Mournings and Uncertainties

Kyoung Kim

PhD in Art

Goldsmiths, University of London

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Kyoung Kim _____

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Abstract

This project makes available a language by which mourning can be expressed and explored as an epistemic concern and as an urgent matter to rethink politics in relation to difference. Through a situated, multidirectional investigation of its sensory, political, aesthetic, and psychoanalytic distributions, I claim that mourning—as the perceiving of alterity in relation to perceived 'loss'—produces a political subject exposed to uncertainty and the possibilities of community and 'moaning'. I propose 'moaning' as a mode of perceptual uncertain knowledge production. Engaging with Fred Moten's (2003) conceptualisation of 'black mo'nin'' in relation to postmortem photographs of Emmett Till, a black teenager who was lynched in 1955, I examine the socio-political stakes of moaning. Following Moten's attention to aesthetics as a political and epistemic concern, I formulate two modes of aesthetic perception: 'moaning aesthetics' as uncertain re-distributing perceiving of sights and sounds open to new political possibilities; and 'hegemonic aesthetics' as a closed, self-affirming cycle between hearing and seeing that disappears politics. I then ask: How, under conditions of political disappearance, might politics be regained by way of perception? Through re/analyses of and re/encounterings with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till in relation to 'lynching photographs' of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and four unidentified persons, and 'memento mori photographs' from James Van Der Zee's *The Harlem Book of the Dead* (1978) and the Thanatos Archive, I advance that moaning is critical for 'dis-appearing'—as in appearing new political subjectivities and possibilities from a condition of having been disappeared—and that perceiving political unknown, uncertain possibilities is politically vital.

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Introduction

On 17 July 2014 at about 3:30pm on a summer afternoon in Staten Island, Eric Garner, a 43-year-old, unarmed, black man, was approached on the pavement outside a store at 202 Bay Street by several New York City police officers and accused of illegally selling cigarettes. After he contested the charges with which they were attempting to arrest him, the police officers assaulted Garner in broad daylight. Of the four officers who attacked Garner, Officer Daniel Pantaleo placed him in a chokehold, an act that has been declared illegal across most of the United States, including New York, since the 1980s and 1990s (Fisher, 1993). As Garner called out 'I can't breathe', another police officer joined in pinning him down. Garner called out 'I can't breathe' eleven times before, within the space of less than one minute, he died.

I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

Why and how is it that the police officers did not perceive Garner's calling out 'I can't breathe' and hear:

He can't breathe.

Why and how did it happen that not only Pantaleo, but none of the other officers—Justin Damico and three police officers who have not been named in public sources—heard Garner's cries of 'I can't breathe' as genuine; as a cry coming from a living, breathing person, capable of being strangled, capable of dying; as 'He can't breathe'; as an urgent call to let go?

Here the matter was not about Garner's being silent, or about a physiological deafness on the part of the officers, or the officers silencing Garner, or Garner communicating in another language that the officers did not understand, such as German or Japanese. And yet, still, Garner was not heard. One conclusion that might be drawn is that Pantaleo was intent on killing Garner. However, if this possibility is suspended, or rather, if it is possible to suspend

this possibility,[1] and to accept that the police officers were not deaf, Garner was not silent, and Garner called out loudly and clearly in a language that was intelligible to them, then what happened?

Achille Mbembe's theorisation of the 'necropolitical' relationship between sovereignty, the state of exception, and biopower offers one way into this question (Mbembe, 2003). Mbembe describes sovereignty 'as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself)' (*ibid.*: 13, emphasis in the original). Quoting Georges Bataille, he writes that the 'sovereign world … "is the world in which the limit of death is done away with"' and that 'sovereignty requires "the strength to violate the prohibition against killing"' (*ibid.*: 16). Thus, 'the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die' (*ibid.*: 11). Mbembe puts forward that the sovereign exerts the strength 'to violate the prohibition against killing' on the order of Foucauldian 'biopower', which functions by 'dividing people into those who must live and those who must die' through racism, which 'presupposes the distribution of human species into groups' (*ibid.*: 16–17). 'In the economy of biopower', Mbembe writes, 'the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state. It is, [Foucault] says, "the condition for the acceptability of putting to death."' (*ibid.*: 17). Mbembe asserts, building on Carl Schmitt's work, that the sovereign sets the stage for exercising the right to kill with 'the power to decide on the state of exception'; by instituting a 'state of exception' that both suspends the normal rule of law and exceptionalises the sovereign from it, the sovereign sets the conditions by which it can kill without accountability to anyone/thing other than itself (*ibid.*: 23).

The sovereign's right to kill is made operational by reducing and flattening all human bodies and populations into commodities in the service of a closed, recursive 'instrumental rationality' (*ibid.*: 18, 20). Therefore, Mbembe writes that the sovereign exercise of 'necropower' aims 'at the eradication of the basic human condition of plurality' and of community, which 'implies the exercise of the power of speech and thought' (*ibid.*: 20, 21). 'Community' is not normatively defined here according to like or shared traits; instead, it signals towards political relations as interactions among non-like entities. Furthermore, whereas the metastructural logic of instrumentalisation swallows the need or possibility for forms of communication beyond the metastructure itself, relations among different and differentiated entities necessarily open up the possibility of communication as contingent, unanticipatable forms and modes of mediation, e.g. speech and thought, which mark, make, and are made possible by difference (see also Blanchot, 1982; Kristeva, 1989; Merleau-Ponty

[1] According to Pantaleo's defense lawyer, Stuart London, 'it was never [Pantaleo's] intention to injure or harm anyone' (Goodman and Wilson, 2014).

1984[1942], 2012[1945]; Nancy, 1991[1986]; Derrida, 1997, 2001, 2007[1999]). Mbembe's understanding of the relation between community, difference, and communication echoes that of, among others, Donna Haraway, who writes that 'difference' is a 'never identical to itself, and so has hope of connection to others' (Haraway, 1992: 87); Avtar Brah asking, '… what is humanity if not an intricate mosaic of non-identical kinship?' (Brah, 1999: 6); and Stuart Hall writing, 'We have to go on thinking and acting, not against, but with difference—without, of course, simply collapsing into it in a riot of relativism' (Hall, 2012: 27) (see also Arendt, 1958; Derrida, 1982, 2001, 2007 [1999]; Blanchot, 1988; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Nancy, 1991 [1986]).

