expected to furnish.

II. "Okay, I have to put the camera down": Pedagogies of Trauma and Bad Archival Subjects in *Operation Filmmaker* (2007)

Nina Davenport's failed documentary subject, Muthana Mohamed, is shot against the backdrop of a cinematic narrative of post-memory exchange depicted in Schreiber's *Everything is Illuminated* and cast as the apprentice in a larger story of American, liberal empire. Throughout, he is positioned as undeserving recipient of American, quasi-cosmopolitan benevolence and a poor pupil who fails to absorb the lessons in archival practices that are staged in Schreiber's film. In order to unpack these two, related sets of expectations that so determine the organizing conceit of Davenport's film, it is necessary for me to provide a rough sketch of the background that partially informs the foreground of *Operation Filmmaker*. In remarking the relationship between these texts, I want to stress that I do not wish to apply any sort of vulgar, competitive model to the historical traumas that they attempt to represent. To recall Rothberg's insight, which has so heavily shaped my project: all traumatic histories are different and we need to maintain that difference *as a given* whenever we embark upon a comparative analysis or consider how these histories shape our understanding of contemporary events.[134] Moreover, my

[134]Rothberg writes: "This project takes dissimilarity for granted, since no two events are ever alike, and then focuses its intellectual energy on investigating what it means to invoke connections nonetheless. . . .Comparison, like memory,

interest in the relationship between these texts is directed at the tensions between the differing genres that they occupy and their respective archival and memory practices. *Everything* is a fictional rendering of Holocaust post-memory that avails itself of magical realism and is organized around an archive of objects; *Operation* addresses a trauma unfolding within the historical present of Davenport's documentary, which is driven by the archive's promise of futurity----Mohamed is expected to give future viewers his account of the occupation.

Both Safran Foer's novel and Schreiber's film adhere to what Marianne Hirsch has identified as the common tropes of post-memory generation in which memories of historical traumas are "reactivated" by personal and familial experiences (33).[135] In the novel and the film, Safran Foer's fictive double, Jonathan, travels to the Ukraine to locate his grandfather's devastated shtetl of Trachimbrod, and to find Augustine, the woman who aided his grandfather's flight to the U.S. Jonathan enlists the help of Alex Perchov and his grandfather (also named Alex), two noncommittally anti-Semitic Ukrainians who have benefited from the monetization of Holocaust memory by providing heritage tours for Jewish Americans looking for traces of their murdered relatives (Alex's bafflement as to why Americans would commission these tours is one of the film's early punch-lines). Jonathan's search for his grandfather's traces is guided by his photograph of Augustine that serves as his archival compass, orienting him and, later, his tour guides, to their shared responsibility to the history they are re-assembling. In Schreiber's

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should be thought of as productive---as producing new objects and new lines of sight---and not simply as reproducing already given entities that either are or are not 'like,' other already given entities." Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009), pp. 18-19.
[135]In the introduction to Hirsch's *Generation of Post-Memory,* Hirsch describes post-memorial work as that which "strives to reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression." Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Post-Memory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012), p. 33.

screenplay, Jonathan's post-memory guardianship is even more pronounced. He is cast not as an aspiring novelist but, as Alex repeatedly refers to him throughout the film, "the collector."

This shift in emphasis from writer to archivist is established in the opening scenes of the film where Jonathan is introduced through his preservation of the dying, first generation's testimonial objects. We see him first as a precocious, wide-eyed child receiving a family broach from his dying grandfather and then as a young man who charts his family's genealogy through found items and bodily ephemera. In a close-up shot, the camera catalogues some of the representative entries within his collection: dentures, a used condom, a single playing card, and a one dollar bill, all of which are preserved in individual plastic bags inscribed with dates that mark their entrance into his archive. Occupying an entire wall in his home, the objects are filed beneath photographs of Jonathan's grandparents and extended family. Collectively, the objects map a genealogical protest against loss---as if, as Safran Foer elsewhere writes in *Eating Animals* (2009), each item was salvaged from the "destroyed branches" of his family tree (5). The wall is at once a mutedly comical collection and a forensic map: it is comprised of the rescued evidence of a crime whose effects reverberate across generational lines and shape the post-memory subjects who inherit the histories that the objects carry. As the itemizing, close-up shots of individual objects are succeeded by a wide-shot of the wall that reveals the collection in its entirety, we are squarely located within the fevered archive of Holocaust post-memory.

Schreiber's lingering shots of Jonathan's archive/*arkheoin* demonstrate how his adaptation keeps faith with the novel's pedagogies of inter-generational memory. Both novel and film are teaching texts that offer us a tutorial in instructing others to pay witness. The novel is structured as an epistolary collaboration between Jonathan, who mails installations of his magically-realized history of Trachimbrod to Alex in exchange for the latter's linguistically-

flawed and initially child-like account of what he, in the opening chapter, terms their “very rigid journey” (Foer 14). In both texts, though, before Alex can assume the role of author and a more fully developed collaborator, Jonathan must first model for him the methodologies and politics of remembrance (as opposed to the vaguely exploitative ones of his grandfather’s heritage tours). Jonathan briefly tells Alex that the Ukraine’s histories of anti-Semitism predated the Nazi invasion and he teaches him how to read his photograph of Augustine for its *punctum*. Under Jonathan’s tutelage, Alex, too, uses this image to guide their search when he later interrogates Lista, the remaining survivor of Trachimbrod, by holding the image to her face and insistently asking: “Have you ever witnessed anyone in this photograph? . . . Has anyone in this photograph ever witnessed you?” Relenting to his persistent questioning, she reveals herself as Trachimbrod’s geographical remnant by answering: “‘You are here. I am it’” (Foer 118). On the page as well as on the screen, Alex’s role in uncovering Lista/Trachimbrod signals his transformation from a caricature of a satellite-Soviet subject enamored of the dated 1980s mainstream American culture and prone to masculine posturing, into a more complex and fully dimensional guardian of Holocaust memory---a role that is more pronounced in Schreiber’s work.

In Schreiber’s adaptation, though, Alex’s education is incomplete; the film obfuscates the lessons of complicity and perpetrator memory that the novel stages.[136] In Safran Foer’s *Everything*, Lista, who uses her home to store the remains of her devastated village (similar to Jonathan’s archive-as-domicile that we see at the opening of Schreiber’s film), gives the men a

[136]In A.O. Scott’s review, he remarks, “The film, more emphatically than the book but in keeping with its spirit, suggests that even the darkest page of history can be bathed in a glow of consoling, self-congratulatory sentiment.” A.O. Scott, “A Journey Inspired by Family Becomes One of Forgiveness,” *New York Times.com*, 16 Sept. 2005. The New York Times.

box of assorted objects, titled: "In Case." The box, "In case," is *itself* a case. Like Haneke's video-letters in *Caché*, Lista's box contains a *j'accuse* image that indicts Alex's grandfather for surrendering his Jewish friend, Herschel, during a Nazi raid on their village. When Jonathan, Alex, and the grandfather blindly reach into the box and feel for the texture of the items they retrieve, the grandfather pulls out a family photograph featuring a younger man who resembles both Alex and his grandfather. The grandfather first holds the picture next to his face for the younger generation's inspection, then uses it to shield himself from their gaze, and confesses to his grandson who, in his echoing translation, informs Jonathan that his grandfather saved the family captured in the image by surrendering his friend, Herschel, to the Nazis.

Like Alex's earlier use of the photograph of Augustine, the grandfather's chance encounter with the image is endowed with a juridical promise---the "in case" object is a case that demands a hearing. The image hails the grandfather; he answers to it with an admission of his guilt that incorporates and radically alters his grandson in its telling. The delay between the grandfather's confession and Alex's echoing translation is collapsed when Alex studies his grandfather's face and, in his later telling of the exchange, includes a parenthetical transcript of their silent, imagined conversation which sounds out and fills in the lacunas in their family history. Their collaborative reading of the photograph affects a transformation that fulfills what Susan Sontag famously diagnosed as our enduring longing for the ethico-political efficacy of images in which pictures of atrocity generate and bind a community of viewers that agrees upon their horror.[137]

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[137]Sontag makes this argument throughout *Regarding*, but one representative passage occurs when she writes: "For a long time some people believed that if the horror could be made vivid enough, most people would finally take in the outrageousness, the insanity of war." Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 14.

The film also exhibits this longing for the efficacy of images but it arrives at its "community to come" by rewriting the grandfather's complicity in his friend's murder as survivor's guilt. In Schreiber's adaptation, the photograph that Alex's grandfather encounters is a portrait that captures him as a solitary figure in his youth. It triggers a flashback of his inexplicable survival of a Nazi massacre and his subsequent denial of his Jewish identity---signaled through his ripping off the bright, yellow star from his clothing. Following the eruptive memory of his traumatic survival and flight from Kolki, the grandfather, without revealing his past to Alex, kills himself. Alex, either taking up his own, intuited Jewish heritage, or inspired by his experience with Jonathan and his friend's parting gift of his Star of David necklace, converts to Judaism. In one of the final scenes of the film, he, his father, and younger brother wear yamakas and mourn at his grandfather's grave, located next to the headstone commemorating the "1,204 Trachimbroders killed at the hands of German Fascism." Alex's grandfather is thus fully incorporated amongst the victims---a more politically vexed memory becomes a familial one---and his descendants are transformed into patriarchal (the mother is only a nominal presence here and Lista disappears from our view after the men visit her) stewards of Holocaust memory. [138] Overwriting the novel's more complicated investigations of responsibility and the trauma of culpability, Schreiber consequently obfuscates the reality of how the Nazi killing machine conscripted Ukrainian subjects as participants.

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[138] Further, Schreiber's positioning of Alex, his brother, and father as patriarchal keepers of the family's memory is guaranteed by and routed along a heteronormative vector. Alex's intimated, queer sexuality is straightened in the film; the father's violent treatment of his son and his own father's understanding of him as a failed patriarch who was too shielded from his inherited history, are omitted. In Safran Foer's novel, the grandfather establishes a causal link between his surrender of Herschel with his son's failure to be a good father, "because it was for him that I didwhatIdid it was for him that I pointed and for him that Herschel was murdered that I murdered Herschel and this is why he is how is he is how is he because a father is always responsible for his son" (251).

I provide this extended, comparative gloss on Safran Foer's novel and Schreiber's adaptation because, as I earlier observed, they have bearing on the disappointed expectations that form the organizing premise of Davenport's documentary. Both texts of *Everything* exemplify the middle-brow criteria of trauma narratives and the generation of cross-cultural memory that Mohamed's story fails to meet. It begs underlining, too, that the criteria by which Mohamed is implicitly graded is demonstrated through fictional texts that depict an idealized rendering of an archive. As Safran-Foer has stated in interviews, his novel emerged out of his unsuccessful and poorly-planned search for evidence of his grandfather's life in Trachimbrod.[139] Both Safran Foer and Schreiber populate the emptied landscape of Trachimbrod with the longed-for traces of the violently-erased losses of the Holocaust. Like *Caché*, *Everything* is built around the fantasy of the archive and the ethico-political efficacy of the commandments it issues across generational and cultural lines.

Notably, too, *Everything*'s fantastically-realized archive and Alex's and Jonathan's responsibility to it are largely conveyed through their exchange of tactile objects. Alex receives copies of Jonathan's manuscript in the mail. Likewise, the reproduced photographs of Augustine, the soil that Jonathan collects from the banks of the Brod, and the buried objects that Lista recovers from the earth, all offer a reassuring physicality. In the film, these objects are endowed with the spirit of their former owners; Jonathan stands on the riverbank of the Brod and is transfixed by the whispering voices emanating from the objects that float past him. Confronted

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[139]After finding "nothing but nothing . . . a landscape of completely realized absence," he abandoned his project of "chronicling [his journey] in strictly non-fictive terms" and reimagined his grandparents' story in terms of the post-modern commonplaces of the subjectivity of history and its kinship with fiction. Explaining his shift from non-fiction to fiction, Foer writes: "Rather than aligning itself with *'how things were' or 'how things could have been,'* the novel measures the differences between the two, and by so doing, attempts to reflect the way things *feel*" (emphasis mine). Jonathan Safran Foer, "Author Interview: Jonathan Safran Foer on *Everything is Illuminated*," HarperCollins Publishers, 2013. Web. 10 November 2013.

with the open fields of Trachimbrod that represent the almost complete erasure of a community, the objects in in *Everything* address Jonathan, Alex, Alex's grandfather, and by extension, the viewer/reader as responsive subjects who must imagine the *concrete* realities of the lives that were stolen. In one of the more exportable passages from the novel (reproduced in the film), Lista gives the wedding ring of her friend, Rivka, to Jonathan and explains to Alex: "'The ring does not exist for you. You exist for the ring. The ring is not in case of you. You are in case of the ring'" (Foer 192). Lista's post-memory commandment charges Jonathan and Alex with the guardianship of Holocaust remembrance.

