

Jonathan Mark Jackson

Rememory

Thesis Essay

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in
Photography in the Department of Photography of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence,
Rhode Island.

By

Jonathan Jackson
2022

Approved by Master's Examination Committee:

Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa
Associate Professor/Graduate Program Director, Photography, Thesis Chair

Nichole Rustin-Paschal
Assistant Professor, History, Philosophy and the Social Sciences, Thesis Advisor

Christopher Roberts
Schiller Family Assistant Professor in Race in Art and Design, Theory and History of Art and Design,
Thesis Advisor

Rememory, coined in Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved*, refers to the psychological action of placing forgotten or misplaced memories into a narrated context within the self. Rather than directly "remembering," the characters in Morrison's novel, like their author, rely on a web of socially produced or shared memories as a way to understand their past. This essay catalogs an on-going performance of rememory in my photographic work. Through an interrogation of physical archives, I remap the historic presences of Black life in New England. This research based practice takes me to the preserved homes and to the workplaces of my real ancestors and fictive kin: African, European, and Indigenous peoples who collided in the port towns of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I search for and "inhabit" house museums that claim a Black history as a way to challenge the imperatives of traditional preservation. Regionally these specific preservationist traditions shroud and stage a space to contemplate the complex forms of violence constituted in colonial America. Using still photography, sound design, and language, I transform the preserved house and the landscape of the region into zones where Blackness, and the rememory of slavery, is central to acquisition of historical knowledge. In each of these zones, I engage a practice of slow looking and listening mediated through the large format camera. In this essay, I think through my photographs as they facilitate the sensorial action of rememory. In addition to Morrison, I explore shared theoretical frames between W.E.B. Du Bois, Michel Rolph Trouillot, Hortense J. Spillers, and Saidiya Hartman to situate my work within an ongoing dialogue of how Blackness functions in and outside of historical narrative.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------------|-----|
| Abstract | | | 5 |
| Preface | | | 10 |
| Phantom | | | 16 |
| The | Black | Rückenfigur | 39 |
| Dream | | House | 63 |
| Meeting | | House | 86 |
| Afterlife | | | 112 |
| Bibliography | | | 134 |

Memory - bound to the way the photograph holds up what it proposes, stops, keeps - is given pause, because what we thought we could look at for the last time and hold holds us, captures us, and doesn't let us go.

Fred Moten, *Black Mo'nin'* (2013)

Preface

This is an essay about photographs, slavery, death, and memory. The preceding volume of photographs, into which this text is enveloped, invokes this question: How can a still photograph actively re-present the interior lives, thoughts, and feelings of enslaved Blacks that were silenced by historical narrative? As my work shape shifts over time, this question has been my permanent internal pursuit. In some ways, this question will remain unanswered in this text. But, I offer several possibilities, contextual cases, and analyses of imagery to pull the question apart.

To do this work, I foreground the writings of literary scholar Saidiya Hartman, anthropologist Michel Rolph Trouillot, literary scholar Hortense J. Spillers, and W.E.B. Du Bois as a quadrangle of theoretical influence to my creative practice. In addition to these four, I interweave thoughts on the fiction and non-fiction work of Toni Morrison, specifically analyzing the imagistic, historic, and fabulative qualities of *Beloved*. Morrison's work guides me as a meta-influence, and structures the shape and shared meaning of my thesis work across forms (this essay, my photobook, and my corresponding graduate thesis exhibition).

These five influences are braided into the following sections, at varying capacities. Through each section, I explain and build an argument for how my photographic practice questions historical narrative. *Phantom* tracks a method of self-capture photography that has been integral to my understanding of the slave body through abstracted figuration. I use the term "capture" rather than portrait, to emphasize the action of producing a photograph that renders the body without assistance or collaboration. As I will explain, solitary production, and the refusal of a direct gaze repossesses misplaced memory. Following this, I study how visual systems of back-turned figures, gazing, and staging function across the work of Black contemporary artists. In *The Black Ruckenfigur*, I connect the working methods of Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson, John Akomfrah, and Dawoud Bey, to my own. I conclude this section with an analysis of how landscape photography constructs gazing. In the third section, *Dream House*, I focus on explaining how house museums, as zones which stage imagined versions of the lives of the enslaved, create a special practice of daydreaming. I explain my interior photographs' connection to the genre of the "still life." I narrate these thoughts through a case study of the preserved Colonel John Ashley/Elizabeth Freeman house located in Sheffield, Massachusetts. Following this, in *Meeting House*, I question aspects of Black memorial gestures that exist in public space. Through my photographs, I specifically examine how these memorial figurations complicate the historical memory of slavery. I expand on my research surrounding the destroyed African Union Meeting and School House within Providence, Rhode Island as a case study. Finally, in *Afterlife*, I provide narrative context for my recent engagements in portraiture to rehearse how photographs transition life into death.

This essay is populated with ghosts, but there are three key phantom presences I must highlight at the beginning which play throughout the remainder of this essay: 1.) The phantom my own evaporated body functions as a ghostly premonition of my own (unknowable) death. 2.) Known historical figures who vessel themselves into objects (tools, chairs, windows) then into photographs. 3) There is the presence of an imagined, unfigured “viewer” of my work. Throughout this essay, I use the term “viewer” in the universal sense. This establishes, I believe, a reading experience where one can transpose themselves into the imagined gallery or exhibition of my work. Here, however, before the universal use takes precedence, I want to structure a figuration of the “viewer” into an “audience”. By closely aligning my work to Saidiya Hartman’s scholarship, I find that the languages of theater - the stage, the cast, the audience, the director - resonate with photographic practice. Later I identify how my photographs act upon, or orient, an audience towards imagination. However, the ideal “who” in the question, “Who is the work for?” remains elusive. Many artists answer this question universally - the work is for everyone. I feel that this is a fallacy. For example, I believe that each artist I will cite in this essay is working with a conceptual audience that informs their practice. I would argue that Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* does not cast a specific racialized audience, but rather is working for an audience of curators and historians that have written and adhered to the rules of canonical history museums. Likewise Martin Puryear may be producing for a community of craftspeople, woodworkers, loggers; an audience that may be considered “outsider” artists. Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson, work to centralize the Black femmes who shape Black culture and in turn cast an audience concerned with Black Feminist practice. Without a primary source reference, I cannot claim that any of these observations are true. However they illustrate how I am thinking of the ideal “who”.

To me, Toni Morrison’s audience is the dead. Who, in her fiction, plays, and essays, exists interstitially through the past, present, and future. *Beloved*, within this essay, stands as the penultimate example of Morrison’s correspondence with the dead. *Beloved* is the primary fictional work that I’ve reread in multiple cycles throughout this year, to consider the fabulative practices animating the historic lives “brought back to life” within Morrison’s research and writing. Thinking relationally with Saidiya Hartman and Michel Rolph Trouillot, if the archives of slavery are “a death sentence” (1), then archives, literature, and visual artwork pertaining to the memory of slavery are equally shaped by death, or an audience of the dead.

Before explaining how my photographs are formed by this elusive, most times unknowable, dead audience, I want to highlight an almost purposefully lost work from Morrison's catalog. This tangent connects to how I am working out the ways in which producing for the dead intersects with memorial and commemorative gestures in the following sections. In 1986 Morrison showcased her first full length play, titled *Dreaming Emmett*, at the Market Theater in Albany, New York. The play is a retelling of the murder of Emmett Till in 1955, from the perspective of a fictional older Till (who would have been 45 in 1986), existing in a purgatory where he constantly revises the summer of his death. The fictional Emmett summons his murders, his mother, and two of the friends he traveled with from Chicago, Illinois to Money, Mississippi to replay their roles in his life. The play is a notable anomaly in Morrison's oeuvre because of its public erasure via the author. After the close of the production, Morrison had almost all copies of the play and its recordings destroyed (2). Some copies exist in university archives, and set photographs from the production can be found in the archive of the Market Theater. Her erasure of her own work points most likely to a contention in production. Equally likely, I feel, was Morrison's acting on her own careful perfectionism around narrative and its experiential power.

Till's murder lived in Morrison's mind, who was 24 in 1955 and finishing graduate study in literature in the same year. The phantom of Till appears significantly in two of Morrison's novels. In *Song of Solomon* (1977), the case of the murder creates a major political divide between the pseudo-brothers Macon "Milkman" Dead and Guitar Baines. The debate the two men have surrounding the murder, Milkman representing a northern bourgeois Black ideal and Guitar perhaps a southern radical, spurs Milkman's own dangerous journey into the South to locate missing pieces in his family's origin. The reception of the murder also reveals which characters, in the novel's community of men, is a member of the "Seven Days". A vigilante group that "rights the wrongs" done onto Blacks by reperforming acts of violence and murder onto whites. In response to Till's murder, the Days kidnap and lynch a 14 year old white boy from a neighboring school.



Joseph Schuyler, *Dreaming Emmett* premiere in Albany, New York.

In *Love* (2003), the murder is similarly cited as the catalyst for the internal rupture in the character May, who becomes a wildly militant separatist defender of a fading "Black only" vacation resort. This passage, recounted by "L," the novels sometimes dead, sometimes alive truth sayers, succinctly illustrates the internal change:

And May's behavior did go strange in 1955. When that boy from Chicago tried to act like a man and got beat to death for his trouble. Mississippi's answer to desegregation and whatever else that wilted their sex. We all shivered about what they did to that boy. He had such light eyes. But for May it was a sign. It sent her to the beach where buried not just the deed [of the hotel] but a flash-light and Lord knows what else. Any day now some Negro was going to rile waiting whites, give them an excuse to hang somebody and close the hotel down." (3)

In both citings, the spectacle of Till's murder causes serious warpings of Black subconsciousness. Through accounts of *Dreaming Emmett* (I am debating the ethics of finding and reading an existing copy) the future, presently dead, Till plays a justifiably vengeful role. By summoning his murderers who appear at their present ages in 1986, he attempts to enact murderous revenge on them through the meta-production of a film, titled "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." Rhaisa Williams' recent analysis of the play focuses on forms of time travel, and time collapsing, that structure the audience's relationship to the past. The play, Williams argues, demands an interrogation of how time affects memory:

[the play] takes place, as Morrison states in the stage directions, "NOW." Setting a play about a past event now disrupts the temporal demarcations that separate the actions of events from their evolving impacts, especially when said events create an icon. (4)

To follow, I explore the ways in which photographs operate in a similar way, temporally fractured from the present. William's reading of *Dreaming Emmett* aids my understanding of Morrisons convening with the dead, and for the dead. It is important, as well, to note that *Dreaming Emmett* was written consecutively with *Beloved*, which was published in 1987. The dramatization of the inevitable return of the dead functions in the same way in both works. As Williams compares the two works, she states that in both, "rememory is staged and told from the perspective of the remembered, the dreamed, and the still forgotten." (5)

This final identification, the “still forgotten,” accurately names the audience I’ve begun to embrace and cast. The photographs within the surrounding volume work to invite the phantoms of the archive in. It may be too purple to state, but in some ways my practice, as a whole, feels like a gesture of gratitude to Morrison herself. Her passing in 2019 ruptured my thinking and made me realize the fictive closeness I felt to her, through her work. In memory, she is a stranger that I hold close and posthumously seems to understand me without ever knowing me. Following her precise and careful guidance, I read, reread, and photograph to learn the lessons behind the story. Photographs, like literature, construct and control experience. The “still forgotten” exist with or without my searching. They are there, in the world, waiting for the right interval to return.

Notes:

1. Hartman, 2.
2. Katie Cusack, What happened to Toni Morrison’s first play, *The Collaborative*, January 22, 2020.
3. Toni Morrison, *Love* (New York: Knopf, Random House Inc., 2003), 10.
4. Rhaisa Williams, People Know Him by Name: Time, Justice, and Memory in Toni Morrison’s *Dreaming Emmett*, (*College Literature* 47, no. 4, 2020), 723.
5. *Ibid.*, 725. My emphasis.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Grandfather's Watch*, 2022

With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?(1)

After my Grandfather passed away in 2013, each truth I had formed about family, life, and death became suspect. In my memory, my Grandfather existed as the boundless, serious, saintly patriarch of our family. Like any lord, his presence pushed me into scared silence.

Then he died. Passed away in his sleep, one year after relocating with my grandmother and aunts to Jackson, Mississippi. We drove from Detroit to Jackson for the funeral, in which he laid in a closed casket. Soon after, he began to reappear in fragments; objects, photographs, and letters. When I turned eighteen my father passed along a secret (to me) heirloom from my grandfather - an inoperable pentagonal Bulova watch from the 1950's. The small watch was something to be passed between future generations. Upon my receipt of the watch however, I did not invent an image of my future generations. Instead, I felt thrown backwards into time. I was pulled into the not-so-distant reality of my Grandfather's adolescent life. Although my father told me the tale of how the watch came to my Grandfather, (found a beach within a war, and then gifted to him before his marriage to my mother), I spent years inventing the pre-existing Black hands that may have held the watch. Their disappeared wrists created worry marks on the back of the watch's small golden face.

For descendants of racial slavery, the quest to find disappeared figures is one of the main entry points to understanding how historical narrative structures identity. Like the frozen face of the watch, photographs have the ability to proctor a sensorial relationship with the past. American racial slavery and its slow abolishment during the 19th century, has been the locus of my creative imagination.



Frederick Jackson, gelatin silver print, 3 x 3 inches, 1963

The self-capture photographs I produce can be defined by analyzing another fragment left by my Grandfather. Although I was raised in Detroit, Michigan my paternal family extends from Rhode Island. My move to Providence in 2020 for graduate school was both a real and fictitious return to origin. In the first months of living in the city, I viewed my Great Aunt's collections of photographs. My grandfather, Frederick, had a strong passion for photography. One self-portrait photograph of him, showcases the historicity of my future self-capture photographs.

My Grandfather photographs himself on a mirrored surface. A small typed date on the left of the print places him in March of 1963. He uses a small twin-lens reflex camera that produces a square negative. He holds the camera horizontally at eye level, rather than at his waist, where most photographers would gaze down into the ground glass viewfinder. A typewritten letter from 1970 places my grandparents in Corpus Christi, Texas. They have four children already, my father being the youngest, and will have six more children between the 1970's and 80's. In this letter, my grandfather reflects on the effects of Hurricane Celia to his sisters still living in Rhode Island. Perhaps this photograph, made seven years prior, is from one of my grandfather's trips across the country scouting for jobs in various oil and automotive factories. The impossibility of my ability to truly know the reason for the images production, even as a person with direct access to the primary source "material" of my grandfather's life, enforces that the bare nature of making a self-portrait photograph is an anticipation of disappearance.

The self-capture photographs I produce are an intersection of documentary practice and fabulation. I use the term documentary to situate the photographs in the 'real' world, and fabulation to vocalize the impossibility of ever understanding the 'real' through them. "Critical fabulation", a term coined by Saidiya Hartman, names the action of redressing factual events and the production of open archival narratives. Hartman argues that the practice of critical fabulation is not meant to, "give voice to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified." Hartman's own focus has been to craft renderings of the afterlives of slavery, an "unrecoverable past", through recontextualizing narratives of pain, violence, and death.(2)

In *Venus in Two Acts*, Hartman works back into archival texts regarding the murder of two captured girls aboard the Recovery slaving ship, which she briefly explored in her 2007 volume *Lose Your Mother*. In trying to reconstruct any possible rendering of “the supposed negro girl” and her proximal companion *Venus*, Hartman explains that critical fabulation creates an entry point to understanding the historical dilemma formed by the death aboard the Recovery. To write insurgently with the material present in the archive, she deconstructs the “requirements of narrative” to further showcase the ways that archives of slavery reperform acts of violence by enforcing silences.(3) Hartman argues that by learning to engage with historical narratives and archives through the method of critical fabulation, those whose identity is constructed by the archive can tether contemporary lives to those left unattended to in the past. The pivotal resonance between critical fabulation in historical retelling and that which is practiced in my photographs lies in the common reckoning of Black life at the fringe of disappearance. To use the photograph of my grandfather as an example: all at once, the single image presents a documented fact (his liveliness in 1963), invites a fabricated narrative (a story built by combining the 1970 letter, with stories from my relatives), and produces, for me, a fictional point of origin for my photographic practice, which is central to my identity. All photographs produce a multitude of surfaces and silences that simultaneously emphasize absence and presence. Film photographs are inherently doubled beings: materially existing as both negative and positive, temporally suspended between the past and present, and in memory, showcasing both fact and fiction. It is important to me to constantly consider this double life of the photograph. Hartman’s formation is important to me because it also stems from a doubled act of revision and rememory. As she writes, “the two acts announce the inevitable return of Venus, as both ‘haint,’ that is, one who haunts the present, and as disposable life.”(4)

To navigate the intersections between the documentary, the fabulative, and the fictive, I have formed multiple practices of image making. These practices are a continuous action of self-capture through grayscale double exposure photographs, producing large scale still life and landscape color photographs made in and around preserved sites of enslavement, and the production of sonic work. Following Hartman’s method, the combination of these different forms intensifies my temporal experience of historical construction through the rearranging of elements from the past.

Through the self-portrait of my grandfather, I differentiate the practice of self-capture from self-portraiture. Photographic portraiture relies on the implicit expectation of a revelation of the self between the photographer, the camera, and subject. In formal portraiture the subject is made aware of the moment when their image - the view of oneself that is impossible to actually see - is captured. The photographs I produce of myself veil rather than reveal a revelatory experience. This veiling is an interpolation of silences. By emphasizing the nature of historical silences, my double-exposure photographs set the conditions for a slow reinterpretation of the material archives of slavery. When they are sequenced with photographs made inside preserved homes, the grayscale photographs alert a viewer to something being amiss in the environment. The phantoming self-capture photograph makes the accompanying photographs of objects, rooms, and landscapes vibrate. The aggregate collection of images tether the viewer to an imagined past, and the self-capture photographs specifically enforce, as Hartman states, "the recognition of that some part of the self is missing as a consequence of this engagement." (5)

To refine the definition of the self-capture photograph, I will now examine three foundational photographs in which my disappeared body is central to the meaning of the image. In addition to these, I will examine two works by sculptor Martin Puryear as precedents for Black bodily abstraction.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Attic*, archival inkjet print, 24 x 36 inches, 2019

Attic is a photograph made during a previous project titled *The House Servant's Directory*. This project gleans its title from a text published in 1827, that was written by my fifth great-grandfather Robert Roberts. Through an archival "family-tree" project made by my great aunt Christine Jackson, Roberts was revealed as our oldest traceable ancestor. Gore Place, the preserved mansion in which Roberts worked and wrote his directory, was within driving distance from my alma mater, Amherst College. In the project I reinterpreted his textual voice, and produced photographs within the mansion focusing on the spaces that would've been under his purview. In the text, Roberts' narrates lessons on etiquette to two younger Black men planning to become domestic servants in Boston. These lessons are written out on a narrative timetable spanning dawn to dusk. I photographed myself interacting with the real and reproduced objects that Roberts' would have held on a daily basis. The project sought to showcase the layers of action repeated within a day's time between my ancestor, myself, and any of the other Black hands that have kept the preserved space alive. I found many spaces for private rumination within the homes' strange half-story design (meaning there is an in-between "service" corridor between the first and second floor).