According to Mbembe, the central project of sovereignty 'is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material of human bodies and populations*' (Mbembe, 20003: 13, emphasis in the original). At the same time, I would argue that Mbembe's operational mapping of sovereignty reveals that the 'struggle for autonomy'—as a struggle for difference—is not a separate project from that of instrumentalising human existence; rather, the latter requires the former to be done away with entirely. From this vantage point, the normative framing of violence, as an act that breaks, fades away and violence as a fusioning that disappears 'struggle for autonomy' comes into view. I deliberately use the term 'disappear' and not 'death' here, because the violence of fusioning does not result in political death. By disappearing the political autonomy of the otherwise 'other' into the totalising instrumentalising logic of sovereignty that comes into full force with the self-institution of a state of exception, the possibilities for life and death also disappear. Therefore, disappearing—as an act of violence as related to the political body—is not the same as killing—as an act of violence as related to the biological body. However, these acts are far from unrelated: as Mbembe's formulation suggests, sovereignty's disappearing of the autonomous agency of a political subject—in doing away with 'the limit of death' in relation to an otherwise would-be other—into the totalising logic of necropower, necessarily precedes the sovereign's self-proclaimed right to kill. Moreover, the primal violence of political disappearance not only facilitates the sovereign's act of killing within a state of exception; it also helps to occlude acts of killing as prohibitive violence outside of states of exception. This is because, by definition, that which is disappeared cannot die. Therefore, I would add that before necropolitics as 'contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of [biological] death' (*ibid.*: 39) are put into effect, disappearance as a contemporary form of suspension of political life *and* death is first meted out.

In refusing to let go of Eric Garner despite his calls of 'I can't breathe', Pantaleo, Damico and the three unnamed officers may be perceived as having exercised a form of necropower against Garner. The officers may be seen to have assumed the sovereign position of the

Police, which disappeared Garner's political autonomy into the flattened object position of an always already Criminal. Having interpellated Garner as a Criminal with the 'instrumental rationality' of the Police with the sole purpose of arresting Garner as their interpellated object, Pantaleo, Damico and the three other officers only would have perceived Garner's 'I can't breathe' through and in the service of this instrumental rationality: i.e. as an obstacle that must be overcome or ignored in order to complete their objective of arresting him at all and any cost, and/or as false protests reaffirming the need to carry out this task. In other words, Garner's cries did not fall on deaf ears; they were perceived by Pantaleo, Damico and the three other officers only in the way that they wanted to hear them.

However, the struggle for Garner's political autonomy did not end with his biological death. The killing of Eric Garner was recorded by a bystander, Ramsey Orta (whose calling out during the attack that 'He [Garner] ain't do shit! He ain't do nothing! He ain't do nothing but sit here!' and 'All he did was break up a fight' also was seemingly ignored by the police). With the release of Orta's video online, millions of viewers heard Garner's eleven calls of 'I can't breathe' as 'He can't breathe'; saw the violence in the officer's actions; perceived the police killing of Garner as part of a growing and alarming pattern not only of, to quote Orta, 'Once again, police beating up on people', but of police specifically targeting and killing black persons;[2] and took to the streets, social media, the press and governmental offices to protest Garner's murder and demand accountability by way of Pantaleo's prosecution and police and legal reform. Despite these efforts, on 3 December 2014 came the announcement that a closed-door grand jury had granted Daniel Pantaleo a 'no bill' acquittal for criminal charges in the death of Eric Garner. This sparked off another wave of protests across the United States in New York City, Washington DC, and Chicago, among other cities, where 'We can't breathe' was taken up as a rallying cry (Laughland *et al.*, 2014).[3]

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[2] In 2014, 69% of black persons killed by the police were neither armed and nor under suspicion of a violence crime, and in 2015, 99% of cases raised against officers involved in police killings did not result in convictions (Mapping Police Violence, 2017). In 2013, 'enraged by the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman, and inspired by the 31-day takeover of the Florida State Capitol by POWER U and the Dream Defenders', Pastrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi founded Black Lives Matter 'as a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism'; there are now nineteen official chapters across the United States and one in Canada (Toronto) (see Black Lives Matter, https://blacklivesmatter.com/ [last accessed 20 November 2017]). In 2015, in response to an alarming rise and aggression of state and police violence meted out against black lives and bodies of black women and girls—including Sandra Bland, Gabriella Nevarez, Aura Rosser, Michelle Cusseaux, Tanisha Anderson, Alexia Christian, Meagan Hockaday, Mya Hall, Janisha Fonville, and Natasha McKenna—and the repeated failures on the part of legal and social systems to make accountable those responsible for these crimes, the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) launched the #SayHerName campaign. According to the AAPF: 'Including Black women and girls in this discourse sends the powerful message that indeed all Black lives matter. If our collective outrage around cases of police violence is meant to serve as a warning to the state that its agents cannot kill without consequence, our silence around the cases of Black women and girls sends the message that certain deaths do not merit repercussions' (AAPF, 2017).

[3] A 'no bill' acquittal indicates a decision that there is insufficient evidence to warrant criminal prosecution of an alleged suspect. The acquittal of Pantaleo came two weeks after the acquittal of police officer Darren Wilson for the 9 August 2014 shooting and killing of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old unarmed black youth in Ferguson, Missouri, which was also followed by protests against racist police brutality and riots.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres has observed:

> … when we speak about aesthetics we are talking about a whole set of rules that were established by somebody. We were not born with a set of aesthetic rules in our hands, were we? Aesthetics are not about politics; they are politics themselves. And this is how the 'political' can be utilized since it appears so 'natural'. The most successful of all political moves are the ones that don't appear to be 'political'. (Gonzalez-Torres in Specter, 1995: 13)

Re-encountering with a necropolitical lens the scene of Garner's killing, the acquittal of Pantaleo, and the public outcry over both, does not merely offer one way of explaining what happened on a particular street in Staten Island on 17 July 2014 and the events that followed in relation to it. It situates Garner's death as part of an alarming, wider pattern of extrajudicial racial violence committed without recourse by police officers against black persons.[4] It reveals that this violence is facilitated and generated by a regimentation of aesthetic perception. It thus draws attention to aesthetics as a site of vital and fatal political contestation, and to the urgency of gaining insight into the mechanics of perception both in order to 'find and support those modes of representation and appearance that allow the claim of life to be made and heard' (Butler, 2009: 181), and to facilitate the locating and breaking of modes of self-rationalising, murderous, necropolitical aesthetic perception that eradicate any and all claims of life and death.

I seek to contribute to this urgent project with this dissertation. Through a practice-based exploration of mourning, I present a conceptualisation and study of 'moaning' as a perceptual mode that is open to new, unexpected phenomenological encounters and redistributions of sensorial ordering.