Finally, Schreiber's depiction of this guardianship collapses the distinctions between victims and complicit subjects in a manner that speaks to *Operation Filmmaker*'s underwriting evasion of nationally-inflected sovereignties. By rewriting Alex's family as victims who must take up the mantle of Holocaust memory, Schreiber romanticizes the politically fraught work of cross-cultural and cross-generational memory.The trajectory that the film follows from Jonathan's successful instruction of Alex to Alex's act of mourning his grandfather at the site of the Trachimbrod memorial ends in a grace note of reaffirmed Jewish heteronormative masculinity and a cosmopolitan ethics. Across national borders, the innocent, third generation is bound together through a familial act of remembrance that successfully resolves the survivor's guilt of the first generation.

The film's focus on remembrance as a reparative practice bears a strong kinship with the invitation that Schreiber extends to Mohamed to atone for the U.S.'s destruction of his film school. Schreiber's humanitarian gesture, while certainly commendable, participates in the same glossy idealism as his film adaptation of *Everything*: it posits the act of paying witness as that which can surmount and abstract the differing positions subjects occupy in relationship to the

neocolonial violence (in this case, an Iraqi citizen whose city was invaded and an American celebrity learning of his experience via an American reality television show). Writing of the difficulties of American and Iraqi civilians collectively mourning the devastation of the U.S.'s occupation, R. Radhakrishnan remarks, "What can be mourned in togetherness is the loss of life, but not those horrific political conditions that resulted inexorably in the loss of life" (75). In his conjured example, bereaved Iraqi and American parents cannot come together without acknowledging their different relationships to the policies that authorized the losses that they suffer. Mourning does undo us, *pace* Butler, but it does not nullify questions of national sovereignty. Notably, the *True Life* episode in which Mohamed made his debut makes this nullifying move. In it, the testimony of an American, male soldier is paired with Mohamed's story under the heading of the episode's title "I'm Living in Iraq." The title alone is something of an unintentional euphemism; the American soldier did not simply relocate to Iraq and while both he and Mohamed are both live in a war zone, they are not exposed to its violent eruptions in the same ways. There must be, Radhakrishnan forcefully maintains, a space for the counter-memory of the Iraqi citizen to interrupt the conflation of expressions of grief (enacted by individuals) with a universal mourning that overcomes and cancels out national identities (75).

To be fair, the internship Schreiber creates for Mohamed and Davenport's continued filming of him after he has been abandoned by some of his early backers, do attempt to carve out the space for counter-memory that Radhakrishnan calls for. Both explicitly state, albeit with weary resignation, that they wanted to create a space for Mohamed's voice. This space for a potential counter-memory, however, is circumscribed by the expectations partially established through the model of remembrance and sentimentality that *Everything* draws. More urgently, the archival medium through which Mohamed speaks is determined by the predicating conditions of

its production. To draw a crude parallel in hopes of reaching a more refined end: just as Jonathan and Alex are told that they exist for the ring---the inheritance and generation of Holocaust post-memory---Mohamed is implicitly told that he exists for the camera and for the testimony he can provide. The opening scenes of the film include footage from Mohamed's *True Life* debut in which he is introduced to viewers as a thwarted artist among the ruined infrastructure of Baghdad. In one scene that is plotted with *bildungsroman*-promise, he visits an open-air marketplace in search of a book on cinema that would aid in his interrupted studies and allow him to participate in the globalized, Hollywood culture. Later, Davenport includes an interview in which Schreiber recounts stumbling upon Mohamed's story as he filled a sleepless night by flipping through television channels. Mohamed comes to us as digital testimony already determined by an American, neocolonial marketplace and the adjoining criteria for humanitarian aid. Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc.* (2007) masterfully shows how the *bildungsroman* influenced human rights legislation and the protections it sought to extend to the seemingly self-evident, seemingly universal guarantees of development and liberty. Mohamed's scene in the open-air marketplace and his very presence on Schreiber's film-set attests to how the narrative form of the *bildungsroman*, figured in *Operation* as the biography of a documentary subject, is bound to the biopolitical; his story-line, divided into chapters by Davenport, is, in very material ways, his life-line. His peripatetic movements from one temporary apprentice scene to another (from one film set to another to film school) are determined by his ability to sell himself as a deserving recipient of arbitrary American generosity. Retaining the residual trace of his MTV reality-television origins—which specializes in simulating neoliberal economies of precariat labor pools and promises of middling celebrity uplift---Mohamed is tasked with

performing his emotive investment in his assigned tasks.[140] This imperative is overlaid by the demand that he must sell himself as a promising pupil---a good candidate for both democracy and artistic expression---and, overarchingly, an affectively-engaging archive of the U.S.'s occupation.

To elaborate on an earlier point, as a film and a site of his internship, *Everything* is both a teaching text and space where Mohamed is cast as an apprentice. His anticipated development is expected to parallel the narrative arc of growth and cross-cultural understanding that Alex experiences in *Everything*. Admittedly, *Operation* is largely devoid of scenes from Schreiber's actual film and Mohamed does not comment on the plot of *Everything* beyond insinuating that his life might be endangered as a result of working on a film that advances the "Jewish version of history"---a Borat-like punchline that is greeted by Saraf and Schreiber's dead-pan silence. Yet, Davenport's footage of Mohamed on Schreiber's set highlights the commonalities between the fictional Alex and Mohamed that informed Schreiber and Saraf's decision to parachute Mohamed into their film set. Like Alex, Mohamed is well-versed in mainstream, Hollywood culture and is prone to the masculine posturing that such exports support. Like Alex, his cultural differences from his American patrons are registered through punch-lines (he, too, is baffled by an American's cossetted, vegan diet). And like Alex, who, in the film, successfully adopts Jonathan's post-memory practices and authors the account of their journey, Mohamed is expected to learn from his American patrons and become a chronicler of his country's history during the occupation.

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[140] For more on this, see David Grazian, "Neoliberalism and the Realities of Reality Television," *Contexts* 9.2 (Spring 2010): 68-71.

Counter, though, to the successful, pedagogical exchange that *Everything* portrays—where Alex undergoes a *bildungsroman*-esque transformation that culminates in his ability to be a guardian of Holocaust memory—Mohamed fails to develop (a verb whose imperial valences the film sometimes acknowledges) into a good guardian of his historical present. Throughout the film, we see Mohamed responding to, resenting, and, then enacting on his own terms two sometimes conflicting instructions: 1.) that he act as a good, neoliberal subject and perform the servile tasks that largely comprise his internship with greater alacrity (guidance that strongly echoes the rhetoric of welfare reform). 2.) that he should more compellingly narrate his diagnosable signs of war trauma. Refusing to hit the affective marks requested of him by Schreiber's crew and, more overtly, by Davenport, Mohamed instead gives performances that draw attention to themselves *as performances* in the many application scenes that occur throughout the film. As he petitions for the time-sensitive footholds of visa extensions, additional aid, and schooling, Davenport alternately portrays him as a moderately successful con-artist unworthy of the winning tickets he continually pulls from public and celebrity aid lotteries or a less inscrutable Bartleby who would prefer not to until necessity absolutely demands it.

Certainly, just as Melville's "Bartleby" alerts its readers to the dubious paternalism of Melville's unnamed Wall Street lawyer who recounts the tragic, dead-lettered story of his clerk, Davenport and Schreiber's bad, emotional investment in Mohamed is centrally positioned in the documentary. As the film's self-aware title suggests, *Operation Filmmaker* is a documentary that helpfully offers to conduct its own self-critique. The film's ostensibly inoculating conceit is that, gentle, liberal viewer, it is in on the irony. In the director's interview included on the 2008 DVD edition, Davenport assures us that she realized early on into her filming of Mohamed's internship that the failed relationship between him, Schreiber and Saraf, served as "the perfect metaphor"

for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Moving beyond the film's claims to a scrupulous self-awareness, Mohamed's contract with Schreiber and, more principally, Davenport, reflect the cultural capital that is alternately awarded or withdrawn from trauma narratives within the marketplace of what Mimi Thi Nguyen has termed the U.S.'s "liberal empire" which operates through discursive economies of gifts (i.e. democracy, freedom, occupation) and debts. Both Schreiber's proffered gift of opportunity and Davenport's insistence on filming Mohamed until, as she tells him in a moment of acute frustration, his story arrives at "the point of something good happening" seek to construct a grateful subject indebted to quasi-cosmopolitan, American, celebrity benevolence.[141] The film's promotional tagline, "Hollywood gave him the chance of a lifetime," alerts us to the slippage between debts and gifts that Nguyen's work examines. Mohamed is given "the chance of a lifetime"---the chance to have a more viable life---by narrating his life experiences in prescribed ways. The film's tag-line is (as such slogans often are) a crude iteration of an underlying thesis that the film tries to hold at a critical arm's length yet ultimately, and uneasily, embraces: Schreiber, Davenport, and Mohamed's later British and American sponsors extend a biopolitical lifeline to an unworthy subject.

In sum, *Operation Filmmaker* is a document of failures that occur across two repercussive scales. It is organized around a failed archival subject; a subject whose biography does not provide a satisfactory corrective to the Bush administration's redacted record of the war. From this angle, my study of the relationship between failed narratives and the biopolitical missions that the film endeavors to respond to, and becomes imbricated in, echoes my earlier

[141]In Thi Nguyen's *The Gift of Freedom,* she theorizes the American notion of "gifting democracy" as the definitive tenet of its liberal empire. She writes: "liberal empire claims an interest in improving, and prolonging, the life of a subject of freedom as a rationale and a target for governance, even while the lethal circumstances that make this claim possible (that is, those schema of race and coloniality that relegate some peoples to the outside) remain foundational to its project." Mimi Thi Nguyen's *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012), pp. 14-15.

exploration of failures in Chapter Three. *Operation*, however, does not furnish viewers with a satisfactory narrative of resistance in the way that Dabydeen's lyric novel, with its "howl of pessimism," actively writes back against British Empire (Old and New) or that Parks's *Imperceptible*, likewise, draws out the commonalities between the gentrification of cities and the domestication of histories of slavery. Its failure emerges from its disappointment of the post-9/11 politically-vaunted expectations of the documentary. In Jacques Rancière's seminal *Film Fables* (2006), he lauds the ability of cinema, and the documentary in particular, to generate narratologically-driven meaning from the real-time deluge of the "informational present" that "accumulates . . . [and] exclusively works for its own profit" and whose sheer "abundance" jettisons that which it "cannot assimilate to its homogeneous and indifferent process of its self-presentation."[142] Echoing Walter Benjamin's paradigm of the relentless storm that "we call 'progress'" and the shrapnel of memory, Rancière contrasts the "informational-present," time driven by capitalist production that engenders forgetting in its very surplus accumulation of facts---that which Haneke so often depicts as the background of global news, with the weak messianic power of memory that cinema taps into.[143]

[142] In Jacques Rancière's essay on Chris Marker, "Documentary Fiction: Marker and the Fiction of Memory," from his 2006 *Film Fables*, he remarks, "Information is not memory and it does not accumulate and store for memory's sake. It works exclusively for its own profit. . . . As the abundance of facts grows, so grows the sense of their indifferent equivalence and the capacity to make of their interminable juxtaposition the impossibility of ever reaching a conclusion, of ever being able to read, in the facts and their juxtaposition, the meaning of *one* story." Later, he emphasizes that his statement "Memory is a work of fiction" seeks to tap into the etymological roots of the word "fiction": "Originally, *fingere* does not mean to 'to feign' but 'to forge.' Fiction means using the means of art to construct a 'system' of represented actions, assembled forms, and internally coherent signs. We cannot simply think of 'documentary' film as the polar opposite of 'fiction' film." Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista, (New York: Berg Publishers, 2006), pp. 157-58, p. 158.