In the center of the mansion's attic is an octagonal skylight, which has a window mechanism to open and close the skylight for air circulation. I photographed myself adjusting one side of the pair. On reviewing the raw digital files, I felt that the "portrait" the image created did not carry the somatic feeling of deep-space that I had felt in the attic. Each encounter, each step I took on the floor echoed across these two skylight windows. The unaltered image did not grant me access to this feeling. I manipulated the image digitally and removed my face from the frame, to allow the cavity of the dark attic behind me to be seen. This decision marked a small rupture in my image making method at the time. However, upon exhibiting the work and discussing its production, revealing the act of digital manipulation altered the photographs' meaning. I had, in multiple ways, produced a fake.

In *Silencing the Past*, Michel Rolph Trouillot argues that power and meaning making are intrinsically tied to the construction of historical narrative. Trouillot demonstrates that silences enter into historical production at various points: "...the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)." (6) In his formulation of silences, Trouillot argues that silences are not singular, but act as multivalent systems with the potential of mixing together. Trouillot slowly details the differences between truth, fact, and fiction, each of which has different historical qualities and relationships to power:

...facts are not created equal: the production of traces is always also the creation of silences. Some occurrences are noted from the start; others are not. Some leave physical markers; others do not. What happened leaves traces, some of which are quite concrete - buildings, dead bodies, censuses, monuments, diaries, political boundaries - that limit the range and significance of any historical narrative. This is one of many reasons why not any fiction can pass for history: the materiality of the socio-historical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narratives (historicity 2). (7)

In the case of Attic, the moment the photograph was taken can be thought of as a moment of, in Trouillot's words, "fact assembly." What occurred in the attic, in the workplace of Robert Roberts, was a bridging of historical and contemporary facts: he was there in 1827, and I was there in 2019. The photograph captures both. By removing my face in post-production, I felt that I had negated the moment of fact creation, a process over which I had complete control.

Trouillot's movement between *Historicity 1* and *Historicity 2* - the phase system flowing from 'what happened' (the factual material of an event) to 'that which is said to have happened' - further informs the photographic method of critical fabulation I am engaging in with Hartman. This formulation, again, is another doubled and dialectical relationship between past and present. In *Attic*, because I had created the conditions for the figure's fading in post-production, I shattered the real possibility of my own tethering to the past at that moment. Since the act of digital erasure accentuated the difference between what is real and false, I resolved that for any photograph to accurately conjure my own disappearance, the action must occur in the moment of image capture.

I intentionally refer to this practice as self-capture to signify the phantom materiality of my body's physical matter in the image, and to echo the flight of the "fugitive," runaway, and free Black body that these photographs ultimately re-present. The large format view camera has become my tool of choice to stretch the interspace between the then and now.(8) The 4x5 or 8x10 inch negative produces a deceptively accurate image. Smaller cameras project a field of focus that is linear, and falls uniformly across a subject or landscape. The view camera allows its seer to twist, shift, and angle the plane of focus within one image. This control is crucial to creating an image that asserts its own reality. The visuality of the large format photograph presents a scene from the world in a form that is impossible for the eyes to perceive naturally.

Before moving to Providence, I lived in the small town of Greenfield, Massachusetts which is located along the northern border between Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In a year of situational isolation, I feverishly read autobiographical slave narratives that were not featured in my primary education. Some of these were the *Narrative of Henry Box Brown* (1851), the *Life of James Mars* (1864), and *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (1860). Each text figured movements of Black life through the New England landscape as equally precarious to movement through the southern United States. Although Massachusetts legally abolished slavery in 1783, the laws established by the commonwealth within the city took time to filter out to the communities living in the region's rural farmlands. Notably, the law itself did not emancipate those within family-slavery settings, but signaled that the buying, selling, or trading of African peoples specifically would not continue to be legally supported.(9)

During this time, slave-catching became a lucrative field for white peoples in the region. Slave catchers were threats to both free and escaped Blacks. (10) While reading about this period at the turn of the 19th century, I regularly photographed myself in nature conservatories along the Connecticut River. I produced double-exposures as an attempt to capture walking along footpaths in the woods. When a negative is exposed twice, any element that is removed or added to the first exposure will appear transparent. This doubling produces slow visual movement. Between the first and second exposure is the echo of wind passing through the landscape. Within this reverberation, I found a way to render my body in a state of temporal transition. In my photograph *Double Figure*, my body appears doubled, and because natural objects are never still, the structure of branches and foliage move between each exposure.

The primary theoretical formation of doubleness that I reference visually is W.E.B. Du Bois' structure of double consciousness. Theorized first in his 1897 essay *Strivings of the Negro People* and later as the introduction to *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois' shaped the identity based system through describing his own multi-racial heritage and community, and the landscape of Western Massachusetts. Du Bois' double consciousness refers to the political perspective Black descendants of American racial slavery possess. Born in 1868 in Great Barrington, MA, Du Bois was raised in an integrated community of which a small group of free Blacks from New York had settled. In the beginning clauses of the 1897 text, Du Bois situates Black subjectivity as counter to whiteness, and visualizes the revelation of 'second-sight' through natural landmarks:

Being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea.(11)



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Double Figure*, gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches, 2020

Du Bois figures his realization of the embodied nature of difference as a moment that is shadowy and natural as wind. As he continues to define double consciousness, Du Bois creates a figural image of a body split or doubled: "two souls, two thoughts; two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." These warring ideals (consciousness split between ruptured African kinship and American assimilation) fracture a merging of selves ⁽¹²⁾. Similar to how Saidiya Hartman must dramatize the search for Venus through the acts of language, I view my double exposure photographs as a repeated dramatization of this revelatory moment in Du Bois' adolescence. By enacting a visual double consciousness, I showcase how the archives of slavery and their material traces in the landscape shape the interior Black subject.

Double Figure was the first work where this action was performed. To create this work, and its subsequent iterations, I engage in a sustained sightless tracing of my body in the landscape. In the zone that I select out for the image, I extend a field of focus to render at least ten feet of space in front of the camera in complete focus. This allows me to move freely within the frame of the image, and for my body to be rendered sharply. I make two exposures on a single sheet of black and white negative film. In the first, I set myself into one position. A gesture that I have repeated since *Double Figure* is one where the figure faces toward the camera and presents the palms of its hands as the central focal point. In the second exposure, I imagine my original placement as a phantomed image of myself in front of me. I then place myself adjacent to this figure. Out of all the terms that I associate with this gesture—apparition, ghost, haunting—I prefer the transitive use of phantom ('phantomed', 'phantoming') to extrapolate the image's meaning. For me, the action of self-capture and phantoming is a spiritual practice and is directly rooted in Du Bois' twentieth century cultural insights. Du Bois is concerned with the shapeshifting nature of spiritual practice within Black culture.

Scholar Dickinson D. Bruce Jr argues that Du Bois' formation of double-consciousness highlights three key issues of Black culture in the twentieth century regarding spiritual form: First, Du Bois acknowledges the effects of power the white gaze imposes on Black life. Second, that doubling represents the internal conflict between being psychologically split between Africa and America. Third, and most importantly, that the split between African and American culture ruptures ties from Africanist spiritual forms and traditions. Bruce writes:

the figurative background to "double consciousness" gave the term its most obvious support, because for Du Bois the essence of a distinctive African consciousness was its spirituality, a spirituality based in Africa but revealed among African Americans in their folklore, their history of patient suffering, and their faith. In this sense, double consciousness related particularly to Du Bois's efforts to privilege the spiritual in relation to the materialistic, commercial world of white America.(13)

My work also privileges the spiritual as counter to the colonial index embedded within the history of photography. The disappeared figures in my work speak of Blackness through gestures of spiritual revelation within the landscape. In *The Idea of Black Culture* Hortense J. Spillers posits a new definition of "culture", and alternatively Blackness, by tracking how racialized consciousness has shifted between the 20th and 21st century. Spillers examines the same introductory passages from *The Souls of Black Folk*, and claims that:

Spirit across this canon was both the retreat, the 'oasis' from the commercial impulses of mainstream civilization at the same time that it was the most intense encounter with the real. In short, the notion of historical possibility dominated the discursive field of Du Bois's work, as well as the entire interpretive enterprise of black cultural theorization.(14)

For Du Bois, spirit or the spiritual exists in the critical posture, and critical imagining of Blackness beyond the possibilities of capitalist Americanization. It is in the fact of the impossible merging of selves that Blackness becomes culture. To dogmatize how culture forms, Spillers argues that Blackness has continued to run critically against Americanization from the reconstruction era to present. Spillers states that Black culture, in the 21st century, is reaching a point where it must shapeshift again to repossess criticality. My self-capture photographs work to visualize this repossession, and extend the condition of double consciousness as a communication with the self.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Well*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021.

The photograph *Well* is the second foundational image I want to highlight as a moment where the disappeared body repossesses criticality and a forgotten space. The photograph was made on the grounds of the George II Fayerweather House in Kingston, Rhode Island, and was exposed over an interval of minutes. George II Fayerweather was the son of freed slaves in Kingston, and the second in his family to continue a generational business of blacksmithing. I was drawn to the home not only for its local reputation, but I was also in a period of investigating how emancipated Blacks became highly skilled laborers in the North East. To this day, I have not been given access to the interior of the property. The surrounding grounds, however, hold charged objects: a large anvil bolted to the stump of a tree, stone fences, and a filled stone well. I began visiting the property, in the hopes of running into a staff member, but became taken by the stone well tucked in the woods behind the home. On a monthly basis starting in the Spring of 2021, I visited the well to make double exposure photographs of the changing flora around it.

In this photograph, not only is the temporal register of the image stretched by the action of double-exposure, but it is also stretched by my continued visitation and observation of growing nature. Returning imbues the series of images with a palpable quality of phantoming, and connects disparate landscapes together. The figural relationship I create in the landscape is informed by my memory of previous visits. In studying the landscape - and repeating the gestures of posing within the well over and over again - I found the ideal position to merge my body with the stones of the well. My body is abstracted by the merging of gray tones shared between Black skin, and the textures of the landscape. The self-capture photograph is both a haunting and an abstraction away from representational figuration. The body, rather than resurfacing the fugitive image as a stereotypical stamp of bondage, expands the range of ways Blackness repossesses an inherited bodily response to American land.

Two works by the Black American sculptor Martin Puryear further inform my language around figural abstraction and phantoming. The sculptures *Self* (1978) and *Column for Sally Hemmings* (2019) exist as two pillars, bookending Puryear's career-long exploration of abstraction. In an essay in the 2019 Venice Biennial catalog, *Liberty Libert *, Anne M. Wagner focuses on the origin of *Self* and how the piece shaped Puryear's working methods over time. Wagner turns similar questions around self-portraiture and self-representation through the object's material makings. *Self* is an early work that establishes Puryear's physical affinity with cedar. Studying the practices of shipbuilders, canoeists, and indigenous boat making, Puryear began cold molding cedar into distinct singular forms. On this process, Wagner writes that:

For the canoeist, the method's advantage is a vessel that is easily portable yet surprisingly durable. For the sculptor, by contrast, the benefit lies in trusting to a technological process that, in at least some instances, he or she can manage single-handedly from beginning to end. Ever bit as important, cold molding makes for a physical illusion of dense bodily presence that is distinctly out of sync with the facts. Cold molding makes a shape that is only a surface. Without depth or density, it is best likened to a skin.(15)

Nothing on the surface of *Self* points to a signifier of Puryear's own lived presence, rather it is the echo of the forms material - the evidence of his hand - that becomes physically significant in personifying the object. Thinking back on the visualization of Du Bois' theory, perhaps *Self* is the solidified symbol of the merged split selves within Black consciousness: a wooden geode, merged and formed under extreme pressure. As Wagner puts it, Puryear's work functions as a "proxy or surrogate" for himself.(16)



Martin Puryear, *Self*, 1978



Martin Puryear, *Column for Sally Hemmings*, 2019

The noun surrogate also resonates with my figural phantom gesture in self-capture photographs. The disappearing figure is a surrogate to visualizing the unknowable presence of many stranger-ancestors. Forty years later, Puryear extends this idea of surrogacy by creating works that act as surrogates for other historical figures. *Column for Sally Hemmings* is a sculpture fusing two distinct objects. The piece was constructed for and exhibited within Puryear's showcase at the 2019 Venice Biennial. Puryear was selected to represent the United States, and took the opportunity to resurface historic symbols, gestures, and forms that specifically reverberate the formation of Blackness within American visual culture. The base of this work reforms a Doric column, which tapers to a vertical point or 'neck.' An iron stake is planted at the center of the column's convergence. This stake creates the 'head' for which the column then visually works as a body. At nearly seven feet tall, the work asserts a singular physical presence. The stake is adorned, or crowned, by an iron shackle. Although this stake-shackle form is a repeating motif in Puryear's recent work, this work is one of the few pieces within his oeuvre that refers to a historical figure. The piece creates a fused visuality that pulls together two forms that are imbued with meaning from the material physical archives of slavery. I form two observations through the piece that echo this fusion. The first is that the work brings viewers into visual rumination about inherited forms related primarily to American architecture. Although transformed, the Doric column clearly mirrors the columns recreated in Antebellum, Greek revival, plantation homes. In which the Doric column became popular, as it could be molded and formed out of wood rather than stone. Puryear's column allows the grain of the wood surface to slightly peek through. The cast iron stake and shackle conjures images not only of the high level craft of blacksmithing, but also the linkage between iron and bondage. When considering the work's title, the piece becomes a surrogate for, rather than an image of, Sally Hemmings. Of whom there is no known visual depiction. In connection to Puryear's figuration, I assert again that while the faded figure in my work stems from my own body, it does not work to situate myself in time. Rather my body becomes a figuration of time passing.

To bridge the thoughts that I have plotted here with the referential section to follow, I want to engage with the self-capture photographs materially, and further explain how they activate the world built within my work. The portal-like nature of *Well* helped me realize that my photographs need to exist in correspondence across multiple sites. For their initial exhibition within the Rhode Island School of Design Graduate Exhibition, I sought the opportunity to install photographs in two exhibition spaces across campus. These two installations represent, again thinking with Hartman, forms of dealing with the unrecoverable past. Where the first installation signals a relationship to haptic engagement with the material archives of slavery (the presence of household objects, hands pointing and gesturing, spaces left empty or being built) the second installation is concerned with illusions, drama, and dreaming. *Well*, as a self-capture phantoming image of the body, tethers the two spaces together. Throughout this essay, I explain how photographs work across these two spaces and how they create correspondence, echoes, and critical doubled visions of the past.

Notes

1. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 3.
2. Saidiya Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts* (*Small Axe* 12, no. 2, 2008), original emphasis, 12
3. *Ibid.*, 12.
4. *Ibid.*, 5.
5. *Ibid.*, 14.
6. Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.
7. *Ibid.*, 29.
8. Draft note: Longer thoughts are owed to W. Benjamin.
9. See section six, *Afterlife*, for continued definitions of family-slavery.
10. William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).
11. Du Bois, 2.
12. *Ibid.* 3.
13. Dickinson D. Bruce Jr. W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness (*American Literature* Vol. 64, No. 2: Duke University Press, 1992), 301.
14. Hortense J. Spillers *The Idea of Black Culture* (*CR: The New Centennial Review* Vol. 6, No. 3: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 26.
15. Anne M. Wagner, "The Self in Sculpture" in *Martin Puryear: Liberty Libertà* (New York: Madison Square Park Conservancy, 2019), 88.
16. Wagner, 90.

The Black Rückenfigur

Previously, I explained the mechanics of the self-capture photograph and detailed how they materially function in the broader scope of my work. The figural gestures often performed in these photographs have multiple precedents that stretch across generations of art. While narrating the conditions that allow for the self-capture photographs to form, I realized that I only enact the gesture outdoors. The figural relationship of these images grows in tandem to a process of “figuring” the landscape. In this section, I connect the work of artists crucial to the formation of my languages of figural and landscape photography. First, I contextualize select works by artists Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson, and John Akomfrah. Between these three, I track a continued performance of the back-turned figure as it navigates space. My analysis here will extend and connect the ways in which each artist has critically figured the Black body in landscape. I track this figure’s appearance in three forms: 1) Through Weems’ extended portfolio, I view the figure gazing at the physical and metaphorical construction of history. I explain the nuance between gazing and witnessing through multiple portfolios of Weems’ photographs. 2) In tandem, Lorna Simpson’s figure gazes at a voided world, where thought clouds of language, narrative, and memory frame the back-turned figure. Simpson engages in a method of addition and subtraction through the photographs to form meaning. 3) Through the multi-channel film installations of John Akomfrah, I experience the single Black figure multiplied into a collective, activating a form of durational tableau vivant. I argue that each artist arrives at a form or piece where the centralizing figure of a Black body in space activates specific histories and memories of slavery - within the U.S. and abroad. These gazing Black figures orient viewers into the speculative possibilities of historical narrative, and enact what Toni Morrison names as the, “effort to avert the critical gaze ... from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served.”(1) Following the analysis of Weems, Simpson, and Akomfrah, I connect thoughts on how the system of gazing built by the back-turned figure in my work has begun to dissipate into “unfigured” gazes onto the land. I think through my own landscape photographs in connection with photographer Dawoud Bey’s series *Night Coming Tenderly Black*. I argue that when the presence of a Black figure disappears, but remains palpable in tone, my landscape photographs work to stage access points to re-view the rural areas of New England as Black geographies. I engage the critical geographic definitions coined by Canadian geographic and gender studies scholar Katherine Mckittrick, within *Demonic Grounds*, to strengthen this claim.

As I moved through introductory photography classes, Carrie Mae Weems' stark narrative photographs cut through the fray of documentary and street photographers like scissors splitting fabric. In 2015, I staffed the exhibition *30 Americans*, at the Detroit Institute of Art, which was curated from the Rubell Family Collection. This exhibition was my first experience viewing work from many Black American artists intimately.(2) Daily, I consulted images from Weems' notable portfolio, *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried* (1996), the full installation of Lorna Simpson's *Wigs* (1994), and the 'controversial' work *Duck, Duck, Noose* (1992) by Gary Simmons, and many more.

From 2003 onward, Weems has been refining the motif of the back-turned figure within her still and moving image practice. Beginning in *The Louisiana Project* (2003), Weems enters the grounds and curated interiors of antebellum plantation mansions. Dressed in a white under-gown, she haunts visually classic Greek revival architecture through gestures of dance and repose. In these images Weems is still activating the behaviors and gestures crafted through her previously made narrative self-portrait projects. I feel that Weems' approach to the language of the back-turned figure gradually removes gestural acts that signal personality.

In the collected photographs from *Beacon* (2005), Weems' figure now appears with two fixed positions: either standing in a dancer's parallel position - spine straight, feet placed shoulder width apart, arms relaxed at the side - or in classical repose. It is in *Roaming* (2006) where Weems limits the figure to one signature pose and one uniform. A stamp of presence repeated from cityscape to natural landscape. Weems' figure in all of these series, but especially in *Roaming*, locates a spatial relationship between the gazing subject, the camera, and the facade of architecture. Weems' figure gazes at the site of sublime architecture and questions its (acquisition of) power. On this relationship, Weems has stated:

Architecture, in its essence . . . is very much about power. If we think about a place like Rome . . . what one is made to feel is the power of the state in relationship to . . . the general populace. You are always aware that you are sort of a minion in relationship to this enormous edifice—the edifice of power: . . . I thought, then, perhaps . . . I could use my own skin in a sort of series of performances. That I could use my own body as a way of leading the viewer into those spaces—highly aware—and challenging those spaces.(3)

The ocular challenge Weems describes is visually doubled, it is the oppositional gaze against the ever present colonialist gaze of conquest.(4) Within Weems' grander project, her back-turned figure mobilizes Black (female) subjectivity against historical (silencing) construction.