Here, drawing on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic formulation, death is approached as the conscious awareness of alterity—i.e. difference that uncertainly cannot be reconciled, transgressed, erased or reversed—which is produced from a phenomenological encounter with 'loss' in relation to that which was not previously perceived as 'other' (Freud, 2001 [1917]). Mourning, then, is put forward as the psychic processing of difference that emerges from a subjective encounter with death (*ibid.*). Without an encounter with that which is perceived as 'other', there can be no conscious acknowledgment of difference; without a conscious awareness of difference, there can be no mourning; and, in turn, without mourning, there can

[4] Black people are three times more likely than white people to be killed by police (Buehler, 2017). In 2017, while only 13% of the US population are black, 26% (279 of 1,079 persons) of persons killed by the police were black (Mapping Police Violence, 2017, https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/ [last accessed 24 November 2017]). Of the eighty police officers who were arrested on charges of murder or manslaughter for on-duty shootings between 2005 and April 2017, only 35% have been convicted; the rest are either pending trial or have not been convicted of charges (Park, 2017).

be no perception of community, politics, political subjectivity, or communication (Klein, 1940; Blanchot, 1988; Nancy, 1991 [1986]; Derrida, 2001, 2007 [1999]). Therefore, mourning is a process that critically differs from and cannot be captured by the necropolitical logic of sovereignty. While, as Shohini Chaudhuri writes, 'disappearance is an interdiction of thought' (Chaudhuri, 2014: 86), mourning emerges here as a site of knowledge production. More specifically, as it is contingent on subjective perceptions of difference, knowledge produced through mourning is uncertain, indeterminate, unanticipated, and contingent. In this sense, as Brah writes:

> Knowing is not so much about the assemblage of existing knowledge as it is about recognizing our constitution as 'ourselves' within the fragments that we process as knowledge; 'hailing' and being 'hailed' within the discourses that produce us and the narratives we spin; directing our socially, culturally, psychically, and spiritually marked focus of attention upon that which we appropriate as 'data' or 'evidence'. (Brah, 1999: 5-6)

I advance 'moaning' as a practice of exploring the perceived indeterminate uncertainty that arises from mourning, and a 'moan' as that which the mourning subject produces as a means to carry out this exploration. Not materially or gesturally defined, a moan can take on the form of a wail, as it is normatively thought, but it may also take on the form of wearing black clothes, of viewing a photograph, of smelling a room, of stillness, of silence, etc. In this formulation, what is considered a moan is subjective and specific to, and situated from the perspective of, the mourning subject, for whom the moan facilitates perception of new, uncertain unknowns through a kind of ambient gauging. With new perceptions come the generation of unexpected, unanticipated forms and configurations of space and time and modes of communication, not least of which is new language that both describes that which is (im)perceived and facilitates further exploration of the unknowns that mourning exposes. Thus, moaning not only produces a performance of mourning, but also makes the performance of mourning performative (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995: 3, 2; see also Austin, 1962).

I do not suggest here that mourning can or should be put to work, nor do I prescribe an ethics of mourning. To do either would subjugate mourning under yet another metastructural 'instrumental rationality' and preclude the vitality of indeterminate and uncertain possibility that it exposes. As Douglas Crimp warns in his essay 'Mourning and militancy' (1989), calls

of 'Don't mourn, organize' and 'Turn your grief to anger'[5]—which weaponise mourning and moralise against 'those who feel only a deadening numbness or constant depression, [that] militant rage may well be unimaginable [...] paralyzed with fear, filled with remorse, or overcome with guilt'—problematically and fatally deny 'a fundamental fact of psychic life'. (Crimp, 1989: 5, 16). 'The ethical', Jacques Derrida writes, 'can therefore end up making us irresponsible' (Derrida, 2007 [1999]: 61).

The four chapters of the dissertation follow the unanticipated line of enquiry that emerged from my pursuit of this research, as drawn from my encounters with the materials discussed and the questions as they emerged from these engagements. In organising the dissertation in this way, I attempt to present an account of my research as having been a kind of moaning, whereby the images and texts, sights and sounds encountered have not served and do not serve as examples for theoretical propositions. Rather, these engagements have been like meetings with strangers on an unplanned journey; they have contributed to the formation of this research, the unanticipated direction of its trajectory, and the making of this uncertain language with which I communicate at and in this particular space and time.[6] As such, the materials discussed in these pages do not serve as illustrations or case studies for the testing of some universal theory, but as unexpected sites for the opening up of new possibility and questions. And if there is a 'case study' to be located here, it is not the materials that I encounter, but the dissertation and my making of it.

Chapter 1 positions mourning as critical for the appearance of politics and political subjectivity. This emerges from attending to how mourning might emerge and be situated as a political and epistemic process, and in this way, formally embarks on a quest to find a language that might allow for the exploration and articulation of mourning as a site of knowledge production. The chapter begins with a discussion of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic formulation of mourning—as a subjective process that contends with psychic disruption in relation to encounters with alterity produced from phenomenologically (im)perceived encounters with 'loss'—as a critical starting point that facilitates an approach to

[5] Joe Hill sent the words of 'Don't mourn, organise!' shortly before his execution via telegram to his friend Bill Haywood, founding member and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World. This phrase was taken up as a Socialist rallying cry during the bloody years of the American First Red Scare, during which the US government systematically crushed the protest movements of organised labour. During the HIV/AIDS crisis in the US in the 1980s and 1990s, Larry Kramer echoed Hill's sentiment in expressing how he could not 'comprehend why the connection isn't made between [the deaths of gay AIDS victims] and going out to fight so that more of these deaths, including possibly one's own, can be staved off' (Kramer, 1989: 1). Hill's 'Don't mourn, organise!' has since surfaced and circulated in the the media, in statements released by politicians and political organisations, and as a social media meme in May 2015 following the Conservative Party's parliamentary majority takeover in the UK in May 2015 (see for example Creasy, 2015); following the Brexit referendum vote for the UK to leave the European Union in June 2016 (see for example Craig, 2016; Wilcock, 2017); and following the presidential election of Donald Trump in the US in November 2016 (see for example, Ford, 2016; Misnick, 2016; Slayton, 2016).

[6] With regards to this uncertain language, I have compiled and include a glossary of terms to help orient the reader; see Appendix 1.

mourning as a non-hierarchical, performative, and productive process. In this section, I contend that the 'mourning subject'—as a relational subject position emerging from a psychic encounter with alterity that is produced from a conscious perception of a phenomenological encounter with 'loss' in relation to an 'object'—is also a political subject. I approach the mourning subject here not as a universal subject position, but as a subject position exposed to uncertainty, with a partial, unprivileged perspective in relation to what it (im)perceives as a 'lost object'. Here I also propose referring to the 'object' that the mourning subject perceives as 'lost' and thus produces the mourning subject's encounter with alterity, as an 'alter-object', as a way to signal that this view of the object is a relational shift perceived from the vantage point of the mourning subject. Next, through readings of works by Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida and Melanie Klein, in which I locate preoccupations regarding the possible relations between mourning, alterity, difference, and political relations, I consider how 'community', as perceived relations with possible, different others, might emerge from mourning production. In using the word 'difference' here, I refer to the relation between the mourning subject and to the 'object' as perceived by the mourning subject with a view towards alterity. I am specifically interested in the works of these thinkers that resist and reject normative modes of thinking community along identitarian lines of sameness, and instead radically formulate and approach 'community' as political relations emerging from encounters with difference—where the possibility of 'community' as an *uncertain* possibility, does not serve as a ground for relations amongst political subjects, but rather is contingent on the subject's mourning production.

