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Tales of here and later coded forms of queer counter-visuality

Daniels, Blake

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Tales of Here and Later
Coded Forms of Queer Counter-Visuality

Blake Daniels

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In questioning the positionality of one's body, and subjectivity, how they perform and are performed upon by dominant forms of visuality, this text will work through these ideas, to develop the foundations of a queer counter-visuality through the work of Nicholas Mierzoeff. What this writing will perform though is that right to look is rather embedded in a right to code one's own visibility, and their ability to be seen and unseen, recognized and mis-recognized. This will also look at patterns, privileges and rights to movement and how queerness occupies space through queering it. In this, I will look at how identity has been tethered to the body through oppressive forms of visuality as well as how the body is tethered to the crowd not through likeness but in differentiation.

Tales of the Familiar Family
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In thinking about family, and its often complex formulation within and outside of the queer body, this text will first question methodologies of how often concepts and theories of association are simplified and made relative through the use of 'strong theory' as opposed to 'weak theory.' An exploration must then be mounted to explore the limits of 'strong theory' in favor for a 'weak theory' of queer visibility. From this framework, a continued questioning of rights based political histories and the limits of visibility and viability within the language of identity politics. There were be a keen location shift that is traced as movement within the paper as it traverses the in-between space of a South African context, the USA and the space between the West and outside through theorist such as Eve Sedgewick, Rey Chow and Edouard Glissant.

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In observing the way time effects the body relationship with family, genealogy and space, and opening it up as another effective platform from which the body is identified and controlled by, or by which one could engender a new model of history and visuality, here I will question the ability of time to also engender a form of queer visuality and in the same act counter it. This text will begin again, with the problem of language and naming in relation to queer politics, and more importantly experience, and how one can establish a counter visuality through it. I will look at Elizabeth Freeman's text *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* closely in unpacking ideas of chrononormativity and countering labored time with a kind of bad timing. It will then come to a point of departure where I will discuss the problems of visibility and the performance of the

queer and racialized body in film and new media with bell hooks' critical essay on the film *Paris is Burning* titled aptly *Is Paris Burning?*.

Tales of Desire
and the Objects that Haunt the Mind pg. 53 – 62

There is a strange conundrum I find in discussing desire without actually engendering it, or creating forms of it, as it is something so personal yet ubiquitous that seems in its nature impossible to experience outside of the body. In this text I will raise questions as to what a queer desire could be, and where it is placed; whether it is truly tethered to bodies and between bodies, or it too can haunt objects, time, space and history. This text will deal with the question of painting as a form of queer counter-visuality, and in form, as a medium that can still hold the potential to queer space and time through positioning desire outside of western centric standards and expectations.

(Re) Introduction
and the Voice of the Anxious Body pg. 63 - 64

Introduction

and the Body of the Anxious Voice

This text and project in its explorations, failures, inquiries and anxiety seeks to feel, touch and animate a working queer space of counter visuality and its sites of resistance against dominant practices of historical visualization. The importance of building language and productive infrastructure around queer practices is apparent in its current state of relative dislocation, or hyper homogenization and governance under the authority of our institutions. The troubled paradox of seeking definition without negation, or the fixing of a subject in opposition to a more popular strain of social theory and practice, has been presented within the discourse as a larger task of concern in need of address. An example became apparent in my prior research on engendering a queer performance within Jamaican Dancehall, a cultural space with a contested legacy of intense and violent homophobia. Nadia Ellis presented a challenging paper that served to provide a strong queer reading of the dancehall that challenged through coded performance the norms in gender. While compelling in its possibility of finding a radical queer space amongst Dancehall, upon closer review, within the very space in which Ellis states, queer constitutes a "break in the line of gender," she evokes only a multiplicity within masculinity, with little inquiry into what queerness looks like in addressing the social marginalization of women and gender non-conforming peoples.[1] This paper will explore more thoroughly dilemma's of this nature, questioning how we visualize a lived experience – queerness – further coding it to counter dominant forms of visual language that have a great deal to gain from the monetizing of such an identity.

It is critical to raise concerns of positionality and the often disassociated voice of the author when discussing, feeling and imagining new and alternative forms of discussing and making visual queer bodies, identities, spaces and times. I am under the constant weight of my own ghost, and the different ways it haunts the spaces I come from, move through and head towards; this ghost caries traces of who I was, where I am and what I am becoming out of sequential time. What this means here is that there are tracings of my position as being a white, gay, male identified American throughout this text and my painting practice. As obvious as this sounds, it has to be named now, privileges acknowledged, as to both hold accountable the experiences from which I have been conditioned and allow the potential later to be unsaid, interpolated into visual stories much greater then these identity cues, but aware of their own codes. This is to actively counter a potential shift in tone in my voice that can echo the authorship dictated by western canons of visual history and critical theory. In a sense, this is my honest confession that when writing about my experience of navigating daily forms and gestures of the body, space and time – ones which often value my right to be seen or

[1] Ellis, N. "Out and Bad: Toward a Queer Performance Hermeneutic in Jamaican Dancehall." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 15, no. 2 35, Jan. 2011, pp. 7–23., doi:10.1215/07990537-1334212. Print.

unseen – I tread with subtle anxiety and intense caution at the reading of a strong theory, or universal voice that can in form be quoted and reproduced as a universal authoritative language on the matter. This in fact does not exist, and by all means should not exist tethered to my bodie(s) and the ways it chooses, and is chosen for, to be visualized and spoken for within western dominant cultures. Instead this voice will act as an echo, no longer only tethered to a body, but the objects, space, and time that it reverberates off of, giving this visual form. This right to the visible is not yours nor mine to dictate though, in as it is each individual's own willingness and desire to give translation to these codes that is their right to be seen or un-seen, named or un-named.

This making of space instead for a kind of reciprocating voice, belonging to many and none, in which authority and authenticity can no longer be regulated will become a fundamental framework in this text. As you experience the writing, there will be moments when tales, stories and poetic forms cut into the text, visually disrupting the form on an aesthetic level, but more importantly introducing un-named voices, coded tales, that visually call upon spaces and times outside the arch of this text. In practice, it is an attempt to layer language, to both reveal and hide the complex narratives that give way to how queerness takes visual form, cutting into the very time, space and bodies of those who code and live them.

In form, this will appear as an exercise of mapping both time and space, in which neither is tethered to one another but instead exist in a shifting relationship. This is by its nature a dialogical practice. While working directly from observed experience, I will continue to read within the field of queer and gender studies while contextualizing a great deal of the social theory within post-colonial and visual theory. Derrida's notions of the impossibility of language as something to be owned, but instead something that owns its subject, establishes a framework for how terms will be employed and becomes one point of access to the approach this paper will take in language.[2] It is important to note that terms are not limited to my own will for definition, constantly reflecting on an adaptable definition for visuality, desire, time, space and queerness.

I will begin with the headliner for this entire project, the every present, and toughly contested term of visuality. As noted by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his text *The Right to Look: A Counter History of Visuality,* the term was coined originally by English historian Thomas Carlyle as a means for visualizing historical accounts as a measure to sustain 'autocratic authority.'[3] Mirzoeff's deep investigation reveals further that "Visuality supplemented the violence of authority and its separations, forming a complex that came to seem natural by virtue of its investment in 'history'."[4] Visuality, under this logic, became the means to aestheticize and give perception to authoritative institutions, vindicated by its seemingly logical means of historical record and index. Visuality is then not just the visible, as Mirzoeff states, nor a socially accepted fact of the visible. Instead it acts as an active performance of the visual that both disseminates and disempowers authority through its own transmission, becoming the interface of authority itself.

[2] Derrida, Jacques. *The Monolingualism of the Other: The Prosthesis of Origin*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.
[3] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality." *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2012, p. 3. Print.
[4] Ibid.

At the center of developing forms of counter-visualities lies the recollection of our right to look, and its corollary of the right to be seen and un-seen, an inherent practice of perception and the realization of space and time that long pre-dates modern forms of visualization. The right to look must first be understood as a claim, an assertion to not just one's individual reality, but its recognition of the other, both constitutive yet autonomous of each other. It is not about seeing or observing, but about an intrinsic personhood. Mirzoeff states, "That look must be mutual, each person inventing the other, or it fails;" it is a collective conscious claim for the right to the real, a claim for "autonomy, not individualism or voyeurism, but the claim to a political subjectivity and collectivity: The right to look. The invention of the other."[5] If visuality has been established, and protected, as the dominant mode of understanding reality, or rendering history into time and space, counter-visuality must reconstitute the terms in which that reality is developed and understood, in this case working within the location of the queer. This is an act of claiming the right to look, the right to see, be seen, be un-seen and coded into language forming the terms of this process.

I am speaking of claiming a queer realism, a kind of reality which Bertolt Brecht cautions "is not only everything which is, but everything which is becoming. It's a process. It proceeds in contradictions. If it is not perceived in its contradictory nature, it is not perceived at all."[6] This is a key component of my working framework, the notion that the realities we seek through counter visualities are inherently a contradictory process, or to state in the terms of space and migration, they lie on an infinite horizon, the line where the cold Atlantic meets the churning sky, a line which no matter how much distance is gained upon will never render visible its fullness. Reality, here, is a nomadic process, its creation 'as a perceptual effect' not meant to manifest itself in the form of visually recognized images, but in the shifting territories in which we assemble such images to establish 'meaningful renditions' of a given glance and moment. The challenge in this process is that as soon as I establish it, I must destroy it, or un-claim it in language at the least, as it too will be subjected to the same processes of definition and authority. In both the rejection of visuality and its counter development, the process is begun of copying one that is neither dominant nor countered, but temporal and spatial; each copy made, countered and discarded, thus providing movement towards new unfixed ways of seeing.

The literary tradition must then itself be malleable within my process as to afford the unset agency of potential that is analogous with a non-identifying queer. Can queer happen without oriented sexual desire, or even outside of the body altogether? Can there exist a rendering and erasing of a crowd of undulating subjectivities, a reciprocating crowd that by nature is both origin-less and incapable of definition; an anxious crowd that is constantly under threat to be fixed into oblivion by the matrix of objective violence Slavoj Zizek notes as being ever present yet invisible.[7] The objective of such a body of work then is not to necessarily fix itself within a prior discourse, or find validation within a theoretical framework. Instead a multitude of visual and literary forms must intersect, cut into each other, and reveal complex layers, creating a cross-disciplinary research method that will refuse finite conclusions.

[5] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2012, p. 3. Print.
[6] Brecht, Bertolt. *The Days of the Commune.* Translated by Clive Barker and Arno Reinfrank. Methuen Drama, 1990. Print.
[7] Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sedeways Reflections*, Profile, 2009, pp. 21–45. Print.

As you traverse this text, as with the others, you will encounter many conversations, many voices and many stratums of the English language that both speak to and through each other. To counter the violence that is at play within my own language, I call upon history's ghosts of the past, future and present, people who have loved me and those who I have loved, those who are dead and who I never met, voices of reason, logic and violence. These voices, these languages all locked in the binds of an english so uncomfortable with its own sound, will all take on different positions, different methodologies of coding and speaking towards shifting modes of queer counter-visualities. At times this will read as theory, at others the voices of history outside of my own body, unsettled by the way they sound through my mouth and fingers, at moments they will be personal narratives suspended between poem and memory and still at time through visual images chopped up and placed not for reference but to be read within and through the text. This paper that you are reading now is but one iteration of a larger set of projects, one that will reformulate itself over and over again into new materials, languages, time and space.

The text while grappling with structures of language and form in developing a queer counter-visuality will also be a navigation of the ambivalence of queer desire, the often unspoken violence in intimacy, and the way outing visibility can be as destructive as it can be productive. As is the nature of my paintings, and studio practice, these nuanced and often highly personal experiences will take form through a process of cutting, hiding and revealing, using a shifting coded visual language that will haunt the text. This is a refusal of a linear reading as the only productive means of engagement in understanding in full the relationship between each coded layer. You will come to know them as the three sisters.

Tales of Here
and the Monologue of the First Sister

The window, the window – this pane of glass that does a terrible job at allowing myself the ability to keep in touch, be seen and see, all the scuttling movements that make their way. There's this strange thing about this city. It's like people don't move in directions, they aren't always so concerned about destinations and reasons of being somewhere. That is unless you're talking about sex and money. Those will get blurred motion quick.

But that's not so interesting now is it.

I'm quite a bore myself though. I'm a painter. My movements become more preoccupied in moments and time, than in places and city streets. The delusions I indulge myself in as I continually re-build the time and space around myself. But this isn't very interesting to watch or read about. It mostly just looks like me walking with a place to be. Walking with my hair blown out; walking with thighs pounding; always a place to be. There is no place. But right now it's at this window, gazing at the lone muscle goddess doing his aerobics on the sidewalk outside the street right now.

It's quite a sight. But I'll bring this up to another time.

That window became myself as the ghost. Scared a little, threatened by a seductive beat of body and pavement, I desired. But their was no way to see this, only the seductive beat of pavement on body.

It was just him alone, nearly nude against. And that beat, so loud the whole city was condemned. *There he lifted those weighted wants, in rhythm reserved movements, in a space neither cushioned nor bothered with the silly natures of time. And like any ill fated creature to the lights of their desires, they came.* He was no longer alone, but in formation. I *hated every moment of this*, as I carried no longer the presence of space. I didn't want to *touch him*, why waste such intense want on something so removed. He was on the other side of the window.

No, no, no.
I just wanted to feel the weight in my own muscles, the strain on a body no longer felt. I don't mean for this to sound silly, though these trappings always come. It just funny, being a ghost behind a window seeing yourself exist in all times but your own; out of time and love. It's easy to get lost in a melancholic fit when one only thinks of themselves bound by time, not in and out. That is another envy of my desire and lust. I return to the window. How stupid to not have seen obvious gaps that lie between here and there, the walls of this studio and the beat of body and pavement. And again there they are, muscle tensed under

the weight of light and the visible forms it shapes. It will cross my mind to make a painting of this some day. But now I splendour in the visible, gazing un-relentlessy past the bars and chasm of the road onto my want, it's a moment now unlike any before. One became two and two with no end. They form one steady flow –

leg up, clap, clap touch the ground, punch, punch leg down and turn –

I scuffle for my camera because memory seems important at the moment, but am amiss when the battery is dead; the sudden realization. Each passerby joins, moving in the same mesmerizing form, with me or without. But mostly without. It's not like a photo on a dated phone would change any of that. It's as if the lust of my desire has become infinite. I realize I am becoming frustrated by my own absence at the moment. Is this what explains my driving need to prove my form and mark. A drive to remove my desire from the figure into my own. But when my body has become just a silly ghost at a window, then I find myself in the oddest of dilemmas? I need to touch though, I can't just gaze. And so I place it in an object, and I break that object, and I paint that object, and I touch it. Then I consume it, though it has no place to go.

This body is bad timing, a collision of generations of desire, making visible my pleasures previously hidden in its own folds. Once it shattered, it could no longer be unseen. I could no longer be unseen; and as soon his eyes caught mine through the window, all became painfully seen. Quickly now, the broken object revealed itself myself, messy and garish yet incredibly tender to his gaze.

There is a *snap* echoing through the studio as space re-straightens the mess that time has made. Or is it the door, I have been expecting.



**

Was it the ghost again?

Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *The First Sister,* 2017

This is a ghost and it haunts not myself, but everything that exists around me.
This is a ghost and it haunts.

This is very lonely.

But this ghost you are always speaking about, it can become a lovely and quite lyrical tie between your paintings and your writings, but I think we need to define it, give it an edge that can be placed within the context of your work better.