Carrie Mae Weems, *A Broad and Expansive Sky - Ancient Rome*, 2006



Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, January 24-May 14, 2014. Photo: David Heald

While sites of enslaved communities and their passage are the organizing subject of several of Weems' portfolios, I view her continuous figural relationship to landscape as a key element to producing the presence of the slave body (5). In addition to this, Weems' exploration of nonlinear installations of framed photographs creates spatial scattering, through which the tracking of a presence of the body becomes the viewer's principal guide. For example, the combined installation of *Sea Islands*, *Africa*, and *Slave Coast*, within Weems' 2014 retrospective - *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video* - groups floating offset triptychs and diptychs, and creates zones of viewing in the high and low places of the museum walls. The presence of Weems' figure, either physically within the image, behind the camera, and in textual language, guides a viewer to scan up, down, and then to gaze through their peripheral vision. This embodied watching of still photographs is one that invokes, for me, notions of the underground railroad. I view the navigation Weems' creates through interstitial space (space that is neither here nor there, but inbetween images) as a direct connection to navigating the archives of slavery. Leading a viewer into and between space is a shared quality between Weems, Simpson, and Akomfrah.

Lorna Simpson's early large scale photographic installations from the 1980s to 90s produce similar gazing orientations as Weems', but the figures gaze into a voided space. While Weems made a slow entrance into figural abstraction, Simpson began her prolific career by making large photographs that either removed the face of the sitter, or reversed their gaze directly away from the camera. Often the figures are photographed against a solid black background, which prevents the appearance of any cast shadow from strobe or ambient light. The viewer's gaze is directed to the form of the figure alone. Each of these photographs are coupled with textual appendages, which either frame the photograph or are layered on top of the image.



Lorna Simpson, *Figure*, 1991

I first saw some of these early works in the exhibition *We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-85* at the Brooklyn Museum in 2018.(6) The pieces *Waterbearer* (1986) and *Gestures and Reenactments* (1985-88) were sequenced toward the end of the exhibition's loose chronological timeline. Previously, when viewing these works digitally, or in catalog, I never considered the importance of their scale in directing the viewer's gaze. In person, the scale becomes a central component to our understanding of the figure. Each work reproduces the human figure at a scale just larger than life. In a piece like *Gestures and Reenactments*, a viewer is able to measure themselves, forearm to forearm, back to back, against each of the six large format printed photographs. Digital documentation of these works led me to think that I could experience the work all at once, but this kind of viewing is impossible in reality. Instead, Simpson creates a narrated viewing relationship and experience that requires physical movement. In addition to the two works in the Brooklyn Museums exhibition, Simpson's 1991 piece *Figure* directly addresses the machinations of the back-turned figure: One large figure stands between two lists of text, engraved on plastic plaques. Although the piece is nearly symmetrical, the figure's posture is pointed to the left in a micro contrapposto, revealing one hand but not the other. Their black dress is reminiscent of many eras of fashion, but hearkens my memory to costumes of modern dance.(7) The left panels read, "figured the worst, figured on all times there was no camera, he was disfigured, figured there would be no reaction" and the right reads, "figured legality had nothing to do with it, figured she was suspect, figured he was suspect, figured someone had been there because the door was open." What Simpson houses in this arrangement is a collection of definitions that the term figure can possess. Any reversal or mixture of the language will provide no further conclusion to what the narrative may be or who the figure pictured is.

While Weems confronts the power of historical silences, Simpson wields the silencing invocation of the photograph to her narrative advantage. These early works question the formation of gender in terms discussing the structure and the rejection of the gender binary. No figure in Simpson's early work can be reliably gendered. These methods of abstraction predict Simpson's move eventual into collage, painting, and the sourcing of archival photographs from Black popular image culture. Photographer and writer Teju Cole responds to this continuous method of abstraction within Simpson's career in his recent collection of essays, *Black Paper*. Cole states that:

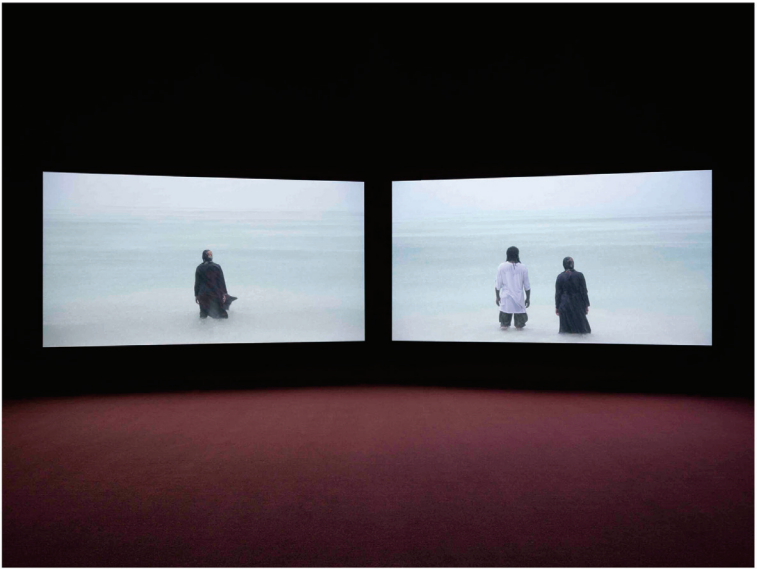
A strong appeal of Simpson's work is that she has always embraced the inherent complexity of Blackness, her own Blackness as well as the Blackness that runs ineluctably through American history. She does not reject representational depictions, but neither does she feel the need to confine herself only to "race" work ... If a Black woman's race and gender are the only things apparent to a certain viewer, Simpson seems to say, the ethical responsibility to escape those shackles is the viewers. Freedom is Lorna Simpson's starting point and her permanent theme.(8)

This freedom is accentuated in Simpson's imagery where the figure disappears completely, or exists in a surreal fusion into landscape, as in the large scale felt panel photographs of the *Public Sex Series* (1995-98), and the paintings from her *Ice Series* (2017-2018). It is in Simpson's films and moving image works, where the function of the figure takes on clearer narrative and historical impulses. The film *Corridor* (2003) connects to the methods of guiding a viewer through space illustrated through Weems. Commissioned by present day Historic New England, a non-profit historic preservation organization, Simpson was asked to produce a work that utilized any part of the organization's sprawling collection of objects, property, and land. Simpson created a two channel film, set in two homes under the organization's purview. These homes are the Coffin House, built in 1678 in Newbury, Massachusetts and the home of German-American architect Walter Gropius, built in 1938. In the film, the artist Wangechi Mutu performs a dual role as both an enslaved woman - stylistically set in the 1860s - and a "modern" woman in the 1960s. Each figure silently attends to tasks as the day moves from morning to evening. In the Coffin House, the woman washes dishes and clothes, and is monitoring a presence somewhere outside the windows of the home. In the evening, she secretly practices writing at a small desk. In the Gropius home, the woman is preparing for an evening dinner date. She applies makeup, cooks, and continuously converses with an absent character on the telephone. Her anticipated guest never arrives.

To emphasize the doubled, and overlaying, temporal registers of the film, Simpson scores the film with a fusion soundtrack that blends samples of free jazz musician Albert Ayler (1936-1970) with the piano compositions of Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins (1849-1908), who was born into slavery and became a prominent touring musician after emancipation. This film, through its multiple aesthetic doublings, was critically important to my initial engagement with preserved homes. Simpson's registers of light, Vermeer-like in the Coffin House, informed how I began to utilize natural and artificial light in darkened space. In connection to Weems guiding figure, the magical guiding action of *Corridor* occurs when the figures seemingly step, or even just look, in-between the left and right channels. This push and pull of the viewer's attention between two pasts, emphasizes the leap movement of Black freedom within one century. The absence of voices highlights Simpson's wielding of silences. The content of the two women's lives, and their internal thoughts, cannot be audibly understood. Yet, the figures animate and stretch these silences in ways that inform their historical possibility.

John Akomfrah's film installations connect to and extend the interstitial movement of figures between frames. Typically installed as either diptychs or triptychs, and sometimes as many as five screens, Akomfrah's large scale film projections transpose a landscape into a gallery or museum. This total immersion of sight and sound effectively places a viewer into the scene. One film work aligns with Weems and Simpson's practices.

In the two channel 40 minute film *Auto Da Fé* (2016) - or Acts of Faith - Akomfrah depicts eight historic narratives of migration sparked by religious persecution, spanning over four centuries. Each act of migration is facilitated by a journey over the sea. Migrants, Akomfrah argues, must cross through the "corridor of uncertainty" to reach forms of freedom.⁽⁹⁾ Visually, *Auto Da Fé* is steeped with visual memories of European schools of painting, particularly Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818). For Akomfrah, color, composition, and gesture rule the dynamics of a reality effect. In *Auto Da Fé*, similar to Simpson's film, the cinematic frame is split over two channels. Creating a sequence of passing time that is not guided by narrative storytelling, but is guided by the relationality of the flowing image pairs. Through slowness, duration, and gazing, the film activates a stasis, a living picture tableau, that roots the viewer within the figured gazes onto land and sea. Through Akomfrah's cast, viewers experience the anticipation of the journey, the breeze of the ocean, and the desperate emotionality of leaving all forms of protection behind.



John Akomfrah, *Auto Da Fé*, 2016

While Simpson's figure is split between two periods of time, Akomfrah's cast experiences time synchronously, but what the viewer sees is an event doubled, capturing the figures actions frontally and from behind. Distinct from Weems and Simpson, is Akomfrah's effort to extend gazing through a collective of back turned figures. The viewer's eyes are not led to the stamp of the figure, but are led by choreography, in the way an audience views and interprets a piece of dance. The back turned figure in his films is a dramaturgical device that places the viewer at the scene of the sublime moment. Interspersed throughout *Auto Da Fé* are views of the sea without a guiding figure. These instances occur after slow pans, and close ups towards a figure's head. This creates another transposition as viewers of the work move literally to see the landscape as the historical figure.

Each of these artists' engagement with figuration and landscape informs my practice of staging and erasing my own body. During the Summer of 2021, while I was in residence at the Center for Photography at Woodstock, I concentrated on locating a historic precedent to begin re-entering the land of the northeast United States. Recalling my research on paths of the underground railroad just a year prior, that informed the making of *Double Figure*, I researched and photographed lesser known portions of the railroad in the Hudson Valley. In addition to these loosely plotted routes, I photographed preserved sites of Dutch colonial slavery and the homes of Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole and Frederich Church. After my residency ended, I returned to sights I had photographed in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to work more intentionally with the natural spaces my memory had not unlocked.

I imagine the space of the underground railroad not only connected to the cinematic and literary interpretations of passage through it, but as a dual space where Black survival relied on the upper and lower regions of the earth, the covert study of weather, and the ability to listen spatially in the land. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison's description of the character Paul D's flight from Georgia to Ohio figures a man moving almost exclusively through the tops of trees:

So he raced from dogwood to blossoming peach. When they thinned out he headed for the cherry blossoms, then magnolia, chinaberry, pecan, walnut, and prickly pear. At last he reached a field of apple trees whose flowers were just becoming tiny knots of fruit. Spring sauntered north, but he had to run like hell to keep it as his traveling companion. From February to July he was on the lookout for blossoms. When he lost them, and found himself without so much as a petal to guide him, he paused, climbed a tree on a hillock and scanned the horizon for a flash of pink or white in the leaf world that surrounded him. He did not touch them or stop to smell. He merely followed in their wake, a dark ragged figure guided by the blossoming plums.(10)

In the novel, nature and the indigeneous inhabitants or spirits, guide the escaped slaves into free territories. Other, "historically accurate," descriptions - whether they be the narratives of William and Helen Craft, Henry Brown, or collected northern runaway slave advertisements - depict movement through rivers, quarries, forests and fields. My contemporary visualization of the underground railroad, as a shifting Black geographic space, tethers the natural world to the historical.

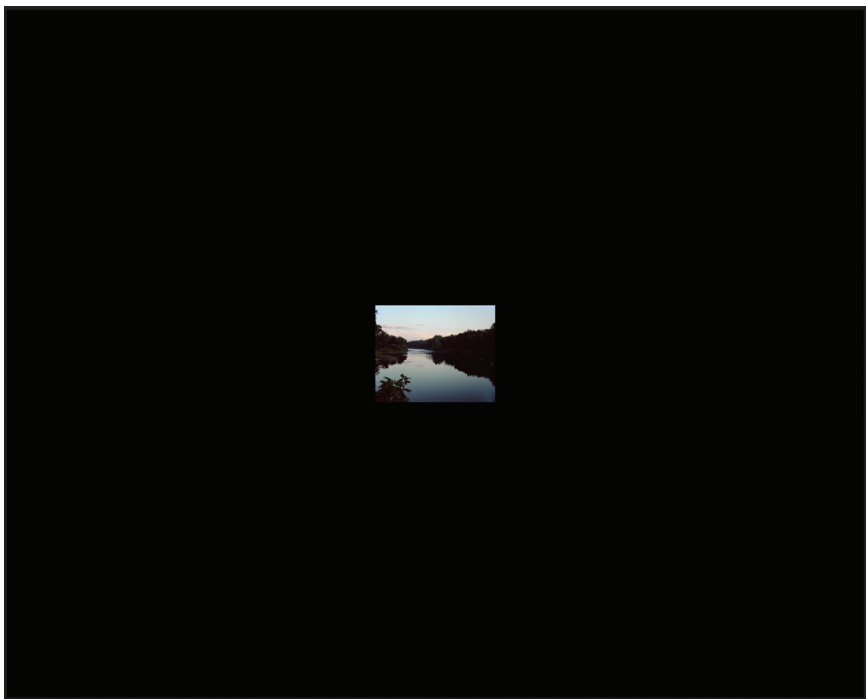
Several photographs within this photobook were made during this Summer of exploration. I highlight three of them here, and explain how one of them works to create an interspace in installations of my work. I compare my approach to Dawoud Bey's methods utilized within the body of work *Night Coming Tenderly Black* (2017), and synthesize thoughts around the sonic registers and narrative qualities within a still photograph of a landscape.

In *Phantom*, I noted that while living in Greenfield, I photographed along the Connecticut river and its tributaries. The rivers often have small park conservatories running alongside them. One area that holds special interest to me is the Stillwater bridge, which connects two roads across the Deerfield river. This river runs through the Historic Deerfield village, a neighborhood of preserved homes that operates as a living history museum. The village has preserved several British settlement homes from the 17th and early 18th century. These settlers transported and owned enslaved African peoples, who formed a small community within the village, and entangled themselves with the lives of Indigenous peoples in the region. This historic presence - as well as the presences of notable abolitionists and "conductors" of the Underground Railroad - activated a potency for me in engaging with the river.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Stillwater Bridge, Below*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021

The Stillwater Bridge offers two distinct scenes of the river. From above, the bridge creates a classically picturesque view, one that the River School painters extended into idealized landscapes. The river almost symmetrically cuts through trees dense with foliage. Underneath the bridge, visitors are able to cast off canoes and fish when water levels are low. I made *Stillwater Bridge, Below* during a visit when this area was thick with foliage. The flowering plants are overgrown Japanese knotweed bushes, a hyper-invasive plant that is slowly being strategically poisoned and removed from rivers in the state. On this particular visit, the footpath to the river bed had become muddy due to rainfall. The visible footprints recorded the presence of passing bodies. In the photobook, this photograph is sequenced into the middle section that is working to transition the viewer outside of the preserved home. This section, beginning with the list, "a chain - a leap - a blow" locates rooms and stages in the landscape. The first two sections of the book are concerned with activating a figural presence through objects in interior space. This third section introduces the viewer to the surrounding landscapes of the home. A presence is felt through photographs of empty chairs in land, ropes bifurcating a corner, and a building's foundation layers over taken by twisting trees. *Stillwater Bridge, Below* and the sections ending photograph, *Manacle*, bring notions of the underground to the surface.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Stillwater Bridge, Above*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2019-2021.

In the fourth grouping within the book, I sequence a second view of the river in *Stillwater Bridge, Above*. This photograph actively references the idealized landscapes of the Hudson River School. I've rephotographed the river on several occasions, closely studying the differences in light at sunset. Many cinematic interpretations of the underground railroad emphasize the necessary invisible practice of nocturnal travel. *Stillwater Bridge, Above* signals twilight, and moves the viewer into the final section of the book, where visual portals into the second volume are abundant. Settling on a form for this photograph for exhibition was challenging. I reproduce photographic prints at an equal size. This creates restrictions on how I am able to sequence works to produce space. My photographs of landscapes create tension with photographs of interior space, because they reverse the natural order of how the viewer's body relates to space. Photographs made within preserved homes nearly triple the size of household objects and maximize their oblique presence. In turn, my landscape photographs minimize the actual size of tree trunks, stones, and bodies of water. This reversal is one that I find engaging in the exhibition space. The reversal creates a space between the photographs that suggests the natural world is barely contained, or seen, by the frame of the camera. It extends, though imagination, the natural world through the interspaces of the gallery. The printed photograph of *Stillwater Bridge, Above*, at the scale of 42 x 52.5 inches, threatened this relationship of visual reversal between other photographs. Thinking of Simpsons voided backgrounds, I reprinted the photograph at the scale of a contact print (8x10 inches) but encased it in a deeply black background measuring the same size as the other photographs. This reduced the canonical, referential, nature of the landscape and foregrounded the image's call to viewing the river as Black geographic space.

These somatic readings of *Stillwater Bridge Above* and *Below* reflect visual strategies from Dawoud Bey's portfolio *Night Coming Tenderly Black*. Made in the rural regions of Northeastern Ohio, Bey similarly studies paths, rivers, and architecture historically relevant to the Underground Railroad. The photographs are not a literal retracing of routes of escape, but somatically orient viewers to imagine flight through the dense natural world. Bey engages this sense most effectively through purposeful underexposure. The photographs present a pre-darkness unique to twilight, the dusky light between sunset and moonrise. This minimal light makes the photographs literally and metaphorically hard to see. The grouping of Bey's photographs makes a viewer consider the navigational skills of traveling along the underground railroad were rooted purely in vision and hearing. The photographs conjure the second-sight ability that forms to interpret images, landmarks, and distance in darkness, based on vibration.