In this chapter, I also introduce 'moaning' as an uncertain, indeterminate mode of aesthetic perception that emerges from the mourning subject's perception of the possibility of community. As such, I propose moaning as a mode of knowledge production that critically activates the epistemic possibilities of mourning beyond the mourning subject's psychic interior. Engagement with Crimp's 'Mourning and militancy' (1989) and his reading of what I identify as Simon Watney's description of his own 'moaning' in his book *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (1987), brings to light the critical political implications and stakes of moaning. Through discussion of Watney's observations of his own attendance at the funeral of his friend, whereby he perceives through 'moaning' multiple forms of homophobia that deny his mourning his friend as gay and having died from AIDS, I add to and extend Judith Butler's theoretical mapping of the the relationship between identity politics and disavowed mourning leading to melancholia (see Butler, 1997a, 199b, 2009). I propose that through moaning, which ambiently gauges by way of aesthetic perception, the mourning subject perceives external injunctions on and structures that would control not only who is mournable (as per Butler's concerns) but also *who is allowed to mourn*.

I argue that disavowed *moaning* effectively *disappears* the mourning subject as political subject: it disappears both the mourning subject's capacity to perceive and be perceived on an aesthetic, political register in relation to who or what one mourns. I propose that this operation precedes the interdicted, disavowed mourning advanced by Butler, which disappears the mourning subject into the melancholic subject (Butler, 1997a). Moreover, I argue that disavowed *moaning* contributes to the aesthetic territorialisation of the injunction. At the same time, following Crimp's observation that Watney's experience at the funeral led not to melancholia, but to militancy (of which, according to Crimp, *Policing Desire* is one manifestation), I propose that although perception of injunctions and strategies of control *may* lead to disavowed mourning, it is not the only or an inevitable outcome.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into the epistemic possibilities of moaning by pursuing the question that emerges at the end of the first chapter: But what, if anything, might moaning perceive beyond injunctions and structures that would control mourning? With this question, I tune into Fred Moten's attention to 'the convergence of blackness and the irreducible sound of necessarily visual performance at the scene of objection' (Moten, 2003: 1) in his book *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003). More specifically, I engage with Moten's reflections on his perception and conceptualisation of 'black mo'nin'', produced in relation to his encounter with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy who in 1955 was lynched by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in Money, Mississippi. Prompted by my encounter with Moten's discussion, I turn towards these photographs, which were taken and publicly circulated at the request of Emmett Till's mother, Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley, and their historical contextualisation as pivotal to the rise of the American Civil Rights Movement. Moten locates 'the rupturing and augmentative power' (*ibid.*: 205) of the images of Emmett Till in the 'sound of the photograph' (*ibid.*: 192), which cuts the viewer with the 'sound + more' (*ibid.*) of blackness as that of 'resistance to power and objection to subjection' (*ibid.*: 12). While this 'visible music' is irreducible, he also argues that it is muted by ocularcentrism, a mode of perception that privileges sight over sound. As a non-hierarchical mode of perception that is open, indeterminate and uncertain, I advance that moaning critically differs with ocularcentrism, such that it facilitates rather than dampens a viewer's capacity to hear black mo'nin'. Drawing on Moten's analysis of the interplay between aural and visual perception as critical to the hearing of black mo'nin' and through a close reading of his strong critique of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981) as a kind of ocularcentric manifesto, I formulate two modes of aesthetic perception: 'moaning aesthetics' as uncertain perceiving of sights and sounds open to and generative of new, unknown political possibilities and distributions; and 'hegemonic aesthetics' as a closed self-affirming cycle between hearing and seeing that disappears politics.

Through my engagement with Moten's 'Black mo'nin'' text, I have turned and re-turned to considering Emmett Till's lynching in relation to the thousands of racial lynchings that took place in the United State from the late-nineteenth through to the middle of the twentieth century. In relation to Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley's describing her son's 'killing as part of a pattern' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145), I began to wonder if Emmett Till's death had a noticeable and notable impact on the mobilisation of the American Civil Rights Movement because the postmortem photographs of his body were unprecedented in their visual, visceral portrayal of the violence of lynching. However, on investigating this question, I encountered the over one-hundred lynching photographs collected by James Allen in *Without Sanctuary* (2000), which were publicly presented and published first in 2000 and subsequently have been exhibited in numerous spaces throughout the US, and learned that the photographs of Emmett Till's body were far from the first public images of a lynched individual. The photographs in Allen's collection and the work of scholars and activists including Dora Apel, James Cameron, Shawn Michelle Smith and Amy L. Wood, evince and describe a practice of taking and widely circulating 'lynching photographs' at the behest and by those who lynched and perceived racial lynching as a legitimate form of vigilante justice. At the same time, lynching photographs, which became a standard part of 'spectacle lynchings' from the late-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century, were also appropriated by anti-lynching and anti-racism activists as evidence of lynching as an extreme form of racial violence (Hale, 1998). However, while these re-presentations and re-framing of lynching photographs are seen to have contributed to the advancement of anti-lynching and anti-racism efforts, the scale of their impact does not compare to that which is attributed to the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till.

But why and how was black mo'nin' not perceived in the viewing of the lynching photographs on the scale, level, and way that the disruptive, improvisational, resistant sound of blackness was heard in encounters with the postmortem image of the body of Emmett Till? In Chapters 3 and 4, I attend to this question as a matter of aesthetic perception, and with a sense of urgency that this examination might open up a much needed, deeper understanding of how both the perceptual modes of moaning and hegemonic aesthetics work and break, as well as the socio-political consequences of their operations.

In Chapter 3, I turn and re-turn to the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and four unnamed individuals, which I first encountered in Allen's book (Allen *et al.*, 2000). I view

these photographs in relation to their having been used as evidential support both for lynching as a form of justice against criminality and against lynching as an extreme form of extrajudicial racial violence, with an examination of the historical and political contexts in which lynching photographs were produced and shared by pro-lynching and anti-lynching factions in the era of Jim Crow, as well as engagements with lynching photographs by present-day scholars. I come to advance that the standardising of lynching practices by lynching advocates, along with ideological positionings that conflated objectivity with photography and blackness with criminality, were critical to the production of a convoluted self-perception on the part of lynching advocates and participants, whereby a disavowed agency allowed them to view themselves as model citizens acting on behalf of 'justice' and truth' and thus justify their actions. Moreover, I claim that the production and reproduction of this perception necessarily operated on the closed, reaffirming cycling register of hegemonic aesthetics. I advance that whilst anti-lynching appropriation of lynching photographs—which drew on the ideological conceit of photography as objective to evidence lynching as racial terror—operated on a directly antithetical mode to that of 'lynching as justice', it also functioned on a hegemonic aesthetic register. I discuss the diametrical relationship of lynching/anti-lynching on the order of aesthetic perception, and propose that by operating within a closed, self-affirming aesthetic regime, both lynching and anti-lynching approaches to lynching photographs effectively disappear political possibility from the field of perception. I therefore conclude that although anti-lynching appropriation of lynching photography was significant in the fight against white supremacism, the hegemonic aesthetic mode of perception on which it operated and relied was also delimiting in its occlusion and exclusion of the viewer's capacity to see a break in the reality of lynching/anti-lynching and hear the resistant sound of black mo'nin'. Furthermore, I argue that the diametrical relationship of lynching/anti-lynching on the order of aesthetic perception, by effecting an imbalance of perception, effects an imbalance of power between lyncher/lynched, which does not break but doubly reinscribes the dominant/dominated relation between lyncher/lynched, and thus doubly disappears the political subject.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I attend to the question: Is to be politically disappeared always and forever to be politically disappeared? Through engagement with Gillian Rose's (1997) analysis of Nicholas Pouissin's painting of *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion (Collected by his Widow)* (1648) and drawing on concepts developed over the course of the dissertation, I contend that political subjectivity can be reclaimed through a perceiving of the breaking of the blind field of hegemonic aesthetics that disappears politics in the first instance, and that this breaking inaugurates a mourning which does not reappear, but *dis*-appears a new, uncertain political subjectivity. With this in mind, I re-turn and re-encounter the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body and the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson,

Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and of the four unidentified black persons. I view these photographs in relation to memento mori photographs from James Van Der Zee's *Harlem Book of the Dead* (1978) and the Thanatos Archive, and advance that memento mori photography, as the practice of taking photographs of the deceased by close relatives and friends, operates on a hegemonic aesthetic register. Through this visual comparison, I perceive the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as visually intersecting and thereby breaking the hegemonic aesthetic perceptual cycles of both lynching and memento mori photographs. I observe that my perceiving the visual breaking of the blind field of these hegemonic aesthetics registers, inaugurates a mourning that dis-appears politics and a moaning with which I perceive a dis-appearing of Mamie Till-Bradley, Emmett Till, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and the four unnamed persons whose images I encounter and re-encounter in viewing the photographs of their lynched bodies, as well as that of my own new, uncertain, unknown political subjectivity.

When I first read about the police killing of Eric Garner, I felt sadness, horror, fear, confusion. Garner's death made no sense to me. Encounters with the names, stories and statistics published in the news and by political activists and organisations, such as Black Lives Matter and the AAFP, of other black persons who were killed by or in the custody of the police—including Amadou Diallo on 4 February 1999 in New York City, Michael Brown on 9 August, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, and Sandra Bland on 13 July 2015 in Waller County, Texas—helped me perceive Garner's death as part of an alarming, growing trend of racial violence carried out by the police against people simply because they are black. My fear and horror expanded with the announcement of one acquittal after another of the police officers involved in these murders. I perceived that in the eyes of the state and members of the public who sat on the juries of these trials and supported these acquittals, these killings are not only *not* considered criminal but also they are considered permissable—this despite the loud and sustained political action and protests across the country that urgently, clearly and evidentially called for accountability and police, state, and legal reform to stop any further racial police violence. Confronted and seemingly surrounded by this condition, I felt that I couldn't breathe.

However, over the course of this study and encounter with the mournings of others, of exploring within a space and time of mourning, I have turned and re-turned to the killing of Eric Garner and have come to perceive that unlike Eric Garner, I *can* still breathe. I have also come to understand that to perceive my condition as different from his is not to wholly turn away from the fatal violence to which Garner was subjected. On the contrary, to perceive this difference is critical to opening the proverbial door to new possibilities whereby my perspective of both his *and* my political condition can transform into something other than the otherwise seemingly endless condition of unfettered police violence.

In this way, I perceive that the breaking of aesthetic perception to which I have been contending has not been first and foremost that of the police, the state, or those who support or accept racial violence, but of my own. Therefore, in presenting a formulation of moaning as an epistemic mode of aesthetic perception, I do not propose a universal theory of how mourning comes to be expressed. I share here an emergent narrative account that is specific to my study, practice, and experience of moaning—as per the feminist adage that 'the personal is political',[7] of how I have come to perceive the personal as political. At the same time, I would propose that this articulation is not solipsistic, but rather that in speaking of my own epistemological journey of mourning, I speak in relation with the mournings of others and towards this possibility. I view this research and dissertation as participating in what Darian Leader calls a 'dialogue of mournings' (Leader, 2009: 78), as one exploration of how and where an engagement with the vibrations of these lines of flight might lead (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 3), and in turn contributing to the possibility of more and other possibilities. Thus, I have not only come to understand mourning as a process that contends with a present condition of encountering new unknowns in relation to re-calling an imperceivable past, but also as a vital process for moving towards and into uncertain, indeterminate futures.

Methodology

I have taken a situated, discursive, and reflective approach in the practice-based art research and writing of this project. Throughout this process, I have encountered various materials—texts, art works, images, sounds, conversations, among others—as in dialogue with my research questions and investigations, and with one another. I have approached these encounters from my position as a practice-based art researcher without a hierarchising of materiality, academic discipline, genre, chronology, or otherwise. The knowledge that has

[7] 'The personal is political' became a popular rallying cry amongst second-wave feminists in the 1960s. According to Kerry Burch, the slogan is credited to 'millions of women in public and private conversations as the phrase's collective authors' (Burch, 2012: 139).

emerged from these dialogical encounters has often been surprising—informing and shifting the course of the project in unanticipated and new ways.

This approach and articulation of it draws on the methods of researchers working and writing across a range of academic subject areas and disciplines. Engaging with an open-ended, contingent 'system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2016), my research has been less methodical than it has been methodological. Turning to and collaging different research methods in relation to questions as they have emerged along the way, has helped my examination and contextualising of these questions, as well as helped me to, if not navigate around, then productively contend with and work through some concerns that have arisen in the carrying out of this work.

According to artist and scholar Michal Craig-Martin, speaking about the Goldsmiths Art Programme in his 1995 inaugural lecture, *Giving Permission*, 'artists, by their nature, are suspicious of institutions and hate feeling institutionalised' (Craig-Martin, 1995: 15). I would advance that having undertaken the research and writing of this project in the discipline of art, which is defined more by its questioning of overarching structures than it is by a working within them, has facilitated my drawing upon research methods that are normatively situated in other academic areas. Likewise, as a practice-based art researcher, I have borrowed and adopted according to what I have identified as the specific needs of the project, as I do in my art practice. This borrowing and adopting as a critical artistic mode—which can also be perceived in the work of other artists including Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz's *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977), Mark Dean's *My Mum (V2-Sensitive)* (2011), both of which have been important to the development of this dissertation—is not effected with abandoned thought. On the contrary, attention to the complexities of this gesture is critical for bringing to light concerns and questions both in the research and my approaches to it, which I may otherwise miss. This practice has been particularly important for perceiving that, as Kimberlé Crenshaw writes, the 'process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual has also characterized the identity politics of African Americans, other people of color, and gays and lesbians, among others' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1241). Therefore, preoccupations with methodology have also facilitated seeing how my work may be situated not only within a Western contemporary art discourse, but also alongside and in conversation with work in the areas of political sociology, comparative literature, comparative history, feminism, queer theory, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, race and ethnicity studies, and diaspora studies; additionally, it has been critical for opening up engagement with research in these areas as a way to proceed with my own explorations.