[143] Tracing the lineage of this poetics, Rancière writes: "Cinema was born as an art out of Romantic poetics, was pre-shaped by it: as an art, it seems almost to have been designed for the metamorphoses of signifying forms that make it possible to construct memory as the interlacing of uneven temporalities and of heterogeneous regimes of the image." Ibid, p. 165.

Rancière's lauding of the poetics of cinema recalls us to the heightened importance attributed to the documentary in the enduring aftermath of 9/11 when the American, informational-present was defined by embedded reporting and wire-tapping to be later succeeded by NASA meta-data mining and the aggressive retaliatory actions taken against Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden. At the risk of painting in broad strokes, the landscape of American and British popular culture absorbed, and to a larger extent, normalized these extraordinary measures (see: *24*'s ticking time bomb scenario and more recently, Carrie and Brody's love-story of martyrdom and depression on *Homeland*).[144] The wave of documentaries that were released alongside Davenport's arguably attempted to resist this normalization. Charles Ferguson's *No End in Sight* (2007), Alex Gibney's *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007), and Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008) all shared the organizing objective of "raising awareness" and resisting one's position in the national "we" that tortures. The hackneyed phrase, "raising awareness" is instructive; it suggests the activation of emotions (shame, anger, indignation) in order to generate a national counter-public more responsive to what it already, at some base-line level, knows. I do not wish to trivialize the muck-raking aims of these films or their differing methodologies for the execution of those aims,[145] but I would argue that these documentaries do not so much produce knowledge as they manage feelings

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[144] Examining the centrality of this scenario in the television dramas, films, and video games that populate this landscape, Diana Taylor remarks, "[they] place[s] 'us' as coparticipants in the drama, asking 'us' to imagine when 'we' too would cross the limit. When did I become swept into this 'we' that debates torture as a legitimate topic and practices it in 'our' name?" Diana Taylor, "Double-Blind: the Torture Case." *Critical Inquiry* 33 (Spring 2007): 710-733. p. 713.

[145] To correct the very broad argumentative strokes in my citation of these documentaries, I do wish to note that Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure* does not simply review the well-established evidence of the crimes committed at Abu Ghraib. As Linda Williams argues, through Errol Morris's use of his invention, the Interrotron (a device that allows the interviewees to make direct eye contact with a mirror image of Morris), and his focus on the perpetuators' understanding of their crimes, *Standard Operating Procedure*, is "the only theatrically released documentary film to have taken on the task of questioning the frame of what is effectively the visual culture of war." Linda Williams, "Cluster Fuck: The Forcible Frame in Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure*." *Camera Obscura* 73. 25.1 (2010): 29-67. p. 31.

about what is already known or that which can only be categorized as nominally clandestine. As Mark Danner remarked in his response to the 2009 The International Red Cross report on the C.I.A.'s treatment of "High Value Detainees": "In our recent politics, 'secret' has become an oddly complex word. . . . From whom was the existence of these 'secret overseas facilities' secret? Not from terrorists, surely. From Americans, presumably" ("Voices from the Black Sites"). And yet, Danner continues, reports on these black site prisons were readily available to "anyone [who was] interested" as early as 2002 ("Voices from the Black Sites"). In 2007-2008, films like Davenport's *Operation Filmmaker* and Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure* ultimately served to generate and reaffirm a national public that was still interested and *moved by* reports that were not entirely news.

Situated within this wave of documentaries, Mohamed's failures, then, are failures of feeling---failures to generate the right feelings. As a member of the Shiite majority who insists to Schreiber's film crew that he "loves George Bush" and that many Iraqis welcomed the invasion, he does not serve as a conduit and legitimating mouthpiece for the feelings of anger, shame, and helplessness with which the presumed, American viewer approaches his story. These feelings are blocked and downgraded by the ironies that define his relationship with Schreiber, Saraf, and Davenport. A self-professed true believer of American Empire and a documentary subject who is well aware of the rapidly depreciating capital his story has within its marketplace, Mohamed's performance evokes, *pace* Sianne Ngai, ugly feelings. [146] Anger at the occupation is reduced to irritation at the testimony Mohamed does not provide and the source of national shame is

[146] In Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings*, she devotes a chapter to reading irritation in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*. Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005).

elaborated to include the narrative expectations that determine his fraught relationship with his patrons and, by extension, the viewer.

These scripted expectations are explicated by Schreiber and Saraf in one of the many application scenes that comprise Davenport's footage of Mohamed. Confronted with the imminent probability that he will be forced to return to Iraq after his internship, he has an off-camera meeting with Schreiber and Saraf during which he announces that he has decided to return to his family in Baghdad and asks them to provide him with a three-chip digital camera for a "narrative film" he wishes to make. In the transcripted, audio footage that Davenport includes, Schreiber tactfully refuses, reminding him of the "tremendous value" of the opportunity that they have already given him and the expenses they incurred in bringing him out of Iraq. Saraf concludes the meeting by offering their support after Mohamed first shows them a script. Davenport interviews Schreiber and Saraf immediately following this meeting and both express a wary relief that Mohamed's stated plans affirm or repay their original impressions of him. Uncertainly trying to extract a satisfying moral from the mostly dispiriting story of his relationship with Mohamed and to establish an end-date for their involvement in it, Saraf tells Davenport, "If, now, he wants to go back and be a filmmaker and he actually succeeds in making a movie, then, I feel like everything we tried to do was fulfilled, I guess." Arms folded, Saraf's "I guess" is accompanied by a muted shrug and an exasperated, shake of his head that sets up the following scene where Mohamed tells Davenport that his Czech visa was unexpectedly renewed.

Learning that Mohamed has abandoned his ennobled plans to film a war zone in order to instead remain in the comparative comfort and safety of Prague to work as a P.A. on the low-brow, aspirant block-bluster, *Doom*, Saraf sharply reprimands Mohamed for his poor performance as a documentary subject rather than as his intern. Saraf stands before Mohamed,

caustically reminds him of his stated plans---"you were going to go home to rebuild your country?"---and then (rightly) predicts that Mohamed will continue to financially depend on him and Schreiber if he remains in Prague. Cataloguing the bad, emotional investments he made in his development, Saraf sternly tells him:

> Just don't bullshit me anymore . . . it's like you're always convoluting some story. Just be straight. . . . You know, when, when we saw you on MTV and we brought you over here, there was this thought: wow, he really wants to be a filmmaker; he's really passionate about being a filmmaker. Then, when you got here, I got the very clear impression that what you really wanted to be was an actor, so that was a little bit of a disappointment that you didn't want to be a filmmaker. But then when you told me that you really wanted to go home and make movies . . . that was exciting to me, I was like 'oh, wow! This is---he's really taken something away from this experience, and he really does want to do that.'

Throughout this lecture, Davenport maintains an extended close up of Saraf's facial expressions as he dramatizes his abused optimism. His eyes widen as he mimes his recalled naïveté and folds back into an expression of cold contempt as he recounts Mohamed's manipulation of him. After Mohamed returns to his apartment, he rightly identifies the source of Saraf's complaints: "I failed to make him like *me*. This is personal. This is not about the filmmaking; this is not about the professional" (*Operation Filmmaker*). As his declarations devolve into petulant accusations ("his opinions are very limited and stupid"), Davenport interrupts him: "Okay, I have to put the camera down." In a move that signals the collapsing of her role as a documentarian and what will increasingly become her role as Mohamed's default case-worker and reluctant advocate, she sets her camera on the table so that it records the unmediated intervention she intends to conduct.

“Look, the way that you approach them, it seems very dishonest. I’ve seen the conversations.” Here, her speech slows as she gives him a directive disguised as kindly advice: “The fact is, if you were more honest and [heavy emphasis] *real*, they would like you more and you would be a lot happier.”

We do not have access to Mohamed’s response to Davenport’s italicized imperative to be “just be real.” In all too self-evident ways, though, the directive unravels itself in the moment of its utterance. When a subject is positioned as a case study of a larger population experiencing an unfolding crisis, serving, in the colloquial phrase as “the face of that problem,” they are being asked to exhibit a particular form of vulnerability. Indeed, as Jasbir K. Puar has argued, the biopower of liberal empire operates through the disciplining of individuals into subjects, who, in turn, can come to represent a population worth preserving.[147] Saraf’s reference to the *True Life* episode that effectively served as Mohamed’s audition tape (“When we saw you on MTV and brought you over here”) underscores his failure to consistently maintain his performance as the face of the occupation and, to draw on Nguyen’s paradigm, to give his American backers a good return on their investment. The pleas that Mohamed need only “be straight” and “real” are requests for him to furnish a more inspiring archive of the occupation. In the moment that Davenport sets down the camera but continues filming her explicit direction of him, she enters the frame as a broker in a marketplace in which Mohamed’s telling/selling of his story determines, in very immediate and material ways, his life chances. Off the camera yet not (we see Mohamed’s folded arms and his hand resting on his chin; we hear their exchange), both remain bound to a clock in which time and footage are capital. Davenport puts the camera down

[147]Re-routing Judith Butler’s biopolitical reading of queer subjects, Puar asks: “How is life weighted, disciplined into subjecthood, narrated into population, and fostered for living?” (36). Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2007).

but doesn't turn it off because she needs to get the shot. Her intervention spells out, in a euphemistic way ("they would like you more and you would be a lot happier"), a lesson that Mohamed already knows but does not heed in the correct manner.

Within the neocolonial teaching scene of his *Everything* internship and Davenport's documentary, Mohamed is schooled in a form of multicultural respectability (to be exhibited in the form of liking the right things and exhibiting the right feelings) that would reaffirm American ideals. In Evelyn Alsultany's study of post-9/11 television series, she notes that shows frequently depicted positive representations of Arab-Americans (predictably either as "patriots" or "victims") to broadcast that, despite its (unfortunate, but necessary) governmental policies, the U.S. was committed to a post-racial era.[148] *True Life's* "I'm Living in Iraq" and Schreiber's and Davenport's respective projects certainly fall under this argumentative heading as their ostensible objective is giving voice and face to occupied Iraqis. Notably, though, Saraf and Davenport express their disappointment in Mohamed when his voice and face threaten to flatten into the profile of the bad Arab/bad brown man: misogynistic, anti-Semitic, lazy (a word that is never uttered but teases on the tip of the crew's tongues), and conniving. This profile is, in turn, overlaid by the discourse of failed uplift that characterizes both welfare reform in the U.S. and American neocolonialism. One can here recall President Obama's initial remarks that the Iraqi army needed to address the then burgeoning civil war in Iraq on its own; "we can't [solve their problems] for them." A troubled neocolonial subject of a troubled nation-state, Mohamed

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[148] In tandem with its romanticizations of counter-terrorism violence (see: Jack Bauer as the post-9/11 Lone Ranger), Evelyn Alsultany notes that many post-9/11 television series and films prominently featured sympathetic portrayals of Arab-Americans who were deliberately drawn against stereotypical lines as either "an unjust victim" or a "patriotic American." Evelyn Alsultany, "Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11: Representation Strategies for a 'Postrace' Era," *American Literature Quarterly*, 65.1 (March 2013): 161-169. p. 164.

resembles the poor, brown/black subject who fails at the project of self-making (or the project of independence) and manipulates the altruistic networks of support available to him.

He attempts to enlist Schreiber and Saraf's support for his visa renewal application by telling them a clearly fabricated story that his family was targeted in a bomb attack for his involvement in their film. Later, in an interview with Davenport, Schreiber explains that, when pressed, Mohamed made a sequence of revisions to his story (the bomb attack was qualified as an attack on his street, still later modified to a branch street, and, finally, to an explosion in his neighborhood). Schreiber admits that even as he questioned the veracity of his story, he realized that Mohamed's safety upon his return to Iraq could very well be compromised by his relationships with them and marvels at his "need" to lie. Indeed, Mohamed's embellishments are later substantiated by his correspondence with his family who warn him of the escalating violence in Baghdad. In Davenport's footage, he sits hunched over a computer screen that illuminates his face as his eyes scan across a screen of untranslated Arabic, summarizing the headlines for Davenport: "Things are really bad here. Don't come back. Whatever you do, don't come home." However manipulative, his expressed concern about the cost of being a friend to Americans presciently speaks to the enduring Iraqi refugee crisis that has now been exacerbated by ISIS's coup.[149]

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[149]I want to more heavily emphasis the plausibility of Mohamed's concerns. There have been numerous cases of Iraqi interpreters, who, after working with the U.S. military and private corporations, suffered violent attacks from political factions or were held in harrowing limbo by the bureaucratically-hampered Special Immigration Visa program for Iraqi and Afghan refugees. *The New York Times* reports that the 2007 Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, which allocated 25,000 visas for Iraqi and Afghan interpreters, has been implemented in a circumscribed fashion. While the program was renewed in October of 2013, only roughly 8,000 of the 25,000 visas have been issued. Tim Arango, "Door to U.S. May Be Closing for Iraqis Who Helped the U.S. Military," *The New York Times*, 19 September 2013. Consonant with Nguyen's argument in *Gift of Freedom*, numerous journalists' reports have remarked that this crisis has been informed by the U.S.'s shameful exit from Vietnam and its post-9/11 anxieties of the legibility of the Arab body. Kirk Johnson, founder of the List Project, remarked that he was accused by the USAID office of "dragging the nation back onto the rooftop of Saigon" by protesting the U.S.'s abandonment of its translators.