Dawoud Bey, *Untitled #25 (Lake Erie and Sky)*, 2017

Northern urban hubs like Cleveland, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan served as important sites in moving escapees into territories beyond the reach of the fugitive slave law. The effort was to enter into Canada, or regions hidden away from southern slave catchers. Bey's photographs emulate a gaze that is seeing this journey as nearly completed. The most daunting photograph in Bey's portfolio is a turbulent view of Lake Erie's waves. The lake is framed as oceanic, with no visible landmark on its opposite side. The photograph prompts the viewer to reflect on travel across the great lakes as a second foundational passage. In her analysis of Bey's photographs within *A Black Gaze*, Tina Campt responds to the sonic qualities of the portfolio. Engaging her previously authored theoretical method of listening to images, Campt argues that silence and quiet have two distinct sonic registers. Bey's photographs activate a sense of quiet, in which the viewer hears the, "hazy hum of nightfall" and the "densely packed ... sounds we often overlook."(11)

Campt's focus on the sonic qualities of Bey's work shape my engagement with sonic practices. My landscape photographs, aligned with Bey's, produce a gazing that orients the viewer to hear themselves within nature. Inevitably, each of our works are an interrogation of the classical sublime through geography. Or, put differently, a posture towards the anti-sublime. Rather than gazing with conquest, Black spatial formation through the underground, reproduces the natural world as a praxis to freedom. These dark pastoral scenes produce a look inward and outward. Black geographies open portals in which time shifts, and the past and present are animated together. Katherine McKittrick asserts that Black geographies exist within and counter to transparent space. She defines these geographies as, "fragmented, subjective, connective, invisible, visible, unacknowledged, and conspicuously positioned" (12). Black geographic spaces, she argues, reveal how modern spaces are elementally shaped by the histories present in the land.

In forming this definition, McKittrick relies on the literary precedents that animate Black subjects within natural space. The notion of the landscape (and therefore the underground) as a portal to literal time travel appears across the work of several Black American fiction writers. Both McKittrick and Saidiya Hartman reflect on the time traveling protagonist of Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979), in which the narrator moves between contemporary Los Angeles and a Maryland antebellum plantation. Similarly, Ta Nehisi Coates' fictional debut, *The Water Dancer* (2019) visualizes movement through the Underground Railroad as magical teleportation. Morrison's access to narrative time travel within *Beloved* is through memory, but it is often spurred by natural phenomena - weather, scents, and woodland clearings. Each of these novels figures the Underground Railroad specifically as the historical basis of Black geographies. McKittrick writes that the railroad is a pivotal formation to Black geographies because it is, "both a material and psychic map," that illustrates how "historical black geographies are developed alongside clandestine geographic-knowledge practices. These practices signaled that spaces of black liberations were invisibly mapped across the United States and Canada and that this invisibility is, in fact, a real and meaningful geography." (13)

Photographs of Black geographic spaces contend with finding the invisible map within the world, and work to place the viewer into the embodied presence of the "invisible agent" of the runaway. (14) Once again, Bey's photographs act as portals to imagining a final emancipatory journey. His camera's gaze is low to the ground, peeking around trees, and listening. My own landscape photographs open a similar portal but are concerned with traveling back in the past even further; to the existence of Black life and subjects before European colonization.

One final photograph from my volume establishes this alter-colonial gaze. *Stream* is the first photograph within the last grouping of the first volume. It is a gaze toward a house, deeply obscured by autumn foliage. Like Bey's slow creepings around the sides of trees, this photograph questions whether the house is the portal to freedom or capture. In line with this question, the photograph also introduces an imagined Black-indigenous perspective into the sequence. It is unresolved in the work, as well as in my own research of my lineage within the Narragansett tribe, how indigeneity could possibly function as a named presence in the work. Throughout this section, I have been careful not to suggest that Black presences, gazes, and working in the American landscape lays claim to land. Rather I have perceived each real and metaphorical look onto the land written about here as a transitory presence. *Stream* however, makes me question how Black figuration in land can move past transitory status. What if the mirage-like house in the photographs center is not a portal to freedom or capture, but a home to the figure gazing upon it? Can a study of Black geographies meet the central question Black-indigenous scholars Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland put forth in the introduction to *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds*: "What happens when key issues in African diasporic experience, such as migration, freedom, citizenship, belonging, peoplehood, and cultural retention and creation, and key issues in Native American experience, such as tribalism, protection of homelands, self-determination, political sovereignty, and cultural-spiritual preservation and renewal, converge?" (12) The real house in *Stream* however is not a home to the Black body. In the following section, I step into this house, and narrate the working methods that occur in photographing within preserved spaces of violence and subjugation.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Stream*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021.

Notes

1. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 90.
2. In hindsight, this specific iteration of 30 Americans created several curatorial and theoretical problems in how the works were organized and sequenced. See Mark Stryker's 2015 review, "DIA's provocative '30 Americans' explores new black art."
3. Carrie Mae Weems "Roaming," *Art 21: Extended Play*, September 10, 2010, video, 2:35, link
4. The Oppositional Gaze, as defined by bell hooks as a gaze that interrogates cinematic work "past race and gender for aspects of content, form, language."
5. *Namely: Sea Islands* (1992), *Africa* (1993), *Slave Coast* (1993), *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried* (1996), *The Jefferson Suite* (2001), *Dreaming in Cuba* (2001), and *The Louisiana Project* (2003)
6. Exhibition curated by Rujeko Hockley and Catherine Morris, 2018.
7. I think of the photographs of Mary Hinkson (1930-2014), one of the first Black dancers in the Martha Graham Dance Company.
8. Teju Cole, *Black Paper: Writing in a Dark Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 134.
9. John Akomfrah "Artes Mundi 7: John Akomfrah," British Council Arts, January 13th, 2017, video, 5:18 link
10. Morrison, 133.
11. Tina Campt, *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021), 135.
12. Katherin Mckittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 7.
13. Mckittrick, 18.
14. Mckittrick, via Douglass,
15. Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

Dream House

In 1781 Elizabeth Freeman successfully emancipated herself from the ownership of John Ashley in Massachusetts. As a child, Freeman was moved to Sheffield, Massachusetts from Claverack, New York as a dowry object accompanying Hannah Hogeboom who married Ashley. John Ashley, a lawyer and prominent politician, was one of the key figures in drafting the Sheffield Resolves, a precursor document to the Declaration of Independence. During a meeting, Freeman, referred to in the house as Mumbet, overheard Ashley and his companions reviewing the 1780 Massachusetts State Constitution. On hearing the now familiar strains of “every man born equal under god”, Freeman covertly enlisted the legal aid of local abolitionists to form a case against Ashley. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in her favor, setting a legal precedent for several other emancipatory cases in the state. By 1790, the Massachusetts census reported that no individual lived in slavery.

I retell this narrative of a critical moment in Freeman’s life because it showcases the types of biographical information that lead me to visit specific preserved homes. The home of John Ashley holds historic landmark status for the dual narratives of his political achievements and the lives of those enslaved within. In the Ashley House, the rooms are curated to represent Freeman’s life, and her conflicts with the Ashleys, in various stages. Forming a biography of Freeman is possible because of her revolutionary legal case, but also because a central site of her narrative stands present today. Other lives, where peoples exist as names in ledgers or contracts, are less susceptible to “preservation.”

To restate the core of my recent work, following narratives similar to Freeman’s, I have photographed in historically preserved homes that claim and exhibit histories of Black life in New England. Through a combination of contemporary trends of preservation scholarship and the 2020 political saturation regarding the Movement for Black Lives, many house museums in the region are contending with the tucked away histories floating behind their namesakes. This section focuses on my engagement with the Freeman/John Ashley house as a case study, to extrapolate the broader scope of my photographic process across the region.

Through Freeman, I describe the methodology I replicate in all of the spaces in which I intervene. Here, I resurface influential theoretical frameworks I have found in the work of Trouillot, Hartman, and Spillers, and connect them to the imaginative spatial theories proposed by philosopher Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics Of Space*.

After contacting curator John Wilson by email, I drove the short two and a half hours from Providence to Sheffield. I was familiar with the surrounding towns of Stockbridge and Great Barrington, and had spent a summer just south of Sheffield in Norfolk, Connecticut. This first visit was in October, and the world had broken into dazzling color. During the drive, I was filled with a rush of desire as the sun slowly peaked over the Berkshire mountains. I allowed myself to feel this romanticism because this was not a frivolous drive through the countryside, but was an intentional wandering. The Ashley house had been moved from its original location near the center of the town, to a rural clearing off a thin paved road. In Stream, I photographed the house from a walking path along the cobble that flows adjacent to the home. The home's facade from the road is framed by two giant oak trees, older than the house itself. .

John emerged from the home's entrance holding one of those electric green plastic brooms. "The whole place is a mess," he muttered as he welcomed me in. Many of the small museums operated by the Trustees of Massachusetts had closed their doors to visitors, and had discontinued standard upkeep, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Areas of the house had accumulated long cobwebs and mice were caught in little traps placed in corners. John swept them away into a plastic dustpan. We spoke for a few minutes in that awkward tense, where language that sounded active in email falls flat in speech. I had worn the wrong kind of clothes, too dressy, too eager to make a good impression. We moved ourselves along, and he gave me a short tour of the rooms, slipping in and out of the narrative of Freeman and the Ashleys to comment on dust, or to make a note of what fabrics and wood were being aged by sunlight.

On looping back to the entrance, he placed his cleaning tools into a small closet. "Okay," he said, "I'll be back at two, and you've got my number if anything goes wrong." He put on his jacket, fiddled with a heavy key chain, closed the entrance door, and locked me inside.

This was our initial agreement. For this first visit I would be locked inside the home while he ran errands in the area. When I tried to be official, and ask the parameters of what I could and could not do, he simply said, "Most of these things have survived for two hundred years, I think they'll survive being put in a picture." It was nine in the morning, and I had five hours of isolation to make something happen. On the drive up, I replayed the beginning chapters of an audio recording of Morrison reading *Beloved*. Morrison once said that it wasn't until she listened to the novel being read by an actress that she realized she had to take on the role of performing them. The cadence she describes as being, "present in the punctuation," but it is her early memory of oral storytelling for her elders that brings the story to life.(1) The beginning of the novel creates the iconographic image of the home on 124 Bluestone Road. Morrison works to create an image that will house the entirety of the central plot:

124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims.(2)

How can a house be spiteful? With section break in the novel, Morrison restates the personified emotion of the house, marking 124 as spiteful, then loud, and finally, quiet. In the 2004 introduction of the novel, Morrison notes the importance of the personification of the house on the effect she wanted the reader to experience. While detailing a vision she had of a woman climbing out of a river behind her own home, Morrison writes that the authorial ghost of *Beloved* had to be planted into the reader's imagination from the first page of the novel, she states, "I wanted the reader to be kidnapped, thrown ruthlessly into an alien environment as the first step into a shared experience with the book's population - just as the characters were snatched from one place to another, from any place to any other, without preparation or defense."(3)

On my journey to the Ashley house, I was gearing myself up to interrogate or experience this kind of somatic haunting. While producing my work for *The House Servant's Directory*, the staff of the home had always accompanied me; working away on their own administrative tasks or giving tours, but either way, always keeping an eye on my activity. The privacy I was left with at the Ashley house made me feel, as Morrison has called it, "dangerously free."⁽⁴⁾ During this visit, I made photographs of various tools, ate a poor lunch of a sandwich and a banana on the floor of the home's hearth, and looked up into the dimly lit attic. This space acted as a repository for various old farming tools not on display to the public. The day was entirely plain. I heard no voices, no spirits flung objects around the room, or appeared in mirrors, as in Morrison's novel. Time passed between me, the space, and the autumn light. That day in October set the conditions that I would enact in each visit to Ashley house and other properties. While nothing miraculous happened, through the process of the creative photographic work, the opening of my own imagination for something to happen, and sensing the architecture's personality, I entered into my own somatic haunting.

In the first chapter of *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard argues that physical homes act as oneiric space. Homes are oneiric because they create the conditions for imaginative activity. His initial description of this concept parallels my first encounter with Ashley house:

Over-picturesqueness in a house can conceal its intimacy. This is also true in life. But it is truer still in daydreams. For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the oneirically definitive house, must retain its shadows.⁽⁵⁾

Preserved house museums are curated spaces with a pedagogical agenda. They showcase the construction of history by rebuilding and freezing the house in a specific period of time. Inside the Ashley house, the house and its objects project the stylings of a home at the turn of the 19th century. Very few objects are actual remnants of the Ashley's and Freeman; the majority are sourced from various collections and placed into the home as a surrogate for the real thing. This surrogacy shapes a difference between historical accuracy and authenticity. The preserved house, similar to how Bachelard describes the 'ultra-cellars' of Henri Bosco's L'Antiquaire (The Antique Dealer), acts as a labyrinth for daydreaming, memory conjuring, and fabulative practice. The house turned into a museum represents a paradox Bachelard's outlines; curatorial interpretation, guided tours, exhibit labels, and informational pamphlets foreclose the possibility for imagination in the space.

The creative work I do needs privacy, quiet, and contemplation. In the home I allow my investment in the production of the photographs to guide me. When asked what my process is when working in these homes, I simply state that I daydream. Speaking to this speculative formation of the daydream, and how houses facilitate them, Trouillot suggests that the material quality of archives (a grouping in which I include these preserved house museums) carries a critical function in the formation of silences and narratives and that they push observers into realms of deep ambiguity:

The bigger the material mass, the more easily it entraps us: mass graves and pyramids bring history closer while they make us feel small. A castle, a fort, a battlefield, a church, all these things bigger than we that we infuse with the reality of past lives, seem to speak of an immensity of which we know little except that we are part of it. Too solid to be unmarked, too conspicuous to be candid, they embody the ambiguities of history. They give us the power to touch it, but not to hold it firmly in our hands - hence the mystery of their battered walls. We suspect that their concreteness hides secrets so deep that no revelation may fully dissipate their silences.(6)

The preserved home, while not a ruin, does usher in feelings of smallness, recalling the childlike version of ourselves enraptured by fact creation. Bachelard claims that the first house we are born into becomes the site we return to in daydreams and that the artistic impulse to replicate said space, and our formative memories of it, can only nudge a reader or viewer towards using their own imagination. Bachelard writes:

All we communicate to others is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively. What is secret never has total objectivity. In this respect, we orient oneirism but we do not accomplish it.

Paradoxically, in order to suggest the values of intimacy, we have to induce in the reader a state of suspended reading. For it is not until his eyes have left the page that recollections of my room can become a threshold of oneirism for him.(7)

It is this afterthought, the story that one builds for themselves to contextualize a discrete object or historical fact, that my work sets the stage for and facilitates. Staying within the Ashley house, I will analyze three photographs whose formations were crucial for me in thinking through this dialectic.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Manacle*, archival inkjet print, 52.5 x 42 inches, 2020

I made *Manacle* during my subsequent visit to the house. I knew that the attic space of the home and the objects within it held special significance to my daydreaming. Whereas during my first visit, I was intimidated by the volume of the room's contents. I knew that I would have to slowly unpack each tool, to understand why the attic felt so charged. One object held my attention for the rest of the month. Placed on the floor of the attic was a manacle. To expand the fictional world of her characters Morrison performed minimal research on the historical life of Margaret Garner, who Morrison fictionally extrapolates to create Sethe in *Beloved*. Garner, who escaped from slavery in Kentucky in 1856, murdered two of her four children when slave catchers apprehended her and a group of escaped slaves in Cincinnati. I never asked John where the manacles came from, if they related to Freeman, or the other enslaved members of the household. Instead, it became my task to invent a photograph that echoed the manacles' multiple historic possibilities.

I made several attempts to photograph them. First, I had to become comfortable handling them. I lifted them from the floor and began hanging them from hooks and nails around the home. There is immense gravity between each loop. I placed them on my own body. Although startling, there was a strange humor in this attempt. My wrists and hands were too small to fit snugly inside the cuff. I was afraid of actually adjusting the notches, which would tighten them, in fear that they may break.

In the resulting photographs, the presence of my arm, in color, rushed the image toward a meaning already stated by the manacles themselves. In the final attempt, I removed the manacle from inside the house all together. Although I only brought them meters from the home, and returned them to their spot in the attic, this small snatching of an image conjured feelings of escape and flight. I hung them on the softwood branches of some low bushes. Their gravity anchored the damp wood into various curves. *Manacle*, the final iteration, showcases the object fully in the center of the frame, and gives the viewer access to perceive it, but refuses to deliver a narrative explaining its presence. *Manacle* is an image that mirrors the ambiguous solidity of an historical archive. The relationship the viewer has to this ambiguous epistemological formation is also replicated in the physical camouflage of the printed photograph. In the printed photograph, the actual manacle blurs away from the eye. It is through a slow approach that its curves and loops become differentiated from the thicket of branches. Similar to my description of Lorna Simpson's *Figure*, it is an image that has a separate viewing experience that can not be replicated in digital form without manipulation. Bachelard writes of images as palimpsests capable of activating oneiric experience:

Images have both a history and prehistory; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience an image directly. Indeed, every great image has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special color.(8)

The prehistory, then, to *Manacle* is equally the ambiguous historic origin of the object, the iterative stages of my photographic production, and its inherited images of enslavement, capture, and bondage.. The final image holds within it the memory of all these predecessors. Within my volume, because the small scale print of *Manacle* is less elusive than its larger scale exhibition counterpart, the sequencing and emergence of the image had to be carefully considered. *Manacle* is a photograph that activates, and names, the historical memory of slavery directly. The photograph found its place within the third transitory section of the book. As I explained while analyzing some of the other landscape photographs in this grouping, this section transitions the flow of space from inside a home to outside. While the other photographs in the group are more opaque in their historical cues, *Manacle* reroutes the sequence back into a figural memory of slavery. The photograph's "portrait" orientation pulls in the presence of a disappeared body. It is followed by another triplet of language, "a cross - a stream - a rest" and then echoed in the following photograph, *Taliq*, which is the first physical Black figure in the sequence. *Taliq* echoes *Manacle* through a focal over emphasis of the hands and wrists. Although the gesture of the figure is ambiguous, he enacts both a covering and offering gesture, in my imagining the proximity of his wrists creates an invisible chain. This vision is aided by the open gold bracelet looping the figure's right hand. Again, this invisible connection between photographs activates an interstitial spatial world.

Determining when an image reaches its final stage is critical, an additional image case from the Ashley House, the photograph *Coal Shovels*, illustrates how this iterative photographic process requires what Hartman refers to as “narrative restraint.”(9)

All preserved sites of American enslavement must form a methodology to negotiate its history violence and harm inflicted on Black subjects. My photographs of these spaces likewise inherit the dilemma of unintentionally reproducing or restaging violence. Within the sources that build Freeman’s biography, an act of violence is cited as the catalyst for Freeman to flee the Ashley house, and enlist legal aid by local abolitionists. In the 1853 piece titled *Slavery in New England*, Catharine Sedgwick retells Freeman’s life in brief vignettes. Sedgwick was the daughter of lawyer Theodore Sedgwick who offered legal aid to Freeman in 1781. Once freed, Elizabeth Freeman worked in Sedgwick’s home as governess of the children until 1808 and lived closely to the family until her death in 1829. Catharine Sedgwick, through memories from Freeman, details events of conflict within the home. Each of these conflicts circulate around the mistress of the home, Hannah Hogeboom. Detailing an event that would have occurred in 1780, Sedgwick writes:

She [Freeman] had a sister in servitude with her, a sickly timid creature, over whom she watched as the lioness does over her cubs. On one occasion, when Madame A was making the patrol of her kitchen, she discovered a wheaten cake, made by Lizzy the sister, for herself, from the scrapings of the great oaken bowl in which the family batch had been kneaded. Enraged at the “thief,” as she branded her, she seized a large iron shovel red hot from clearing the oven, and raised it over the terrified girl. Bet interposed her brawny arm, and took the blow. It cut quite across the arm to the bone, “but,” she would say afterwards in concluding the story of the frightful scar she earned to her grave, “Madam never again laid her hand on Lizzy. I had a bad arm all winter, but Madam had the worst of it. I never covered the wound, and when people said to me, before Madam,— ‘Why, Betty! what ails your arm?’ I only answered— ‘ask missis!” Which was the slave and which was the real mistress?(10)



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Coal Shovels*, archival inkjet print, 52.5 x 42 inches, 2021
Book I, plate 36.