I realize this seems necessary, but this ghost, its not so much a play of words, or any kind of word. I might sound a little crazy, but I think often this ghost is me, it's like if you're there but you're not. This is silly, but imagine being in a place, by a window, and you can see everything, not just their surfaces and skins, but all of it. The unfelt desires and the punctuations of every touch. You're not invisible, nor seen, and probably not unseen because it would seem you would have to be seen in the first place. It is more like being un-visualized, or the opossite all together of gazing and looking.

Now we are back on oppositions.

I know this.
I suppose I am on a daily basis proposing paradoxes.

But this makes sense if you want us to continue working against a strong theory and developing a queer approach that isn't so comfortable with its name. It's almost as if you need to think in a similar manner there, here, in un-framing queerness. Forgetting itself. This is paramount in your approach, the paintings forgetting themselves, your forgetting them. There is pattern of generationality here. Do we have another term for lineage, one that doesn't make so blatant its love of lines? If you begin to think in this manner, we can reproach the legacy of history.

And the Angel.

But this ghost, is it with us now?

No.

Tales of the Body in the Crowd and the Self Replicating Master Copy

In questioning the positionality of one's body, and subjectivity, how they perform and are performed upon by dominant forms of visuality; in this essay I will look at how identity has been tethered to the body through oppressive forms of visuality as well as how the body is tethered to the crowd not through likeness but in differentiation.

The orientation of the human body has been paramount to the proper construction and maintenance of an archival history — linear, resolute and controlled. Nowhere does this become more evident than in the production, ownership and employment of the image. In mapping the earth, cartographically etching upon its surface organizing systems of semiotic clarity, we inadvertently cut across our own bodies; gender, race, language and location are all uprooted from their point of unformed origin into the fixed poles of a hegemonic society as opposed to the errant nomadic poetics of relation.[9]

On a planet naturally formed by fluid routes and unseen adaptive systems, indexes have managed to forge out straight lines, dissecting and partitioning the fertile third space in between. This has been an age-old habit of humans, formalized through an era of colonialism, made palatable through forms of 'post modern' language. In understanding and establishing a queer visuality, it becomes paramount that we also consider a counter-visuality, one which is by its very nature queer; relocating the position of power from outside the queer subject, as traditionally formed, into the very politics of queerness itself. I am speaking here specifically about the power relations of visuality and counter-visuality, emphasizing Glissant's notion that the "knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in relation."[10] This is the right to look, to render unspoken desires visible and to bring to form the very movements our bodies make through territories.

I was a little disoriented from the heat of the blue lights that pushed from the creases of Buffalo Bills, it was as if the sun turned against me once again. I looked left and right again for a cigarette, but considered it a futile waste of movement, the horizon gave hint to my imminent moment of flight.

I was a little disoriented from the heat of the yellow lights that pushed from the broken windows of my bedroom deep in the belly of Bertrams. I knew the sun well, but this was a new reflection of myself. I heard him rapping at the sheets, his body gave hint to my imminent moment of flight.

[9] Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation.* Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997. Print.
[10] Ibid.

In attempting to reconcile a queer third space for political equality, we have made evident the mirage of liberal freedom that comes through recognition; this has left us susceptible to politics that seek idealized homogenized communities, centered on narratives of a singular origin of oppression as a means to fabricate a collective consciousness and intelligible visuality. This is what I will refer to as the 'master copy', an authored and enforced central image, a way of looking, that is standardized and replicated into nearly every aspect of society. This form of visuality affects everything, from how grocery stores are designed based around the economic territories that they exist towards the West's obsession with white washing and reimagining itself as an exceptional center in religion, culture and language. This desire for wholeness, a reclamation of a central identity, territory, image and time, to accommodate 'queerness' instead of troubling it has served to reinforce structures of white supremacy and patriarchy. In aestheticizing a fixed image of queer, visuality has ultimately discredited the intersectional matrix of race, class and gender that affords subjectivity, mobility and performativity. This is to say that the need to make queer subjectivities aesthetic, and therefore visible, has diminished their right to look, and therefore to render realities as replications of the dominant culture.

It is important here to pose a thriving question as to what and who is exactly made visible, on what terms, in what space and during which time? This is more or less a complex way of saying that all visibility is not the same, and the context of the subject, time and space greatly impact the desire, potency and necessity for gaining visibility and therefore recognition. To become visible in conformity to the dominant norm may socialize the body into a more equitable image, but it will also come at the cost of positioning the body in conjunction with the master copy and therefore acknowledge its legitimacy. The subtle navigation and movement so necessary for survival is not between visibility and invisibility, but between the spaces that allow the body to become visible within them.

These structures of oppressions have been used to consecrate the queer crowd into a singular and fixed position; a body, sociologically definitive, calculated and controlled. This constant oversight of queer subjectivity runs the danger of allowing its perception to veer from the point of infinite potential, resting delicately on the itinerant horizon, into the field of what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls 'the new male gaze,' one which closely intersects with violent forms of white supremacy.[11]

This new male gaze, a kind of liberal beckoning as opposed to possession, fixates upon itself, looking at its own reflection for forms of absolute desire and approximation of space. Through the commodification and rendering of self under such a gaze, forms of queer visuality are threatened to manifest themselves as approximate identities, positioned to be reflective and reproducible in exacting measures to that of a societal master copy; a new self-objectified desire of replicating white masculinity infinitesimally to occupy the threatening space of queerness, a space that José Esteban Muñoz as quoted by Nadia Ellis describes as the 'gap between the ground in which one stands and a compelling place beyond.'[12] Through a violent policing of this master copy, employing techniques such as mapping, historicization, and the regulation of desire through ethics,

[11] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Routledge, 2009. Print.
[12] Ellis, Nadia. *Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora*. Durham: Duke U, 2015. 7. Print.

visual practices serve to discredit the role that queerness has in troubling and dismantling dominant social structures. This runs the danger of being institutionalized in a way that can reaffirm and exploit them. We see this cycle of authoritative visuality rendering the subversive into the oppressive specifically during 17th century colonialism, where Mirzoeff states that "[i]n the plantation economy, art and culture were techniques to generate increased biomass of cash crops without regard to other considerations," continuing that



"[m]apping reified observations made at a local level that were systematically categorized and divided by natural history and made sustainable by the force of law."[13] The processes of art and culture then were forced between different aspirations of autonomy, in the said case the colonist and the slaves, both seeking independence from a site of authority, both seeking different forms of reality, different spaces of visibility — one whose revolution was sustained by slavery and the other whose was to overthrow the first. The colonial project, the realities of which are still prioritized today, and whose image can be seen blazoned across nearly everything, still continues to consume art and culture as a means of mobility and self-preservation.

Global capital Historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals even goes as far as to describe the plantation itself as a "nomad entity," destroying its own conditions of possibility through consumption without mutual construction, forcing it to continue to move physically and

[13] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2012, p. 57. Print.

conceptually from one site of harvest to the next, landing long ago on the site of the queer subjectivity.[14] In calling upon Glissant's notions of relational identity, the queer body itself is forced into constant mobility within time and space, often dictated between varying degrees of survival relegated by class and access.

I was a little dissoriented from the heat of the purple lights that reflected off of the painted surface I had wasted time trying to realize, to see my own face looking at me. I scorned the butt of my last cigarette, staring out that window, nothing gave hint to my imminent moment of flight.

The affect of the reduction of the queer body into that of visualized, and commodifiable, signifiers becomes the accentuation of otherness. This otherness is then mapped, recorded and enforced as a negative ulterior employed to support the dominant visual experience. The reliance on the reification of queer visualities into socially recognizable forms becomes a mechanism of control, employing methods of identity indexing as a way to disarm the potency of self-determination and therefore fix the singular into the communal. The return to volatile nationalism through hyper control of land access and security through migration is but one effect of the desires of a homogenous body. It is imperative to shatter this process of identity replication through commodification; to engender the 'inoperative crowd' that is neither coming, nor moving in approximation to geo-political signifiers, but visually constitutes itself through what John Paul Ricco calls the "anonymous spatial relations amongst infinitely substitutable inaccurate (non-mimetic) replications of forms, shapes, surfaces, color etc,"[15] or as Leo Bersani eloquently states, the "pleasure of at once losing the self, and discovering it elsewhere inaccurately replicated."[16] This idea has taken many visual forms of experience, from reincarnation to the very notion of heaven and an afterlife. Humanity exists on this praxis that our bodies, and their inherent physical matter, will live on regardless of the form they are replicated in.

And out the window of this studio I see myself, in every body, vibration and scar on the street.

[14] Fraginals, Manuel Moreno, and Cedric Belfrage. *The Sugar Mill: the Socio Economic Complex of Sugar in Cuba 1760-1860*. Monthly Review Press, 1976. Print.
Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *Lover's Famine (I Only Dream of Summer),* 2015
[15] Ricco, John Paul. "Chapter 3: Wink." *The Logic of the Lure*, University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 79.
[16] Bersani, Leo. *Sociality and Sexuality, Critical Inquiry 26* (Summer 2000). pp. 646. Print.

Yet here I am again, safe.

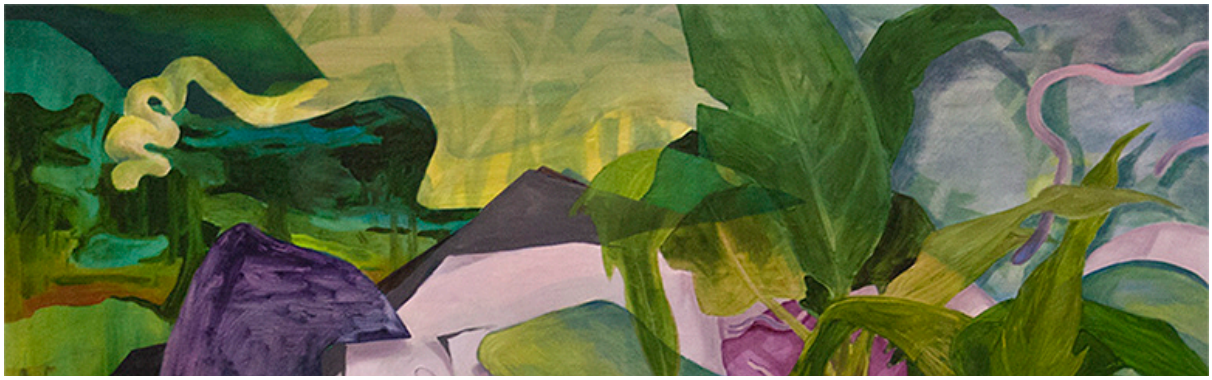
Left with my own pleasure to repeat over and over again.

The problem rises from an acceptance that there is a particular mould to this form, and kind of universal truth that we are all in practice trying to replicate in and out of our bodies. While countering this is an important point of departure, a counter-visuality cannot just become the negation, or negative space, of the image of the oppressor.

This continues to point towards a larger communal shifting into the crowd, a becoming in which all elements of the individual, or singular, are composed completely of the anonymous reciprocating forms of the crowd; not a dissecting of the physical form, its desires, body, history, time and origins, but an inaccurate replication, in which these signifiers are collapsed, flattened, dispersed, and reassembled. That is to say, denying the occupation of the new male gaze in favor for that of the blank stare, one in which only the imperceptible horizon is clear. This becomes a theoretical framework to begin to realize a space of visibility outside of the dominant culture, or everything on this side of the horizon. This is a glitch in the image, which in itself contains other worlds and possibilities, layers of subversion not covered and lost, but actively animated within and out of time and space.

The proposition is a direct command of one's body; it is not to gain visibility, or to author it, but to be it. A conscious body, knowing how to navigate the nuanced relations it has with space, time and desire. It is to be at the window, seen or unseen to the 'world' outside based on the intersections and differences of your identity against theirs, and you become lost in the small bits of where the sky meets the dusty mineral dumps, the little spaces between the buildings, other bodies, crowds and manufactured earth. In this, the little cuts and collages on the surface of skin, pavement and earth reveal a different mode of visibility, one concerned with matters of honest desires, damned touch and bodily vibrations refused by the very subjects we are told to focus our gaze upon. This is a proposition to disappear into the crowd. The bodily migration to this place becomes transformative, out of time, a place that cannot be replicated, cannot be named, and as soon as you call it queer…

snap.





The Distance of Language

This body is bad timing, a collision of generations of desire, making visible my pleasures previously hidden in its own folds. Once it's shattered, it could no longer be unseen. I could no longer be unseen - as soon as his eyes caught mine through the window, all became painfully - seen. Quickly now, the broken object revealed itself, myself, messy and garish yet incredibly tender to his gaze.

There is a snap echoing through the studio as space re straightens the mess that time has made.

Or is it the door, I have been expecting.

This snap is a form of protest, of resistance through coded bodily language, enjoying the pleasure of visibility outside of the dominant and often violent gaze. In understanding the violence of our current societies and institutions, which often propagate and support systems of exclusion and protection for the image of white, heterosexual masculinity, a risk is run of allowing reclaimed language, coded performance and bodily desires to become sanitized. Resistance becomes reflective of this master copy by using them as a means to gain visibility within the space colonized by the prior states of the visual norm. What is meant by this is that in reclaiming the word queer for instance, and allowing it to gain an institutional legitimacy as a field of study within a western logic and framework, that term is allowed to gain its radicality only in opposition to what is understood as the norm. This is a process of sanitizing and justifying the experience of being queer to that of a white western male logic, thus orienting it to the aesthetics of the 'Other', a fixed performance of difference.

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley opens her essay "To Transcender Transgender: Choreographies of Gender Fluidity in the Performance of Mildred Gerestant" with a beautiful prologue that centers her discomfort with the current relationship that theories around queerness have with the body. In discussing her attempts at finding the correct language to express the experiences of Caribbean lesbian, gay, transgender and queer experiences, she writes:

> So I went back to the texts I had gathered for my project, looking for what unexpected things they might have to say about Caribbean lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer experiences that I was still missing. I quickly found my answer: *nothing.* This was because the vocabulary I'd been using to describe these authors, the descriptors they used for their own identities – queer, lesbian, transgender – appeared nowhere in their work. No characters, no narrators, no one in the novels used these words. Instead they talked about many kinds of

> desires, caresses, loves, bodies, and more. And over and over again, they talked about something that was such a big part of my life but that I never expected to find in most queer fiction: spirituality, Afro-Caribbean religions.[17]

Tinsley brings to the foreground, in this seemingly simple reflection, an immensely important observation around the relation, difference and disconnection of language within the academy to the people it is attempting to theorize, study or speak for. In this, exists an intense discomfort I have developed with the term queer and its relationship not just to my writing, painting and professional practice, but also to my body. This catch all term, that gets bent, oriented and performed for different purposes and gains, seemingly fails in all accounts to accommodate for the daily experiences my personhood and bodily experience as an individual. This sentiment extends within a larger crowd , one of which I am constantly mobilizing within, a crowd which I am and am not a part of. It feels sanitized and more reflective of heterosexual curiosity than of a genuine interest in the stories and experiences of bodies and peoples who imagine themselves outside of the dominant norm. It cannot account for the ghost, angels, spirits and demons that the body can summon and occupy – it does not allow for a visuality un-authored yet. It is from the language – bodied, loud and shifting – that will be not be forgotten, or left in the distance as a given fact, but made to mobilize, code and perform just as the bodies and crowds that seek resistance and liberation from within and outside of it.

**

It's quite a sight. But I'll bring this up to another time.

That window became myself as the ghost. Scared a little, threatened by a seductive beat of body and pavement, I desired. But there was no way to see this, only the seductive beat of pavement on body.

A drive to remove my desire from the figure into my own. But when my body has become just a silly ghost at a window, then I find myself in the oddest of dilemmas? I need to touch though, I can't just gaze. And so I place it in an object, and I break that object, and I paint that object, and I touch it. Then I consume it, though it has no place to go.