Like Davenport's gesture of setting down but not turning off the camera, Schreiber's well-intentioned questioning of Mohamed's "need" to lie, and their shared irritation at the flat stereotype that he almost collapses into, alerts us to their shared desire for him to develop into their more fully dimensional profile of multicultural precarity. To chart the depth of these terms, I want to draw on Chow's trenchant re-reading of the stereotype as "a sheer exterior deprived and independent of historical depth" (*Protestant Ethnic* 66). Breaking with the liberal, progressive orthodoxy that understands stereotypes as caricatures that impede cross-cultural understanding, Chow, elaborating on Fredric Jameson's work, maintains that stereotypes are inevitable and that rather than promoting the cultivation of more accurate images (an enterprise that still relies upon notions of cultural authenticity), we need to consider how stereotypes are deployed by different political regimes and what realities they bring into being.[150] The bad stereotypes that Mohamed uncomfortably grazes against (of the misogynist Arab, the conniving brown man) roughly index the orientalist tropes recurrent in the U.S.'s news media coverage of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, which Schreiber, Saraf, and Davenport are committed to complicating. Yet, his exhibition of these traits is frequently tied to his consumption of low-brow exports of globalized American culture. In her footage of Mohamed's semester abroad-like experience in Prague, in which he lives rent-free with other ex-pat men reveling in the extended adolescence of their early twenties, Davenport notes a copy of *Playboy* sitting idly next to a lighter with an image of the Twin Towers on it. Later, in Davenport's final reunion with Mohamed, he invites her into his room which is wallpapered with magazine cut-outs of

[150]Chow writes: "Cross-ethnic representation, then, is not just a matter of discovering more and newer routes to and contacts with other cultures, whether by means associated with Christopher Columbus (caravels) or Bill Gates (modems). Instead, it is a process in which the acceleration and intensification of contacts brought by technology and commerce entail an acceleration and intensification of stereotypes, stereotypes that, rather than simply being false or incorrect (and thus dismissible), have the potential of effecting changes in entire intellectual climates---as Derrida's reading of Chinese writing demonstrates" (63). *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002).

airbrushed Hollywood actresses and models. Simply put, he likes the wrong things. From his avowed love of Bush to his understanding of himself as a rising celebrity, Mohamed is a product of the bad, American products that he has ingested. The two sets of stereotypes that he evokes---the bad Arab and the consumer of ugly American culture---require us to return to Homi Bhabha's insight that "the success of colonialism depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects to ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[151] Bhabha's intervention that the almost-but-not-quite right slippage of imperialism's civilizing mission reduces the colonized subject to a "*virtual* or partial presence" who demands but ultimately denies further development (86, emphasis mine), resonates with Chow's argument when she argues that the stereotype compels us to couch cross-cultural contact in the Freudian and "unsentimental terms of a brushing against the other as a mere external *surface*" (*Protestant Ethnic* 55). Read with one another, Bhabha's and Chow's observations allow us to sketch the flat imprimatur of the colonial subject that liberal empire's multiculturalism purports to amend, thereby distancing us from the violent regimes we associate with stereotypes. As I earlier addressed, the depth model inherent to the documentary is especially serviceable for this objective. Documentaries offer viewers a live-action, edited archive; they assemble a portrait of a crisis beyond the stock images and terse headlines of, to return to Rancière, the informational present. The documentary, though, is reliant on the disciplinary tactic of the confession that prescribes how lives should narrate themselves as *fully developed* selves worth saving. In *Operation*, the self that Schreiber and Davenport attempt to draw out of Mohamed resembles a

[151]The exact phrasing of Homi Bhabha's formulation is worth citing here: "the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. By 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'. It is as if the very emergence of the 'colonial' is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86). Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994).

more palatable stereotype: the poor yet educated third-world subject, indignant but not dangerously enraged (a potential friend as opposed to a potential terrorist), traumatized, but capable of being treated.

Demonstrative of this, Davenport tries to develop a more complex portrait of Mohamed to flesh out the one-note, flat performance he gives on Schreiber's set. After filming an exchange between him and Saraf in which Saraf informs him that he admitted to an interviewer for *Entertainment Weekly* that he was shocked by Mohamed's declared "love" for George Bush (to which Mohamed rightly rejoins, "you are disappointed?"), Davenport later takes him on a Vltava riverboat cruise and asks him about what he witnessed during the bombing of Baghdad. Annoyed by her timing and intrusiveness of her question, he answers:

> I am not able to describe it because I can't. . . . I can't transfer the image by words. . . . We are spoiling a beautiful trip in Prague talking about the war. I don't want to remember that. . . . You just want stories. That's it. You just want interesting stories that you can see on the television. Even that, we spent a beautiful moment and that was over . . . somebody's feelings. That's what you wanted.

In their tense interview, Mohamed identifies their differing understandings of time. For him, the riverboat cruise is stolen time. Off-set and off-the clock, he criticizes Davenport for re-appropriating this time as an opportunity to further mine his experience of the invasion that he has already cashed in on, on what he feels to be his own terms. For Davenport, who, like him, is dependent on the continued support of her backers, time is footage. Her invitation for him to speak effectively attempts to resituate him in the time of the occupation and as a subject traumatized and still arrested by the invasion.

Davenport's direction of Mohamed is further evidenced in what feels like another heavily choreographed moment. Immediately following her interview with Mohamed, Davenport incorporates footage from a *CBS Early Show* report of an insurgent attack on a police station in Baghdad. In a voice-over, the news broadcaster explains the attack as we see footage of the burning debris of cars and an anguished, Iraqi man yelling in untranslated cries. Davenport then shifts her camera to Mohamed who stares blankly at the television screen; he does not comment on the report. From the most obvious angle, the disparity between the Iraqi man's emotional response and his silence is intended to mark Mohamed's temporal and spatial dislocation from a disaster that now only comes to him in heavily mediated, global news reports. Read with his previous exchange with Davenport, though, his perhaps deliberately muted response conveys a refusal to provide the affective testimony she solicits. His earlier criticism of her, "you just want somebody's feelings," anticipates her instrumentalization of his story as a generic case study of the war—she wants "*somebody*'s feelings"—an Iraqi man, not unlike the one featured on the *CBS Early Show*, testifying to his traumatic experience of the occupation. Notably, in the director's interview, Davenport speculates that Mohamed was "probably suffering" from PTSD.[152] Her appended diagnosis is intended as a generous contextualization their relationship, but it returns us to the frustrated expectation that he should be affected by the war in a more *affecting* manner. Again, these expectations are shaped by the economy of debts and gifts that Nguyen identifies in America's liberal empire. Building on Veena Das's *Life and Words* (2007), where she questions privileging trauma as the rupturing event, Nguyen notes that the category of trauma mobilizes an imperative for rehabilitation that locates the refugee as a site for

[152]In 2008 interview, Davenport explains that her initial sympathies were largely aligned with Mohamed, stating, "He's been plucked out of a war zone; he doesn't know anything about American culture . . . he probably has post-traumatic stress disorder from the war, who knows, and I was on his side most of the time."

governmental intervention and elides the operations of power that contributed to his/her displacement.[153] At first glance, her insight may appear to have only a rough application to *Operation*; Davenport's objective in pursuing Mohamed as a documentary subject is to elucidate the commonalities between Schreiber's intervention and the Operation Iraqi Freedom. Still, the dynamic that Nguyen charts—the diagnosis of trauma, the normalizing gift of rehabilitation—does play out within the Davenport's implicit demand that Mohamed narrate his experiences of the invasion in a more compelling way.

In resisting Davenport's directorial cues and solicitations, Mohamed refuses to be fixed---arrested and treated---as a displaced, native informant who must, through his testimony, render the occupation visible in the green zoned regions and publics of the U.S. and Western Europe. Through his guarded silences and his sometimes studied moments of inattention, he deviates from her plotting of his response and reroutes its attendant emotional pathways. In one instance of this rerouting, Davenport records him actively ignoring a news report on the prosecution of the prison guards who tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Mohamed knocks on the door of his flat-mate's bedroom to ask for his assistance in translating a text message that he has received from a young woman he met on the set of *Doom*. The open door of his roommate's darkened bedroom reveals a small television in the corner of the room which broadcasts the prosecution of U.S. soldier Charles Graner, Jr. Davenport narrows in on the television screen that shows illustrated images from the trial and then the widely circulated photograph of naked, Iraqi male prisoners forced into a pyramid of exposed and emasculated flesh coded as queer. Subtitles to the broadcast are provided for us but the report is audible. Mohamed, however, is seemingly

[153] Nguyen writes, "In this regard, the rehabilitative objective first concurs with the condition as a narration of refugee abnormality that covers over its epistemic violence (in which state and capital collude to produce dispossessed peoples) and then conceals the political stakes for intervention" (65). Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2012).

oblivious. He ignores the tacit directorial cue conveyed through the abrupt shift of Davenport's camera and continues to dictate a text message to his flat-mate.

This missed encounter bears an uncanny resemblance to the scene in Haneke's *Caché* in which a news report on Abu Ghraib forms the unremarked background to Georges and Anne's domestic argument. There, Haneke firmly draws a through-line between Georges's emphatic refusal of responsibility for Majid and his paradigmatic, bourgeois couple's privileged isolation from the neocolonial war crimes occurring in Iraq. In *Operation*, though, the lessons are not so easily guaranteed; the emotional channels through which they would travel are blocked. Mohamed's missed encounter with the report renders it atmospheric as opposed to pedagogical----an accidental accompaniment to his exchange with his roommate. There is an undercurrent of frustrated desire in this moment; it invites us to imagine the exchange that could have taken place between Davenport and Mohamed. Davenport's abrupt and targeted focus on the almost found footage of the news broadcast tries to open up a scene, to cause a scene that would address the shame that John Limon identifies in his scare-quoted-entitled article, "The shame of Abu Ghraib"---the shame at the shamelessness of sovereigns, petty and administrative, and the shame of the non-sovereignty of the American citizen.[154] Instead, Mohamed's inattention folds the report back into an ambient knowledge-scape, one in which "Abu Ghraib" is simply become one of the more prominent entries on a long roster of crimes committed during the occupation.

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[154]In his article, John Limon maps out a flow-chart of the often amorphous circuits of shame and observes that American expressions of shame (more precisely, for the use of shame as a torture tactic, a predicating notion that Limon incisively questions) denote an identification with the perpetrators rather than the prisoners. He writes: "The undeclared idea must be that the shame of Abu Ghraib (the shame induced by detainees) entails the shame of Abu Ghraib (the shame of American soldiers and civilians shaming detainees) entails the shame of Abu Ghraib (the shame felt by American citizens). Yet feeling Bush's or Cheney's or Rumsfeld's shame for them can only mean identification with them. The very source of potential identification with detainees (feeling shame) reveals a precedent identification with the administration (it is their shame that is felt)" (553). John Limon, "The Shame of Abu Ghraib," *Critical Inquiry*, 33.3 (Spring 2007): 543-572.

This muted, non-exchange constitutes, as I have outlined, one of the many episodic entries in Davenport's catalogue of rebuked expectations. Collectively, this catalogue is shaped by Mohamed's attempts to override Davenport's directorial control by determining when and where he will exhibit his war wounds but also by the tensions between the ordinary, green-zoned spaces that he navigates---in which the occupation is a series of images and digital dispatches---and the unfolding event of the occupation and his own displacement.