The photograph *Coal Shovels* holds within it the memory of this specific act of wounding. The documented moment of Freeman's injury is an example of the theatrical violence that Saidiya Hartman analyzes to understand how the conditions of slavery exist in historical narratives as spectacles that possess dramaturgical strategies. These strategies guide empathetic responses. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman organizes acts, tales, and scenes of violence within archives of slavery to examine these dramaturgical gestures. In relation to my knowledge of Freeman's injury, Hartman's argument in the subsection, "The Character of Practice" connects to the sensorial dilemma I continuously face in photographing mute objects. Hartman writes,

The cleavage or sundering of the slave as object of property, pained flesh, and unlawful agent situates the enslaved in an indefinite and paradoxical relation to the normative category "person." One must attend to this paradox in order to discern and evaluate the agency of the enslaved because the forms of action taken do not transcend this condition but rather are an index of particular figurations of power and modes of subjection. (11)

Coal Shovels attends to the paradoxical re-presentation of Freeman's wounding through measures of restraint and refusal. The photograph places me, and my viewer, at the scene of violence but refuses to provide context to the event of harm. And refuses, I believe Hartman would argue this way, the natural impulse to empathetically replace Freeman with myself. Hartman defines this action of narrative restraint as, "the refusal to fill in the gaps and provide closure, [which] is a requirement of this method [critical fabulation], as it the imperative to respect black noise - the shrieks, the moans, the nonsense, and the opacity, which are always in excess of legibility..." (12) The formation of Black Noise that Hartman makes here informs the sonic work I produce to exhibit with my photographs. In relation to *Coal Shovels* specifically however, the quiet sounding of the shovels creates humanistic figural presence. I connect this sounding to my analysis of the qualities of presence felt when encountering Martin Puryear's Column For Sally Hemings. In the introductory sequences of my photobook, I feel that hand-held objects and furniture become Black figures in the preserved space. My impulse to photograph three shovels in *Coal Shovels* perhaps grows from the three key players in Segdwick's retelling. Through sequencing the still life photographs fairly continuously within the first two sections of the book, I create a figural index. I conceive of the objects as performers activating Black noise: soloists, duets, and a chorus.



Fred Wilson, Metalwork, Mining the Museum, 1992

In addition to Martin Puryear, Fred Wilson's groundbreaking exhibition *Mining The Museum* (1992) is an important predecessor in the formation of my photographic figural index. Within his installation, Wilson surfaces and recontextualizes objects and artifacts culled from the permanent collection of the Maryland Historical Society. In the museum itself, Wilson restaged these materials into a weighty oneiric walk-through of histories and memories of slavery. The subtle interrogations he forms surface the ways practices of slavery fuel modern American culture. Viewers of the exhibition would move through separated galleries that thematically define how the aggregate collection of objects relate to violence and subjugation. To prompt the viewers attention to what would unfold through the index of objects, Wilson installed a panel of questions inside of the elevator leading to the galleries. These questions are:

What is it?
Where is it? Why?
What is it saying?
How is it used?
For whom was it created?
For whom does it exist?
Who is represented?
How are they represented?
Who is doing the telling? The hearing?
What do you see?
What do you hear?
What can you touch?
What do you feel?
What do you think?
Where are you? (13)

The latter half of these questions push viewers to engage with the installation with a hyper awareness of their sensory experience. Like Wilson, my formation and staging of still lives for the photographs relies on my haptic engagement with the objects themselves, and with the ability to "pull back the veil" of the house museum curatorial structure.

Regarding a similar topic of hapticity, Hortense J. Spillers has mined the subject of intimacy within the 18th century through a series of talks drafting a forthcoming essay. Spillers argues that intimacy, in the contemporary use of the word, did not exist between slave owners and the enslaved. Rather, the domestic closeness of family slavery produced a racialized distinction between bodies and flesh. Bodies, (white bodies) Spillers argues, have an inherited access to protective rights under the evolving American constitution. Flesh (non-white bodies) remained outside the protection of law, and was made permeable, objectifiable, and in every sense non-human. The still life photographs of objects I produce in the homes reflect this historic distinction. The Freeman case, and the Ashley house, resonate this distinction as Freeman radically seized the opportunity to become a body, to become a citizen under Massachusetts constitutional law. The still life photographs further mirror the distinction of touch. Tools, utensils, and furniture do not wound flesh or bodies on their own. They must be wielded to enact violence. They must be touched. The imaginative journey the viewer takes upon seeing them, reanimates the sensate of the haptic into vision.

The attic at Ashley House, as I have cited, is where the sound of "Black noise" is intensified. Attics in my imagination - which is also informed by my own ancestors' domestic work in *The House Servant's Directory* - are important spaces because they offered privacy to the enslaved. In Bachelard's writing, attics act as one polarity of the home, which are countered by the cellar. Extrapolating from a psychoanalytic image created by C.G. Jung, Bachelard writes:

In the attic, fears are easily 'rationalized.' Whereas in the cellar ... 'rationalization' is less rapid and less clear; also it is never definitive. In the attic, the day's experiences can always efface the fears of night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls.(14)

The attic in the Ashley house is illuminated by natural light. In my dim initial encounters in both the attic and cellar, I was still guided by natural light. On the first visit to Ashley house I was intimidated by the sonic quality of this space. As time went on, like with Manacle, I continued to remove objects individually from the attic to observe outside in bright light.

During October of 2021, in an attempt to finalize thoughts that had formed over a year, I returned to Ashley house with the goal of visualizing the attic space as is. The final photograph is illuminated by strobe light mimicking the conditions of high noon daylight. Each object fits into the angled roof like shuffled puzzle pieces. Initially the eye encounters a mess, but slowly a logic is formed to sort them out and place them in their proper position. Like the metaphorical man in Bachelard's psychological example, the attic space is a site of revelatory clarity. Bachelard continues to emphasize the difference between attics and cellars through the physical movement it takes to arrive in either space. He writes: "Lastly, we always go up the attic stairs, which are steeper and more primitive. For they bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude." (15) In the attic of Ashley house, I do experience a tranquil solitude. But I also, more so than any other space, invent and hear sonic interpretations of the space - its "Black noise".

Along with Freeman and her sister, the Ashley's owned three additional slaves - men, of which little is known - who would have labored on the private farm land around the home. These men, and I assume Freeman, her sister, and her children, would sleep together in this attic space. The space therefore housed the real shadow family built by family slavery: a micro community that was united by racial status and aware of the political force of their presence (16). The photograph Attic vocalizes notions of this community existing tightly together. The imaginative daydream I experienced in the home is not one that is purely a reimagination of the researched life of the enslaved. As Bachelard argued, it is a daydream full of my own life, my own body, placed into the past alongside the known and unknown historical figures. This further aligns my practice with critical fabulation. The daydream I create is an image of myself with them, laboring the day with them, receiving the same news, hearing their secrets - whispered plans for escape, Freeman's verbalization of recognizing a route to freedom - and sharing my own.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Attic*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021

I carry the same questions of making and imaginative possibility into the printing and installation of my photographs. In the Summer of 2021, I worked with curators David Little and Lisa Crossman at the Mead Art Museum to form the exhibition *A Room That Grew* (17). Which was a two-person exhibition pairing my work with the photographs of my mentor, Justin Kimball. The exhibit showcased two discrete bodies of work in separate galleries - Kimball's *Elegy*, and my undergraduate thesis *The House Servant's Directory* - and then sequenced our recent in-progress photographs together in a median gallery. This sequencing blended together my still life and double exposure photographs, with Kimball's recent figuratively led photographs of individuals and groups in towns within western Massachusetts. The organizing aim of the show was to identify where and how Kimball and I overlapped, and our relationship to the house as imaginative space became the unifying principle. I also viewed the exhibition as an opportunity to set a precedent for my future thesis installation, and experiment with installation gestures. Kimball and I collaborated on choosing the selection of photographs, and setting the sequence within each gallery. Pivotal in this installation was the inclusion of a table-like vitrine of objects culled from both of our personal collections.

Viewers in the exhibit, similar to Wilson's prompting, were guided by a small piece of text to touch and handle the objects. The table included materials similar to those presented within each of our photographs: handheld iron tools, scales, flattened books, identification cards, watch faces, flags. As well as raw materials, such as coal and flint stone. These objects guide a viewer's attention to the haptic quality inherent in the production of each photograph. None of the objects presented form a concrete narrative with the accompanying photographs. Rather they offer another point of entry into the world of the image. Through this exhibition, I established that future installations of my work will focus on orienting the viewer toward imaginative space by activating the senses on two levels. Calling attention to what a viewer can see (the large scale photograph) and what they hear (recorded room tone from the homes).



A Room That Grew, Mead Art Museum, installation view, 2021

These two sensory prompts are the conceptual parameters that structure my installations at the Rhode Island School of Design Graduate exhibition. In an effort to expand the spatio-temporal registers within my work, I installed two groupings of photographs across the campus. These installations mirror the duo-tone voice of my photobook volumes. At the Rhode Island Convention Center, five color photographs hang linearly at an equilateral scale. These photographs - *Coal Shovel (Double)*, *Cooking Spoon*, *Bell*, *Cotton Scale*, and *Shadows* - are installed in white painted maple frames. In previous plannings of this installation, I sought to emphasize the character of wood by framing the photographs in various raw and stained wood enclosures. The stark whiteness of the current frames contrasts dramatically with the warm shadowy palette of colors shared between each image.

This layout is a "classical" form, in the sense that I am relying on a horizontal linear sequence of photographs to suggest what is beyond the frame. As I described when detailing Carrie Mae Weems retrospective exhibition, photographic installations can guide the eye of a viewer in controlled ways. These five photographs are installed in an indexical style that brings disparate photographs into one body. Or, put differently, the photographs form fragments and clauses of an almost complete sentence. Reading them from left to right, I describe here my own somatic responses to how the group tethers past and present:

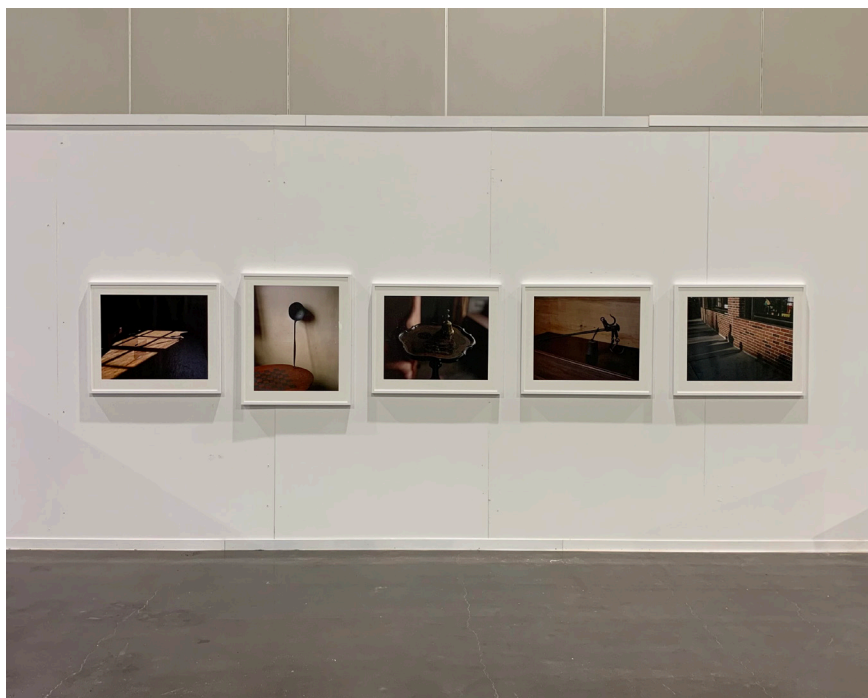
Coal Shovel (Double) is a pre-image to *Coal Shovels* that I detailed previously. Here a singular shovel is doubled and moved using the same technique of double-exposure performed in my self-capture photographs. This is one of the only instances where I have performed this with an object. This photograph is a strong visual suggestion of time passing within space. The acute angle formed by the repeated shovel mimics the short and long arms of a clock. Likewise, the simple repetition of the object suggests the perhaps infinite amount of times the tool was picked up, handled, and thrust into hot coals.

This photograph, and the notion of time, are followed by two photographs that indicate domestic labor. *Cooking Spoon* is a vertically oriented still life that reads much like a portrait. In the image, a large cast iron spoon balances precariously on a wooden table. The table is marked with a chess board that is thrown out of focus in the bottom left corner. The spoon is out of its place and commands the attention that eyes do in portrait photographs. The interior of the spoon appears at once convex and concave, giving the head of the object a planetary curvature. The spoon's staging emphasizes a performance of labor, and becomes another literal and metaphorical Black body in the sequence. This reading is further formed by the object's distinct cast shadow.

Next to this photograph is *Bell*. Similarly to *Manacle*, *Bell* is a photograph that names slavery as the dominant organizing principle of the image. It was important to me to install this photograph as the central core of this grouping. Once again, the face of the clock, and notions of repeating time, are invoked through the tea table's fanciful curves. On the table, a bronze bell has been lifted and reset several times, disrupting a thin layer of dust covering the objects. This lifting leaves traces that create overlapping circles. *Bell* also invokes a type of labor that is not only strenuous, but attached directly to a slave-owner's personal comfort.

Curves and semi-circles are repeated then in *Cotton Scale*. This domineering object, also found in the attic of the Ashley House, is a cast iron cotton scale that would have been used to measure bales of cotton and other domestic goods for market. The variation of light in this photograph is brighter than the diffused natural light of the preceding three. Lit with an external strobe light, each surface of the scale is reproduced in gleaming clarity. While *Cooking Spoon* may invoke a body, *Cotton Scale* invokes infliction of weight onto a body. The presence of the scale also incites active verbal description, such as: hanging, hung, stripping, and weighted.

The palpability of the market is then echoed in the final photograph, *Shadows*. This scenic photograph, made moments after *Priest* (detailed in the section Afterlife), captures a shadowy procession of figures in an urban setting. Inside the cropped shop, two figures await food orders. A setting sun casts long shadows of the figures preceding down the street. These shadows, I argue, can be read as literally and metaphorically as Black figures/bodies. They connect to the presence of shadow within *Cooking Spoon*. While key events are not captured, where the figures are going or what they are doing, the open space of the shadows invokes imagery of the coffin. Which Saidiya Hartman clarifies as, "the unabashed display of the market's brutality, the juxtaposition of sorrow and mirth, and the separation of families accounted for the trade's declared status as the most horrible feature of the institution of slavery." (18) What I am attempting to showcase in these brief readings, without even revealing how I came to make these photographs, is the expansive methods of re-narratization and daydreaming that can occur by viewing the photographs as an aggregate.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, RISD Graduate Exhibition, Installation view, 2022

Aiding these imagined pre-histories in this installation is Room Tone 1, an audio work that layers field recordings of varying spaces together. This voiceless audio piece is made of two fluctuating recordings of my body walking through a preserved house, and moving through my current home. The footsteps fade in and out of "Brown" noise, a signal noise produced by the random movement of particles in space (Brownian motion, or the Wiener Process, which is the integral of White Noise). Brown noise is also referred to as "random walk" noise. The deep, almost wet sounding, tones echo the wandering of the unfigured footsteps. In addition to these phantom steps, stray sounds of cooking, chopping, and searching through cabinets and drawers float in and out. This work is installed via recessed ceiling speakers, mounted underneath the framed photographs. In my planning, these sound works accompany the sonic registers already present in each photograph. In my speculative planning, through the presence of sound viewers are encouraged to watch the photographs in active anticipation for their layers to unfold.

In the corresponding installation at the Sol Koffler Gallery, I pair the photographs *Well* and *Sickle*. The spatial play between these two photographs mimics the image reversal of negative film when it is seen in shadow versus in light. Positive and negative space shift in degrees of legibility. Accompanying this situational diptych is one black visible speaker which projects Room Tone 2 into the gallery. This piece is made of field recordings from three walks within cemeteries across Rhode Island - God's Little Acre (a colonial African burial ground in Newport), the North Burial Ground of Providence, and Riverside Cemetery. These recordings capture the sounds of birds, wind, and my footsteps on the ground. Both installations, in shared and differing qualities, pull apart the material clutter of the archives they manifest from. To think once more with Bachelard, viewers can, "untangle the complex of memory and imagination; it [the daydream] becomes necessarily sensitive to the differentiations of the symbol. And the poetic daydream, which creates symbols, confers upon our intimate moments an activity that is polysymbolic." (19) The intimate process of looking at these works manifest poly symbols and afterimages that reconstitute memory. Combining the photographs with sound pairs the action of looking with listening and asserts that the photographs themselves are polyphonic as well as symbolic.

Notes

1. Toni Morrison, *Mavis on Four*, Thames TV (originally aired, February 24th, 1988), August 6th, 2019, video, 22:15, link
2. Morrison, 1.
3. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage International, 2004), xviii.
4. Toni Morrison, Junot Diaz, *Live from the NYPL*, New York Public Library, December 12th, 2013, 1:32, link
5. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Penguin Group, 1964), 34.
6. Trouillot, 30
7. Bachelard, 35.
8. Bachelard, 53.
9. Hartman, 12.
10. Catherine Sedgwick, *Slavery In New England* (Bentley's Miscellany, Vol. 34, 1853), 418.
11. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 56.
12. Hartman, 12. my emphasis
13. Poster reproduced in: Lisa G. Corrin's, *Mining the Museum: An Installation Confronting History*, 306.
14. Bachelard, 40.
15. Bachelard, 47.
16. Hortense J. Spillers, *Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution*, Barnard Center for Research on Women, February 21st, 2017, video, 1:15:45, link
17. This exhibition title references a translated poem from within *The Poetics of Space*, René Char's *Fureur et Mystère*, the full line reads, "a room that grew buoyant and, little by little, expanded into the vast stretches of travel.
18. Hartman, scenes of subjection, 32.
19. Bachelard, 47.