No, no, no.

Once it shattered, it could no longer be unseen.

Body Terms and Demands of Resistance

There is a new outing for the queer, one in which polemic terms of sexuality have often been grafted as politically impotent due to recent legal and social recognitions, especially prevalent in the West. Lacking the transgressive qualities today that made terms such as gay and lesbian popular for resistance in the late 20th century, a kind of queerness as form has risen to identify new consciousness in gender and sexual fluidity.

The employment of queer as a form of social identity, ingesting to the center what was

[17] Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "To Transcender Transgender." Ed. Patrick. E. Johnson. *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies.* N.p.: Duke UP, 2016. pp. 132. Print.

always outside of itself, again raises questions around the need to visualize and index even the most fluid of identities, threatening to once again use queer subjectivities as forms of racial, class, sexual and gender erasure. This becomes a process of replicating instead the image of white patriarchy as a continued site of colonial exploitation. It is then within the gape of the blank stare, as opposed to the gaze, that a queer counter visuality may best be un(seen); constantly reforming itself, reshaping through reciprocation, and pulsing against the economy of identity that seeks to fix, control and capitalize off its form. That is to say that in seeking a queer counter-visuality, it would be amiss to discredit or ignore the very real ways in which economies, laws and socially constructed paradigms undermine a process of queering the visual in favor of a queer visuality. This is also a question of when we divest the body of its vested knowledge in favor of prioritizing that of the collective or communal, a culture and therefore subculture, leading to the same desiring notions of the promise of recognition through replication and social homogenization. Metaphorically speaking, this is a shift of the queer body into the queer community as opposed to crowd.

Mirzoeff then puts forward that it is in the intersections of "ocular vision and (where) the 'minds eye' meets" that which constitutes visuality, minimizing sensorial production to that of the overseer, master or social standard. I would argue the necessity in understanding the process of queering the visual to have a committed resistance to being seen and legible to the authority vested in visuality.[18] What becomes necessary then is the queering of visuality, and its potency to establish a reality in which Bertolt Brecht writes is not "only everything which is, but everything which is becoming," continuing that "If it is not perceived in its contradictory nature, it is not perceived at all."[19] This is another way of understanding that identity must be formulated by difference, not substantiated by sameness; we are a community, and therefore an un-nameable crowd, because of the chasm, expanses and layers that exist between our bodies, our spirits and personhood. It is this negative space that must be reframed to resist.

Queer counter-visualities can then be understood, and expanded upon, as not being completely and inexplicably spatial, but also temporal, therefore tethered to forms of movement and migration. It is particularly important in exploring the concepts of origin and movement with regards to queerness's ability to be critical of a particular individuals access to movement in relation to the crowd. It would be a misnomer to think that a kind of queer counter-visuality that refuses fixed forms of location and identity should be celebrated as a liberating force equally accessed by all within the crowd. Instead one must interrogate further the rights to movement, access to space and the forms of oppression, which seek to reinforce borders and laws established by the plantation era that continue to control, mitigate and disperse particular bodies. I would be wary then in relationally establishing the word Diaspora even though some tenets of discourse resonate within its context. While inferring a scattered population, it also connotes a place of common origin, or geographic identity. There is no presupposed region, language, culture, nationality, race or gender from which to trace this origin in relation to a queer crowd, or body — there is no canon of history, no central signifier that can

[18] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 57. Print.
[19] Fritz Haug, Wolfgang, *Philosophizing with Marx, Gramsci and Brecht.* Duke University Press, 2007. pp. 153. Print.

comprehensively define, understand, archive and connote the queer. One must just look at queer identities historically outside of the ethnicity model, appropriated in the twentieth century, to make clear the notion then that quite possibly one's 'queerness' is not an identity at all, instead acting as an antagonizing force not just to question and trouble forms of identity and origin, but to collapse constructions of them altogether. Queer in this sense is a demand to understand them as a code, or a coding of space, time and language within the continual assemblage and dis-assemblage of crowds to whom these coded forms of language may or may not be able to be read.

In relying on socially assigned roles in relationship to that of the new male gaze, one must often make decisive choices daily between violent acts of assimilation and negation. The structures of white supremacy have fortified themselves within queer politics and studies, often targeting institutional obscurity as the greatest problem, not the institutional structures themselves; determined to craft our validity in space, as a singular fixed communal body, this 'queer image,' has relied on the standardization of 'visibility as authenticity,' and therefore social access, control and power.





But who is made visible and under which structures must they function to maintain such institutional recognition? More often than not, race and class are sublimated from the queer experience, a process of internal policing and careful grooming to insure that the communal queer body, and its visibility, are unified and in support of the institutions from which it has found vindication — institutions rooted in neocolonial practices of racialized and gendered violence and exclusion. This is an image constructed from the same values that have seethed from white patriarchy for generations. A queer visuality that values a notion of recognition through its occupation and mimicry of white colonized spaces at the cost of self determination is then just another site of an authoritative colonial rule, a neo-plantation whose fictive hybridity as Sean Cubitt writes is "no longer the property of resistance, (instead) this hybridity is the authority of rule."[20] The fear of a queer planet

[20] Cubitt, Sean. *Dispersed Versions: 'About a Place'*. Third Text 32 (Autumn), 1995. pp 65 - 74. Print.
Image Caption: Interior of the Artist Studio.

then is not a fear felt by the ruling class, or the socially privileged, but instead that of the queer body itself, in that it's only sites of resistance may too be running out, completely occupied, sanitized and empowered by the oppressors from which resistance was lobbied.

Little more is needed to be expounded upon, though with great more ground to cover, to re-instate the urgency which exists in developing progressive forms of counter-visualities, and then countering them once more, to not just protect sites of resistance, or forms of sub culture and art, but to seek measures to discontinue the current trajectory of the complexes of visuality that seek to continue the complete dismemberment of all subaltern bodies and the ability for queer, femme and gender fluid peoples to self-actualize in meaningful ways outside of the time and space dictated by the dominant norm.

Tales of the Familiar Family

and the Discarded Drafts of Genealogy

In thinking about family, and its often complex formulation within and outside of the queer body, this text will first question how common methodologies, concepts and theories of association become overly simplified and made relative through the use of 'strong theory' as opposed to 'weak theory.' An exploration must then be mounted to explore the limits of 'strong theory' in favor for a 'weak theory' of queer visibility. From this framework, a continued questioning of rights-based political histories and the limits of visibility and viability within the language of identity politics will be looked at to provide context and disrupt timelines within the often un-written and discarded practices of keeping history on gender and sexuality non-conforming peoples. This essay traverses the in-between space of a South African context, the USA and the space between the West and outside, as a reflection of my own body's mobility in the past decade within and outside of writings from theorist such as Eve Sedgewick, Rey Chow and Édouard Glissant.

Across the territories that queer studies cover, and visuality effects, themes of social identity within the spectrum of post and de-colonial studies continue to remain central. In refusing to return to an archaic structure of identity indexing, very much a tool used in the visualization and subjugation of subaltern identities, I will return to Patricia Hill Collins' framework of the "Matrix of Domination", using a queer perspective to interrogate further the implications of the visualization of race, gender and class upon both the singular and collective body, sites of multi-faceted resistance, and the territories from which there exists a constant negotiation of the location and movements of such identities.[21] This will also give us fertile grounds from which to critique the current state of a troubled and paradoxical queer counter-visuality and its derivative visibility. This fixing of an indexical queer, an outcome of the ethnicity model adopted post-Stonewall by the predominantly white gay liberation movement, prioritized claims to political rights over the more elusive and abstract right to the real. In the rights-based discourse that often preoccupies the United States and South Africa, it must be inquired further as to how these rights become effective within a racialized and classed economic and political environment. What is the 'real' mentioned here, both in theory and form, and who then has a right to author it?

This authorship lies at the heart of Mirzoeff's unease around the authorship of said 'real,' and the visuality employed to sustain it. He presents it to us in the opening line of his text

[21] Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge, 1990. Print.

The Right to Look and spends the better half of the book laying out his own genealogy as to the legacy of violent authorship and the sanctions of normativity around it. Where Mirzoeff's theory of visuality and a claim to the right to look shines is in its ability to draft a framework of 'looking' through a historical account that normalized hierarchies of the visual and visible from the gaze of the west. He references models of time, space and history, nodding towards Achille Mbembe's writing on coloniality as being "formed by modes of 'entanglement' and 'displacement,' producing 'discontinuities, reversals, inertias and swings that overlay one another."[22] Mirzoeff continues this idea noting that "no such genealogy can be comprehensive. Mbembe's emphasis on complex temporality further suggests that one modality of visuality was not simply succeeded by another, but rather that their traces linger, and can be revived at unexpected moments."[23] This is to further state that what we see, how we see and what gets seen is not based solely on the space and context of the present and here, but on a constant collapsing of time out of sync with normal progressive flows. Visuality in this sense acts as a necromancer of time and space. What I become weary of in this seemingly liberating notion of claiming counter-visuality and visibility as a right is how the time and space it traces have been oriented and framed, and further how they themselves under radical theories of post-structuralism, post-coloniality and relationality may in fact re-implement or reify a norm-based model of visuality that is not out of sync with normative time but instead in sync with the standard regimented structures of Western time.[24] These are echoed in the concerns raised by Glissant in regards to the 'right to opacity' as a claim against the reductive methods of organization used to regulate minority social and family structure into a transparent order with that of the West. This becomes a question no longer concerned with what lies at the core of a family, or cultural group, but instead on the 'texture of the weave' composed of infinite individual components irreduceable to a common core.[25] Glissant continues: "[t]he right to opacity would not establish autonomy; it would be the real foundation of relation, in freedom."[26] It is, in a sense, a freedom of relation to nothing, untranslatable, that cannot privlege the transparency of western ethics and ideologies as the source at the reductive core of identity and their points of collision.

What comes to mind immediately in framing a visuality as an applicable theory that can accommodate experiences outside of the West, or dominant norm, are the concerns raised by Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's ideas surrounding 'strong theory.' Sedgewick motions that a theory is 'strong' when it can be universally applied and can reduce complex relations into

[22] Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. University of the Witwatersrand, 2015. Print.
There is any interesting thing that is at play in the specific summoning of Achille Mbembe within the context of radical visuality and a strong theory to hold it in relationship to the 'postcolony' following Mbembe's radically normal stance of defending the University at Wits in during 2016 FeesMustFall protest, and bringing little active motion to the language he has often employed. Beyond the semantics of political positioning and the orientation of the academic project in relationship to greater political and social concerns, it forced Mbembe's words, and his authorship into both a present moment of action as opposed to a future scope of reflection as well as making him visible in a manner also tethered to authority and not beyond of completely outside of it.
[23] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 6. Print.
[24] These concepts are linked to Elizabeth Freeman's notion of Chrononormativity (the idea around the social structures that dictate our relationship to time based on our socialized bodies relationship to western standards) that will be addressed further in the section *Tales of Time.*
[25] Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. University of Michigan Press, 2009. pp. 189. Print.
[26] Ibid.

clear and simple principles.[27] What is important to note is that she is not reflecting on any kind of moral structure on the term or concept of 'strong' insofar as it takes a hierarchical position above a per-say 'weak' theory. In this regard Sedgwick writes in relation to Silvin Tomkins theorising of paranoia that:

> [T]he reach and reductiveness of strong theory – that is, its conceptual economy or elegance – involve both assets and deficits. What characterizes strong theory in Tomkins is not, after all, how it avoids negative affect or how well it finds positive affect, but the size and topology of the domain that it organizes.[28]

In the size of this domain there is often a demand to territorialize, to render transparent, and center to a dominant spirit of greater meaning from the theory. This again reflects the logic of Glissant's right to opacity in developing a 'weak theory' of queer counter-visuality, one that in fact is not a theory at all. It is instead a convergence of affective and differentiated modes of identity and visuality that cant possibly form a territory, but instead make a seemingly borderless domain.



These ideas are important in discussing counter-visuality, whereas a 'strong theory' may be fundamental to an equation of physics, it can often be reductive, limiting and at worst violent when applied in sociology, humanities and the arts. An example of where this plays out can be seen in Lacan's theory of language, stating that all language, all signification, acts as an expression of patriarchal law. In another form, this 'strong theory' begins to take on the form of authorship, the very measure of concern Mirzoeff raises in tracing a genealogy of visuality through Western colonial history. It is for this same reason I have expressed my deep concerns, and attempts, at using language as a framing device to engage meaningfully in a discourse around queering visuality and the vital importance of visibility with one's commitment to remain unseen as a form of counter-visuality. This commitment

[27] Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading / Reparative Reading." *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Duke University Press, 2006. 131. Print.
[28] Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading / Reparative Reading." *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke University Press, 2006. 134. Print.
Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *Sister Summoner of the Klipriviersberg,* 2017

to locate "a subject in what cannot be reproduced within the ideology of the visible," become fundamental in Peggy Phelan's own form of 'weak theory' development to contest the "connections between representational visibility and political power which have been a dominant force in cultural theory in the last ten years."[29] Much as the ghost haunts myself, and myself the ghost, metaphorically and literally, Phelan notes that, "like a ubiquitous ghost, she continues to haunt the images we believe in, the ones we remember seeing and loving."[30] This ghost, and the tales it leaves behind, is in a sense the manifestation or form of one queer counter-visuality, it is the manifestation of a 'weak theory,' a hauntological presence whose opacity comes from its very nature of being unseen in almost everything that is seen.

This I found in my early attempts to accommodate both my own physical placement between the United States and South Africa, as well as appeasing a model of academic structure that has framed my means of processing as radical. Within this procedure, I was teetering very closely on the problematic cliff of using 'strong' Western theorist such as Mirzoeff to legitimate my personal experience, not as a valid perspective into the discourse of queer visuality, but instead as a universally applied understanding of what queer visibility is supposed to look like, how it is supposed to be seen and who is supposed to see it. This was a very disturbing realization, not just in my personal implications of perpetuating an essentialism based on my genealogy of being Irish/German-American, white and male - all which have some degree of legacy in domination and centering themselves as the radical norm - but also in the limitations I was enforcing on my own relationship to queerness and my femme, not as an identity type, or character mask, but as one of the independent, powerful and force shifting ghosts that needed to haunt in every way my personal expressions of visibility, the unseen and counter-visuality.

In working through Sedgewick's ideas around the inheritance of critical theory from poststructuralism, Rey Chow's work titled *The Interruption of Referentiality* comes to mind with its ability to engender non-authored projects that can grapple with the immense diversity of experiences encapsulated under the term queer. Chow brings a nuanced voice without speaking over or for particular experiences, writing:

> In the increasingly globalized realm of theoretical discourse, a habitual move may be readily discerned in critical discussions regarding marginalized groups and non-Western cultures: the critic makes a gesture toward Western theory, but only in such a way as to advance the point that such theory is inadequate, negligent, and Eurocentric. As a consequence, what legitimates concern for the particular group, identity, or ethnic culture under discussion (which for the purposes of this essay I will simply call X) is its historical, cultural, gendered difference, which becomes, in terms of the theoretical strategies involved, the basis for a claim of opposition and resistance. Epistemologically, what is specific to X – that is, local, history-bound, culturally unique – is imagined to pose a certain challenge to Western theory; hence the frequent adoption of the vocabulary of contestation, disruption, critique and so forth. […]
>
> The one indisputable accomplishment of post-structuralist theory in the past

[29] Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance.* Routledge Press, 1993. pp. 1. Print.
[30] Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge Press, 1993. pp. 6. Print.