Davenport tries to bridge the divide between the breathtakingly insulated spaces that Mohamed moves through and the ongoing, rupturing event of the occupation by incorporating video diaries filmed by Mohamed's friends in Baghdad. Introduced by her supplied caption of "what Muthana's life would have been like had he stayed in Baghdad," these entries encourage the viewer to imagine an alternate, and, implicitly, more compelling, storyline for him in which he, like his friends and family, would have lived under a curfew that confined him to his home and to imagine him proudly displaying his inked index finger to demonstrate his participation in the 2005 elections. These videos supplement the thin and unsatisfying archive of the occupation that Mohamed provides by introducing us to *historical* subjects, marked, as Dhaya's inked finger shows, by their entrance into the time of modern democracy and demonstrating an unexpected, positive yield of the unpopular occupation. These entries feature more deserving candidates for the celebrity aid and American good-will that Mohamed carelessly squanders. One shot shows Dhaya crouched near a wall as he expresses his longing to take a boom mic and record the occupation that Mohamed steadfastly refuses to discuss outside of his petitions for visas and applications for aid and schooling. In another piece of excerpted footage, Nezar reports on the interminable curfew from the sequestered space of his home and he regrets his inability to work. Giving Davenport and Mohamed a tour of the home and bedroom to which he is confined, he

explains that he has tried to expand it by re-arranging the furniture. He points to pictures of Charlie Chapin and Jean-Luc Godard that he has taped to his wall referring to them as his "friends" who have guided his film studies and explains that his own work has been derailed. "I can't go out, I can't write, I can't do anything. . . . I hate these fucking terrorist groups and fucking religion." He sighs. "I hate to be hating. I need to get out of here." It does not detract from the profound sincerity of Nezar's exasperation to note that these epistolary videos are simultaneously audition tapes addressed to Davenport as a representative of the networks that have airlifted Mohamed out of the occupation. They offer us a ground-level view of the occupation that is no longer within Mohamed's visual horizon but they are also shaped and determined by the promise of the American humanitarian aid lottery that Mohamed continues to navigate.

Positioned against these alternate storylines---the life that he could have led under the occupation and the footage that his friends might have given had they been the beneficiaries of the opportunities that he carelessly mishandles---Mohamed is seemingly marked by his lack of depth. He is an audition tape repeating on loop; a seductive but ultimately deceptive face of the occupation whose performances draw attention to themselves *as performances*. Yet, if he is a flat character or, to make an italicized return to Bhabha, only "*virtual*" presence, the resemblance and menace of his neocolonial mimicry is a reflection of the depreciating value his story carries within an American market for traumatic stories about third-world, racialized others. When Davenport pleads with him that she needs to wrap up her project by stating: "Do you think that this is fun for me? I keep trying to film you to the point of something good happening. I need to move onto other projects." "What's your next," he quips, "an Afghani?" His cynicism is cheap but not inaccurate. In the teaching space of Schreiber's and Davenport's respective projects, he

absorbs not the lessons of cross-cultural memory that they wish for him to replicate on camera but the desperate necessity of gaming the starkly different markets of Hollywood and immigration bureaucracies.

As I remarked at the outset, the majority of Davenport's documentary focuses on Mohamed's applications for aid after his internship with Schreiber and Saraf ends. It goes without saying, but the markets to which he applies are organized around differing criteria of precarity: as an intern on a film set and, later, a film student, Mohamed circulates as an appealing and often digitized representative of the occupation. As an Iraqi subject applying for a U.S. visa, he is evaluated as a national entrant with a profiled, and uncertain, future. As ever, media matters. In one market, he is a virtual product. In his applications for film schools, his story is submitted remotely and evaluated for its speculative capital. He submits a digital video of himself performing a monologue from Stephen Frears's *High Fidelity* (that, in his conflation of low-brow Hollywood culture with high-brow film, he incorrectly attributes to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*), and one of the directors, Joan See, remarks, "Just look at that face. You could put that in a movie tomorrow." Digitized face of occupation, he travels as the unfulfilled promise of cosmopolitan memory that is engendered by the technologies through which his story is principally transmitted. Within what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun calls the "ever up-dating, inhumanely clocked time in which our machines and memories are embedded," there is an illusory effect of the collapsing of spatial boundaries into a global memory space wherein one can, across national borders, access the occupation through and as a series of refreshable images.[155]

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[155]Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future is a Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 35.1 (Autumn 2008): 148-171. pp. 166, 169.

As a digitized object of global memory, Mohamed does make good on the generation of cross-cultural memory—his story has legs. Within the domain of immigration law, however, he is arrested and fixed by the post-9/11 counter-terrorism policies and the ordinariness of his story. After Mohamed desperately entreats Davenport to enlist the help of humanitarian lawyers and warns her that he will not allow her to film him if he is sent to a refugee camp, Davenport and her producer meet with lawyers in New York City. Immigration lawyer Cyrus Mehta remarks that if Mohamed were to apply for a refugee visa, he would be further required to prove that the Iraqi government and U.S. forces could not sufficiently protect him. Recalling Davenport's earlier excerpting of CBS's footage of the occupation and the emails Mohamed receives from his friends and family warning him not to return to Iraq, this demand seems laughably cruel, but it illustrates how, as Suketu Mehta has reported, the application for asylum constitutes a trauma narrative genre onto itself. [156] After concluding that Mohamed's best option would be to apply for an O-1 visa reserved for "individuals with extraordinary ability" who have been "sufficiently distinguished" within their field, Mehta warns Davenport that if Mohamed were to move to New York without a supportive network, he would become further disenfranchised and be subject to post-9/11 police surveillance. What is striking about these interviews is Mohamed's absence. We only see Davenport and her producer making a good faith effort to investigate his options. In Mehta's projected vision of Mohamed's future, he maps a story-line that extends beyond the fifteen-minute mark of a reality television segment and a ninety-minute documentary to a probable end-point: Mohamed appears as an "illegal" with expired papers and a potential target

[156] In Suketu Mehta's "The Asylum Seeker: For a Chance at a Better Life, It Helps to Make Your Bad Story Worse," she reports on an African immigrant who was advised by her lawyer to embellish her story to make it more horrific. She writes, "It is not enough for asylum applicants to say that they were threatened, or even beaten. They have to furnish horror stories. It's not enough to say that they were raped. The officials require details. Inevitably, these atrocity stories are inflated, as new applicants for asylum get more inventive about what was done to them, competing with the lore that has already been established, with applicants whose stories, both real and fake, are so much more dramatic, whose plight is so much more perilous, than theirs." Suketu Mehta, *The New Yorker* 1 August 2011.

for Homeland Security. As a narrative, Mohamed is globalized memory; as an Iraqi national who is neither spectacularly talented nor extraordinarily endangered, he cannot be incorporated into the body politic of the U.S.

The final scenes of the film further demonstrate this point. Mohamed effectively shuts down Davenport's documentary when she tells him that she will no longer support him financially, but they reunite several months later for one final interview in London. Mohamed first pitches his intended film project to her, explaining that it will feature the royal dog, Mimi, who escapes from the Palace and embarks on adventures in London's club scene which sound roughly similar to Mohamed's own nights in Prague. The film, he tells Davenport, will end with a shot of Mimi standing before a store-front window display of multiple television screens transmitting images of the war. It is a derivative project that sounds very similar to the "seeing eye bitch" Sammy Davis Jr., Jr. in *Everything is Illuminated*. Mohamed's pitch lands as a banalized return on the idealistic aims of *Operation* and *Everything*.[157] Still later, he stands in the doorway of his London apartment and insists that he will eventually make it to New York and work in film, "I don't care about nations or passports. I don't care about any of that. . . . I'm going to make it. And do you know why? Because of I'm real." In this final shot of neocolonial mimicry, Mohamed, who entered Davenport's and Schreiber's frame already well-versed in the gospel of American neoliberalism, keeps adamant faith with its major tenet: one is one's own best product---the most compelling iteration of one's trauma narrative.

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[157] In both the novel and the film, Alex and his grandfather have an intimidating "seeing-eye bitch" named Sammy Davis Jr. Jr., who serves as the comedic mascot for their journey.

III. Zones of Life, Subjects of Labor, or, Revolution for the Future-Present: Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*

> "In other words, it was a matter of organizing circulation, eliminating its dangerous elements, making a division between good and bad circulation, and maximizing the good circulation by diminishing the bad." Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*

> "They die out there because the policy is to let them die (the wall is strategically incomplete) to discourage others from crossing." Teju Cole, "A Piece of the Wall" (2014)

Operation Filmmaker ultimately ends by highlighting the ways in which Mohamed, while espousing the gospel of the purportedly boundary-less neoliberal world is, nonetheless, stalled at the border as a displaced Iraqi national. While his application essays and commodified war story find some traction in the cosmopolitan marketplace, as a subject he remains bound to the nation-state world of passports and wars: neither sufficiently talented for an O-1 visa nor sufficiently endangered to be admitted into the U.S., he is just an arbitrarily, highlighted case study of the U.S.'s failed occupation of Iraq.

This divide between the cosmopolitan travels that Mohamed enjoys as a documentary subject and archive of the war and his curtailed and uncertain movements as a racialized Iraqi roughly mirrors the corporeal/labor divide in Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* (2008). In *Sleep Dealer*, labor is outsourced while the exhausted body of the migrant remains bound by the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. As I earlier summarized in my introduction, Rivera's science-fiction film is an indictment of the past and future disasters that already have and will have occurred in the long aftermath of the U.S.'s neoliberal infiltration of Mexico---first through the U.S.'s outsourcing of manufacturing jobs to the industrialized enclaves of the *maquilas* along

the border and later exacerbated by NAFTA.[158] Countering films that depict Mexican and South American subjects crossing into the U.S. as either undocumented, domestic laborers (Alejandro González Iñárritu's 2006 *Babel*) or drug mules (Joshua Marston's 2004 *Maria Full of Grace*), Rivera's film inverts the typical direction that labor and capital travel by exclusively focusing on the U.S.'s infiltration of Mexico. The initial, world-building scenes of the film show the U.S.'s privatization of Mexico's water (courtesy of Del Rio Water, Inc.), the resultant foreclosure of local forms of agricultural production, and de-corporealized border-crossings wherein the labor of workers is virtually channeled into the U.S. while the bodies of workers remain reassuringly confined to the space of Tijuana. The only subject who physically crosses the border is an American drone operator, Rudy, who crosses into Mexico to search for Memo and atone for his assassination of Memo's father.

In short, Rivera's film provides a serviceable primer on the consequences of NAFTA by following its production of undocumented workers "in the shadows" to its logical conclusion and rendering them completely invisible within the nation-state of the U.S. For this and other reasons, it has generated a burgeoning body of scholarship. To extract two representative threads from this conversation, Luis Martín-Cabrera situates *Sleep Dealer* within the context of neoliberalism's enclosure of the natural commons (natural resources) and privatization of information in the digital realm.[159] In Lysa Rivera's thoughtful analysis, she provides a more geographically specific reading by placing *Sleep Dealer* within a genealogy of borderland

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[158] While G.M.'s outsourcing of its manufacturing to Mexico occurred in the 1980s, Mezzadra and Neilson underline that the *maquilas* first emerged along the border in the aftermath of the 1965 bilateral agreement, or the "Auto-Pact" between U.S. and Canada and were later more fully developed in the 1977 Mexican Automotive Decree. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, Or, The Multiplication of Labor*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2013), p. 236.

[159] Luis Martín-Cabrera, "The Potentiality of the Commons: A Materialist Critique of Cognitive Capitalism from the Cyberbracer@s to the Ley Snide," *Hispanic Review*, 80.4 (Autumn 2012): 583-605.

literatures---both those which emerged in the aftermath of the U.S.'s 1848 seizure of Northern Mexico and the sci-fi literature that responded to transformations in Mexico's economic landscape in the 1980s and, more pronouncedly, after 1994. Both Martín-Cabrera and Rivera note that *Sleep Dealer* grew out of Rivera's short, satirical film, "Why Cybraceros?" (1997). "Why Cybraceros" highlights footage from propaganda videos sponsoring the 1942-1964 Bracero Program that imported Mexican laborers to work at California's farms during a labor shortage. With this footage, Rivera interweaves crudely digitized images of Mexican labor, figured as vaguely Pac-Man-like figures wearing sombreros, whose energy powers robots at American work sites. The lesson is explicitly translated for us in the voice-over monologue: "'In Spanish, *Cybracero* means a worker who operates a computer with his arms and hands. But in American lingo, *Cybracero* means a worker who poses no threat of being a citizen.'" Martín-Cabrera reports that this American lingo was extremely alluring to some American businesses; a website that was launched in conjunction with the film project received serious inquiries from interested companies who misread the satirical site as a portal into an untapped market (590). In *Sleep Dealer*, the Cybracero program returns as the name of the corporation that owns the factories that fulfill America's globalized dreams. By identifying the continuities between the U.S.'s Bracero program and its post-NAFTA creation of cheap labor and cheapened life that underwrites so many of its products and service industries, *Sleep Dealer* thus outlines the long durée of U.S.-Mexican economic relations and, as Lysa Rivera states, "comment [s] on the ways in which 'real' labor practices in the US/Mexico borderlands region are quite literally exercises in dehumanization and exploitation" (424).