Meeting House

In the previous sections, I thought through how the preserved house museum operates as oneiric space and how my own work orients viewers into an imaginative daydream. The preserved house museum operates with a curatorial and pedagogical agenda that is also commemorative. The Ashley house honors Elizabeth Freeman through signage, guided tours, and events. I feel that something is amiss in popular forms of memorialization in the United States. In the talk *The Idea of Black Culture*, accompanying the essay of the same name, Hortense J. Spillers argues that commemorative spaces or gestures possess a dangerous element of nostalgia, that silences or contains the ongoing life of the event or person being commemorated. Spillers asserts that this is a kind of death.⁽¹⁾ Following my preface analysis of Morrison's literary correspondence with the dead, I explore here more closely how my own photographs work to visualize the dead, the destroyed, and the erased as I navigate cultural institutions; namely, colleges and museums that are directly connected to the business of slavery.⁽²⁾ In this section, to understand questions of the commemorative in my work, I first establish a case that represents a creative dilemma in which a memorial could be used to address. This case narrates events around the site of the destroyed African Union Meeting and School House in Providence, Rhode Island. I summarize the origin of the meeting house and its cultural significance to the city. Following this narrative, I contemplate the functions of three different public memorials within New England. These works are: Martin Puryear's *Slavery Memorial*, placed on the campus of Brown University, the Toni Morrison Society's ongoing *A Bench by The Road* project, and W.E.B. Du Bois' boyhood site memorial and park. I then summarize how *Rememory* as a volume of photographs and language works to open questions of the commemorative. Because researching the destroyed Meeting House has been a hyper-site specific interest, this section produces several floating (unresolved) questions that circle the subject. I track these questions as prompts for future works.

In between visits to preserved homes like the Ashley House, I sustain my practice by taking daily walks and photographing with a medium-format camera. On these walks, I attempt to find and document poly-symbols in the neighborhoods within Providence, Rhode Island. My eyes tend to find loose chains, iron fences, flaking paint, and outdoor “corners” created by the city’s loose, ungridded, housing plots. One day, in the Spring of 2021, I found myself standing on a grassy lawn riddled with weeds and junk. This small area was elevated from the steep incline of Meeting Street by a foundational layer of large slate rock. A house had clearly once rested there, but had been deconstructed. Nature was retaking the carefully built foundation. After photographing the area, cursory research through the National Register of Historic Places and the Historic American Building Survey revealed that the foundation layers likely held the African Union Meeting and School House.

A story of the African Union Meeting and School House, can be assembled between the following documented events. By 1820 thirty-nine percent of Providence’s free Black community lived in white-headed households growing around Brown University. Meaning of the some 1200 Blacks (enslaved or free) occupying the city, as many as 468 were the attendants, caretakers, and onlookers of these homes. They were the handlers of overgrown hydrangeas or rhododendrons, fixed sidings and clapboards, did the shopping, shoveled snow, and puffed fires to heat homes with windows on all sides.

In the process of Rhode Island’s gradual emancipation, free Blacks were limited in the geographical areas they could move. Choosing to remain in the place of their “documented” legal residence allowed for gainful employment, or poverty assistance, from prominent Whites or mutual aid societies. In 1819, construction of a meeting and school house for the free community of Blacks began in Providence. A committee formed and began collecting donations from the community of Blacks and prominent religious abolitionists. A forty-page volume and deed, on the history of the building, was authored by Moses Brown, one of the four founding merchant brothers of Brown University. Raised in the business of slavery, the Brown family amassed fortunes through rum distilleries, cane plantations, and the active sale of captured Africans. After the death of nearly 109 captives aboard the slave ship Sally in 1764, and an independent conversion to quakerism, Brown became a political abolitionist aiding Rhode Islands gradual emancipation. Brown provided the plot of the land upon which the house was built. The building was set into a hill east of the river canal, at the corner of Meeting Street and Congdon Street. This space was legally called the African Union Meeting and School House. Although the funds for its original construction were garnered through a civil collection, the deed for the property remained in control of Moses Brown.

Brown's account of the building's development collapses key instances of conflict between the group of free Blacks creating the structure and white neighbors, into short clauses. For example, after laying in the foundation Brown writes, "they [the black laborers constructing the building] were detained in their exertions by certain discouraging circumstances, till the ensuing fall..."(3) This erasure obscures possible evidence of later identifying the building's attackers. The meeting house is described as an almost square-shaped construction measuring 50 by 40 feet, with a 30 foot elevated ceiling and a separate school room of smaller size. It took nearly three years for the building to be completed and occupied. The house was opened with a dedication ceremony that flowed through the streets of the neighborhood:

young colored men formed a military company to escort the African societies to their new house of worship. The African societies wore their regalias. The president of the societies, who was their commander, was dressed to represent an African chief, having on a red pointed cap, and carried an elephant's tusk in each hand; each end was tipped with gilt. The other officers carrying emblems, decked with lemons and oranges, representing the fruits of Africa, and other emblems. The military company wore black belts and carried muskets, and officers with their sidearms.(4)

This parade was followed by sermons from Henry Jackson and Stephen Gano (pastor of the First Baptist Church), and was closed by a performance of an African choir led by Benjamin C. Wade.

As evidenced by the ceremony, parade, and formation of a private militia - called the African Greys - the community of previously enslaved Blacks were visualizing forms of freedoms through creative expression. They performed inherited and imagined customs. In addition to the meeting house acting as a Christian interdenominational worship site, it was also the gathering point for civil affairs and correspondence between Providence mutual aid societies and those of Newport, Kingston, and Bristol.

Either in 1863 or 1869, the African Union Meeting and School house was destroyed by its white neighbors. The meeting house and school had run for forty years. It had spawned branches of separate Christian congregations in western rural regions of the state. There is no primary source material detailing the exact cause of this destruction. Its destruction, however, follows a thread of racialized violence from the Providence cove (areas now filled by Providence Place Mall and the Rhode Island state capitol building) up into College hill.

In 1824 the Black neighborhood of Hardscrabble was destroyed. Twenty building structures were dismantled one by one. In 1831, the neighborhood of Snowtown was ransacked for four days without intervention. Records detail the racialized disagreements that sparked the flames, but in a broad stroke, one can visualize the anger formed from living in parallel. The growing community of fiscally, spiritually, and emotionally free Blacks were threatening a white class that had prospered off their dependency and labor for nearly two centuries. Tangentially, the construction of the Prospect Terrace viewpoint beginning in 1869 may have also been a catalyst. The production of leisure, perhaps, necessitated the whitening out of the mark of Black worship and progress just up the road.

Remaining members of the Baptist and Calvinist congregations began construction on a new house, a formal church, one block away from the original meeting house at Congdon Street and Angel court. This structure was completed in 1875 and stands today as the Congdon Street Baptist church.

The Congdon Street Baptist church, as the mirror of the destroyed African Union Meeting and School House, was easily recognizable as a space to enter to explore questions of the memorial. I walk the arterial streets cutting through the east side neighborhoods of Providence daily, passing the foundation layers at Meeting and Congdon street. In my first and only visit to the Congdon Street Baptist Church, I was silently ushered in by a woman working in a small office located inside the building's bell tower. The empty space of worship held a calm but stern personality. I made photographs of the pews, small framed pieces of sheet music, and a large bible spread across a mantle with kente cloth. The black and white photographs flatten the vibrant nature of the church's interior - mint green walls, white pews, and almost magenta carpet covering the floor - into shadowy territories. Pews is a photograph made close to the front of the church. A giant organ is cropped on the right side of the frame, and an empty bible rack is highlighted by diffused sunlight. The opaque windows extend past the top of the frame and suggest the sense of a cavernous space.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Pews*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Church*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021

Another photograph from the Congdon Street Baptist Church, prompts a viewer to create afterimages. In the balcony of the church, where a soundboard for microphones rests, a framed collage of small gelatin silver prints and polaroids is hung in a corner. On the board, hand drawn letters name the collage "Congdon Street Church Nursery 1947 - 1965". Each of the interior photographs within the board frame show young Black children in Sunday best dress. This photograph for me has become the imagistic representation of a Black social life that is presently silenced within the overpowering historical narrative of Brown University. Seeing the small photographs reminded me of the square self-portrait of my Grandfather, and stimulated my desire to see images Black people in the past. The re-photographing of the scene of the board however, obscures the figures into phantoms. This irreproducibility mimics how other figures in the book (statues and the faded self-capture figures) resist naming.

Although this mirror building exists, and offers its own unique voice to the hill, what has the landscape lost in the absence of the original? What would it mean to construct a new meeting house in its place? The lot of land remains empty. Foundation layers of a built something still remain at the corner of Meeting Street and Congdon Street. Would a marker further reduce the histories present in the land? Or would it effectively release the hidden vocality within the land? Is the empty land a haunting in and of itself?

To extend these questions, I have physically tracked three memorials within New England that plunge into the depths of representational ambiguity regarding the memory of slavery. Here, I catalog public and personal responses to each work to contextualize how my own photographs differ in terms of commemorative aim. I begin with the example of Martin Puryear's *Slavery Memorial*. In the Fall term of 2021, I enrolled in a graduate seminar at Brown university titled *Retouch: The Imaginaries of Repair*. This course was led by scholars Ariella Azoulay and Aaliyah Abdur-Rahman. In the course's beginning weeks the class reread the seminal 2006 report on Brown's recataloging of its ties to trans-atlantic slavery, commissioned in 2003 by former university president Ruth J. Simmons. While reading the report, we were tasked with venturing to the various sites of Brown's campus that were formed in tandem with the report (including the Center for the study of Slavery and Justice and Puryear memorial) or sites that operated as historic locus points. We were tasked with co-authoring a short critical response that imagined how we may "retouch" elements of the report, and its resultant fixtures on the campus. I chose to work through the presence of Puryear's sculpture.



Martin Puryear, *Slavery Memorial*, 2014. Photograph by Warren Jagger.



Slavery Memorial installation. Photograph by David Winton Bell Gallery.

Placed on the Quiet Green in 2014, adjacent to the college's oldest architectural structure, Puryear's *Slavery Memorial* visualizes a half buried, or half uncovered, broken ball and chain. Ever the elusive artist, the Slavery Memorial is one of Puryear's most signatorially clear works. The structure is a half dome made of ductile cast iron. The broken chain link is finished with a mirrored glass surface. My critique of the memorial can be formed in a two part question: how does the physicality of the object itself call forth the institutional memory, and predication, of slavery into the present? Secondly, does placing a memorial act as a visual conclusion to the institution's commitment to researching its past, that is directly linked to the labor of, and acquisition of power through, Black life?

I think about these questions first in terms of form. Visually the memorial hearkens to an archetypal symbol of bondage. Against the backdrop of the campus' classic architectural facades, the gleam of its cast iron and its low position does create a counter-image to the idyllic campus green setting. After viewing the memorial several times, there is something that feels incomplete to me in its gesture. A part of this may be its literal halfness. Photographs from the installation showcase that the structure exists only as the top portion of its imagined image. But what if this installation and form had been extended to create a full scale monumental iron ball, and Puryear had buried the majority of it? What fullness would we feel in just knowing that a massive unmovable form lies underneath the earth? The 2006 report notes that the foundation layers of the memorials surrounding buildings are the spaces and land that were layered by enslaved labor.(5) This connection that the memorial orients the viewer to - the underlayers of the campus - is the most significant rumination it conjures. In thinking through the second critical question, I believe that the memorial is consequently colored by its accompanying plaque. This plaque reads:

This memorial recognizes Brown University's connection to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the work of Africans and African-Americans, enslaved and free, who helped build our university, Rhode Island, and the nation.

In 2003 Brown President Ruth J. Simmons initiated a study of this aspect of the university's history. In the eighteenth century slavery permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American share of the African slave trade, launching over a thousand slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1808, and scores of illegal voyages thereafter.

Brown University was a beneficiary of this trade.(6)

I view this first paragraph as a critical mishandling of language. The distinction between Africans and African-Americans, and their qualifying conditions of “enslaved and free” creates a puzzle of identity. The sentence turns on the verb “helped”. A clearer approach to this beginning, which the report itself does not shy away from, would be specifying that each of the Brown merchant brothers participated in the business of slavery, even when turned abolitionist, in the case of Moses Brown.(7) The current iteration of the statement signals that Black Americans exist within the institution - whether they be students, faculty, or staff - as equal benefactors of to the institutions prehistory of slavery.

In 2021, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice released a second report, aiming to contextualize the actions taken since the first. In an essay, titled *Tactility, Memory Work, and Martin Puryear’s Slavery Memorial*, Professor of Africana Studies Renee Ater summarizes the division of interpretations of how the sculptures function as a commemorative gesture on campus. Ater’s focus is on how the memorial invites “memory work”, which is analogous to Bachelard’s oneiric orientation, through its haptic qualities. Ater argues that “the tactile and the sensate” are pivotal to feeling the emotional and poetic depth of the memorial.(8) The memorial currently has a smaller accompanying sign instructing viewers to not touch, sit, or stand on the monument. This addendum, to protect the memorial from damage or vandalism, points out the structure’s precarious life on the campus. Ater catalogs two responses to the memorial after its dedication in 2014, in a student newsletter by Malana Krongelb and Justice Gaines, who assert that:

This memorial glosses over the experiences of Black people and instead privileges the perspective of white slave owners and beneficiaries of the trade. It twists the slavery narrative as only meaningful for capital gain: in this case, Brown’s financial foundation. The Slavery Memorial thereby silences the humanity, culture, and resistance present among Black communities in Slavery-era Rhode Island. It ignores the presence of Black members of the Brown community today, perpetuating how this predominantly white institution has produced centuries of silence.(9)

Historian Christy Clark-Pujara concludes her volume *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* with observations on the memorial at Brown as well: "Throughout the volume Pujara makes clear and critical connections of institutions in Rhode Island whose security stems directly from the trans-Atlantic trade. Regarding Brown University and the language surrounding Puryear's sculpture she claims that "it [the memorial plaque] does not indicate how common slaveholding was, record the continued investments in the business of slavery during the nineteenth century, or trace the legacies of those practices and investments." (10) The call Pujara eventually makes is for a continued act of public commemoration: "Through these responses, I feel that Puryear's *Slavery Memorial* works more to represent Brown University's current contention in retouching the afterlives of slavery that shape the campus."

This idea of continued public commemoration is the impetus of the Toni Morrison Society *A Bench By The Road* memorial project, which began in 2006. The society, formed in 1993, is an established author society within the American Literature Association. While Morrison herself held no official leadership role within the organization's formation, after her receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, this group of scholars quickly expanded outside of its twenty-six original members. (11)

The bench project gleans its name and aim from an interview Morrison conducted with *World Magazine* in 1989. The novel *Beloved* was at its critical public reception, as Morrison had also received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988. In the interview, Morrison details the relationships of her novels to memorials. She states:

There is no place you or I can go, to think about or not think about, to summon the presences of, or recollect the absences of slaves . . . There is no suitable memorial, or plaque, or wreath, or wall, or park, or skyscraper lobby. There's no 300-foot tower, there's no small bench by the road. There is not even a tree scored, an initial that I can visit or you can visit in Charleston or Savannah or New York or Providence or better still on the banks of the Mississippi. And because such a place doesn't exist (that I know of) the book had to. But I didn't know that before or while I wrote it. I can see now what I was doing on the last page. I was finishing the story, transfiguring and disseminating the haunting with which the book begins. Yes, I was doing that; but I was also doing something more. I think I was pleading for that wall or that bench or that tower or that tree when I wrote the final words. (12)



Jonathan Mark Jackson, Robbins House Bench, 2021

Since 2006, the Toni Morrison Society has placed 25 benches at sites (cultural museums, colleges, parks, etc), "commemorating significant moments, individuals, and locations within the history of the African Diaspora." (13) Since discovering the project, I have visited and photographed four of the benches. These have been located in Concord, Massachusetts (adjacent to the home of Caesar Robbins), the Walden Woods in Lincoln, Massachusetts, in Nyack, New York (placed in commemoration of Cynthia Hesdra), and in New Bedford, Massachusetts at the home of Nathan and Polly Johnson, free Black abolitionists who housed Frederick Douglass after his initial escape from Maryland. The broad scope of the bench placements has created a regional map or catalog of Black geographies. The project, like Puryear's monument, forms two questions for my practice, relating to the sensate: First, perhaps, is creative work and the intellectual rendering of the histories of slavery through scholarship a "suitable memorial"? If it is through absence, and practices of narrative restraint in the historic retelling, that Morrison forms her compelling fiction, how do I produce work that deconstructs the historical narrative and figures it as an open space for reinterpretation? The second question relates to the action of journeying to these benches: are memorials of Black culture more sensorially effective if you do not know "where" they are there? The benches I have journeyed to in the northeast are off the beaten path. For example, in Walden Woods, the bench is tucked deep away from view along a footpath sequenced with notable historical quotes laid into granite rock. This walk creates a purgatory of disparate historical figures, rather than vocalizing the community of enslaved Blacks that existed in Concord specifically. In New Bedford, the bench is placed very discreetly in the backyard of the Johnson house - New Bedford's historical society. Walking up to it feels like entering someone's private backyard. In Nyack, the bench is placed quietly in a riverside park.

The answer to the first sub-question (What work constitutes the "suitable memorial"? And how to produce work that deconstructs the structure of historical narrative?) can be approached by reexamining Michel Rolph Trouillot's phase system of Historicity 1 and 2. The interspace between what happened and that which is said to have happened possesses an extreme amount of ambiguity. The existence of this ambiguity connects to Spiller's warning of the halting (death) caused by memorials or commemorative gestures. If historical ambiguity is sealed, the stage for future historical narratives collapse. In my pursuit to find and photograph each bench in the region, I feel that I am engaging with the memorial in a process that runs counter to the Society's intention.

Perhaps the benches are not meant to create a collective cartography that invites tourism, but instead is trying to honor Morrison's call for quiet. The benches work to silently name absent presence. The route for Morrison to this quiet rumination was her fiction. My photographs align with Trouillots statement that his work, "fully embraces the ambiguity inherent in the two sides of historicity." (14) This leads me to form another question based in the destroyed meeting house: how can my photographs simultaneously retell the narrative of the Meeting House, and retouch the stage of historical possibility for such a site?

The third memorial site that I have been concerned with connects to these questions of ambiguity and fictionalization. Off South Egremont road in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a large burgundy sign directs visitors to the "boyhood" homesite of W.E.B. Du Bois. As noted in the first section of this document, Du Bois was born in Great Barrington in 1868. He was raised by his mother, Mary Silvinia Burghardt inside the home of her parents on Egremont road. The Burghardts were descendants of enslaved members of Dutch colonial settlements within New York, and had settled into the region of Great Barrington in the nineteenth century. Du Bois left his home at seventeen in 1885 to pursue his first Bachelors degree at Fisk University. Du Bois' early life is marked by racial relations in the period after the Civil War, his own multi-racial ancestry, and his deep connections to nature in New England. In the 1920's Du Bois began inquiring through directories to purchase the house of his grandfather, Othello Burghardt, which had fallen out of ownership from the family. Two letters held in the University of Massachusetts Amherst archive of Du Bois' correspondence showcase this interest. First on July 17th, 1925 he wrote to request the contact information of distant relatives that may possess ownership of his grandfather's house. After a return visit to Great Barrington that Summer to review the property, Du Bois contacted the current owner on September 1st, 1925 to make his case.

Great Barrington

[Great Barrington, MA.]

July 17, 1925

The Recorder of Deeds
Great Barrington, Mass.

Sir:

5/12/62

Will you kindly inform me who is the owner of the property on Egremont Plain which a long while ago belonged to my grandfather, Othello Burghardt and then afterwards to John Piper. I have been informed that it now belongs to another branch of the family named Wooster. At any rate I should like to have the name and address of the owner and if possible some description of the property. I should be glad to pay any charge.