This situated, open and discursive approach has facilitated my drawing and delving deeper into possible connections between what might normatively be considered unrelated or mutually excluding. In so doing, I neither valorise nor have I attempted to smooth over differences between, for instance, Melanie Klein's theorisation of 'first mourning' (Klein, 1940) and Fred Moten's theorisation of 'black mo'nin'' (Moten, 2003), or the perceived material and sensorial differences between encounters with an essay and a photograph. Instead, I have turned my attention to differences, both seemingly obvious or nuanced, as sites of possibly productive tension (see Haraway, 1988, 1991). At the same time, it is worth clarifying that I have not proceeded in my research and writing with Nancy Harding's interest in 'map[ping] how a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemic, scientific and political advantage' (Harding, 2004: 7–8). Rather, I have proceeded with the open-ended question 'What might be produced in practising art research as a matter of perception?' accompanied with, among others, the possibility of discovering that the answer could simply be 'nothing'.

Consideration here of Michael Rothberg's methodological formulation of 'multidirectional memory' is useful both for clarifying what is at stake in and offering a way towards pursuing research with the idea that 'the public sphere [is] a malleable discursive space' (Rothberg, 2009: 3, 5) where, according to Stuart Hall, 'We have to go on thinking and acting, not against, but *with* difference—without, of course, simply collapsing into it in a riot of relativism' (Hall, 2012: 29). In *Multidirectional Memory* (2009), Rothberg approaches a comparative analysis of 'memory frameworks' as 'multidirectional' to 'reveal how memory of the Nazi genocide and struggles for decolonization have persistently broken the frame of the nation-state' (*ibid.*: 22, 20). According to Rothberg, pursuing collective memory as 'multidirectional', as 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative', opens up 'attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance' (*ibid.*: 3, 11) and opens up the possibility to perceive a multiplicity of otherwise invisible memory frameworks. In contrast, a view towards collective memory as 'competitive', as a 'zero-sum struggle over scarce resources', problematically 'distracts from other ways of thinking about the relation between histories and their memorial legacies' (*ibid.*). Therefore, Rothberg concludes that '[c]omparison, like memory should be thought of as productive—as producing new objects and new lines of sight—and not simply as reproducing already given entities that either are or are not "like" other already given entities', as such a 'competitive' approach runs the risk of preemptively ossifying an intractable problem into an impossible one (*ibid.*: 19).

While Rothberg's theorisation of multidirectional memory in relation to competitive memory is helpful in articulating the value of discursive research, my research approach also critically

differs from Rothberg's mode in significant ways. First, while in 'order to demonstrate the stakes of the past in the present', Rothberg 'takes remembrance of the Holocaust as its paradigmatic object of concern', there was/is no paradigmatic positioning, perceiving or approaching in the research and writing of my project. Relatedly, while Rothberg operates in a mode that makes strong objective claims for the 'inevitable', 'all memories', and 'all articulations of memory' (*ibid.*: 15, 15, 16), I do not. Departing from Rothberg's method in these respects, the dialogical approach I have taken can be seen as more closely aligned with Fiona Vera-Gray's feminist method of 'conducting research *as* a conversation', where knowledge production is a 'co-creation' that at the same time does not remove 'the power dynamics inherent in the project of research' (Vera-Gray, 2017: 64). The research and writing of my project were conducted with attention that research decisions are made and outcomes are presented from the perspective of the researcher and, therefore, in the process of partial perspective 'analysis and writing … I ultimately recreate this co-creation, a process described by Coy (2006, p. 422) as "my story of their stories"' (*ibid.*).

Accounting for my situated, partial perspective as a practice-based art researcher attends to broader concerns I have about academic writing that tends towards the making of truth claims for universal subjects—a move which requires first and foremost a disavowal of my differentiated, privileged position as the researcher who is advancing these claims. Donna Haraway writes: 'Fusion is a bad strategy of positioning' (Haraway, 1988: 585), and I agree. Moreover, as I have carried out the present work both as a study *and* practice of moaning—as an epistemological process that foregrounds attention to situated, partial perspective as critical to the perceiving of new unknowns—attention to my own positionality as one that 'must be hostile to easy relativisms and holisms built out of summing and subsuming parts' (*ibid.*) has been specifically important to the researching and writing of this project.

Especially in light of the situated, dialogical dimensions of this project, critical reflection also has been an important methodological practice throughout the researching and writing of it. In using the term 'critical' here, I invoke Irit Rogoff's definition of 'criticality' as 'a recognition that we may be fully armed with theoretical knowledge, we may be capable of the most sophisticated modes of analysis but we nevertheless are also living out the very conditions we are trying to analyse and come to terms with' (Rogoff, 2006: 2). With this recognition, reflection as a means of interrogating my own experiences and actions in relation to the materials *and* approaches with which I have encountered and re-encountered, becomes a vital research practice of what Rogoff calls 'smuggling', which 'goes beyond conjunctives such as those that bring together "art *and* politics" or "theory *and* practice" or "analysis *and* action"' (*ibid.*: 1). This is because, as David A. Kolb writes in *Experiential Learning*:

> To focus so sharply on continuity and certainty that one is blinded to the shadowy penumbra of doubt and uncertainty is to risk dogmatism and rigidity, the inability to learn from new experiences. Or conversely, to have continuity continuously shaken by the vicissitudes of new experience is to be left paralyzed by insecurity, incapable of effective action … both these postures—dogmatism and absolute skepticism are inadequate foundations for the creation of valid knowledge systems. (Kolb, 1984: 28)

In addition to helping me avoid and/or break tendencies towards dogmatism and absolute skepticism, reflective practice helped me to identify new questions and concerns that emerged from encounters, but which I had yet to articulate. It allowed me to perceive patterns and make connections between what and how I was researching, which were otherwise difficult for me to see. It provided space and time to consider why I had taken certain steps but not others, and had followed particular paths while I had attempted but abandoned others. In turn, it facilitated my perceiving of questions and concerns in relation to certain materials that, with frequent re-visiting in various dialogues over time, had moved into the foreground as well as my repeated avoidance of or disengagement with questions and concerns in other instances.

In other words, reflection made for research that was not only directed, but uncertainly *responsive* to encounters and emergent questions and, therefore, critically informed not only the movement and shaping of the project often in ways I would and could not have expected or planned for earlier in the process, but also helped me work through how and why I was moving and shaping the project in these ways. Reflection provided a space for the practising and testing out of, not the materials with which I was in dialogue, but my ability to articulate the ideas that and questions emerging from my encounters in relation to these materials. As such, it was also critical towards figuring out how to materialise the research as a PhD dissertation that would communicate the questions being explored, the ways in which I have been exploring them, and the urgency of attending to them.