More than a comment on these literal exercises in dehumanization, *Sleep Dealer* replicates the speculative mode in which (disaster) capitalism works. The global South *will be*

because it has already been reduced to a collection of human and environmental bodies to be depleted through corporatized, military technologies that entirely occlude the exhausted bodies and collateral damage from the global North's view. Conjugating disaster in the future anterior, *Sleep Dealer* connects the traumas of global capitalism that have already occurred (the seizure of resources, the production of disposable subjects) to the forecasting models and virtual technologies that so inform the U.S.'s counter-insurgency missions and the speculative economies of high-finance capitalism.

By concluding my chapter with Rivera's sci-fi dramatization of the American Dream, I continue my examination of migrant narratives that address the inter-generational and unfolding atrocities of colonialism and neocolonialism. Like *Caché* and *Operation Filmmaker*, Rivera's film addresses the event of trauma through the drone assassination of a civilian and the seriality of everyday, muted-atrocities: the slow voiding of indigenous forms of production, the internal zones that migrant laborers must traverse, and the work hazards to which they are exposed. Yet, whereas the fantastical archives in Haneke's film and Davenport's documentary are organized around post-colonial and neocolonial subjects who petition for recognition from the imperial nation-state (Majid's final, self-annihilating plea for Georges to witness his decision to end the slow disaster of his life; Mohamed's applications for aid and visas and his final, defiant interview with Davenport), *Sleep Dealer* demands that the viewer recognize how the U.S. parasitically feeds on Mexico and ends with a recuperating gesture towards local sovereignty.

To be sure, this gesture is made with a heavy patriarchal hand. Memo and Rudy are the only political actors in the film and their collaborative act of destroying the Del Rio Water Inc.'s dam is presented as a fulfillment of Memo's patrimonial inheritance. The women only exist as largely unnamed workers and mothers who either wordlessly grieve the disasters of a militarized

border (as Memo's mother does) or to celebrate them. "We're so proud of you!" Rudy's mother comically enthuses when Rudy expresses his guilt over killing Memo's father. Her response provides one of the film's few punchlines but it lands at the expense of its continuity. She also served in the military so why would she be so cavalier about taking human life? The one named and developed exception to this eye-roll-inducing patriarchal rule, Memo's romantic partner, Luz, is a free-lance journalist who largely serves the purpose of inadvertently uniting the two men and enabling their act of political resistance. Bookmarking rather than bracketing the film's reification of the masculine subject as the default citizen, *Sleep Dealer,* nonetheless, urges us to imagine the scalar costs (human and environmental) of systems of capital that bank on and engineer the immediate and future disasters to come.

These catastrophes-to-come are registered through the zoning of life and labor that has already occurred. The film begins as a long flashback sequence in which Memo, now plugged into a virtual factory, recalls reluctantly working on his father's milpa in rural Santa Ana. His memories highlight the division of resources between the rural Oaxaca and industrial-virtual domains of Tijuana and San Diego. In order to obtain water to sustain their fledging crops, Memo and his father must insert American currency into an intercom mounted to the aggressively policed fence that guards the dam that barricades the waters of the Del Rio from local farmers. When Memo's father recounts the sovereign methods of production that they once enjoyed before the war, Memo, the apolitical son, scoffs at his nostalgia and instead looks to the futurity promised by the city. Re-wiring his family's television satellite, he devotes his free time to an amateurized form of wire-tapping; we see him pirating signals that allow him to hopscotch across conversations occurring within his village and the city. Through his headphones, he listens to the voices of internal migrants who exchange news about their "nodes" (a surgical

implant that wires them for work in the Cybracero factories) and their new, disembodied service-industry jobs across the border. "I'm working as a bus-boy in New York. Or, at least, I think it's New York." The camera snakes across the wires that transmit these contraband testimonies and expands into a sky-view shot that surveys the illuminated cityscapes where they occur. The panoramic view reflects Memo's act of claiming the right to visualize or, more precisely, right to freely traverse the internal and external borders created by the U.S.'s corporatized invasion of Mexico.

Predictably, there is a price exacted for claiming this right. Memo's satellite signal is read by Del Rio Water's security team as "a terrorist intercept" potentially tied to "aqua-terrorists" (specifically, the Mayan Liberation Army, a reference that repeats throughout the film but is never overtly explicated as an allusion to the insurgent groups that have protested the privatization of water in Cochabamba, Bolivia). As he and his brother watch the American reality television program, *Drones!* where, as the *America's Most Wanted*-like announcer advertises, "High-tech heroes use cutting-edge technology and blow the hell out of the bad guys!" they learn that their father's milpa has been identified as the target. A parodic nod to the merger between the post-9/11 U.S. counter-insurgency military, private corporations, and the entertainment industry,[160] *Drones!* resembles a hybrid of *COPS*, *American Idol*, and the short-lived ABC reality show, *Homeland Security, U.S.A.* (2009). The latter predominantly featured Latino U.S. border control agents policing Mexican and Arab subjects. Consistent with *Homeland Security U.S.A.*'s inoculating multiculturalism (like the W. Bush administration, it

[160] These mergers, of course, pre-date our post-9/11 epoch. As Roberto J. Gonzalez reports, the human terrain systems that now determine how the U.S.'s counter-insurgency teams target specific regions was first conceptualized in "domestic counterinsurgency efforts in the late 1960s, when U.S. spy agencies hoped to neutralize the Black Panthers and other militant groups" and later refined during the Vietnam war. Roberto J. Gonzalez, "Cybernetic Crystal Ball: 'Forecasting' Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan," *Virtual War and Magical Death: Technologies and Imaginaries for Terror and Killing*, eds. Neil L. Whitehead and Sverker Finnström, (Durham: Duke UP, 2013), pp. 65-84. p. 67.

engages in the tired bait-and-switch logic of "the policy is not racist if it is enforced by the minorities it targets"), the drone assassination of Memo's father is preceded by a talking-head confessional with Rudy Ramirez, a second-generation Mexican-American pilot on his first mission. He earnestly explains that he is following in the footsteps of his parents who served in the military, a statement that is visually scored with a photograph of him as a child sitting atop his uniformed father's shoulders. The show then includes a sky-view overhead shot of the security headquarters in San Diego. San Diego, of course, is a hub for security companies that have benefited from post-9/11 heightened Homeland Security initiatives. General Atomics, one of the leading providers of drones for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, is headquartered there and the city served as the site for the first installation of the border fence in 1990.[161]

Transforming what are commonly thought of as clandestine aerial attacks (although, to echo Mark Danner's criticism of such formulations, drone attacks certainly are not clandestine for those within their flight path), *Drones!* depicts security as spectacle. A cheering studio audience watches on a giant, hi-definition screen as Rudy puts on his flight mask and, aided by fly-eye camera drones, bombs Memo's home. When Memo's wounded father limps out of the burning structure, Rudy zooms in and positions the camera's bull's eye on the father's terrified face. The frame of the film is completely aligned with the frame of the show and we see the *Drones!* logo in the upper right-hand corner of Rudy's viewfinder. After hesitating, he follows command and eliminates the bad guy.

[161] Wendy Brown states, "The U.S. Border Patrol undertook the building of the first piece of the barrier, the 'San Diego fence,' in 1990. Extending from the Pacific Ocean fourteen miles inland and completed in 1993, the fence was constructed of air force landing mats remaindered from the Vietnam War, which turned out to be eminently climable and lacked the visual awe of what was soon to come." Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, (New York: Zone Books, 2010), p. 35.

Crossing-cutting between multiple screens, the televised drone attack enacts the “cyborg orgy” of modern warfare that Donna Haraway identified in 1991, in which missions were increasingly executed through the C^3I code of “command-control-communication-intelligence” (292). Her fin de siècle diagnosis of the virtualization and corporatization of U.S. warfare has only become more relevant in this century. Corporations are enfranchised as citizens whose interests are protected by private security firms that employ technology first designed for overseas military operations and then domesticated for commercial and law enforcement purposes. While the co-opting of military technology for the private market has always followed on the heels of military engagements the proliferation of drone technology, which has been advanced by the 2012 FAA Reauthorization Act, has fostered, in Robertson Allen’s phrase, “new forms of virtual soldiering” (169). These new modalities of virtual soldiering are defined, Allen states, by the “immersive” qualities of military entertainment such as those featured in the first-person-shooter games like *Call of Duty* and the video games that the U.S. military has used in its recruitment efforts. The imperial visualities that they engender, though, abstract life as targets. On the ground, human and animal life are pixelated as so many clustered dots of projected collateral damage in “personality strikes” (the chilling euphemism for the U.S.’s drone attacks against its designated but never charged terrorists). Terming this visuality “spectacide” (a phrase that Rivera’s film nicely dramatizes), Jeffrey A. Sluka makes the familiar point that from the military’s vantage point, or, “the imperial top-down perspective, remote-controlled ‘terminator’ drones are perceived as a fantastically successful new weapon, right out of science fiction” (186).

Rivera challenges the nomination of drone technology as “‘the only good thing to come out of the war on terror’” (Sluka 182) by showing a masked Rudy confronting a close-up of the terrified face of a man who has been read by a satellite feed as an aqua-terrorist. Based on the

available data that Sluka reviews (drawn from counter-insurgency champion David Kilcullen, who contributed to the U.S. Department of Defense's FM 3-24 manual), the U.S.'s airstrikes in Pakistan and Afghanistan have had a 98 percent civilian casualty rate with a ratio of fifty, accidental/incidental civilian deaths for every two militant executions.[162] The satellite feeds that guide the drone operators obscure these deaths by registering the civilian casualties as so many dots, or, in the military colloquialism, "bug splats" (a phrase that recalls Suzan-Lori Parks's repurposing of the word "splat" to denote pestilential human populations and infestations in *Imperceptible*). Indeed, protesting the reduction of human life to incidental debris of aerial warfare, Pakistani, American, and French artists in Pakistan launched the *Not a Bug Splat* art project which confronts satellites with a 100 by 70 feet photographic portrait of a young girl who lost her parents and siblings in a 2009 aerial attack on Pukhtoonkhwa in western Pakistan.[163] Similar to *Not a Bug Splat*, Rivera's close-up of the father's face demonstrates that in the cyborg merger between the U.S. soldier and the predator drone s/he operates, vulnerability and mortality (or, in neoliberal parlance "risk"), are outsourced to the machine and to the populations below. Through the view-finder of the drone, they become unfortunate expenditures that, while regrettable, cannot deter its programmed flight path.