> several decades has been its systematic unsettling of the stability of meaning, its interruption of referentiality. If such meaning had never been entirely stable even in pre-theory days, what post-structuralist theory provides is a metalanguage in which it (meaning) can now be defined anew as a repetitive effect produced in the chain of signification in the form of an exact but illusory correspondence between signifier and signified. While referentiality as such may continue to resist, for the new metalanguage it is the movements in the realm of signification that matter, that command critical interest as the (shifting) basis for meaning. Henceforth, meaning is a term that occurs within scare quotes […]
>
> In its stead the conception of (linguistics) identity becomes structurally defined, with (linguistic) signifiers mutually dependent on one another for the generation of what makes sense. Rather than being that which follows identity, difference now precedes identity. It is difference that creates an object of study.[31]

In thinking through the conundrum of language when naming, identifying and positioning bodies under the framework of queer, it is important that a focus is placed on differentiation and the negative space that exists between bodies; this brings substance to a formless language that often cannot exist outside of its own gridlocked logics. Chow opens the doors within post-structuralism, and an academic language I am often in contention with, to begin to work against Western pedagogy's attempts to form a universalized theory through a linkage of sameness - attaching bodies to cultures to times to histories to rights to laws to truths - this all under a guise of reclamation and social equity. Here Chow is making a careful point against the dismissal of post-structuralism within identity politics, a dismissal that is often caught up in the same bind of constituting identity as a pre-linguistic fact. Of course, no identity exists outside of the structures, privileges and trappings of language, a point that will be reflected upon within Marlon Riggs film *Tongues Untied* at a later text where the phrase "my silence protects me, but it is also a violence against me," is both said and un-said in a reflection of the complexities of naming and positioning complex unfixed and fluid identities within language. [32]

This link of a 'strong theory' in language itself comes from the constant need to name and index, to ensure that all bodies, and their parts and personhood, are made visible and categorical within and against the central logics of Western sensibility. This is a measure of control for one, but also another means to visualize communication through linking visibility to practices of naming; this is a continual tension that rises within the need to claim a space radical, to speak it queer, and therefore align it with the transparent order of the dominant norm.

[31] Chow, Rey. "The Interruption of Referentiality: Poststructuralism and the Conundrum of Critical Multiculturalism." South Atlantic Quarterly 101.1, 2002. pp. 171-86. Web.
[32] *Tongues Untied*. Dir. Marlon Riggs. Perf. Brian Freeman and Essex Hemphil. 1989. DVD.



There is immediately a tension set within the language as it itself must be reflective of difference to gain meaning (as can be seen in how each word, letter and sound quite literally have relationships of difference from one another to be discernible) and when employed as a universal mark of sameness or unity, requires an establishment of a standard. It is important to critically translate this formless medium of communication into substance. This substance does not need to be named though in the longer trajectory of self-identification, as much as be woven into the formless tapestry mentioned again by Glissant in his claim to opacity. The act of claiming self outside of the logical ordering of names and identity types is a revolutionary act, and an important facet of ones right to visibility and command of it. What is important is to not de-value the present demand to claim space in language, within the logic of Western order, to accommodate pronouns such as femme, trans, queer, cis, them and they and understand their visual role in establishing hierarchies and borders within and upon the central territory of this tapestry. The right to visibility must acknowledge the priviledge afforded in visualizing the self within language and formed under western heirarchies while making these same terms and names un-translatable into ones own language, terms and codes; a haunting of the center by the horizon that refuses to benefit any form to dominant modes of location anymore.

Can You Queer Whiteness?

One approach that is an example of a counter-visuality or visibility model came through the adopting of a gay ethnicity model in order to understand the movement as one that sat within the struggle for American minority rights. The overwhelmingly white Gay Liberation Movement appropriated in form and function methods of self identification, protest and mobility from the Civil Rights Movements. This flawed framework, much like the criticisms waged against early feminism, failed to recognize the intersectional networks of identities and locations which its members identified within. To extend this further, I would argue that by appropriating a model of ethnicity from the Civil Rights Movement, the Gay Liberation Movement became the visualization of the minority rights movements, taking an institutionally recognizable image, form and visibility through white masculinity, which would inevitably take the form of the authority it once sought to usurp. This becomes a theoretical proposition of Glissant's notions of adaptation, in that to make political progress, the Gay Liberation Movement sought to establish a gay aesthetic, one established in a fixed root identity as opposed to the nomadic figure of the queer. In establishing this root, the right to look was severed, forfeiting relational forms of identity in favor of establishing a

Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *Brother Lover,* 2016

central gay image that could then be replicated and capitalized upon.

This approach relies greatly on the image of the individual presupposing that of the group. Gay white males within the context of the United States gain hyper visibility within the economic and political pillars of the nation through the establishment of an ethnic model that can be centered around whiteness and masculinity. This particular gay image then becomes the master copy of which to be replicated in order to maintain access to said rights, money and social ascension. In the particular case of America, this takes the form of the apolitical white male, one who feigns acceptance of all, demanding an equalization of political rights, while hoarding the economic gains veiled in the rainbow flag. This particular metaphor caries weight in a different context within South Africa.

It is important to scrutinize this process of transition undertaken by the nation state at the end of the 20th century through the process of coming into democracy. In the case of South Africa, Neville Hoad makes note that regarding gay right's emergence within the hegemony of the new South African national project, their "provisionally successful institution can be accounted for by activists' insistence on their national character against their transnational form. Their temporality is equally baffling," continuing that "these rights have been staged as a legacy of colonialism and as a means of facilitating a new identity form that which threatens national values. They have become a relic of the colonial past that must be transcended and/or a sign of the transnational future that must be feared."[34] Lyn Ossome provides insight into this, stating that the, "[m]any oppressive social relations such as those of racism and homophobia involve systems of mis-recognition."[35] The correlation lies in the continued placement of post-colonial national anxiety, especially around the economy, onto the bodies of marginalized peoples; this centers minority communities within the legacy of Western colonialism and frames them as a threat to the modern nation state, visualized then as a modern remnant of an oppressive history.

A key aspect of mis-recoginition is formed through a violent visualizing of the national project's shortcomings into the image of minority groups; suddenly a collapsing currency due to poor governance and western market monopolies visualizes itself as xenophobia against a migrant shop owner. Ossome starkly states that when vulnerable minorities become "scapegoats in the name of patriotism," it acts as a survival mechanism for a neo-colonial project under threat. Antje Schuhmann lays it out very clearly, writing that it is often "the abject 'other' (immigrants, perverts, criminals, HIV/AIDS positives, prostitutes, homeless – the dangerous classes) that are made responsible for threatening the inner peace rather than, for instance, hegemonic notions of violent masculinity or specific class interests."[36] This form of mis-identification, and ultimately visualized violence becomes an incorrect identification of the nation, or normalized visual body, as the foundation for safety, security and prosperity. That is, one's access to citizenship, and the political and economic gains, in the post-colonial state, has a dependence on their ability to imitate with scrutiny the master image. In this, there is often a liberal critique lobbied under the language of equal rights, or minority rights, that suffers from the desire of gaining protections under an

[34] Ossome, Lyn. "Postcolonial Discourses of Queer Activism and Class in Africa." *Queer African Reader*. By Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 33. Print.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ossome, Lyn. "Postcolonial Discourses of Queer Activism and Class in Africa." *Queer African Reader*. By Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 34. Print.

oppressive rule of law. Why then is this demand always framed under gains for the minority and not losses from the dominant? In the context of a counter-visuality, a critique is lobbied as to why the queer body, the black body or the femme body, named in language's opacity, must become more visible as opposed to the dominant norm giving up its hold on visibility. Under these terms we would see the white male heterosexual body dissipating into the invisible.

The reduction and re-emulation of the state's ruling class violence becomes a dangerous trapping of claims for national identification regarding sexual orientation and gender. This reduction is enacted when communities "negotiating their citizenship claims adopt economic mechanisms that appear paradoxically to eschew active participation within broader political and social rights paradigms that most legitimately represent their claims as citizens."[37] Ossome warns that this can establish a justification through reducing complex claims to that of identity politics. She notes Yuval-Davis stating, "identity politics tends not only to homogenise and naturalise social categories and groupings, but also denies shifting boundaries of identities and internal power differences and conflicts of interest."[38] This will in effect reinforce boundaries, often seen most clear in the erasure and mythical non-existence of the intersections of class and migration as a fundamental, yet un-replicable, queer experience. How does one experience queerness across land and time in relationship with class and migration?

The process of replicating these structures of domination can only sustain violence. Whiteness is violent, masculinity is violent and capitalism is violent. They rely on an equally complex matrix of intersectional identification shrouded in familiar normality that renders them nearly invisible through a hyper recognizablity. Slavoj Zizek simply calls this 'subjective violence' - acts of violence played out against a societal stage of peace and normality. He counters then that "objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this 'normal' state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent… It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seems to be 'irrational' explosions of subjective violence."[39] In the terms of an exploration of visualized violence, we must inquire on the nature of Zizek's objective violence; how it shapes realities for different peoples based on its employment of identity politics and the nature of its visualization through a subjective form. This is more or less an investigation into the very nature, foundation and goals of these forms of violence. Are they inherent to the social order in which our racialized and gendered nation state functions? Does this shed light on the farce of equality rhetoric, especially when spoken by the beneficiaries of this order? In regards to a central image of domination, it raises the worrying critique that the violence isn't inherent in the image itself, but in the very form which produces a said image. This is the process of visualization, not the visuality itself. From this mode, we can understand how acts of grotesque violence are in truth merely visual replications of the societies we perceive as normal.

Sometimes the blue light merges with the yellow, and from it shines the purple. There is a

[37] Ossome, Lyn. "Postcolonial Discourses of Queer Activism and Class in Africa." *Queer African Reader*. By Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 36. Print.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. London: Profile, 2009. pp. 2. Print.

cool tone, and indigo prophecy, that only tells its secrets when the three meet at just the right time.

This also gives shape to structures of violence inflicted on norm-defiant peoples, often visualized as internal and self-perpetuating, if not more grossly as inherent to the marginalized identities that are violently enforced by the normalized state. Ossome continues that, "[s]exualized forms of violence that penetrate societies derive from a structural base that profiles those it targets along lines of class, gender, race and ethnicity," continuing that, "the effectiveness of this violence in reality functions within a system that sub-profiles individuals within these categories: thus, heteronormative identifications of individuals within racial, ethnic and class categories places self-identifying queer people outside of the matrices within which structural violence is understood and addressed."[40] An indivisible violence enacted on an invisible people, a violence played out on people which can neither be named nor made seen. Come out, proclaim and make yourself visible or be erased completely; this witch-hunt then requires a dangerous visibility through naming to gain basic access to even the most basic of rights, such as healthcare and housing, violently controlling minority access to such rights through disproportionately violent policing while placating the cause of such violence as an effect of minority communities, the victims of the violence itself.

Judith Butler provides an avenue to address such violence through notions of masquerade and mimicry instead of replication and authorization. Judith Butler states that, "gay is straight not as a copy is to an original, but, rather, as a copy is to copy. This 'parodic' repetition of the 'original' […] reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original."[41] Butler is offering us another act of performance in which to counter the authoritative image of origin enforced over body, language and land. This is the kind of mimicry that celebrates the pleasure Leo Bersani mentions of 'losing oneself', only to find it later 'inaccurately replicated' in another space. Queerness again is a mobilizing force, nomadic not by choice, but by counter response to the ever roaming consumption of the colonial project.

No, no, no.
It was just him alone, nearly nude against.
And that beat, so loud the whole city was condemned. There he lifted those weighted wants, in rhythm reserved movements,
in a space neither cushioned nor bothered with the silly natures of time. And like any ill fated creature to the lights of their desires, they came. He was no longer alone, but in formation.

I hated every moment of this, as I carried no longer the presence of space. I didn't want to touch him.
Why waste such intense want on something so removed.
He was on the other side of the window.

The writings of Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner serve to remind us once more of the

[40] Ossome, Lyn. "Postcolonia Discourses of Queer Activism and Class in Africa." Queer African Reader. By Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 36. Print.
[41] Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter*. Routledge Press, 1993. pp. 31. Print.

errant and nomadic nature of queerness, and the theory that seeks to make sense of it. Troubled by notions that queer theory may only serve that of academia, asserting then a kind of 'dead politics,' Berlant and Warner write that, "what follows is a kind of anti-encyclopedia entry: queer theory is not the theory of anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape."[42] While this may seem like a futile means of establishing a queer theoretic framework, it actually functions quite oppositely, giving us a narrow scope from which to define, and un-define, queerness as an act of performed mimetic becomings. This establishes that the term queer is not tethered inherently to sexuality and gender; queer acts instead as a claim of potentials and infinite horizons, refusing to be indexed as an expression of identity or history.

It's quite a sight. But I'll bring this up to another time.

These thoughts challenge colonial notions of purity, and open up a space in which to understand queering as a set of unsatisfiable potentials, possibilities, which encapsulate gender and sexuality, but are not limited by them.

The Dismissive Voice of History

Language, whether written, spoken or visual, is a troubling measure of record and story telling. This subsumes any logic or function, as it seems improbable that we will have a better, or less skew, method for communication in any accessible time. On the first page of his aptly titled text *Violence*, Slavoj Zizek lays clear the implications of the "cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms," further stating, "there is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning."[43] Withstanding the desire to delve into a response that seeks to then ban meaning and moral implication, leaving only a space void of purpose and repercussion, I ask instead that we work with this troubled framework directly. I will try to focus here on form and the relationship that written and oral modes of narration, historicization and visualization have in making or erasing genealogies. In this, the paper and paintings question methods of story making, self determination and archiving, their shifting frameworks often dependent on the intersections and violent policing of race, class and gender, and their relationship to the terms and processes of queering.

At the heart of this discussion, and practice, is a celebration of discomfort under-shadowed by a constant challenge to any form of authorship and dominant norms. Lyndon K. Gill introduces the 'foremother' of black queer theory, Cathy Cohen, warning of the pitfalls that will come with 'blindly' setting queer methodologies, and politics, against all heterosexuals. Cohen makes clear that "if any truly radical potential is to be found in the idea of queerness and the practice of queer politics, it would seem to be located in its ability to create a space in opposition to dominant norms, a space where transformational political work can begin."[44] While the necessity of opposition and disruption is a fundamental tool in making progressive change, I find that it may lack in imagination and creative capacity to dismantle

[42] Berlant, Lauren & Warren, Michael. *What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X.* 1995. *pp.* 2. Print.
[43] Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. London: Profile, 2009. pp. 1. Print.
[44] Gill, Lyndon K. "Represent Freedom: Diaspora and the Meta-Queerness of Dub Theater." *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*. Ed. E. Patrick. Johnson. N.p.: Duke UP, 2016. pp. 113. Print.

these norms in meaningful ways, or more seriously dismiss their right to exist altogether. If a political strategy is based on a point of opposition wholly to a dominant practice, there is an unseen validation of the dominant practice to exist; an acknowledgement that we cannot think of ourselves outside of its influence, therefore forfeiting the ability to create and make visible a genealogy beyond it. This is, of course, based in a kind of utopic vision that travels time itself, as it would be naïve to think that with a change of mindset and language the capital driven states that maintain dominance would just evaporate, leaving no trace or memory. We will have to build new forms of visual culture and history upon their ruins, but we cannot let their structures dictate ours, not even in opposition.



This again becomes the tripping stone in employing methods of counter visuality in undoing real and felt violence. The counter methodologies ultimately mimic the very thing they were seeking to dismantle, fulfilling the life circle of domination; the once progressive counter image being birthed as a new mode of dominant norm.