Very sincerely yours,

WRGD/KF

September 1, 1925.

Mr. Edward Wooster,
129 Orleans Street,
Springfield, Mass.

My dear Edward:

5/25/77
You will probably receive inquiries from several sources concerning the sale of the old Burghardt place on Egremont Plain. They all come from me. I saw that there was a sign on it saying that it was for sale some time ago, but could not find who the owner was. I consulted two or three real estate agents who said they would find out. Meantime I learned that you were the owner and on your visit to Great Barrington you confirmed it.

I have a sentimental desire to keep this place which was the home of my grand father, the birth place of my mother and the place that I remember in my earliest childhood. On the other hand it would be impossible for me to pay much for it as I am trying to buy an apartment house in Harlem and have almost no spare funds.

I write to ask what the smallest price would be that you would consider

for the sale of the property. Of course
the house is almost fallen down, but I
should like to try and restore it. Also
let me know the most favorable terms of a
sale. I should be glad to hear from you.
My best regards to the family.

Very sincerely yours,

WEBB/PF

5/25/78

Du Bois' roots in his impulse to re-secure his grandfather's property in a "sentimental desire". In 1928, Joel and Arthur Springarn raised funds to purchase the homestead and gifted the site to Du Bois on his sixtieth birthday. In that same year, Du Bois published a short article in *The Crisis*, titled "The House of the Black Burghardts". Its ending paragraph emphasizes the deeply rooted nostalgia he felt for the space, and in it he writes:

Whereat in great joy I celebrated another birthday and drew plans. And from its long hiding-place I brought out an old black pair of tongs. Once my grandfather, and mayhap his, used them in the great fireplace of the House. Long years I have carried them tenderly over all the earth. The sister shovel, worn in holes, was lost. But when the old fireplace rises again from the dead on Egremont Plain, its dead eyes shall see not only the ghosts of old Tom and his son Jack and his grandson Othello and his great grandson, me - but also the real presence of these iron tongs resting again in the fire worship in the House of the Black Burghardts.(17)

After reading these highly sentimental thoughts and stewing on the mental image of Du Bois' hearth and tongs, I began visiting the marked-off land of Du Bois' youth on my journeys to Ashley House in Sheffield. Du Bois owned the property from 1928 to 1954, and made plans to renovate and preserve the structure on its grounds. However, after falling on financial hardship, Du Bois sold the property again and the home was deconstructed by the next owner. Throughout the later half of the twentieth century, the land was shuffled between owners, was designated a National Historic Landmark, and turned over to the University of Massachusetts Amherst for archaeological study. In 2009, three organizations (the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the African American Heritage Trail) collaborated to produce plans for the preservation of the Burghardt land as well as designing an interpretive walking tour across Great Barrington which catalogs significant spaces to Du Bois' adolescence.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Du Bois Trees*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5, 2021

Du Bois, who died in 1963 at the age of ninety-five, would never see the project completed. The entire project is described as a 'living memorial', and expands Du Bois' nostalgic quest to catalog and represent the historical significance of the community he was raised in during the reconstruction era. The physical site on Egremont road dedicates most of its signage to archaeological artifacts recovered within the land relating to the Burghardts. After weaving through the cut paths, the viewer ends at a raised wooden platform. Around this platform is orange construction tape that outlines the original shape of the Burghardt house. I arrived and photographed this spot. The tape had fallen out of shape, I enjoyed the simplicity of its demarcation. More effective than this outlining, is the accidental memorial created by a thicket of dying cedars encasing the park. I have returned to photograph these trees in different seasons, and continue to be struck by their dramatic display. To me, their criss-crossing lines perhaps represents Du Bois' mixed relationality, and the gradual effects of time on natal connection. Soon, I speculate, the stewards of the site will work to clear and replant the trees. I hope that they do not.

Underpinning each of these gestures, in varying degrees, is an assertion of permanence. Memorials are unsettling to my mind for the ways that they can halt or silence ongoing dialogues of the effects of slavery. The difference between these memorial case examples and my own work lies in this permanent temporal assertion, and through an awareness of how silences have shaped the dominant practice of archiving slavery, I feel that the photographs I produce are permeable archival material rather than fixed. I embrace the ambiguity of the "afterimages" and meanings each photograph acquires as they extend away from me. In *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*, scholar Kimberley Juanita Brown defines the afterimage as "the figurative register of what gets left over when the eye no longer has the image before it." (18) While all of my photographs work to expand my own understanding of temporality within historical narrative, the prompting (conjuring) of afterimages is the central intent of my work in the aggregate *Rememory* volume. The book takes up the task of sequencing thirty-seven photographs, at a variety of sizes, with six concrete language pieces. As I described through the preceding Black memorial spaces, the operative function of language is to prompt meaning within the mute object. In my book, photographs and language share the same sonic qualities, suggesting that meanings, definitions, and stories built by the sequence are permeable.

In *Dream House* I noted that the large scale installations of my photographs possess specific sensorial guides. As a book Rememory extends these sensorial prompts within a private viewing, mimicking the kind of observative hunt one must enact within an institutional archive. The five short lists that appear between groupings of photographs, prompt a viewer of the book to search internally within the photographs for the named objects or gestures. These lists name both absent and present images. This active searching for a punctum or phantom is a gesture that I argue opens space for imagining historical possibilities; narratives that couldn't be written. Elements of this sequencing also alert the viewer to the fact that, even within my careful working methods, history is still working actively around each image. In this way, the book aligns with Trouillot's awareness that in any historical narrative, "someone else has already entered the scene and set the cycle of silences." (19) The interstitial lists read:

"a bed - a rope - a scale"

"a crawl - a scrape - a moon"

"a chain - a leap - a blow"

"a cross - a stream - a rest"

"a stone - a knot - a voice"

In the book, these lists are separated spatially by type-face justification, equally spacing words from one another to set margins. Through this separation viewers can read and interpret the lists both horizontally and vertically. While building the books sequence, I assigned myself the prompt of distilling and finding specific nouns and verbs that resonate with the 19th century language utilized in runaway slave advertisements. As Lorenzo J. Greene notes in *The New England Negro as Seen in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves*, "In them [the advertisement] the historian may find valuable bits of information bearing upon the nomenclature, age, sex, stature, complexion, physical traits, personal traits, personal accomplishments and many other characteristics of the slave as a person." (20) What the advertisements seek to create, in as few words as possible, is an identifiable image that would live in the readers mind. In the past, I have reproduced fictional runaway slave advertisements that either place myself in the position of the runaway, or imbue the runaway with supernatural abilities, much like Glenn Ligon's sardonic series *Runaways* (1993). Here, however, I wanted to slow the signifying action of language to a glacial pace. Through the separation of words as well, the letter "a" becomes a mysterious determiner. The letter's announcement expands the concept of the word that follows, for example, "a cross" becomes a kind of double-entendre, signifying all at once the symbolic christian cross, intersections of roads, and the preposition of "across."

The second textual guide stems from the titles of the photographs themselves. Located on the last page of the book, this list becomes a key to return to the photographs in reverse order. In my imaging, I believe that the shorter text triplets prepare the viewer to encounter this longer list. The justified list of plates becomes a poly symbolic echo of historic accounting records, ledgers, archival finding aids, and keys of maps. The lateral spill and separation of the words themselves becomes an image, mimicking a nervous system transposing blood through invisible veins. I owe inspiration of this simple textual design to M. NourbeSe Philip, whose seminal work *Zong!* activates a textual interstitial space through the recovery and fabulation of the legal case regarding the drowning of 130 African captives aboard the slave ship "Zong". Like Hartman's interpolation of *Venus*, Philip's recontextualizes the silenced voices by deconstructing the legal case. Through this deconstruction, Philip's evades the prescriptive signifiers that historical narrative can possess, in the postscript section titled *Notanda* they state, "it is so instinctive, this need to impose meaning: this is the generating impulse of, and towards, language, isn't it - to make and, therefore, to communicate, meaning? How did they - the Africans on board the *Zong* - make meaning of what was happening to them? What meaning did they make of it and how did they make it mean? This story that must be told; that can only be told by not telling." (21) Through *Zong!* I can return to my initial example regarding the African Union Meeting and School House. The danger I feel in memorializing the space revolves around this imposition of meaning. Like Philip's, an approach to figuring or imaging the Meeting House could be to accept its destruction and craft a narrative through untelling. Rememory the volume has set a precedent in my work now to think through how photographs and language can untell the historical narratives ever present in the contemporary.

Notes

1. Hortense J. Spillers, "The Idea of Black Culture," University of Waterloo Department of English, March 19th, 2013, video, 1:25:36, link
2. The "business of slavery" is terminology by scholar Christy Clark-Pujara in *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*, formed in relationship to historian Ira Berlin's contrasting "slave society" versus a "society with slaves." Clark-pujara expands, "In a slave society, slave labor was essential to the economy, and slaveholders constituted the ruling class; in a society with slaves, slave labor was marginal to the overall economy, and slaveholders were part of but did not dominate the elite class," 25.
3. Moses Brown A short history of the African Union Meeting and School-House: erected in Providence (R.I.) in the years 1819, '20, '21; with rules for its future government, ca. 1821. (Moses Brown Papers, MS 930, Special collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.)
4. William J. Brown *The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, Rhode Island, with Personal recollections of the Incidents in Rhode Island* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2006), 47.
5. Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, "Slavery, The Slave Trade, and Brown University" 2006, 12-13.
6. "Martin Puryear, Slavery Memorial" Brown University, accessed March 1st, 2022, link
7. Brown Report, 17-20.
8. Renée Ater, "Tactility, Memory Work, and Martin Puryear's Slavery Memorial" in Brown University's Slavery and Justice Report, with commentary on context and impact, 2021, 31.
9. *Ibid.*, 31.
10. Christy Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 154

11. "Society History," The Toni Morrison Society, accessed March 1st, 2022, link
12. Toni Morrison, Melcher Book Award acceptance speech, World Magazine 1989, UUWorld, accessed March 1st, 2022, link
13. "Bench By the Road Project," The Toni Morrison Society, accessed March 1st, 2022, link
14. Trouillot, 23.
15. Du Bois Umass archive.
16. Du Bois Umass archive.
17. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Crisis*, "The House of the Black Burghardts."
18. Kimberley Juanita Brown, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 13.
19. Trouillot, 26.
20. Greene, Lorenzo J. "The New England Negro as Seen in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves." *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 2 (1944): 125–46.
21. Philip, M. NourbeSe. *Zong!* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. 194.

Afterlife

What were you praying for, ma'am?

Not for anything, I don't pray anymore. I just talk.

What were you talking about?

You wont understand, baby.

Yes, I will!

I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on, Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place - the picture of it - stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened.

Can other people see it? Asked Denver.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm - every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there - you who never was there - if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over - over and done with - it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what.

Denver picked at her fingernails. If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies. She looked right in Denver's face. Nothing ever does.(1)

This dialogue between mother and daughter, which occurs within the first few moments of *Beloved*, is one of the most significant passages in all of Morrison's fiction. The passage begins with the abandonment of prayer for rumination. Sethe, the novel's protagonist, confronts and reorders her memory of enslavement, escape, and recapture over the span of the novel. She is haunted physically by the fleshed ghost of her eldest daughter, whom she murdered in a moment of possible recapture back into slavery. Throughout the novel however, Sethe is largely haunted by her own memory. She describes, in the preceding passage, the uncontrollable slip into memory which allows a hunger for answers and clarity to take over her imagination. In this passage, Morrison creates the term rememory. Sethe is warning her daughter not to seek out the past she has lived, but it is this kind of seeking that allows Morrison, the author, to craft the narrative. The "thought picture" Morrison describes through Sethe here is not one that is directly photographic, rather, the phrase figures a mirrored world, where the past gets plotted out in a storyboard. The compelling thrust of rememory is its immortality. Morrison writes about this collecting and recollecting of nonphysical images in a pivotal speech, later published as an essay titled, *The Site of Memory*, she writes:

if I'm looking to find and expose a truth about the interior life of people who didn't write it (which doesn't mean that they didn't have it); if I'm trying to fill in the blanks that the slave narratives left - to part the veil that was so frequently drawn, to implement the stories that I heard - then the approach that's most productive and most trustworthy for me is the recollection that moves from the image to the text. Not from the text to the image.(2)

Throughout the novel, interior space, architecture, and the landscape operate as venues to access the thought-pictures of the characters. Knowing now that the novel was written consecutively with a play informs its central stage like structure; each outside place is mapped onto the central stage of the house on 124 Bluestone road. The characters move discreetly through dialogue as pairs or trios. Moments of conflict occur whenever more than three characters meet at cross purposes. Morrison rarely defines her characters with clear physical description. In novels published after *Beloved*, Morrison makes a direct effort to conceal the racial description of her characters. In my reading, the refusal to describe characters allows for my imagination to run wild with how they may appear. In the beginning quoted passage, I see Sethe and Denver very clearly. How, through this minimalism, do the characters within the novel appear so alive?



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Parents*, 2021

In this essay, I have explored how domestic space, the natural landscape, and the imagining of the dead have shaped my imagination. Following my invitation to an audience of the “still forgotten,” I want to conclude this text by examining how my work shifts through the introduction of “characters” and their lively presence. I track the appearance of characters through three select photographs of people in space. I compare my working methods to photographer Deana Lawson’s and extend observations on the sonic possibilities of photographs with the theoretical penning of Fred Moten.

My parents drove to Rhode Island for a weekend visit just before Thanksgiving in 2021. We had not seen each other in nearly two years. Their itinerary was split between touring my current living situation and visiting my father’s relatives in East Providence. I gave them a tour I thought they’d enjoy, driving them through the routes I walk daily. As we drove, my father pointed out homes that my relatives had lived in before, making me think again about the photographic presence of my grandfather in this town. Although they had been to Providence before, they had never been downtown. After a morning looking around, I drove them to Newport and we walked the streets brisk with ocean air.

A moment before we settled back into my car, I asked if I could photograph them in a small park - Ellery Park on Thames Street. They obliged, assuming I think that I may take a photograph with my phone or a point and shoot digital camera. When I carried over my unfolded 8x10 camera, they were stunned. A portal opened to us in the park, and transitioned us into a different kind of relationship. As I noted in *Persona*, I believe that portraiture administers a kind of internal revelation. I made two exposures during this moment. The first captured a ‘pose’ they had set themselves in. A pose they must have learned over years of weddings and ceremonies. They stood tightly together, my father holding my mother around her waist. She turned herself slightly inward toward his chest, and placed a hand on his heart as they smiled very evenly.

After this moment, I asked them to take three steps away from each other, creating a cavity that revealed the trunk of the low tree behind them. Separated, they placed their hands in their pockets and watched me fix my focus. While guiding their breathing in and out, I made the second exposure. In this photograph, the revelation that their presence brings functions on multiple levels. I study quirks that I had known as characteristic of them for all my life. My mother has sensitive eyes, and keeps a pair of sunglasses on her person at all times. She often forgets that she's placed them in her hair. My father has an affinity for trendy shoes, tracking down sneakers in various secondary markets. On the surface, they still very much feel like my parents. However, the second reveal comes through with their presence as an image: looked at as if they were strangers to me, without the knowledge of my presence or relation, a viewer experiences two individuals photographed in a park without rhyme or reason. Their proximity may suggest that they are a couple, or that some intimacy flows between them, but the physical distance between them clouds that intimacy.

Without my clarification, the key difference between them is fictively racial. Viewers may form total meaning in the slight distance between a 'white' woman and a Black man. The complications, and looseness, of these surface readings connect to ideas about character description in fiction. In Morrison's work almost no characters - aside from the very first novel and her last - are physically described in detail. What does a viewer actually learn when confronted with just the surface of a person? Although I form specific meanings through the knowledge I possess about my parents as figures - for example, that they are both 'mixed' race stemming across several ethnic groups - when they are sequenced into the larger project of my work, amongst objects, the surface meanings of their portrait adds further elements to help orient a viewer's imagination. Between them is not only just an unknown relationship, but a growing contemporary historical narrative. Their figures perform in tandem with the still lives of objects, in orienting a viewer towards an imagined scenario.

After photographing my parents, I began to have a series of conversations with them individually about photographs. I picked photographs out of the small collection of family pictures I have in my possession, in which I could place the time to a period before my birth. I would then scan, or rephotograph these images and share them with my parents. The exchange around the picture, of simply asking "Do you remember when this was?", produced conversations of the recent past with very lucid memories. One photograph prompted a long conversation between my mother and I. The photograph captures my mother, pregnant with myself, and holding my one year old elder sister. She stands in the center of the frame, in front of a pulled over Ford Explorer SUV. My mother recounted the image in detail: It was the Summer of 1996, and my parents had driven to Rhode Island to visit my father's relatives. After their visit, the three of them drove to spend a few days at a beach in either Virginia or South Carolina. (My mother could not remember if it was Virginia Beach or Myrtle Beach). Throughout this straight forward story, she slips into retelling other photographs from this Summer that I don't have at hand. I usher her back to the pulled over Ford. She remembers that they had driven down a small gravelly road to fix a flat tire. As my father changes the tire, a truck, with shotguns strung up in its bed, passes them. My mother states that, while nothing happened, They just looked at us, she said, nevertheless the look of two white men with guns triggered a flight response in my parents. We went on talking about other photographs, but I was struck by this memory. The threat of death to Black life, Black family, reappeared in a random photograph. In my mother's own retelling, she quickly, nonchalantly, moves on to other topics.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Tāliq*, archival inkjet print, 52.5 x 42 inches, 2020.

Earlier in *Dream House*, I wrote about how the photograph *Taliq* functioned in relation to *Manacle*. Here I want to tell the image's backstory. I met my second cousin Taliq in the same vibrant October when I made my first trips to the Ashley House. We had little to no association with each other as adolescents. Our intersection in Providence - Taliq's real hometown, and my historical hometown - made me think about the tractability of family. Sharing great grandparents still creates a palpable sense of connection. We bore, to each other, a striking resemblance. I sent my father a photograph of us on the lawn we settled at and he said we looked like brothers. This resemblance is not the core of the image, and is not where our meeting stopped. Over the afternoon we discussed our shared interests in historical narratives, what we had researched as undergraduates in relation to our family. I felt like the character Paul D., who in *Beloved* is orphaned in adulthood through the sale and death of his brothers. Once freed, Paul D. travels, on foot, into different states. Morrison writes, "each time he discovered large families of Black people he made them identify over and over who each was, what relation, who in fact belonged to who." (3) In addition to the information we shared with one another, I believe that our sense of connection was also aided by the site of the photograph. We met on the lawn of the Nightingale-Brown House on Benefit Street. Formerly the home of Colonel Joseph Nightingale (dates), the mansion is now home to the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage. The house is one of the many historic properties on Benefit street where enslaved labor flowed. Joseph Nightingale owned several slaves between his mansion and his merchant business with John Innes Clark. In a report by scholar Joanne Pope Melish, the details of Nightingales participation in the business of slavery are brought to light. However, regarding Nightingales local influence on owning and selling slaves, Melish writes that:

While we can identify a number of other men and women of color in and around Providence with the surname Nightingale whose activities were recorded in town records, business accounts, and private correspondence between 1769 and 1862, all almost certainly slaves, former slaves, or children of former slaves of Samuel [Nightingales father], Joseph, Samuel Jr. or Clark & Nightingale, we cannot single out the black Nightingales who were originally claimed by Joseph and received their surname from him. (4)

On the afternoon of our meeting, Taliq and I temporally overlapped with these unnamed Black Nightingales. Like children set loose, we explored corners of the lawn, and staged a moment for our bodies to perform the connection of fissured familial ties. I guided Taliq through slow movements, photographing him lifting his palms in the same gesture of *Double Figure*. As a character within the work, Taliq shifts the sequence away from heavily personified objects and spaces to a fleshly rendering of the still forgotten. Thinking as well about Morrison's restraint from racial description, the obscuring of Taliq's face subtly emphasizes a concept of "mulato-dom." Without a gaze fixing me and my camera, the gaze of the camera falls onto the skin. In relation to the solid deep black of iron tools, or the shadowy tones of tree bark, the figure of Taliq introduces that some black skin can only exist through racial mixing. In addition to this attention, the photograph includes two light leaks at the top of the frame. These were caused by two small cracks in the protective covering of my large format film holders. This small fracturing, like the visual movement within my self-capture photographs, figures a mystical truth about light. The blue white marks double the light within the frame. It is the same sunlight that is warming Taliq's body, and it is the same sunlight that would have illuminated the Black Nightingales in shadow.