By showing that the flight path of the U.S.'s drones extends into Mexico's airspace, Rivera's film indicts the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's use of surveillance drones in the borderlands and, more broadly, illuminates how post-9/11 counter-terrorism technologies have

[162] Among his sources, Sluka cites counter-insurgency expert David Kilcullen who testified before the U.S. Congress that "'Since 2006, we've killed 14 senior Al-Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same period, we've killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the area.' . . .Kilcullen said that the kill ratio had been fifty civilians for every militant killed, a hit rate of 2 percent, or 98 percent civilian casualties." Ibid, p. 183.
[163] "Not a Bug Splat: Artists Confront U.S. Drone Operators with Giant Picture of Pakistani Child," *Democracy Now: A Daily Independent Global News Hour*, 10 April 2014.

been repurposed and aggressively redirected for the militarization of the U.S-Mexican border. Brown's apt description of the militarization of the U.S./Mexican border, "[it] is built from the fabric of a suspended rule of law and fiscal unaccountability" (38), also serves as a characterization of the U.S.'s occupation of Iraq. Recalling Amy Kaplan's argument that the borders of the homeland contract as U.S. Empire expands, the tactics and resources employed in the occupation abroad have been funneled into the intensified policing of the U.S.'s borders at home.[164] Customs and Border Protection, with its payroll of 60,000 employees, now comprises the "largest federal law enforcement agency in the U.S."[165] The shared fabric between these states of emergency and the figures that they produce---the "illegal", the Arab terrorist, and their counterparts, the good multicultural Muslim-American and the college/army-bound young adult of the DREAM Act---is tightly woven into the methodologies used to police these figures. The racial profiling and standard-operating procedures that targeted people of Arab-descent in the aftermath of 9/11 have likewise been employed at the checkpoints and border detention facilities that now mark the ever-expanding border zones of the Southwest and Northeast. Further, these procedures for tracking the suspected Muslim terrorist and the Mexican "illegal" have increasingly gone online. The surveillance drones that conduct panoptic raids on Arizona are complemented by the NSA's monitoring of Muslim Americans that is partially directed by training manuals that use the monikers "Mohamed Raghead" or "Mohamed Badguy" as the examples of targeted individuals that might appear in the databases.[166]

[164] See Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002).
[165] Todd Miller, "66 Percent of Americans Now Live in a Constitution-Free Zone," *The Nation*, 15 July 2014.
[166] Noting the use of the term "Mohamed Raghead," Amy Davidson, editor of the online edition of the *New Yorker*, reminds us, "The slur isn't a one-off; another document, made public last year, created to demonstrate how to query a database in order to track communications, used a character named, 'Mohamed Badguy.'" Amy Davidson, "The N.S.A's Spying on Muslim Americans," *The New Yorker*, 10 July 2014.

On this point, Rivera's film primarily alludes to the commonalities between the war on terror and the U.S.'s parasitical policing and exploitation of Mexican migrants through the virtual technologies (the drone strikes) and their shared nomenclature (for "Muslim insurgent," substitute "aqua terrorist"), but one of the promotional materials for *Sleep Dealer* eerily recalls an image from the Abu Ghraib archive. One of the frontispieces for its 2009 U.S. DVD edition shows a uniformed Memo with electric wires extending from the nodes implanted in his outstretched arms; in the background, a mushroom cloud from a drone attack blooms. Memo's posture and the cables extending from his arms resemble one of the most commonly reproduced images from the published Abu Ghraib archive---that of the hooded prisoner, 151716, Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh, standing on a wooden block with electric wires dangling from his outstretched arms. Both pictured figures denote an attempt to reconfigure their subjects as either the redacted worker who only appears as a programmed machine at the U.S.'s work sites or dehumanized prisoner beyond the civilizational pale in the war on terror.

Read with one another, these two figures, one of the U.S.'s future, economic terrorism, the other of its torture chambers in Iraq, visually index the *actual* underwriting of neoliberal policies of the U.S.'s war on terror and its militarization of its borders. Just as NAFTA and border security have produced pools of undocumented workers, the U.S. relied upon migrant laborers during its occupation of Afghanistan, and to a greater degree, Iraq. Sarah Stillman reports that sixty percent of the privately contracted employees at military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan were comprised of "third country nationals" from South Asian and African countries, many of whom were effectively trafficked into war zones with promises of working for wealthy business owners in Dubai. Like their undocumented counterparts in the U.S., these

low-wage, service industry workers of the green zone were frequently subjected to abuse and poor working conditions with little recourse to law.[167]

I tabulate these commonalities between the U.S.s' homeland security regimes because they add up to a shared necropolitics in which poor, brown bodies are registered as targets (or bug splats) and expendable laborers to be selectively conscripted into the circuits of the U.S.'s globalized economy. *Sleep Dealer*'s depiction of these conscripting circuits reflects an argument advanced by numerous theorists and activists: the border produces the undocumented worker as a figure of anxiety and exploitation. Writing of this definitive paradox, Brown has argued that the proliferation of walls among nation-states signals a futile attempt to shore-up sovereign power against the globalized channels of capitalism that have rendered the nation-state porous (39). *Sleep Dealer*, though, invites us to move beyond the wall as the organizing locus of these tensions. Foregoing the move made by films like González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006), where the wall is spectacularized and the camera lingers over the home-made crosses that embroider it, Rivera's film sidelines the wall to the periphery; it marks his characters' horizon but does not determine it. Notably, we only see Memo and Luz comment on the barrier during their leisurely visit to the beach where the wall ends in the water as a series of steel pickets that advertise their ineffectiveness. Luz quips, "This is where the border wall ends. I guess they built it to keep out terrorist surfers."

[167] Sarah Stillman writes, "The expansion of private-security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan is well known. But armed security personnel account for only about sixteen per cent of the over-all contracting force. The vast majority—more than sixty per cent of the total in Iraq—aren't hired guns but hired hands. . . . Many of them recount having been robbed of wages, injured without compensation, subjected to sexual assault, and held in conditions resembling indentured servitude by their subcontractor bosses." Sarah Stillman, "The Invisible Army: For foreign workers on the bases of Iraq and Afghanistan, war can be hell." *The New Yorker*. 6 June 2011.

Marking the wall as a mundane reality---a piece but not the determinative whole of the problem---Rivera instead focuses on two scales of biopower: the regulation of the population through the regulation of resources (water and the raw matter of human labor) and the disciplinary reconfiguration of the worker's body. Rivera's focus chimes with Mezzadra and Neilson's argument that we need to move beyond the wall and approach the migrant economies that they have produced as "border-scapes" (a term they borrow from Suvendrini Perera). Border-scapes, they elaborate, are regions regulated by a "sovereign machine of governmentalities" and "flexibly linked to market technologies and other systems of measurement and control" (176). Multiple public and private actors work within this machinery of governmentalities and they pull on different levers of control. These levers include the immigration points systems whose filters are fitted to the demands of the market; the digital databases devoted to collecting biometric information on migrants (a policing tactic that *Sleep Dealer* captures when Rudy's work and travel history are produced by a biometric scanner); and most pertinent to my concerns here, the incursions of multinational corporations that produce internal districts---hotbeds of economic activity, dead-zones of ecological depletion.

These different regulatory economies sometimes override and sometimes work in tandem with border regimes. As *Sleep Dealer* shows, their impact on the migrant worker precedes and surpasses the physicality of the border-wall. Upon his arrival in Tijuana, Memo is introduced to the corrosive effects of virtual outsourcing. After he is robbed by a coyotek (version 2.0 of the smugglers, or "coyotes," who promise migrants safe passage for a fee), he squats in an empty shack in a shanty-town lining the border wall that is occupied by elderly and indigent factory workers who give the Cybracero factories their colloquial moniker "Sleep Dealer": they have been blinded as a result of their virtual-reality equipped blue contacts melding to their eyes.

Later, Luz, who Memo meets on the bus to Tijuana, sells one of her uploaded memories of him on "True Node: the World's Leading Memory Market." Like Mohamed, he circulates in the digital realm as a case study of the displaced (more on this in a moment). In a form of embedded reporting, Luz pursues Memo and performs his node surgery. As she injects steel outlets along the interior of his arms and across his shoulders, she warns him of the dangers that he will later see realized when one of his coworkers is electrocuted and disabuses him of his romanticization of the virtual realm: "Sometimes you control the machine and sometimes the machine controls you."

Properly wired, an awed Memo later enters the Cybracero's windowless, tunnel-like factory where workers wear prison-like uniforms and World War I-era gas-masks as they slowly pantomime the movements that power their mechanical counterparts across the border. They plug into their jobs through an overhead carousel of wires that resembles industrialized farming equipment. Furnishing the United States with, as his supervisor tells him, "what they've always wanted—all of the work, without the workers," Memo's and his coworkers' assigned, outsourced jobs index the physical and domestic service positions typically available to migrant laborers: "José is working at a slaughter-house in Iowa; Maria is a nanny for a little girl in Washington." Memo is assigned to a construction site in San Diego where the drone attack against his father was launched.

Rivera's depiction of the Cybracero factory draws from a heritage of numerous "belly of the beast" unveiling scenes in sci-fi and dystopian film that expose the movie-monster of capitalism and the laboring bodies that underwrite the conjoined categories of the human/citizen/consumer. The seemingly anesthetized movements of the workers recall both the opening scenes of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) where the faceless workers shuffle chain-gang-

style into the elevator that takes them into the subterranean depths where they power the city and the Haitian zombies operating the sugar mills in the Halperins's *White Zombie* (1932). To again paint in wide strokes, the post-human of sci-fi film does not simply envision, as per Cary Wolfe, "a historical moment in which [the human is decentered] by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks" (xv) but how capitalism's networks (industrial and cyber) create vulnerable life/lives that blur the demarcations between the animal, the human, and the machine.

In keeping with this definitive trait of the genre, *Sleep Dealer* shows us the disciplinary effects of virtual networks in the global South. Workers from vastly different service fields are re-industrialized, their labor forcibly extracted and uploaded as a uniform supply of always on-demand energy for American consumers. The waiting periods, delays, and holding patterns that so often determine the life world of the migrant laborer are canceled out. Likewise, the work hazards and injuries that the worker incurs do not appear on the American employer's screen. Rivera's portrayal of outsourced labor as simultaneously re-industrialized and de-corporealized labor sharply criticizes the "flows of capital" heralded by our online global age. Both as image and hackneyed phrase, "flows," as Mezzadra and Neilson remark, flatten out the "variegated process[es] of segmentation and hierarchization" that shape migrant labor forces and the often violent channels through which they are made to "flow" (209). Rivera foregrounds the violence through which these channels are forged by showing us the marked and exhausted bodies of the workers and, moreover, the unilateral direction that the slip-streams of capital's flows travel. To reiterate: Memo can connect his "nervous system to the global economy" to be, as he later states, yet another body "drained and sent across the border" just as the Del Rio is drained, but as

a subject attempting to acquire free information about life in Tijuana, he is read as a terrorist and his point of access is brutally shut down.

Yet, Rivera's depiction of liquated labor grossly neglects, as Martín-Cabrera notes, the fact that gender operates as a form of human capital. [168] The different jobs that the manager itemizes (the nanny, the worker on an assembly line of industrialized animal slaughter, Memo's own work on a construction site) are defined by wildly different "skill sets" (read: disciplinary demands) that are situated within gendered labor pools. The overlapping eras of globalization and neoliberalism have advanced, as numerous feminist and cultural studies theorists have argued, a feminization of labor in which migrant female workers outnumber their male counterparts and they are valued in the marketplace as more mobile and malleable---nimble-fingered factory workers and intrinsically nurturing caretakers. For those who provide domestic care (like Rivera's Maria who works as a nanny in D.C.), their work is characterized by poorly compensated affective labor and by a lack of privacy in which one is never "off the clock."

Certainly, Rivera's liquidation of labor elides these crucial distinctions between the gendered forms of work that the Cybracero factory furnishes. This elision, as Martín-Cabrera points out, is consistent with the patriarchal arc that the film travels in which the only developed female character, Luz, serves as a conduit for the men's act of political solidarity. Yet, his reading of Luz overlooks the distinctions that the film draws between the virtual homogenization

[168] Martín-Cabrera writes, "It has to be understood within the extraordinary reproduction and intensification of gender norms, racial hierarchies and the occupation of the commons that capitalist accumulation requires both inside and outside of its productive centers." Luis Martín-Cabrera, "The Potentiality of the Commons: A Materialist Critique of Cognitive Capitalism from the Cyberbracer@s to the Ley Snide," *Hispanic Review*, 80.4 (Autumn 2012): 583-605. p. 594.

of the factory workers for Cybracero and Rivera's depiction of Luz and Rudy as two workers situated within the ascendantly middle-class domains of cognitive, virtualized labor.

Luz's attempts to gain a foothold in the cognitive economy as a free-lance journalist who orally uploads her memories onto the social media site True Node (a Facebook-like platform that more overtly monetizes its users' personal data by inviting them to cash in on the value of their memories) parallel Rudy's work as a drone pilot in the private security domain. Both enter (or endeavor to enter) into the middle-class as indebted subjects. I earlier underlined that Rudy views his career as a drone operator as a means of repaying the gift of his inheritance; he follows in the footsteps of his first-generation immigrant parents who, to borrow from Nguyen's formulation, fulfill their debt to the U.S. through their military service.[169] Similarly, Luz, too, is only able to enter the cognitive/informational economy through the faulty class-catapult of student loans and she earns a free-lancer's haphazard living by selling her memories to an American corporation. After meeting Memo on a bus to Tijuana, she returns to her apartment and logs onto her computer where she is simultaneously informed that debt collectors will confiscate her belongings if she does not submit a payment and that none of her stories have sold.