Queer's potential exists in its ever-shifting entanglement with race, culture, gender, sexuality, nationality and class without dominanting the experience tied within, through and around each facet of how one identifies themself. In a specific argument, looking at the African diasporic experience for context, Lyndon K. Gill moves Cohen's position forward, asking "what else might queer mean in addition to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)-identified?"[45] This further poses a question of queer potential when it is no longer attached to sexuality? Further as a term, concept and political position, does it only maintain its potency within its inability to be fixed? In employing it as a term directly linked to norm opposing genders and sexualities, have we limited its scope or honed its ability to visually engender something beyond the norm and its opposition?

[45] Gill, Lyndon K. "Represent Freedom: Diaspora and the Meta-Queerness of Dub Theater." *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*. Ed. E. Patrick. Johnson. N.p.: Duke, 2016. pp. 114. Print.

Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *The Three Sisters of the Palm Courts,* 2016

This is a process of differentiating, and remixing, genealogies and dismissing the dismissive voice of history in favor of a familiar legacy that doesn't just rebuke or bend categories of identification, but completely re-dubs them together. This is a melding of their complimenting and opposing signifiers into new sounds, visualities and forms that trace their lineage to the many intersecting points that make them almost un-recogognizeable to normalizing processes. Where capitalist-driven homosexuality in the West has allowed itself to be formed into the image of white masculine capital, it is important to continue to code queer visualities, and their counter forms, as a means of survival and command over visibility and the ability to become visible but remain unseen.

At its heart, this becomes a call to action in reclaiming, reforming and reimagining how our stories and ancestry can be recorded and told; this underscores not a universal method but one that can recognize the differing roots and routes in which people access and activate their histories and genealogies across time and space, especially when the land, time and objects connected to such ancestry have been stolen, defiled and made inaccessible. Gill makes a case for such a process through dub in Jamaica. In speaking about the process of making the dub plates, Gill writes, "[t]his is doubling with difference; the original sound is copied in a way to produce a completely reconfigured sound that nonetheless echoes - sometimes quite literally – with snatches and phrases of the original." This coupled with the limited life span of the dub plates before sound warp and degradation becomes a potent example of a new queer genealogy, or as Gill puts it, "a border challenging queerness on the move."[46] The movement implied in this genealogy must then seek a determination through and within time and space, disrupting the normal process of identification and narration within geographical borders constituted by a past moment imposed on the present. It must also be weary of a form of exceptionalism or liberation based on a notion of random and transcendental love as the image and source from which we visualize new and radical forms of lineage and narration.

It becomes pressingly necessary to rethink the models, and practices, of genealogy and history making as images, sounds, writing and performances that withstand the pressures of replicating this legacy of radical normalization. This refutes a certain characteristics of authorship and theoretical authority that can be named, owned and replicated, opting instead for a process that favors frequent shifting to the point that it becomes nearly impossible to establish and coherent form or image. This I hope will not only reveal the "unnaturalness of the 'natural' order" in a society more interested in harboring structural and social inequality under the mask of normal life, but will enact altogether a new mode of communication in which ones own future ghost exists in the past; a genealogy where paradoxical methods of ancestral practice inform not just the present, but narrations of future history never dismissed through a legacy of European exceptionalism.

Cincinnati has always been a funny way to think through my own face, this rubbery interface which I can only gaze upon outside of my own flesh and body. The city looked very small underneath me, choked by the river it draws life from.

[46] Gill, Lyndon K. "Represent Freedom: Diaspora and the Meta-Queerness of Dub Theater." *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*. Ed. E. Patrick. Johnson. N.p.: Duke UP, 2016. pp. 117. Print.

I always take the window seat with no mercy.

I have to see myself, reflected in the window, face transposed on land breathing at its own rate. I watch as the one recognizeable asset of my body blurs over mountain, city, farm, city, ocean, continent, history – time.

The window, the window –

this pane of glass that does a terrible job at allowing myself the ability to keep in touch, be seen and see, all the scuttling movements that make their way.

I am bound for Johannesburg, a strange city, where people don't move in directions, not always so concerned about destinations and reasons of being somewhere. It will be nice to land I suppose,

but right now I am lost in dreams of a city of Angels.

Part of this in practice is a dismissal of the formulation of truth and fact as a penultimate form of disseminating information, looking at a reanimation of fiction and inaccurate recall as a vital part of the process of establishing a fluid historical self. The importance here lays at the core of how we build and validate our processes of establishing and rectifying communal and societal truths. Here, even methods of observation fall short, abjectly ignoring again the intersectional frames and filters that shape and influence perception. The flaws, and disproportionate power dynamics, can be made blatantly visible in nearly any act of violence; one may be in for a futile, if not impossible, task if asked to reconcile an absolute and fixed historical account of the formation of the South African nation state. While recounts will be contesting, presenting diametrically opposed methods, languages and narrations of how South Africa came to exist, the domineering norm will present a central narrative, painted under a universalized form of language and context. Thus the rise of catch phrases such as the rainbow nation and loose stitchings of patriotic debt.

I burned this time under the radiating lights –

blue, yellow and purple –

They no longer had the time, nor patience, to emphasize with my personal conundrums.

It was a kind of violence I wasn't acquainted with, a kind of cutting of myself, piece by piece, second by second, until all that was clear were the layered spaces of absence, washed in that cursed color, each one a sister unto the other, each one a space I once desired.

The ghost they haunt me.

The ghost I haunt them.

This will be my task at hand as I seek to strip myself and the paintings I make of any singular authorship, recognition or form; this is not just refuting the exceptional center of the dismissive voice of history, but literally revealing and making seen its own image of fraudulent dominance. This is an experiment in personal spirituality, genealogy and narration penetrating the limits of time, space and desire from which my body can experience and endure.

Tales of Later
and the Monologue of the Third Sister

There was an ice about the air, one that chilled the breath in your mouth before the air could be released. I say this because I find it quite odd. I am aware of the dream I am in, I am aware of body I am in, I am aware. I just never thought it would be so strange to leave them both at the same time. Maybe one, then the other, but both?

The air though, it was odd for August in Johannesburg. I understand that winter does come, and with it a chill, but it never had the same impact as Chicago did on myself. Maybe I only realise now, having left the constraints of my body, which sleeps. It seemed the morning would be as any. The sun provided no warmth in its touch, just a reminder of the things I surround myself with. Its funny this thing, as I lay in my bed, the kind of amnesia brought by the night. I think its often why I keep the curtains drawn, so I must slumber in the orange rays of that god awful city light. It at least reminded me I wasn't alone in the space I made so sacred for myself. At least I wasn't invisible in my own presence.

I fumble my hand over to grab my phone, infuriated I seemed to be too lazy in the eve to put the damn thing on charge. Typical. I seem to always find a way to undo purpose.

9%.

If I am thinking correctly, that should give me about 7 minutes. I can make a lot happen in 7 minutes.

I look at myself quickly once more, still encapsulated in the dream that began 7 years ago. I shake my head, not for shame or judgement, but just a creak in my neck from the years of routine and repetition. Today will not be the day. Not at least another arching movement forward, in which numeric parades strip me of all desire, where even touch loses its appeal. I remember fervently those foggy images of me in Los Angeles. I am much older than I am now, maybe late thirties, and the sun hits my skin like it never has before. It seems to almost disappear in the light, ghosted by the very science that gives it form. It's only upon a scrutinizing glance that it becomes obviously clear. Can I describe her to you. Hair flowing in heavy locks down the side, her face almost completely covered save the stubles of her unkept beard poking through. The color, it is, if I can say, unlike anything my eye is accustomed to recognizing. How can something disappear into the darkness of evenings creep all while luminating with a light so bright that I almost disappear. The dry summer heat of Los Angeles almost makes me forget about how much I hope to move to Johannesburg some day, to reunite with the man I loved to love. I think I only found this desire in the points of contact which our bodies were making. I am talking about the night creeper who is brighter than light itself. In their presence it seems nearly impossible to stay

whole. A loss of interest remains in the actions it takes to keep foot on leg, hair on head, breath in mouth. They seem too fixed in time, and me myself, haven already given way to the Angel of History, both then and to be; I have forced the fissures and space, prepared for another shattered body of desire incapable of delivering but the most mediocre of pleasures. How fucking tiresome this sex has become.

So I stamp out my cigarette and switch on that vile lamp I keep around. The one my roommates grandfather had left, whose handsome face teases me in its shadows.

And in the light it seems all is lain bare. The gawdy speckled pink of the lamp. Here ominous face, beauty seeming more and more distant to the eye, sprouting roots of its golden tinged beard. And my own body. Good lord, it seems I have only looked at myself in the reflections of my daughter's own turn into puberty. A distance no longer lingering on the joints that connect my body have left me derived of any context in space in time. Just this solemn bedroom, the light of a lamp and the lingering face from which she continues to haunt me. My body becomes his, and hers enters mine so discreetly, but with the slightest nod of approval and joy. I've desired for so long the pleasure of losing form, of sex unbound from the points of entry and exit sex is often so fixated on; I've desired for long that I never planned as one should, what would come next in a sequence of time. It seemed like it would all be taken care of by the systems of measurement and keep we so whole heartedly believe in. Yet here I am, wishing to kiss myself one last time, wishing for one last moment in the bleak desires of my mind that only managed to manifest through my fingers and my cock before burning away in the light of the lamp.

I didn't need it anymore.

I have become my own object of desire, and I have become once again bound by time itself.

Darting eyes catch the last breath of the tip of my cigarette, and I think stupidly about what a waste that last inch was, I should've smoked the damn thing right to the filter like I usually do.

Acknowledging the burglary that was at place, it seems odd that these shadows had to invite themselves in. An obvious look of scorn painted plainly across their faces, there is a distinct look of distaste at my decision to intrude with the light when it was more than obvious that this was their hour by law. An argument would be a waste of breath, and ultimately the cold air isn't so pleasant on the thought in these dry Joburg months, so I shut up, build myself again in the mirror and allow the indigo.

2%

It might as well be dead. Shaking the bit of slumber off the tips of my eyes, I wonder if I had passed out in those all important moments of rush before digital death, or had just let my mind run rogue as it has been up to as of late. A waste of time lingering on such. As much favor as one could have for a bedroom, or any room at that, had to be halted at some point to get on with one's day. I had way to many meetings to get too, and I knew too well that my body would lead me back to the window in the studio at some point, if not just to be

seen at least once in the day. And the eggs, I had promised so many that I would make the eggs today.

Pulling the curtains open, I look back upon myself, breathing in the cold August air.
I was not here to forgive me.
I was not here for me.

Tales of Time
and the Forgotten Knowledge of the Future

In observing the way time effects the body's relationship with family, genealogy and space, my interrogation of queer counter-visuality must extend into another facet of narration and history, that being time and its ability to also engender a form of queer visuality while in the same act countering it. This chapter will look at Elizabeth Freeman's text *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* closely in unpacking ideas of chrononormativity and countering labored time with a kind of bad timing. It will then come to a point of departure through discussing the problems of visibility and the performance of the queer and racialized body in film and new media with bell hooks critical essay on the film *Paris is Burning* titled aptly *Is Paris Burning?*.[47]





It is deeply unsettling, the violent demand to accommodate your own body and personhood, let alone others both close and far, within the confines and possibilities of language not just as a tool of communicaton, but as a keeper of time. I am often troubled by the voice I hear and read within my writing, and work to not correct this, or at worst, sanitize it into a legible form that benefits or postures impossibly complex peoples into

[47] *Paris Is Burning*. Dir. Jenny Livingston. Miramax, 1991. DVD.
Image Caption: (Left) Blake Daniels, *The Third Sister,* 2017 (Right) Blake Daniels, *The Second Sister,* 2017

performing the script of academic positioning or political leverage. I am disturbed by the power that the language of the academic project wields and the means of authority so freely granted to it under the process of making sense out of human conditions; becoming the author of queerness or blackness, removed from ones own subjectivity, actively authoring others – bodies removed from personhood removed from crowds removed from communities.

I am more shaken by a self-awareness of my own active role within these circles of exclusion and authority, the way in which I can reproduce my own forms of power and authority, replicating a white masculinity that has the potential to violate and normalize. I feel as if I have witnessed this within the academic sanitization and white washing of the term queer through its alignment with an escapist plural identity for white gay men and its attempts at de-racializing and standardizing some form of a unified LGBTQI body. This unification is a reflection of a white man, be they gay or not; his image is hauntingly close to my own socialized reflection, often invisible, yet completely in control of the parameters in which all other bodies and people are made seen and unseen. Is this a fault of language, its own empirical racism of privileging Western languages such as English in proper form as an inherent truth or absolutism, or is it my own use of such a tool without question and hesitation. A classic blame the gun or blame the shooter, when it seems in reality there isn't that much difference between the two.

Was it the ghost again?

This is a ghost and it haunts not myself, but everything that exists around me.

This is a ghost and it haunts.

This is very lonely.

But this ghost you are always speaking about, it can become a lovely and quite lyrical tie between your paintings and your writings, but I think we need to define it, give it an edge that can be placed within the context of your work better.

As if my own voice echoing from the space I stood just now, I hear it clearer than the voice in past mind.

They speak.

I'm very fond of the titles Elizabeth Freeman uses for the opening and first chapter of her important book, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalitites.* As sobering reminders of the temporal conditions experienced in non conforming genders and sexualities, Freeman introduces her text with 'Queer and Not Now,' proposing a video work from artist Nguyen Tan Hoangin in which a man visits a past, one which is not his, mediated through the object of a video screen. Freeman quickly presents her argument for the importance of time in understanding queering methodologies writing, "Nguyen seems to recognize that a hiccup in sequential time has the capacity to connect a group of people beyond monogamous, enduring

couplehood."[49] This hiccup, much like the snap, functions as a mis-recognition of a normalized social method of time, or 'chrononormativity' as Freeman uses, which references a mastery, or exceptionalized form of time. This is a kind of exceptional time, much like the one Europe used to centralize and replicate itself in space, language and image, that had established itself as a radical norm during colonial expansion; it can be seen in the normalized organization of time through early capitalism, towards maximum productivity.[50] The process of using moral notions of fact and truth show themselves again, noting that, "chrononormativity is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts."[51] This notion is exemplified by sociologist Evitar Zerubavel, writing that even our calendars, watches and work patterns replicate what he calls "hidden rhythms," continuing Freeman's logic that these are, "forms of temporal experience that seem natural (only) to those whom they privilege."[52] Here this also refers to the use of normalized temporal production as central to the strategies employed by European colonisation, reified into capitalism, replicated through American and Western economic imperialism.

This is a temporal form of white supremacy and heteronormative masculine dominance that has maintained the power dynamic embedded within the white male as the 'master' of the household, and white women as both the oppressed and oppressing gate keeper of this white masculine supremacy. Here we see these hidden rhythms expose themselves on a much more intimate stage, not merely in the nation, but in the family unit, reproduced in the image of the white male-led hetero-normative family, one which involves not only cis-male to cis-female heterosexual partnership, justified through state and religious sanctioned marriage. Under these terms, the very understanding of how desire, time, labor and lifestyle are meant to be visualized to implicate or signify a family, especially one with value, is established. Freeman calls upon Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept of a "History 2," a history divested of its capital 'H' that manifests within its own self-contradictions. Freeman continues that, "Lesbians and gays[…] emerged in just such a way: capitalism broke up the family economy, producing subjects available for projects other than the heterosexual coupling and reproduction necessary to sustain that economy – yet they were troped as people who had not yet arrived to civilization and/ or individual maturity.[53] Under these parameters, queerness becomes a paradoxical response to the development of labored time within families under capitalism, keeping that sexually dissident 'subjects' had to maintain an uncomfortable closeness to the family unit to sustain it, visible only in labor and product, not in form. This is the under-cased history, the complex foundations of time, built through the wildly complex, yet precluded, experiences, developments and mythos of the underclass, oppressed and dissident. Queer is the history that exists out of time as enforced,

[49] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 3. Print.
[50] The use of European Exceptionalism in this context refers to the continued practice of standardizing and then exceptionalizing methods and modes for maintaining societies outside of their own, in the image of their own, while they themselves maintained the freedom to evolve, change and radically mobilize politically, socially and economically. This is a classic 'do as we say, not as we do' situation whose legacy can be seen in the destruction of religions, languages and modes societal time (labor, love, rule etc.) across colonized nations replaced with European rule, while European nations remained the exception to their own rules. This will inevitably become an underlining tenant of white dominance and self proclaimed exceptionalism, both in personhood and national interest, as seen in nearly every aspect of western societies.
[51] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 3. Print.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 20. Print.

not purely a method of negation, but instead a messy meeting of bodies with objects and other bodies.[54]

Now we are back on oppositions.