The photograph *Priest* echoes the guiding gesture of Taliq's hands. In the Fall of 2021, I was invited by a member of the Unbound Bodies Collective to attend and photograph an Egggun procession that would move from the Historic Strand theater, to the North Burying Ground in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The ceremonial walk, led by interdisciplinary artist Ife Franklin, ended with a ring-shout at the graves of three enslaved figures: Betty, Ann, and Cambridge, who were owned by Antiqua plantation owner Robert Oliver (5). Upon arriving, I asked Franklin's permission to photograph her centrally throughout the ceremony, she agreed but pointed to my clothes, "It's good, you're half in and half out."

Practitioners of the ceremony wear all white, and I had arrived in a white shirt and denim. As the ceremony started, I felt the split. I was present to observe, but when the rounds of "Believer, I know" began, I sang with the group in a meek baritone. In the photograph *Priest*, Franklin is teaching the group the lyrics of the song. I was enraptured by the palpable presences within the shadows of bodies cast onto the red brick building behind her. In the photograph, modern urban Blackness edges the spiritual and historic. The ceremony started an hour before sunset, and as we walked the quarter mile to the burial ground, heavy Boston traffic flowed through the streets. Across the street from the group a woman, in a white cocktail dress, yelled "That's the old church!" and did a dance. The photographs from the event leave me with the bittersweet memory of being half in and half out. As a character, Franklin's form and the shadows around her call to the nameless invoked in the ceremony, making the photographs of this moment highly vocal.



Jonathan Mark Jackson, *Priest*, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52.5 inches, 2021

Through reflecting on the impetus to engage in portraiture and sound, I also feel a photo-memory tremor in realizing that both engagements revolve around the image and voice of my mother. In the essay *Black Mo'nin'*, poet and cultural theorist Fred Moten reforms the Barthesian invocation of the silent, or disappeared mother, through a recursive reading and listening to the open-casket, highly publicized, photograph of a massacred Emmett Till. Moten argues that the publicized photograph of Till beckons "dissonant, polyphonic affectivity of the ghost" (6). Within the photographs aural aesthetic, and the aural reflexivity of *mo'nin'*, Moten writes that, "Something is remembered and repeated in such complications. Transferred. To move or work through that something, to improvise, required thinking about morning and how mourning sounds, how moaning sounds." (7) I view my engagement with sound as a doubling, or echo, of the sonic character already present within my photographs. Moten contextualizes the post-mortem performance of Mamie Till Bradley, Till's mother, who chose to have an open casket wake:

That leaving open is a performance. It is the disappearance of the disappearance of Emmett Till that emerges by way of exhibiting what Mackey calls "wounded kinship"... It is the ongoing destruction of the ongoing production of (a) (black) performance, which is what I am, which is what we are or could be if we can listen while we look. If he [Till] seems to keep disappearing as we look at him, it's because we look away, which is what makes possible and impossible representation, reproduction, and dream. And there is a sound that seemingly is not there in this performance, which this performance is about; but not just a sound, since also we are concerned with that sound would invoke - immortal or utopian longings, though not the utopianism of a past made present, not the recover of a loss, and not just a negation of the present either, in the form of an ongoing displacement of the concrete. Rather, here is an abundance - in abundance - of the present, and abundance of affirmation in abundance of the negative, in abundance of disappearance.(8)

Motens' reasoning here is that an apparent function of black figural portrayal is to enact the fact of disappearance. Thinking back on Morrison's erased play, *Dreaming Emmett*, I return to the idea that photographs collapse liveness. My parent's double portrait renders them as already gone.

After my mother and I discussed the roadside photograph, she sent an image that she and my father had been discussing just that day. She described it as her “absolute favorite” picture. The photograph is another small glossy print. My father is the photographer here, and he crops my mother slightly out of the frame, centering my sister - who is smiling, aware of being pictured - and myself. The picture is made possibly two weeks after my birth in October. When I asked my mother why this photograph was her favorite, she expressed that the feeling it imbues is tied to the memory of being able to hold both my sister and I in her arms. She expressed the pride of that bodily action. She also noted that it appeals to her because her face - one closed or downward cast eye is shown - is slightly obscured. Her leaning out of the frame, and her continued aversion to being photographed, may be a lean away from disappearance. Disappearance into the world of the image.

I asked my mother to scan a copy of this photograph, and as her own project, she scanned several of her favorite photographs on their home flatbed scanner. She arranged the cut cropped glossy prints into horizontal and vertical diptychs. Creating vacuous white space between the various baby pictures (all of her favorites are when we are babies). In the scan of her “absolute favorite” she places the adored photograph in the top right corner, and in the middle of the scanning bed, another picture of my newborn self. I am laid on a hamper covered with a blue and white knit blanket.



Mothers diptych, 1996-2022

These diptychs, our conversation, Moten's sonic renderings, Morrison's maternal memory scenes, and the double portrait photograph of my parents, have me considering that perhaps one of the afterlives of American racial slavery is the lively function, and hyper-personal attachment, Black individuals have on photographs and photographic culture. The preeminent artist I think about this through is Deana Lawson. The collected portrait and environmental photographs within her three monographs and notable exhibitions expand the performativity that Moten calls the "life-drama-trauma of blackness" (9) In addition to this, Tina Campt describes encountering Lawson's photographs as thunderous:

Lawson's giant prints meet you eye-to-eye. To view them is to engage in a face-to-face dialogue and be challenged to withstand the force of their penetrating stares. Eschewing the historically elevating function of portraiture to cast its subjects as superior to others, Lawson's images render her subjects as equals. They are photographs that invert the normal rules of spectatorship and spectacularity. Rather than viewing them, we are viewed by these subjects instead. Rather than scrutinizing them, they scrutinize us, and we are captured in an inscrutable and inscrutably powerful Black gaze.(10)

Upon a planned venture to view Lawson's retrospective exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston - the largest aggregate grouping of her photographs to date - I was nervous. I was nervous to encounter the thunderous voices of the photographs, and nervous to feel the "collective head" of their grouping. In retrospect, I believe that I was also nervous to encounter the subject's gone-ness. To feel that figurative absence on an international scale.

As our group of graduate students, and exhibition stragglers, slowly followed curator Eva Respini through the exhibition I was antsy to be separated from the flock. I needed to see each photograph one by one, and deal with each one on its individual terms. This kind of viewing was impossible with the time allotted, and impossible with the amount of people in the space. I viewed as much as I could, and became fitful. Something childish was coming out of me. I left the exhibition after several passes, and then viewed, in an adjacent gallery, Boston based artist Dell M. Hamilton's installation *The End of Susan, The End of Everything*. Hamilton reinstalled the willed archive of art historian Susan Denker, into an exhibition. The collected archive of Black cultural production (artist monographs, novels, poetry volumes, slide photographs, historical textbooks, films, records, cds), right next to Lawson's exhibition, seemed to really contain "everything".

I will read three of Lawson's photographs that stage figures moving in between life and death. In interviews from the 2010's Lawson continually states her interest in birth and funereal photographs. The two transition stages of life - beginning and end - form a polarity within Lawson's oeuvre that each subsequent portrait falls in between. When seeing my own sleeping baby portrait, I thought immediately of Lawson's photograph *Adorah* (2008), which was made at a funeral of a still born baby. In Lawson's Light Work catalog, Contact Sheet Issue 154, titled *Corporeal*, *Adorah* is sequenced near the end of the book. The book begins with a photograph of a live baby being born, titled *The Beginning* (2008). The ghost within the photograph of *Adorah*, like that of the manifestation of the figure "Beloved", is the projection of what the child's life could have been. It is life cut short for one that had no say in its liveliness or death. Made in the same funeral home, the portrait of Charles Garland titled *Director* (2008) figures the funeral home as an interstitial space of purgatory. The funeral director, as Lawson has stated, acts as an Anubis figure; the Egyptian mythological transporter of souls between life and death.(11)

Director lives uniquely in Lawson's grander body of work, as it is one of the few photographs that centralizes a male figure. It is also one of the few figures where the sitter's morphological Blackness is in question. I do not view Lawson's work as embodying utopic sentiments, however the aggregate of visibly Black figures does conjure historical images of all Black post-emancipation (disappeared or destroyed) towns in the southern and western United States. Lawson's travels to and imagery of west and central Africa, as well as the Caribbean islands, connects these historical images with all black diasporic nations. *Director* becomes a figure that is split between these various nations, and is split between life and death.



Deana Lawson, *Adorab*, 2008



Deana Lawson, *Director*, 2008



Deana Lawson, *Monetta Passing*, 2021

In *Monetta Passing* (2021) Lawson returns to the stage of the funeral, and conjures that passage of death as a move into the cosmological. The deceased has been laid on a deep purple satin bed, and dressed in dark indigo. Beside her, a man grieves but stares directly into the lens of Lawson's camera. His head is tattooed with a compass enclosed in a circle. Perhaps the tattoo references the bakongo cosmogram; the ancient Kongo symbol that figures life and death moving circularly between the physical and spiritual world. All of the angles within the photograph's composition lead to the giant circular standing funeral spray. A closed wreath of white, purple, and pink blooms. The wreath mimics constellation formations of a supernova. In this photograph, the figuration of death does not push the body of the deceased to become a deified figure, but aligns the body with deep space. Connoting that the passing is a movement back into raw, pre-earthly, astral material. In a conversation with poet Tracy K. Smith, Lawson states that this turn to the cosmological, connects Black subjectivity to the ongoing global climate crisis.(12) Lawson's portraits - of the living and the deceased - proctor new caretakers for the planet. Her subjects become "conductors" in the underground of a magically real future.

There is a danger, I think, in trying to force out some truth about the photographs presented around this text. However much the interiority of the enslaved may remain elusive, I feel closer to those interior thoughts. Authoring these pages, and summarizing the processes formed in the past two years, has made me realize that the key takeaway I extend from this work is to truly understand what it means to think with and against the archive.(13) I cannot end these words disconsolately. As each of the writers, scholars, and artists that I learn from within this text suggest: there is magic in knowing.

My photobook begins with an epigraph from the last page of *Beloved*. Morrison has stated that the last page could have been the beginning of the novel, because it functions both as a conclusion and an opening of time.(14) The oft cited repeated phrases of, "It was not a story to pass on." and, "This is not a story to pass on." echo how I continue to think about historical narratives and the afterlives of slavery.(15) Even in death, Black life resists, subverts, shapeshifts, augments, vocalizes, ruptures, shouts, and guides clarity.

Perhaps the "something more familiar" moving behind the photograph of a loved one is the ever shifting presence or scar of the wounding past. The photographs, for my consciousness, embrace and salve this wound that will never fully heal. Just as the images are portals to the past, they are also visions of the future. Their materiality will exist beyond my fleshed life. There, in a future archive, the familiar eye looking out from within the picture floats, swims, and sinks, into the ineffable. Never arriving anywhere, but there, nonetheless, looking.

Notes

1. Morrison, 43-44.
2. Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory", in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 93-94.
3. Morrison, 258.
4. Joanne Pope Melish, *Black Labor at Nightingale Brown House*.
5. African American Trail Project, 17th century
6. Fred Moten, "Black Monin", in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 62.
7. *Ibid.*, 66.
8. *Ibid.*, 65.
9. *Ibid.*, 67.
10. Camp, 36.
11. Deana Lawson, International Center for Photography, The Photographers Lecture Series, March 28th, 2012, video, 1:03:12
12. Deana Lawson, Tracy K. Smith, Artforum: Artists on Writers, Writers on Artists, November 17th, 2021, video, 54:55
13. Hartman, 12.
14. Hay Festival, Toni Morrison talks to Peter Florence, November 4th, 2014, video, 1:06:32.
15. Morrison, 324.

Bibliography

African American Trail Project. "17th Century." Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://africanamerican-trailproject.tufts.edu/17th-centurygallery>.

"A Bench by the Road | UU World Magazine." Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/bench-road>.

"A Short History of the African Union Meeting and School-House: Erected in Providence (R.I.) in the Years 1819, '20, '21; with Rules for Its Future Government, ca. 1821." Accessed May 8, 2022. <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums930-b01-f027-i001>.

Art21. Carrie Mae Weems: "Roaming" | Art21 "Extended Play," 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI0R2qlRfps>.

Artforum. Deana Lawson and Tracy K. Smith: Artists On Writers | Writers On Artists, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkOgyks35co>.

Bachelard, Gaston, and M. Jolas. *The Poetics of Space*. New edition. Penguin Classics. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2014.

Baker, Russell, and William Zinsser, eds. *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. Rev. and Expanded ed., 1st Mariner books ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

"Black Labor at Nightingale-Brown House | Public Humanities | Brown University." Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://www.brown.edu/academics/public-humanities/about/history/black-labor-nightingale-brown-house>.

Bogues, Anthony, Cass Cliatt, and Allison M Levy. *Brown University's Slavery and Justice Report: With Commentary on Context and Impact*, 2021. <https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/sites/g/files/dprej1501/files/reports/BRW321-SlaveryandJustice-10-22-21.pdf>.

British Council Arts. *Artes Mundi 7*: John Akomfrah, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv7NNTC8sMQ>.

Brown, Kimberly Juanita. *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Camp, Tina. *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2021.

Clark-Pujara, Christy. *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*, 2018.

Cole, Teju. *Black Paper: Writing in a Dark Time*. The Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin Family Lectures. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Corrin, Lisa G. "Mining the Museum: An Installation Confronting History." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 36, no. 4 (December 1993): 302–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.1993.tb00804.x>.

Delmez, Kathryn E., and Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville, Tenn.), eds. Carrie Mae Weems: *Three Decades of Photography and Video*. Nashville, TN : New Haven: Frist Center for the Visual Arts ; In association with Yale University Press, 2012.

Du Bois, W. E. B., and Shawn Leigh Alexander. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Amherst: UMass Amherst Libraries ; Boston : University of Massachusetts Press, 2018.

Eng, David L., and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Gates, Henry Louis, and Anthony Appiah, eds. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Amistad Literary Series. New York: Amistad : Distributed by Penguin USA, 1993.

Gooden, Mario. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity*. New York, New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2016.

Greene, Lorenzo J. "The New England Negro as Seen in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves." *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 2 (April 1944): 125–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2715307>.

Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1>.

Hartman, Saidiya V. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*. 1. paperback edition. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008.

———. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Race and American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

International Center of Photography. ICP Lecture Series 2012: Deana Lawson, 2013. <https://vimeo.com/70583782>.

josh begley. Toni Morrison and Junot Díaz, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5kypjY-jSQ>.

Jr., Dickson D. Bruce. "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness." *American Literature* 64, no. 2 (June 1992): 299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2927837>.

"Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Edward Wooster, September 1, 1925." Accessed May 8, 2022. <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b031-i410>.

"Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to the Recorder of Deeds, Great Barrington, Mass., July 17, 1925." Accessed May 8, 2022. <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b029-i010>.

Life of William j. Brown, of Providence, r.i. Place of publication not identified: Nabu Press, 2010.

Lugo-Ortiz, Agnes I., and Angela Rosenthal, eds. *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

"Martin Puryear | Slavery Memorial | Public Art." Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://www.brown.edu/about/public-art/martin-puryear-slavery-memorial>.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Miles, Tiya, and Sharon Patricia Holland. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822388401>.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1st Vintage International ed. New York: Vintage International, 2004.

———. *Love*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2003.

———. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization 1990. London: Picador, 1993.

———. *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*. First edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019.

Moten, Fred. *Black and Blur. Consent Not to Be a Single Being*, v. [1]. Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2017.

Paynter, Robert. "Building an Historical Landscape, Commemorating W. E. B. Du Bois." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 18, no. 2 (2014): 316–39. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24572721>.

Philip, Marlene Nourbese, and Setaey Adamu Boateng. *Zong!*, 2011.

Piersen, William Dillon. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Puryear, Martin, Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Darby English, Anne Middleton Wagner, Tobi Haslett, N.Y.) Madison Square Park Conservancy (New York, United States, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Mission to Italy, and Biennale di Venezia. Martin Puryear: Liberty, Liberta,

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. "Slavery in New England." *Bentley's Miscellany*, Vol. 34, 1853, Pp. 417-24., 1853. <https://sedgwickstories.omeka.net/items/show/58>.

Simpson, Lorna, Joan Simon, Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, Jeu de paume (Gallery : France), and Haus der Kunst München, eds. Lorna Simpson. Munich ; New York: DelMonico Books, Prestel, 2013.

Spillers, Hortense J. "The Idea of Black Culture." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 6, no. 3 (2007): 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2007.0022>.

Stessin-Cohn, Susan, and Ashley Hurlburt-Biagini. In *Defiance: Runaways from Slavery in New York's Hudson River Valley, 1735-1831*. First edition paperback. Delmar, N.Y: Black Dome Press Corp, 2016.

ThamesTv. Toni Morrison Interview | American Author | Award Winning | Mavis on Four | 1988, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAqB1SgVaC4>.

"The Official Website of The Toni Morrison Society | Society History." Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://www.tonimorrisonociety.org/society.html>.

Town, Edward, Angela McShane, Glenn Adamson, and Yale Center for British Art, eds. *Marking Time: Objects, People, and Their Lives, 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2020.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, and Hazel V. Carby. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015.

University of Waterloo, Department of English. Hortense Spillers: The Idea of Black Culture, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1PTHFCN4Gc>.

Walcott, Rinaldo. *The Long Emancipation: Moving toward Black Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

The Collaborative. "What Happened to Toni Morrison's First Play?," January 22, 2020. <https://collaborativemagazine.org/2020/01/22/toni-morrison-dreaming-emmett-albany/>.

Williams, Rhaisa. "People Know Him by Name: Time, Justice, and Memory in Toni Morrison's *Dreaming Emmett*." *College Literature* 47, no. 4 (2020): 721–51. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2020.0037>.

Yale University. Hortense J. Spillers, "Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us," 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10haBLXN1r0>.