Rudy and Luz work on different sides of the border but their digitized pathways to the middle class are both routed through the corporations head-quartered in the U.S. Their pathways are roughly the routes to middle-class citizenship proffered by the U.S.'s DREAM (Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors) Act, which conscripts undocumented young

[169] In Mimi Thi Nguyen's *The Gift of Freedom*, she examines the story of Nguyet Anh Duong, a Vietnamese refugee who later serves as the director of science and technology for the Naval Surface Warfare Center of the Department of Defense and develops bombing technologies for the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. As Nguyen summarizes, Anh Duong, like many refugees, "repays the debt she owes for her freedom with more war." Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012), p. 170.

adults into debt. To be sure, I should once again stress that Rivera's film pointedly abjures the narrative of the undocumented-yet-deserving migrant who crosses into the U.S. Rudy *is* an American citizen and like Memo, only the raw material of Luz's disembodied experiences is permitted to cross the border. And yet, Luz's access point for class mobility and futurity---not working a Cybracero job whose dead-end is literally marked by the blinded workers living in the shanty-towns that line the border wall---is determined by a corporation that, like all the corporations in the film, extends its invitation to prospective users in globalized American English.

Transmitted from the border security nexus of San Diego to the social media hub of Silicon Valley, the neocolonial overtones of this invitation are muted by the ethos of the world-wide and worlding online economies. Both Lysa Rivera and Martín-Cabrera have remarked that *Sleep Dealer* is a sharp rebuke to standardized reading of the internet as a purely democratizing medium of class mobility and free expression. I would augment this point by adding that *Sleep Dealer* encourages us to approach online offers of virtualized, cosmopolitan citizenship with skepticism. Azoulay's call for the digitized, civil enfranchisement of non-citizens (principally, Palestinians) in which "everyone appearing onscreen would gain access to the rights guaranteed by that territory," for example, fails to address the obvious reality of how "appearing onscreen" more often connotes the surveillance of non-citizens and/or the reaffirmation of a selective humanitarian calculus.[170] On *Drones!* Rudy's young, earnest face serves as the face of the corporatized war and overwrites the face of the "aqua terrorist"; his attack on Memo's father is preceded by the story of his family's multicultural uplift through military service. Luz, likewise,

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[170] Calling for a form of citizenship not exclusively tied to nationality, Ariella Azoulay calls for a virtual registry. "Once civilian representation is produced on-line from the registration of inhabitants in a given territory, it will be possible to overcome the flaws in the distribution of citizenship and to handle these virtual goods in a truly virtual manner." Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, (New York: Zone Books, 2008), p. 78.

collects affecting stories of indigenous communities and the rural poor who have been disproportionately impacted by the U.S.'s privatization of its water. Echoing the crude ironies that determine *Operation Filmmaker*, where Mohamed's story reveals to predominantly American viewers the fall-out from their nation-state's occupation, Luz's stories are pitched in an actual memory marketplace presumably shaped by demands from users in metropolitan regions and the global North. As she later tells Memo, who bristles at her exploitative use of those she meets in travels, her first sale was of a memory of farmers who invited her into their home which was "like going back in time"---a familiar phrase that simultaneously demarcates and naturalizes the civilizational divides forged by the distribution of resources between the metropolitan and the rural. Unlike her affecting story of the indigent but dignified farmers, her stories of those who attempt to correct these divides by regaining control of their water supply, as such as the Mayan Liberation Army and rural farmers digging a well, do not sell.

In contrast to the marketplace where Luz first uploads her meeting with Memo as a largely generic case-study of migrant labor ("he was just like all the others," she tells True Node), his memories are off-line and not monetized by corporate social media sites. Although his over-voice narration that accompanies the time-jumps between the past and the present are conveyed by interior shots of the fiber optic cables and channels through which Memo's labor and Mexico's water are drained, his story and his revolutionary collaboration with Rudy opts out of and temporarily disrupts these channels. Hacking into neoliberal networks to destroy the internal borders it has created, Memo uses the Cybracero factory as an access point for Rudy to hijack a drone plane and destroy Del Rio Water Inc.'s dam. Their revolutionary act disrupts the U.S.'s "flows of capital" and allows, as Memo's mother tells him, communities in Oaxaca to freely access their water. Both Rudy and Memo must live in exile or "off the grid" and their

actions are cast as a return to the land divorced from the nation-state. Rudy is forced to renounce his U.S. citizenship and Memo envisions a future that is decidedly analog. Images of crops sprouting from the ground and of Memo walking hand-in-hand with Luz visually score Memo's fulfillment of his patrilineal inheritance.

These overwrought images of restored plentitude suggest the "return to the garden" plot-line that Haraway famously warns against in "Cyborg Manifesto". Lending credence to her warning, *Sleep Dealer*'s recuperative turn to the land re-installs the binaries of woman/man and artificial/natural and results in women being returned to their silent roles as supportive pillars for male agents.[171] Regrettably, the future that the film gestures toward is all too typical in this regard; after Luz meets Rudy, she has no other lines in the film. Her voice is muted and her line of work as a free-lance journalist (which is only redeemed by the connection she establishes between Memo and Rudy) is effectively shut down by her romantic involvement with a political exile.

These gendered circumscriptions, though, do not entirely invalidate the possibilities that the film raises. Rudy and Memo's re-mastering of the corporatized, virtual channels and access points that have so determined their lives envisions and carves out a different zone of life. Their act of political solidarity is forged through an experience of mourning which, unlike Haneke's final extended shot of the peripheral meeting between Majid's son and Pierrot, does not seek to cancel out their different relationships to that traumatic event. Rudy's feelings of guilt do not

[171] Haraway reminds us that women do not fare well in the story of "the return to the garden." She warns: "Every story that begins with original innocence and privileges the return to wholeness images the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of the self . . . In this plot women are imagined either better or worse off, but all agree they have less selfhood, weaker individuation, more fusion to the oral, to Mother, less at stake in masculine autonomy." Donna Haraway,"Cyborg Manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the late twentieth century" *The Cybercultures Reader*, eds. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 291-324. p. 313.

void his complicity with the security regimes of the global North, but he chooses to see what, to adapt Butler, the frame of war-gaming has occluded. Effectively abdicating his U.S. citizenship, Rudy claims not just the right to witness the life below the drone's flight-path but the right to *preserve life* over and against the corporate-nation-state conglomerate that has created zones of slow death through its regulation of water. Rivera's move from mourning to political action invites us to imagine a planetary future anterior in which the inevitability of climate change disasters (such as water scarcity) that will have (and have already) disproportionately affected those of the global South will have been disrupted by local collectives. The future anterior that *Sleep Dealer* envisions points toward what Roberto Espositio terms an "affirmative biopower" that would dismantle the privatizing zoning of resources.

Epilogue

"How I am encountered, and how I am sustained, depends fundamentally on the social and political networks in which this body lives, how I am regarded and treated, and how that regard and treatment facilitates this life or fails to make it livable." Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009)

This dissertation begins with an archive of screams so it seems to fitting to end with a story about silence. Phil Klay's best-selling and National Book Award winning short-story collection *Redeployment* (2014) closes with "Ten Kliks South," in which an American marine attempts to cross the distance between his protected compound and the checkpoint, supposedly harboring insurgents, that he and his unit decimated. After the completion of their mission, the unit has lunch and celebrates what was their first attack. One of the sergeants, Jewett, expresses his anxieties about the unreality of their mission and admits that he does not feel as though they actually hit their target. Trying to overcome the abstraction of the human life that they eliminated, Jewett asks, "'How many did our gun, just our gun kill?'" (272). As a sarcastic rejoinder, one of his fellow sergeants enacts a performance of calculating the precise, soldier-to-causality ratio. "Sanchez takes out a notebook and starts doing the math, scratching out the numbers in his mechanically precise handwriting. 'Divide it by nine Marines on the gun, and you, personally, you've killed zero point seven something people today. That's like, a torso and a head. Or maybe a torso and a leg'" (272). His gesture, executed to silence any doubts that would undermine their celebratory lunch, instead results in the men speculating on whether their targets were killed by the actual battery of ammunition fired or by the shrapnel from the attack.

Their debate frames and prompts a Lance corporal, who is only known by his rank, to visit the "Personnel Retrieval and Processing" department (read: the base's morgue) only to be informed that the U.S. does not process killed Iraqis. The Lance corporal, disoriented, wanders

out into the base and is arrested by his memory of standing to attention as a stretcher, enshrouded with an American flag, passed by. Recalling his fellow marines' immediate and collective silence, the Lance corporal reflects:

> It'd been an image of death from another world. But now I know where that corpse was headed, to the old gunny at PRP. . . . Then it would have gone by air to TQ. And as it was unloaded off the bird, the Marines would have stood silent and still, just as we had in Fallujah. And they would have put it on a C-130 to Kuwait. And they would have stood silent and still in Kuwait. And they would have stood silent and still in Germany, and silent and still at Dover Air Force Base. Everywhere it went, Marines and sailors and soldiers and airmen would have stood at attention as it traveled to the family of the fallen, where the silence, the stillness, would end. (287-88)

Mapping the travels of the dead and the silence that accompanies the body, the unnamed marine's precise cartography of these bases forms a sharp contrast with his vague understanding of the dead that exist "10 Kliks South." Before he recounts his memory of the fallen American, he revisits the place from which they launched their attack and remarks, "There's no indication here of what happened, though I know ten kliks south of us is a cratered area riddled with shrapnel and ruined buildings. The bodies. Sergeant Deetz had seen them on his first deployment, during the initial invasion. None of the rest of us had" (280). The story turns from its titled destination where life, and its supportive infrastructure, has been liquidated, to the respectful silence that marks the travels of the fallen American. In its final line it movingly forecasts the cries that will be sounded when the American families receive and mourn their dead.

Like the other stories in Klay's *Redeployment*, "Ten Kliks South" ultimately keeps faith with what Butler terms the frames of war that determine which lives are vulnerable and which lives are grievable. On this point, it resembles the 9/11 memorial and museum which so prominently features photographs of witnesses looking at the atrocity committed against the U.S. and confines the crimes that undo the victim/perpetrator binary to a time-line of geopolitical events that occurred after the attack. Yet, as the title of Klay's final vignette suggests, "Ten Kliks South" points us toward what exceeds its frame and through Sergeant Sanchez's vulgar calculations, "'you've killed zero point seven something people today,'" (280), it invites us to question its own exclusions.

This gesture of questioning the biopolitical frame of the nation-state has been enacted, on a far grander scale, over the past two years. Over the past year and a half as I have completed this dissertation, we have seen an affirmative biopolitics emerge through the Black Lives Matter movement, that both mourns those subjects that were racialized as threatening bodies and demands the dismantling of a national framework that does not see those lives as lives to be protected. For me, the images of the Black Lives Matter movement and the online archive that it has generated, have been coupled with the images Syrian migrants, displaced, in part, by U.S.'s disastrous management of its occupation of Iraq and images of Latin American refugees who, as Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* demonstrates, are admitted as labor but expelled as subjects who would be enfranchised citizens.

Against this ever-accumulating archive is the resurgence of a white, paranoid hermeneutic that Faulkner both diagnoses and reaffirms in his work. I have written and revised this project while living in Buffalo, a city where black citizens once and still protest the living conditions to which they have been relegated through zoning and where Coetzee once protested

the U.S.'s war in Vietnam. On my many drives to St. Bonaventure University, located in rural, upstate New York, I have seen Confederate flags prominently and defiantly displayed as an answer to the Black Lives Matter movement. These Confederate flags, now lowered in South Carolina, along with other, terrorizing monuments to the Confederacy that are being removed across the nation, have been coupled with a billboard that greets me when I enter the outskirts of Buffalo, featuring an image of a police badge with the re-appropriated slogan, "Blue Lives Matter."

Across the zones that I travel in this project and the zones that I have traveled during its long production, I have sought after an affirmative biopolitics that would both register the life lost to an immunitarian understanding of the human and the nation-state, whose borders must be violently policed, and theoretical and literary works that allow us to imagine a *communitas* in which, without evading difference, without evacuating historical traumas or domesticating the narratives that emerge from them, an ethics of life can be cultivated.

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