I realize this seems necessary, but this ghost, its not so much a play of words, or any kind of word. I might sound a little crazy, but I think often this ghost is me, its like if you're their, there, but you're not. This is silly, but imagine being in a place, by a window, and you can see everything, not just their surfaces and skins, but all of it. The unfelt desires and the punctuations of every touch. You're not invisible, nor seen, and probably not unseen because it would seem you would have to be seen in the first place. It is more like being un-visualized, or the opposite all together of gazing and looking.

I know this.
I suppose I am on a daily basis proposing paradoxes.

In recognizing, and naming, the role that time has as a tool in establishing and replicating a normalized oppressive model for historical production, it becomes critical that we approach it with the same strenuous rigour as visual, written and audible language. We recognize clearly that while our humanity is bound to history, historical narrative development is not dependent on our humanity. Frederic Jameson's claim that "history is what hurts," comes to mind in that, "large-scale social structures set limits on individual desires, even as works of imaginative fiction repress the fact of those limits and provide formal resolutions to irresolvable social conflicts."[55] This form of social liberalism becomes the predominant practice employed to justify the labor and time involved in maintaining the radical normalization of desire and its tethering to story telling, genealogy and history.

This is a ravaging practice of the de-legitmization and replication of Zerubavel's rhythms that maintain productive normal time; an amnesiac time fixed in a perpetual present, ravaged of its ancestry and oriented towards a future that mirrors itself. This has played out in the aftermath, and continuation, of the colonial project, through a calculated and forced amnesia of existing modes of knowledge production, practice and archiving. This forgetting of how things were done, and the notion that a singular model of practice was never normal, is affixed to the trauma and violence committed to the land, body and time by European exceptionalism; in this sense Freeman continues that, "traumatic experiences productively humiliate and discombobulate the knower into new epistemologies, or at least into feelings that intimate the possibility of new modes of apprehension."[56] To look at this in breadth, the justification of a normalized oppressive modem of time takes the face of liberal justice, impotent and facile through its own complacency to the very pillars of oppression it both normalizes and upholds. Further, this model of time keeping caries the blood of the desecrated knowledge and historical practices that have existed out of normalized time. It continues to erase these practices through establishing identities limited in their own desires and self determination but bound to a sense of flesh debt, a debt for its moments of

[54] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 20. Print.
[55] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 10. Print.
[56] Ibid.

contact with bodies of labor, for its facile opposition and resolution to the oppression it itself created.[57]



This neoliberalism functions as a new form of white supremacy, heterosexual domination and hyper-masculinity framed within a desire to actually replicate itself within every narrative, including those of violence and oppression. It becomes the answer to the very problem it conjured, ensuring that it continues to remain central in all aspects of the society it propagates. The 'dissident' person then is once again left with a desire outside of the time and space offered by the good liberal society as an alternative to the noted oppressive past. It claims that you have been liberated, you have seen the revolution, yet all that there is to show is a small buy in, a monitored access point to the time and space of the society that continues to kill what is seen as dissident. But this method of running the human race, this structure of labored time and space, still requires a workforce to maintain itself.

[57] Time in this sense, standardized and replicated through domination and colonisation, is a graveyard soaked with the blood of cultural genocide and 'traditional' temporalities that it had to eliminate or render invisible to replicate itself as normal, to economize time through industry and capitalism which in effect racialized and gendered time as well. This 'flesh debt' is a nod toward the current rise of liberalism, specifically from the white West, that replicates the temporal cycle of the oppression and liberation of gendered and racialized 'deviants,' mobilizing their platforms of power to traumatize marginal peoples (ex. economic exclusion and poverty), offering their lifestyle, a standardized and policed (cont. on pg. 42) temporality, as a solution at the debt of erasing all other practices. It then enforces new forms of exclusion under the language of colorblindness and unity. It is a self propagating machine that polices the invisibility of ulterior modes of time and desire and enforces a 'debt' for access to stolen economies and societal rights.

Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *Bad Girl Baptism (She Set Fire to the New Great Hall),* 2017

Who is this workforce then, in which bodies is it enforced, and could the queer body of the West propagate its position through the labor of those outside its authorship? Lyn Ossome brings this difference of time and space into an uneasy state of doubt and tension that is necessary to dis-privilege the often assumed likeness, and equal labor, shared between queer bodies from vastly different locations and classes. This workforce often takes the form of what Ossome phrases as 'sacrificial lambs,' where, "states and societies need social movements to self-identify from among themselves diversionary sacrificial lambs, and Africa has witnessed a number in the past: Asians in Idi Amin's Uganda, foreigners in South Africa, albinos in Tanzania, witches in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda."[58] This scapegoat becomes the workforce, the labored time that must be spent, expended and discarded with endless replenishment to maintain the standard of 'bureaucratic excesses' that fuels white supremacy, heterosexual domination and hyper-masculinity.[59] Their must always be bodies committed to labour that can also be replicated, not in the image of the master copy, but in its opposition, where difference is manufactured to be expunged to keep this labored class from transcending therefore ending the exclusive rights white capital contains within the image of the middle class.

Time does not heal, but binds; it continues to stuff itself, refusing to bleed out, denying the societal haemorrhage that must be maintained to keep the whole body from sinking. It is ourselves, our bodies, our communities, our desires; the very physical and spiritual form of non gender binary peoples, of people of color, of sexually fluid peoples and communities that are used to fix the self inflicted hurt imposed by a normalized time, normalized history.

Queer Bodies Out of Time

The clock never once struck midnight, it just kept reversing on itself, just that one-second, it refused to allow a cycle to be met, a body to transition into the next day. We were stuck.

I wish so deeply that there was a way to understand the perpetual second in language, but I cant.
It is only in my limited experience, my essentialist nature to constantly want to monopolize time also, even when I know it is not mine to have, that I see so clearly the recognizeable face of the malevolent ghost of time.

There must be a demand to let this normalized body, this master copy just bleed out, for all those who have been oppressed by its self replicating dominance to find pleasure in its fall. The queer body is one that possesses the ability to desire outside of time and bring history itself into the a-temporal, writing objects of the past and future into the present. This is a fundamental facet of queerness, and the bodies it occupies, in relation to time; the understanding that radicality does not exist within progressive movements made inside 'Western Modernity,' but instead their inability to organize, bind and capitalize on

[58] Ossome, Lyn. "Postcolonial Discourses of Queer Activism and Class." *Queer African Reader*. Ed. Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 40. Print.
[59] Ibid.

queerness. Freeman makes clear that "the point is to identify 'queerness' as the site of all the chance elements that capital inadvertently produces, as well as the site of capital's potential recapture and incorporation of chance."[60] In all the potentials, in the melding of future and past into present, at a place that can neither be located or arrived upon may lay a form that summons its own image through the conjuring of queer. This complicated process of seeing without naming functions as a practice of thinking through queerness outside of the organizational capacity of our current colonised methodology, to establish a working model of making visible, or maintaining an opacity, the right to invisibility, in and out of time's binds; gender and sexuality untethered by the signifiers which popular culture has bound it within.

I fumble my hand over to grab my phone, infuriated I seemed to be too lazy in the eve to put the damn thing on charge. Typical. I seem to always find a way to undo purpose.

9%.

If I am thinking correctly, that should give me about 7 minutes. I can make a lot happen in 7 minutes.

When queer identities visualize themselves through dissidence, against these middle class values, they inherently form a value through the proxy relation; this often plays out through pop cultures co-opting and inevitable profiting off of queer cultural iconography (dance, fashion, music, language, art – you name it, it has been taken). The queer body, its movements, its rhythms, histories and language are then left as bad copies of their own being, vindicated and valued only through their close proximity to the values of the middle class, played out through pop culture and its reproducibility.

Gender crossing, drag and performance gained visibility through a replication, a kind of 'bad copy', of white masculinity, and what it found palatable for entertainment within our own closed societies and family units. This most often plays out directly on the performance of black and non white men's access to gender and power, taking on a form of hyper-visibility in film, performance and on the stage in relation to films such as *Paris is Burning.*[61] bell hooks writes:

> Many heterosexual black men in white supremacist patriarchal culture have acted as though the primary 'evil' of racism has been the refusal of the dominant culture to allow them full access to patriarchal power, so that in sexist terms they are compelled to inhabit a sphere of powerlessness deemed 'feminine' and have thus perceived themselves as emasculated."
>
> For black males, be they gay or straight, to take appearing in drag seriously [then] is to oppose a heterosexist representation of black manhood. Yet the subversive power of those images is radically altered when the latter are informed by a racialized fictional construction of the 'feminine' that suddenly makes the representation of whiteness as crucial to the experience of female

[60] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 16. Print.

[61] *Paris Is Burning*. Dir. Jenny Livingston. Miramax, 1991. DVD.

> impersonation as gender, that is to say, when the idealized notion of the female/feminine is really a sexist idealization of white womanhood.[62]

hooks is stating very clearly here, that in performing a crossing of gender in drag, it still seeks to replicate a white, cis womanhood which, performed within the flow of the dominant time, replicates and centers itself towards white masculinity. This assumed racializing of the feminine, centering its visual values on whiteness, is a direct performance of white cis male desire, and their establishment as the standard from which sexuality and gender must conform their desires.

She had never looks so handsome, so dominant, so powerful. The third sister, he was the one I knew could smash my body into the bits and pieces it always seemed more comfortable with.

4%

And in the light it seems all is lain bare. The gawdy speckled pink of the lamp. Her ominous face, beauty seeming more and more distant to the eye, sprouting roots of its golden tinged beard. And my own body. Good lord, it seems I have only looked at myself in the reflections of my daughters own turn into puberty.

A distance no longer lingering on the joints that connect my body have left me deprived of any context in space in time.

Just this solemn bedroom, the light of a lamp and the lingering face from which she continues to haunt me.

My body becomes his, and hers enters mine so discreetly, but with the slightest nod of approval and joy. I've desired for so long the pleasure of losing form, of sex unbound from the points of entry and exit which sex is often so fixated on; I've desired for long that I never planned as one should, what would come next in a sequence of time. It seemed like it would all be taken care of by the systems of measurement and keep we so whole heartedly believe in. Yet here I am, wishing to kiss myself one last time, wishing for one last moment in the bleak desires of my mind that only managed to manifest through my fingers and my cock before burning away in the light of the lamp.

4%

But this replication of white dominance within radical drag is as susceptible to the mediums of time and the platforms on which they are made visible and invisible. In this effect, Freeman's conceptual framing of 'temporal drag' becomes a form of crossing gender and sexuality through, within and outside of time.[63] In film, and performance, hooks cues us to

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[62] hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" *Reel to Real*. London: Routledge Press, 1997. pp. 278. Print.

[63] She seemed to know that it was only in her outmoded past selves, the ghosts that haunted the tight skirt that now served as a symbol of liberation, the pound of the ball of her foot on marble grounds, that she could truly summon, make visible, her own form, unbound from the walls that always served to frame in her in time and space. In this she gyrated, she centered the rhythms of her cunt, of her cock, of her sisters both in past and future, and together, they three made visible not the grand narrative of time, but every moment erased from its disgusting desire to self replicate infinitely, to ensure its visibility in a future already lived in the present. She only shook her head, as she caressed herself, visualized by everything outside of linear time, not in future or past, but in the very rhythms of heaven herself.

the oft praised film *Paris is Burning* to make very visible the racializing of womanhood fixed within the desires of dominant time. What is particularly intriguing is the connection drag within the film has, "to a figure never visible in the film: that of the white male patriarch."[64] Where Marilyn Frye is cited for her critique of gay male 'femininity' as a "casual and cynical mockery of women, for whom femininity is a trapping of oppression." This is a critical point and one in which homosexuality has been to fault on in its capitalizing on the trappings of its desires, normativity, to attain them at the risk of replicating them. In essence this is the pink dollar and the current state of capitalism that has poured in specifically around the culture of gay white men. Within this critical discourse there is still an uncomfortable lack of acknowledgment from Frye that the feminine she references is an identity owned and protected by white, cis heterosexual woman, and therefore directly implied in replicating the white masculine dominance it seeks to subvert.[65] The same situation is unfolding now as social capital continues to leverage queer as a catch all phrase for understanding gender and sexuality outside of the binary. While this is a momentous social accomplishment, it equally runs the risk of erasing experiences of those who's gender and desire where never predicated by a term or visualized moments in time.

This presumption that femme, or queer, in all its earth shaking powers and equally violent control, is inherent to a socialized or biological gender, that it is somehow Frye's sole experience as a cis woman, shows an inherent fear of a trans-planet and a non-gender conforming phobia. This is reflective of the racial replication of the white ownership of queer and trans stories that often speaks louder than everyone else in contemporary feminist theory. Judith Butler makes this clear in her text *Gender is Burning,* writing in her chapter 'Ambivalent Drag' that:

> The problem with the analysis of drag as only misogyny is, of course, that it figures male-to-female trans-sexuality, cross-dressing, and drag as male homosexual activities – which they are not always – and it further diagnoses male homosexuality as rooted in misogyny. The feminist analysis thus makes male homosexuality about women, and one might argue that at its extreme, this kind of analysis is in fact a colonization in reverse, a way for feminist women to make themselves into the center of male homosexual activity (and thus to re-inscribe the heterosexual matrix, paradoxically, at the heart of the radical feminist position). Such an accusation follows the same kind of logic as those homophobic remarks that often follow upon the discovery that one is a lesbian: a lesbian is one who must have had a bad experience with men, or who has not yet found the right one.[66]

There is an important overlap that comes with bell hooks and Judith Butler's discourse around race, gender and sexuality in relation to drag and male homosexuality. The first is the power often left un-checked within the white woman's gaze, especially in relationship to heterosexual standards as a norm and the kinds of violence it can visualize, especially on femme and queer people of color. I find hook's support of Marlyn Frye at odds with the

[64] hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" *Reel to Real*. Routledge Press, 1997. pp. 279. Print.
[65] Frye, Marilyn. *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory. Freedom*. California: Crossing, 1983. Print.
[66] Butler, Judith. "Ambivalent Drag." *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex".* Routledge Press, 2011. pp. 365. Print.

way she very aptly criticizes the films director Jennie Livingston. It is not that her critique of Livingston is unwarranted, it is quite brilliant in its making clear the way whiteness uses gender to hide its continued methods of centering itself. It's just that these same critiques should be lobbied at the likes of Frye, in the same breadth that I also must be very aware of my own impositions of experience and voice, assuming ownership of a particular queer body. hooks quickly makes note of Livingston's rendering of herself invisible within the film, leaving her voice absent, so as to position the film within the visual language of ethnography untethered from the authorship of Livingston herself. hooks writes that "Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness "represents" blackness but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic. By shooting the film using a conventional approach to documentary and not making clear how her standpoint breaks with this tradition, Livingston assumes a privileged location of 'innocence'."[67] hooks brings two important points up around the authoring of visuality, specific to the medium of film in this critique. Firstly she makes very clear the vast history of whitewashing and centering employed by 'well meaning' whites bringing the knowledge of the 'natives' into high culture, an act often framed under cultural preservation and met with great praise. In this instance, we answer a question posed at the early onset of this project as to who is telling these tales and who is authoring their visibility. This also summons a long history of violence surrounding the trope of white female innocence against the threat of black masculinity. Secondly, hooks alludes to the vital importance of the medium as a tool for making visible and authoring such visuality. In this instance again, Livingston needed first to be aware of the more nuanced codes of visibility enacted through performance at the balls in Harlem – there are many reasons these balls happened through performance, not film, and in physical locations often kept hidden from white and heterosexual New York of the time. In translating the experience of drag and balls into film, Livingston not only failed at positioning herself and acknowledging the power she has over her subjects; she also does not challenge, as hook's states, any "conventional approach[es] to documentary," positioning another form of authorship over the bodies of the subjects of the film, and by proxy homosexual people of color, into the often racist and imperialistic history of ethnographic documentary films from the West.