While the linear narration of the dissertation is not inaccurate, its construction belies the syncopated, stuttered rhythms of the research process, and the critical importance of numerous unmentioned encounters and perceptual breaks that were critical to its making. It does not, for instance, overtly account for my questions around death, disappearance, mourning, and my uncertain relationship to these questions as emerging from my art practice —specifically from an invitation extended to me by Jaskaran Kaur, co-founder and director of Ensaaf (ensaaf.org), to make a memorial in relation to the tens of thousands of Sikhs who were disappeared in the 1980s and 1990s by the Indian state police. It does not account for my deeper exploration of Moten's work—which led to my turning to and relational consideration of the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till and to the photographs of the lynchings of Curtis Brown, William Brown, Garfield Burley, Elias Clayton, Lige Daniels, Richard Dillon,

August Goodman, Lee Hall, Elmer Jackson, Will James, Clyde Johnson, Isaac McGhie, George Meadows, Will Moore, Laura Nelson, John Richards, Thomas Shipp, Bennie Simmons, Abram Smith, Rubin Stacy, Jesse Washington, W.C. or R.C. Williams, Leonard Woods, and four unnamed persons—as coming from a suggestion from Professor Michael Newman, my supervisor, in a tutorial during which we reviewed a text I had submitted that was comparatively brief in its discussion of Moten's conceptualisation of black mo'nin'. It does not account for my particular interest in Moten's attention to the sound of black mo'nin' as related to my exploration of the perceptual dynamics of sight and sound in my art practice, which I discussed at length with Mark Dean, my second supervisor. It does not account for my renewed attention to sound as related to my having lost 70% of my hearing in one of my ears, around the time of my father's death in 2009, for the period of about a year. It does not account for my heightened attention to questions of mourning at the time that I began the PhD as related to my encounter with the loss of my father.

I draw attention to what the dissertation does not mention but which nonetheless has been critical to its making, in order to communicate that I do not perceive or present this dissertation as comprehensive, nor has it ever been my intention or desire to create some kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Moreover, I advance that this failure to include and communicate 'everything' is not a failing, but is what allows for it to be situated as a dialogical gesture. Throughout the text, I ask questions not only to communicate and contexualise the concerns with which I have been grappling, but also as an active, open-ended invitation to the reader to consider these questions by bringing your perspective, experiences, and knowledge in relation to the reading of the text. In other words, I not only share here an account of my research as having been a kind of moaning, but also *as* a kind of moaning—as an invitation extended not with an intention, but with a hope that echoes Avtar Brah's in 'The scent of memory: strangers, our own, and others', wherein she writes:

> I hope that this one develops into an open-ended conversation—a kind of graffiti without finite beginnings and endings—with ... readers responding, interrogating, critiquing, agreeing or disagreeing, and extending its main concerns ... The question: 'What do you think?', which is scattered throughout this text, is, therefore, offered as a genuine invitation to write back. (Brah, 1999: 4)

On the Inclusion of Images

Within these pages, I have chosen to reprint photographs that have been and are critical to the making of this dissertation. In Chapter 2, I reprint the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till that were commissioned by and circulated at the request of his mother, Mamie Elizabeth

Till-Bradley. In Chapter 2, I include the photographs from lynchings of four unnamed persons, Curtis Brown, William Brown, Garfield Burley, Elias Clayton, Lige Daniels, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Lee Hall, Elmer Jackson, Will James, Clyde Johnson, Isaac McGhie, George Meadows, Will Moore, Laura Nelson, John Richards, Thomas Shipp, Bennie Simmons, Abram Smith, Rubin Stacy, Jesse Washington, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and Leonard Woods. In Chapter 4, I include memento mori photographs of unnamed persons taken by James Van Der Zee, and those of Mrs. Wheeler, the Keller family, the Kramschuster family, and other unnamed individuals from the Thanatos Archive.

Each image is printed on a separate page without accompanying text or captions (excepting the page number, as per the requirements of the Goldsmiths Graduate School *Research Student Handbook*). To help the reader's re-encountering of these images, should they wish to do so, I parenthetically provide the page number on which the photograph has been reprinted when discussing an image in the text. I have also included a 'List of Images' at the front of this dissertation, which carries information that might normally be set as a caption. These formal decisions are my attempt to signal that these images have not served and do not serve as illustrations, examples, ancillary support of the text, or as test cases for a practice of moaning. They are meant to communicate that the text is produced from encounters and re-encounters with these images, and that the readings of them presented in the text are open-ended, uncertain, and do not because they cannot substitute the images or encounters with them.

I have been asked if I have considered that including photographs of lynchings taken and initially circulated by those who supported and took part in racial lynchings, might contribute to or participate in a normalising of the visualisation of this violence. I also have been asked if I am not concerned that by reprinting these photographs for the reader to encounter, I reproduce the same, performative violence from which these images came into existence in the first place. My answer to these questions is: yes, these are concerns that I have considered and deliberated at length, and still do so. I am afraid of them. I fear the possibility of inadvertently participating in, reproducing, or seeming to promote any aspect of the violence that these images not only depict but have been used to exact.

However, I also recall Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley reflecting on her motivation to publicly display her son's lynched body and circulate photographs of it to the world: 'if other people could see it with their *own* eyes, then together we might find a way to express what we had seen' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 139). I believe that not including these photographs would be tantamount to my participating in a closing down of this critical, vital possibility. I also believe that not including these images, and to have the reader merely rely on descriptions provided here of them, implicitly misguides attention away from and occludes

the critical importance I am proposing here of attending to aesthetic perception as subjective, uncertain, and unstable and of the political possibilities that this attention produces.

Deciding to include these images, as well as how to include them, has not been easy. Born and raised on the East Coast in the United States, I attended local schools and institutions of higher education that were proudly progressive and liberal. But it is only through carrying out this research, from my reading of Fred Moten's 'Black mo'nin'' (first in Eng and Kazajian, eds., 2003, and later in Moten, 2003), that I came to learn of and then encounter the postmortem photographs of the lynched body of Emmett Till and, subsequently, the practice of lynching photography, and the photographs of the lynched bodies of Curtis Brown, William Brown, Garfield Burley, Elias Clayton, Lige Daniels, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Lee Hall, Elmer Jackson, Will James, Clyde Johnson, Isaac McGhie, George Meadows, Will Moore, Laura Nelson, John Richards, Thomas Shipp, Bennie Simmons, Abram Smith, Rubin Stacy, Jesse Washington, W.C. or R.C. Williams, Leonard Woods, and the four persons whose names I do not know. To say that my first encounter with each of these images was affectively difficult is an understatement. Turning away and looking again also did not become less difficult over time. On the contrary, with reading and perceiving more about the individual stories of each event; the persons involved; the practices of lynching and lynching photography and the volume and scale of these operations; the wider historical contexts, logics, and conditions that allowed for lynchings to take place and these photographs to come into existence; the timescale and timeline of this being in the not-too-distance past, within living memory; and the connections with present-day extrajudicial racial police killings and political disappearances and the social conditions, power dynamics, and tactics used to justify and occlude their violence, my re-turnings became more affectively saturated and amplified, not neutralised or muted. Over the course of my studies, when the research asked that I look again at these images, I did so not without reluctance. I found that looking again requires psychological, emotional, and physical preparation, and that after looking again, I need space and time to recover.