Another film that is vital, if not often under-represented for the above reasons, is artist and director Marlon Riggs filmic essay *Tongues Untied.*[68] This film, released in 1989*,* eloquently maps and weaves together a multitude of visual languages, under the cohesive medium of film, to tell the complex stories, and make visible, the specific identities of gay black men; identities that were constantly under attack and rendered non-existent from forms of both heterosexual and homosexual white supremacy and racism. In format, Riggs' presence is very much felt throughout the film, visualized through a shifting lens of reenactment, prose, poetry archival material, first person narration and coded dance and performance. Working with 'The Other Countries Workshop,' a New York poetry workshop for black gay men, Riggs began, what seems to be, an intensely self reflective journey, questioning the the forms of poetry that privileged voices of oppression and developing nuanced voices of his own that could speak directly towards his experiences in both content and form. Parodying the ethnographic film formula that haunted Livingston, Riggs takes us through

[67] hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" *Reel to Real*. Routledge Press, 1997. pp. 283. Print.

[68] *Tongues Untied*. Dir. Marlon Riggs. Perf. Brian Freeman and Essex Hemphil. 1989. DVD.

the fictional institute of Snap!thology, where he very consciously celebrates the coded body language of resistance while maintaining a keen awareness of ethnographic otherness, and capital, when visualized and performed for and by a white body or within spaces of institutional acclaim. Riggs was very clear in his lack of interest, or desire, to entertain critiques or even attempts of translation in regards to the signification and implications of his experience, the experience of being black and gay, in regards to American morals and cultural etiquettes. He states, "[i]mplicit in the much overworked rhetoric of community standards is the assumption of only one central community (patriarchal, heterosexual and usually white) and only one overarching cultural standard ditto."[69] Beyond the more forward implication, that has become well recognized into the 21st century, of the issues of essentialism and the assumption that what we consider culturally adept is neutral and outside of Western time and history, is the radical resistance of the untranslatable language of the snap itself. It is in its irreducibility, described only by what it does, but never affording a translation into a signification that could be understood within the logics of the dominant culture. This turns the whole cinematic and performative logic on its head, as it essentially ignores the master copy, visualizing in rhythm and coded movements which cannot be reflected or understood on the visual register of the dominant norm. The language between the snaps, the time and space they contain, animate the infinite horizon, spaces of differentiation that suggest in action that there is no universal language.

1%
and as if the third sister cared no more I was met with silence, a kind of silence not heard but seen, made known through presence not absence. I had occupied enough space, my insatiable need to engulf all three sisters, one by one.

I didn't need it anymore.

I have become my own object of desire, and I have become once again bound by time itself.

Acknowledging the burglary that was at place, it seems odd that these shadows had to invite themselves in. An obvious look of scorn painted plainly across their faces, there is a distinct look of distaste at my decision to intrude with the light when it was more than obvious that this was their hour by law. An argument would be a waste of breath, and ultimately the cold air isn't so pleasant on the throat in these dry Joburg months.

So I shut up,
built myself again in the mirror

[69] Castro, Alex. "Tongues Untied." *Senses of Cinema*. N.p., 04 June 2014. Web. 16 Apr. 2017.

and allow the indigo to fill the space in between.

Bad Copies, Bad Time

In this logic, one that values middle class order as the norm for source material, one's lesbian sister becomes a bad copy of a brother, an inadequate or disfigured deviation from the master copy that demands specific requirements for gender's relationship to sexuality. Thus we see born the violent logics that render gender non-conforming individuals into the role of cast off poor reproductions of a man or woman. Freeman elaborates in her text on the film *Coal Miner's Granddaughter,* "Even in its physical aspect, the video incarnates the cliches that a lesbian is a bad copy of a man, that a queer life leaves nothing enduring, that a working-class subject has, in Rita Felski's words, 'nothing to declare'."[70] This in-betweeness evoked by Felski becomes an important conceptual approach in looking at time, social constructs and even the mediums in which we visualize the prior. The in-between understood through spatial terms is a neither here nor there situation, one of transition that cannot be fixed or copied. This concept gives insight into understanding another facet of queerness, one of which is in-between (class, gender, race, sexuality etc.), which cannot be copied or replicated accurately. In its inability to be reproduced, there arises an anxiety, a kind of fear at the very plausible implication that what has been established as normal might very well just be itself 'in-between'. Felski implies this further in looking at the anxiety of the lower-middle class stating, "In fact, the lower-middle class has typically been the scorn among intellectuals, blamed for everything from exceedingly bad taste to the rise of Hitler," employing this in-between ascension from the impotent working class to the standardized desires of the middle class as a point of 'non-identity' or negation used to skirt the fallout of middle class excess, or discarded copies that no longer carry the capital power and value in time they once had.[71] This hatred may lie in the collapsing of time felt by a proletariat class of liberal intellectuals, one in which the working class, and the queer body, reflects copies of the middle class from its past, out of normal sequential time, mirroring the conservative tenant that sits at the foundation of middle class wealth and intellectual liberalism. The blame must then be set against this ascending working class as it threatens again the normalized master copy which these values have secured all their social investments in.

This messy meddling with time that see's even the 'poor peoples' so championed by the liberal elite pegged as a societal problem when they mobilize beyond the bounding limitations of poverty and silence. Sequential time then is a singular ascension between the

[70] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 27. Print.

[71] Felski, Rita. *Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame and the Lower Middle Class*. 1st ed. Vol. 115. New York City: Modern Language Association, 2000. pp. 34. Print. PMLA.

middle and elite, a one way road vetted only by the exception to the master copy, the master himself. In terms of time, queerness becomes a measure of undermining and completely derailing sequence, rejecting the exploitative processes repeated in placing value on labor, desire, relationships, history and the body. Queerness must then block the transformation of time into 'Grand Historical Narratives,' refusing these narratives the right to depict people visually based on their relationship to a standardized form of class, race and gender. This is a blockage



of sequential movement, enacting a commitment to a 'Bad Timing' outside of a policed 'Shared Timing.' A bad timing truly is a direct claim towards pushing against the standard shared time we are forced to engage in to reap the capital vaults of our current societies. It is as it says, a call towards the bad, or improper sourcing of knowledge in time; a word play of sorts off of the phrase 'Bad Timing' when referring to improperly placed statements and actions within a larger predicated context. In this era that desires too standardize, replicate and capitalize on normalized visual modes of communication as a form of knowledge, bad timing relocates time again into the body, into the kinks and desires felt through the mind, spirit and physical body.

In thinking about history as hurt within the violent structures of normalized time that continue to be implemented, the need to rethink our way of speaking about the body, and wounds enacted on it, becomes imperative in shifting our understanding of the body as the enactor of bad timing and the keeper of a forgotten knowledge of the future. In wounding this body, this knowledge only discernible by those who can make futures unseen visible, there is a process of interaction, or affiliation, in which sacred knowledges, completely unbound from linear shared time, seeps into the present, breaching the binds of time. If the body then is the apparatus for bad timing, then pleasure must be actualized as a form of time itself. [73]

Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *The Indigo Prophecy,* 2016

[73] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 49. Print.
Freeman elaborates on this stating, "in contrast to a male bodily economy where the sacrifice signalled by orgasmic expenditure produces momentary bliss, pleasure in the female bodily economy engenders more pleasure and thus more time." What is so powerful in this notion is its ability to enact an unbound queer timing, a bad timing, against the norm of a cis hetero-essentialism which propagates the association of female as an inherent facet of a particular body.

Tales of Desire
and the Objects that Haunt the Mind

There is a strange conundrum I find in discussing desire without actually engendering, or creating forms of it, as it is something so personal yet ubiquitous that seems in its nature impossible to experience outside of the body. What a queer desire could be, and where it is placed are questions we should be wary of answers too; instead it should be asked whether it is truly tethered to bodies and between bodies, or it too can haunt objects, time, space and history? This text will deal with the question of painting as a language of queer counter-visuality, and in form, as a medium that can still hold the potential to queer space and time through positioning desire outside of western-centric standards and expectations.

In the context of painting, it is always quite peculiar that language and looking tends to lean towards a polar relationship between what we can make out and what we cannot. This may be at the heart of the lost cause of abandoning painting, a superstitious spook that nothing more could be sourced beyond, beneath, behind or through the manufacturing of representation and abstraction as visual products. At a point, a silly, and quite honestly, boring practice of superseding forms of knowledge production as the apex of the art object took it's seat as the new normal in critical art theory, and with it, dismissed a kind of physical object-hood conscious of much more than its potential for language and the furthering of an intellectual project. This, I would argue is a project often tainted with its own bound histories of colonial progress. Objects and forms of radical potential, queer in their nature that once took the image of physical and visual liberation are quite literally straightened out into modes of linear time. bell hook's critique of Jennie Livingston reveals this, where Livingston's radical position of visibility for gay black men in turn fixed them into an ethnographic other, tethered in context to a racist and empirical history of ethnographic documentary film.

Have you thought about performance?
Or at least a more research driven
conceptual approach?

To come back quickly to the harvesting of knowledge from objects, painting and its surfaces, the practice of gaining knowledge, and seeking its progress, is fundamental to any mode of production, and especially that of painting and the visual record. This is an anxiety I have in painting, a productive potential of failure in painting's ability to actually become a mode of counter-visuality. The point of contention lies not so much in the practice of ascertaining knowledge, in as much as how that knowledge is organized and dispersed, and maybe more

critically, what is done with the object after it has served its purpose for production? We should ask this same question while exchanging the term object for body. The forms of exchange that are often employed have a tendency to consign to a fictional irretrievable past anything that challenges a dominant vision of the future. Diana Taylor, the performance theorist falls into semantics to discuss such an archival process that employs a forgetting of radical desire as a violent form of an untraceable past. Her form for this 'non-archival system of transfer' is *repertoire*, where 'Repertoire is a corporeal mnemonic, whose work is to reincarnate the lost, non-dominant past in the present and to pass it on with a difference.'[74] What I like in this idea sits around language and gesture as a measure of blurry memory, not one that is only concerned with recalling the past with hardwired precision, but instead it is rewiring loops and cycles that change the present with every recall.

Angelus Novus or The Angel of Time or The Sisters and the Spring Fling



In fact, in this approach, the present dissolves itself altogether in form, leaving us with no point of reference for the past and future. Time then can become an object itself, one that can be shattered, eaten, split up, fucked, violated, given away or made very, very, visible. I become anxious in painting's capability to dissolve itself because of its value both economically and socially, calling instead for a deep sense of preservation and sanctificaiton. This is of course not unique to painting solely, but a bi-product of the capital markets who have taken over custody of much of the world's art. In these circumstances, it becomes critical that this process of dissolving, of shattering linear time flows and their hierarchies of meaning, functions in the process, material and surface of the painting. This can also happen in the gesture of the painting itself, in the repeated touch and gestural representations of bodies and their parts (hands, feet, genitals, heads) within the painting, and the fragmented stories they tell transposed across time and space. This object can take many names, and forms, but most importantly it can become unbound from the violence that deprived its desires from the start.

And this moment is pregnant with the desires both dangerous and enticing, embedded in the histories which bind us and yet so deeply troubled by these master narratives that contain them. I find this understanding of the anxious potential and failure of painting, especially the object hood of time and history, and the desires they can contain, evident clearly in the work of painter Nicole Eisenman. As if conjuring an angel from a past that never existed, Eisenman understands the many falsehoods and trapping of history and its narratives, and further has a pulse on how they render themselves visible today – often in a

[74] Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2007. Print.

Image Caption: Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920

coexistance of both fear and intense desire. History to her is an object, a physical sexuality in itself that can be conjured, made visible, and invisible and given language within and through paint and the dense surfaces they create both on and off the canvas. In form, this 'Angel of History', so aptly visualized through the painting *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee, and in theory by Walter Benjamin, manifest themselves with the potential to be the angels whose voices continue to haunt this very text, this very language that seems to choke on itself in its own attempts at liberation. She renders herself in Eisenman's painting titled 'Spring Fling.' Here we see a classic female figure, white as bloodless porcelain, reanimated in a style that pokes at the fleshy surface of Tiepolo and other 19th century French realist. While becoming an object of history, the notion of time and desire nodded at by the title, emboldens the angel with an intense sexuality, a temporal lust that has already been expended. In this summoning of a historical Western desire, so often imagined in classical painting, under the terms of a fling, I begin to have a deep churning in my gut, the kind of body reaction of revulsion that comes from locking eyes upon a soured lover's garment in the back of your closet. It is in this act that painting serves as a translation of time, an object transmuting desire, lust and sexuality – capable of speaking towards complex human and bodily experiences – without having to explain them. In this way, Eisenman is capable of not resisting history, in this case a specific nod to Western genealogy in art, but is capable of speaking through it, of breaking its long kept singular voice and controlled method of desire into her own, and through painting, potentially into the viewers as well. In that, we can see the Angel herself as a plural who transcribes history's desires through time, and in theory refuses a the singular form of identification.

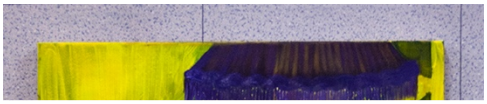




Now these thoughts may be themselves bound up in theory and the imagination, but they do offer necessary platforms in what would seem the impossibly complex violation of self-

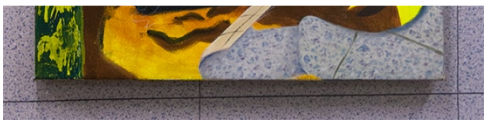
Image Caption: (Left) Nicole Eisenman, *Spring Fling,* 2013
(Right) Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, (Detail) *Triumph of Virtue and Nobility Over Ignorance,* 1750

identification. In following a strain of logic that has no linear path, we can look at the body in both metaphor and reality as 'temporal and spatial' in its refusal to cohere to a singular identity.[76] My object of desire then is one of truly *Bad Timing,* one that has become the pillar for what Freeman continues as the 'forms of time which a patriarchal generationality and a maternalized middle class domesticity lean for meaning.'[77] My desire is bad timing, it simply cannot find meaning in such an oppressive mode of understanding time and space, body and object, without sourcing outlets which can not just reimagine new life-worlds, but make them. This is not merely a matter of production, or building what wasn't, but a process of summoning, recording, translating and visualizing experienced narratives outside of the desires of capitalism and dominant society.





In this sense, one approach is to rebuild the image of the past, the white Angel of history, have our fling and then smash these objects of ill fated desire in favor for their marks, fragments and ideas from which can be assembled infinitely, unfixed objects, stories and identities. This is a rejection of any attachments to objects and notions of identity and body entrapped by oppressive sequential time. Our desires are precious, and so are the vessels for which we manifest them.



So I stamp out my cigarette and switch on that vile lamp I keep around. The one my roommates grandfather had left, whose handsome face teases me in its shadows.

And in the light it seems all is lain bare.



The gawdy speckled pink of the lamp. Her ominous face, beauty seeming more and more distant to the eye, sprouting roots of its golden tinged beard. And my own body.



From this we can call upon, and make visible the wave lengths and vibrations that have carried these desires through bodies and objects over time and space. There is no doubt that the desires we are oriented towards, if not manacled to completely, steal and mould the image of radical resistance into that of their own. This becomes one of the most challenging aspects of making visible radical bodies, and persons; the measures from which our dominant culture functions, the mediocrity at its core,

[76] Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Bind:s Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 49. Print.
[77] Ibid.

Image Caption: (Left) Blake Daniels, *Portrait as My Bedroom I,* 2017
(Right) Blake Daniels, *Portrait as My Garden,* 2017

maintains its image, and the longing desire to replicate it, as a queer counter-visuality. This is stating essentially that white supremacy, heteronormativity and domination – these master copies are willing to mould their desires into the image of queer resistance to quell any deviations from their own centrality. This can be seen in examples around the amount of labour femme, queer and trans people produce in building the most equitable and current trends within popular fashion, music and art.[78] This chameleon tactic of imposition lays at the root of European imperialism and the colonial project. On the African continent Sokari Ekine writes that "Western interventions which seek to impose a Western narrative on queer African struggle are part of an uninterrupted history of suppressing the needs and experiences of Africans dating back to colonisation," continuing that, "The African struggle is not only directed at changing existing legislation; it is a struggle in which we seek to reassert our own narrative and reclaim our humanity."[79] This has happened even within queer and LGBTQI activism perpetuated by the West, underscored by an asserted association of whiteness, Westerness, and masculinity within queer – serving as a desperate escape route from its own self capture by the very oppressive image it once sought to subvert. Adeleye – Fayemi picks up on this in speaking about the imposition of the Western image in feminism onto that of the African Femme, writing, "[t]he word still conjured up bogeys of wild, naked white women burning their bras, imperialism domination, an undermining of African culture, etc."[80] In returning to Marilyn Frye's criticism of gay male drag culture as expressed by bell hooks, we see here again the problems of imposing desires, and forming movements in the image of whiteness. This replicates once more the imperialism and colonization of the image of radicality, specifically around gender and sexuality, another bad timing that summons the ghost of European conquest on the African continent in this case through the reimagining of white feminist liberation.

There is a return to the problems of the need to name here, in which this ghost of European conquest must actually be disallowed the privilege of remaining un-named and transparent. In painting, this ghost appears in the form of both history and criticism, deeming what is an acceptable and noteworthy pursuit, and what is seen as outsider, primitive, craft, hobby or any of the other number of pejorative names that are used to locate painting practices that fall out of the desires of a Western aesthetic. We see this in the grand narrative of Western modernism, and the erasure of the many other modernisms that have happened globally in different forms, spaces and times. In practice, this becomes a moderation of the literal gesture in painting, a demand to represent visually the body, and its relationship to history and space, within a particular codex of centralized values. Nicole Eisenman subverts these values by giving their gestural form a kind of humanity, by literally figuring history into the

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[78] I mean to call upon the exploitation of femme and queer labor in the production of dominant western visual culture as both a physically abusive tenant of our current capital system that continues to demand real labor, in creative and intellectual property and in production, for queer and femme peoples above and beyond the normal demands of survival and thriving within a violently oppressive society. Further, it also becomes reflective of Elizabeth Freeman's writing that I look at closely in this text, on the temporal organizing of the body under capital. This becomes in a greater sense a form of flight from the outskirts of social norms into the capital rich center as a means to be safe, have rights and thrive, a flight that is likened, and takes form as migrancy fleeing conflict situations caused by Western imperialism only to be shut out of the society that is the root of conflict.

[79] Ekine, Sokari. "Contesting Narratives of Queer Africa." *Queer African Reader*. Ed. Hakima Abbas and Sokari Ekine. Dakar, Senegal: Pambazuka, an Imprint of Fahamu, 2013. pp. 87. Print.

[80] Adeleye-Fayemi. "Creating and sustaining feminist space in Africa: local global challenges in the 21st century". Paper prepared for the 4th Annual Dame Nita Barrow Lecture. Toronto. 2000.

figures of her paintings in a way that is too intimate to be reproduced are propagated as a universal visuality.

Walking with my hair blown out; walking with thighs pounding; always a place to be.
There is no place.
But right now it's at this window, gazing at the lone muscle goddess' doing his aerobics on the sidewalk outside the street right now.

It's quite a sight. But I'll bring this up to another time.
That window became myself as the ghost. Scared a little, threatened by a seductive beat of body and pavement. But their was no way to see this, only the seductive beat of pavement on body.

I desired.

The Holy Trinity of Desire

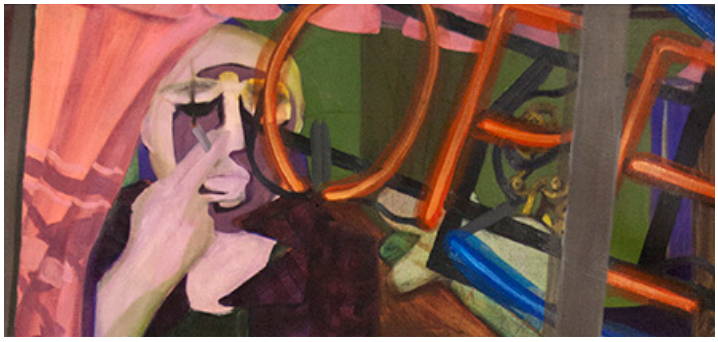
In discussing this colonization of desire, I return to Butler's notion of mimicry and interpellation that is present within *Paris is Burning.* In the performance of a queer femininity within the balls, there is not simply an imposed form of gender or performance from the outside, it is an interpellation and subversion that gains agency through an exponential deviance from its original form. In this sense Butler writes that "[i]nterpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that which it refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent."[81] If it can be understood that these desires, and the people that they desire, simply cannot be spoken for, they cannot be visualized without being suppressed or capitalized on under the current oppressive model of normalizing and regulating the visual, then we can begin to question the relationship that desire has to the visible. This is not to disregard the vital importance of gaining visibility in public spaces now, under the current dominant norms, especially when concerned with real implications of safety, rights and vitality; instead it is a claim that while the norm can only be seen because of its reflection against what it normalizes, the queer body, crowd and person can control their own body in the present, through coded gestures of the past and future, of space, desire and time yet outside of the same space, desire and time. It is not that this queer visibility and visuality has no form, but instead exists at a frequency outside of what can be reflected by the dominant norm. This is a commitment to remain unseen, claiming visibility not as a counter action or response to the master copy, but through coded gestures and a control of access to who can and cannot register with them, desire them, see them. In my painting practice, and its relation to the spaces I occupy, this plays out in a kind of collapsing of space – my bedroom, my studio, and the bar – as a tool to trace my own visibility within language, my work, time and the city of Johannesburg. Could a bar such as Buffalo Bills become a queer space of desire; simply because of its accessible location could it function as a form of queer resistance? How does my body code its gestures within this space as opposed to the

[81] Butler, Judith. "Gender is Burning." *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex".* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011. 82. Print.

sanctuary of my bedroom, and the productive space of my studio; or more importantly, how do I manage my body and gesture as the in-between, the negative space that links each location through desire in my paintings?

I want to return to Nicole Eisenman and a closer reading of the queer desire that can render this unseen visible within painting. In writing on Eisenman's newest body of work, Dennis Kardon calls upon a passage written by Maggie Nelson in her text '*The Argonauts'*:

> It reminds us that any bodily experience can be made new and strange; that nothing we do in this life need have a lid crammed on it; that no one set of practices or relations has a monopoly on the so-called radical or the so called normative.[82]





It's from this perspective that painting's desires, or queer's desire, and its ability to continue as a progressive and radical format to hyrbidizing and establish new modes of visuality, and visibility, must be thought of not as a dominant monopoly, as was the case prior to the 20th century, nor as normative measure in which to think through art. What I appreciate in Nelson's text is the claim and the relationship established between the radical and the normative, that in essence they are the two ends of a binary system at play; this underlines the linear nature that each has with one another. They are two sides of the same coin as an old saying might phrase, positions as diametrically opposed and inherently paradoxical. Yet the radical must reflect a response to the norm and the norm must constantly change itself to the radical – the owner of one then owns both. Ambiguity then as a word, and visual form, becomes an immediate process of entering the in-between, and outside of and unseen within this binary.

Eisenman treats forms of ambiguity as if they are the surface of paint themselves; they sits at eye level to most recognizable forms that hold taboo desires – the gender, race, color, size, sexuality and physique of the figures – yet this only seems to sit on the surface, a coded form to distract the dominant Western cultures gaze while the politics of ambiguity play out in the color, time, space and tales of desire coded into the paint itself. This coding in one

[82] Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. London: Melville House UK, 2016. Print.
Image Caption: Blake Daniels, *The Second Innauguration of Buffalo Bills,* 2016



read comes purely from the touch that is involved in the process of painting – the flick of the wrist, the snap of an arm, every body movement that marks the surface – these become un-translatable gestures that can exist only in our own physical experience within them. In this way paintings establish a relationship of gesture and touch between the viewer and the artist, with the painting itself as the stage or interface. The presence of ambiguity is not just a middle passage between two controlling spheres, it is the animator themselves; here one cannot tell if time is flowing in any direction in Eisenman's paintings, whether a train is traversing land or time in *Wee ks on a* Train or if the scene in *Another Green World* is situated in another era, or world altogether. It



is in this aforementioned painting, a nod to Brian Eno's album which is present in the painting, that any form of binary begins to give way to itself. Gender melts from one figure into another, the blue hue of flesh takes on the folds of stray blanket cast off a body neither clothed nor dressed and 70's motifs crash into a lone figure lost in the world of their cellphone. In one painting, time, gender and space all break down and as Kern notes the viewers need to fit this world into a reflection of 'ours' writing, "It is interesting how reflexively we desire to do this in order to navigate our social world. But here it doesn't matter; it's a party, everyone is welcome."[83] What is more is that it is not just a party, but many parties, and with open invites, it completely relies on your ability to read subtle cues masked and at times hidden

[83] Kardon, Dennis. "Paint Queer, Gender Fluid, Meaning Ambiguous: Nicole Eisenman at Anton Kern." *Artcritical*. Artcritical, 23 June 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.

Image Caption: (Top) Nicole Eisenman, *Weeks on the Train,* 2015 (Bottom) Nicole Eisenman, *Another Green World,* 2015

within the very codes of the painting itself. From here the painting as an object of desire, and keeper of non-linear tales and genealogies, takes the form of a body itself; a body that reflects not a master copy of the western society's radical norm, but of the viewers desires themselves.

Kardon builds on this idea of desire in Eisenman's work in addressing the inherent queer desire that she embodies into the figure/ground relationship of her paintings. There has never been a solution in her work, and never a formula of convention from which she pulls, instead constantly addressing every element with the same level of tenderness, impregnating everything with desire, from the lines of coke on the table to the lover's entangled in a permanent embrace. It is her attention to the forms and shapes of the painted surface, like a 'jigsaw puzzle' that allows her to bring forth erotic power and relationship towards even the most benign object in the painting. She brings this through her work, "treat[ing] each shape as an arena of painterly invention of differing facture, not letting big expanses of emptiness dominate," continuing, "[w]hat keeps it together is her masterful drawing, creating space through exaggerated changes in scale, juxtaposing oblique surfaces coexisting in impossible perspective, and establishing different points of focus using her sharp tonal color sense."[84] It is here, in these different 'languages of painting' that the impossible cacophony, the humanness, of painting begins to be exploited at its best. We are allowed to see perspectives not just beyond our own selves, oriented to a dominant cultures way of looking; no, we are given views impossible, heartbeats in color and pained orgasm's lost in a moment refused by time.

I have become my own object of desire, and I have become once again bound by time itself. Darting eyes catch the last breath of the tip of my cigarette, and I think stupidly about what a waste that last inch was, I should've smoked the damn thing right to the filter like I usually do.

0%
I didn't need it anymore

In this dense web of desire, history and place, intimate moments are still allowed, we see tender images of Eisenman herself, coding in the most subtle of ways a space of vulnerability, invisible to the gaze of masculinity, heteronormativity and whiteness. These vulnerable desires are not up for sale, they cannot be seen without an orientation only brought through the sophistication of one's self visibility experienced as a means of surviving, of thriving and haunting all the spaces of possibility outside of the Western radical norm. It is in moments such as the painting *Morning Studio* where we are drawn into the eyes of a figure, in touch with another, embedded with every sensation, flesh to flesh, has carried for the length of human time on earth. Yet, in this unbelievably intimate moment, an image meant for personal keeping, an invitation to the larger world is opened through a view into an indiscriminate city, into a galaxy, into a computer and the internet it assumes. There is an emotional complexity at play which exists completely in the painted body and almost exclusively outside of it, it is a paradox, an ambiguous portrait of Eisenman, and her queer body. It is a generous invitation to inject our own narrative, one most often rendered

[84] Kardon, Dennis. "Paint Queer, Gender Fluid, Meaning Ambiguous: Nicole Eisenman at Anton Kern." Artcritical. Artcritical, 23 June 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.

non existent and invisible into the paint that makes up both figure and ground, the elements of desire within the object.

3%
I didn't want it anymore.

(Re) Introduction

and the Voice of the Anxious Body

As you traversed this text, as with the others, you encountered many conversations, many voices and many stratums of the English language that both speak to and through each other. To counter the violence that is at play within my own language, I called upon history's ghosts of the past and future, people who have loved me and those who I have loved, voices of reason, logic and violence. These voices, these languages all locked in the binds of an English so uncomfortable with its own sound, all have taken on different positions, different modes and methodologies of coding and speaking towards differing models of queer counter-visualities. At times this reads as theory, at others the voices of history outside of my own body, unsettled by the way they sound through my mouth and fingers, and others, personal narratives suspended between poem and memory and still at time through visual images chopped up and placed not for reference but to be read within and through the text. This paper that you are reading now is but one iteration of a larger set of projects, one that will reformulate itself over and over again into new materials, languages, time and space.

The text while grappling with structures of language and form in developing a queer counter-visuality also navigated spaces of ambivalence of queer desire, the often unspoken violence in intimacy, and the way outing visibility can be as destructive as it can be productive. As in the form of my paintings, and studio practice, these nuanced and often highly personal experiences took form through a process of cutting, hiding and revealing, using a shifting coded visual language through slices and layering that will haunt the text, refusing a linear read to be the only productive means of engagement in understanding in full the relationship between each coded layer, and their meaning within language and forms of visuality.

You have come to know them as the three sisters.





Monologue of the Second Sister

I only have one language, it is not mine.

No amount of rainbow nation rhetoric, never mind the troubadour who calls on the ghost of a general to come back and liberate his people, can cause

It/then

to migrate. Transcribed.
You know about the stones, the utterance,
I shall lead you away to the voice of Estremadura.

Offer this song I used to sing as a child, a welcome to the cheeky doge.
Here is your knife.

This animal, which is quite unhistorical, remind him what his existence fundamentally is. A Mickey Mouse party. Das Schibboleth, hinaus in die Fremde der Heimat, the first animal to die in orbit. A city whom seems to have forgotten its own first name. For the men who devour the vast landscape, the operating system development of low-penis, I wet the fate of my father hungrily. Ag pleez Deddy, how I vibrate to your memories in our absence,
Donde Va Mama, lost in languages not wanted by this land, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure.

I am monolingual, never will this language be mine, and truth to tell, it never was. It's Flesh at last inlaid in the horizons of speech.

It then – migrate.
Transcribed. Today and forever.