I share this account neither for dramatic effect nor to suggest that I am especially immune to normalised disaffected perception. What I am raising here is that, in my own experience, the dangers of normalisation are not to be found in a looking that desensitises. Instead, they lay in a tendency to privilege looking with knowing—of *having* looked to avoid looking *again* that staves off feeling or thinking *again*. Moreover, I have perceived that this condition is not entirely uncommon. Over the past several years, sharing the questions that emerged from my encounters with these images has often led to my showing them to others both within and outside of academia, e.g. in conferences; symposia; tutorials; art crits and discussions; conversations at parties, in the office, over dinner, in the pub, on the phone, over the internet.

Through these interactions, I have discovered that I am far from alone in my prior lack of knowledge of the practice of lynching photography or encounter with these images. I have perceived in the responses of and subsequent engagements with colleagues, friends, and family members, this familiar tendency to reach for reasons to not think about, not talk about, and especially not look again at these photographs. Whether framed as a matter of anachronism, propriety, ethics, desire to 'move on', or fear, these rationales equate having once looked with the certain knowledge of having always already looked, from which one can draw the conclusion that there is no need to look again, because there is nothing more to learn in doing so.

At the same time, I have also perceived others who re-turn and look again. I have encountered writing, art, music, conversations that communicate insights, questions, experiences and perspectives that require having looked again and again at these photographs. Through these encounters, I have perceived new, unexpected avenues, ideas and unknowns. These encounters have critically informed the direction of the research and the moulding of this project. They have helped to break my own perceptual assumptions and fear of looking again. In the midst of what at times I perceive as an unstoppable rise in assaults on difference—in racial, xenophobic, identitarian, gender, sexual, class-based violence—seemingly everywhere, looking again at the lynching photographs in relation to anti-lynching appropriations of them and at the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till in relation to their profound impact on the American racial divide and in relation to Moten's ask to both see *and* listen, has also re-minded me of the possibility that and exposed me to possibilities by which these trends are not unstemmable and can be changed. And they have also opened up my perception and turning towards the largely unexamined and rarely discussed violence that has affected my own family's history: of my father's and mother's lives growing up during and after the Korean War; their illegal immigration to the United States in the 1970s; and the challenges and complexities that came with this legacy and contending with these conditions, which have affected and shaped our lives.

Eliminating the capacity to look at photographs of lynching is not the same as eliminating lynching photographs or the practice of lynching. On the other hand, eliminating the capacity to look at these photographs in a new context, from the vantage point of the present, eliminates the capacity to perceive both *that* social perspectives have changed and *how* they have changed since a time when racial lynching was considered a legitimate form of justice by many, such that it is now normatively viewed as an extreme form of unacceptable, incomprehensible racial violence. Therefore, drawing on these experiences, I reprint these images here and now. I do this despite expressed concerns of reproducing past violences in the present. I do this with an understanding of the impetus to engage a perceptual mode that

comes in the guise of disavowed perceptual engagement as a way to disengage affectively with the photographs of lynchings and of lynched bodies. I do so with an awareness that the experience of encountering these images—looking at them, hearing them, and perceiving the reality of the violence from which they materialised, without which they would not exist—is challenging and does not stop being challenging. I do this despite my lack of desire to distress the reader. But I also do this as a way to resist and respond to what I perceive as a normalised violence of the present, enacted through a willful avoidance of perceptual re-encounters, which precludes the political and social possibilities that can only be produced by looking again.

1. Mourning and Moaning

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate how a Freudian understanding of mourning—as a subjective process that contends with psychic disruption in relation to encounters with alterity produced from phenomenological encounters with 'loss'—might emerge and situate mourning as a political and epistemic process. The second aim of this chapter is to develop a language that facilitates further exploration of this conceptualisation of mourning as a site of uncertain, indeterminate knowledge production.

As a critical starting point, I begin with a close reading of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theorisation of mourning, which I advance allows for an engagement with mourning as a non-hierarchical, performative and productive process. In engaging with the work of Freud, I am not interested in proposing or considering a mourning subject as a universal subject. Rather, I am interested in the linguistic possibilities that Freud's work offers in constructing a means by which to speak about and from the perspective of a situated vantage point that emerges from an encounter with alterity. In this section, I refer to a 'mourning subject' as a political subject position that is inaugurated with a psychic encounter with alterity that is produced by a conscious perception of loss in relation to an 'object'. Use of the terms 'subject' and 'object' is not intended to evoke or suggest subject/object hierarchies or a political economy of use-value, but rather only to signal towards mourning as a process formulated from the partial and arguably unprivileged perspective of the mourner. In this section, I also introduce the term 'alter-object' as a way to signal to the relational shift from the mourning subject's perspective that comes with a conscious perception of alterity in relation to the 'object'.

From and with this positioning of mourning, I then consider how the possibility of understanding 'community', as perceived relations with possible, differentiated others, might arise from the production of mourning. I conduct this investigation by turning to writings by Maurice Blanchot, Jean Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida, and Melanie Klein, in which I locate

lines of enquiry that intersect with and inform mine with regards to relations between mourning, alterity, difference and politics. In using the word 'difference', I refer to the relation between the mourning subject and the 'object' as perceived by the mourning subject with a view towards alterity. I am specifically interested in the writings of these thinkers here, as they critically formulate and approach 'community' as political relations that emerge from encounters with difference through mourning. In this way, they do not fall into normative modes of thinking about political relations as requiring a predetermined metastructural underpinning, such as ideologically common or shared identities, traits, or ethics. I am also interested in them because they approach community not as an ever-present ontological given, but as that which is ever in process and requires conscious attention for its continued production. In this thesis, I do not approach community as a set of political relations mapped from an aerial, bird's-eye view of a spatio-temporal field of actors positioned in a particular, networked configuration. Rather, 'community' here is drawn as a possibility that emerges from mourning—approached laterally, through a kind of orienteering—from one possible perspective of a mourning subject, where the possibility of 'community' as an uncertain possibility, does not serve as a ground, but rather is foregrounded by and throughout the mourning process as a generative possibility.

From here, I formulate a conceptualisation of 'moaning' as an uncertain, indeterminate mode of aesthetic perception that is generated by mourning and the mourning subject's perception of the possibility of community. Moreover, I propose that moaning critically activates the epistemic possibilities of mourning beyond the mourning subject's psychic interior. In the last section of this chapter, I turn to Douglas Crimp's 1989 essay 'Mourning and militancy', whereby a consideration of Crimp's reading of Simon Watney's moaning, as described in *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (1987) in relation to Watney's encounters with homophobia at the funeral of his friend and ex-lover who had died of AIDS, not only elucidates the role moaning plays in the continued reproduction of mourning, but also the political implications and stakes of moaning for the continued production of community and, inversely, the potential consequences of injuncted and disavowed moaning.

1.1 Mourning Producting Situated Uncertainty

I have not come across any writings by Sigmund Freud that directly attempt to rethink community in relation to notions of difference. Nonetheless, his positioning of and attendance to mourning as a psychic operational process can be seen as a critical departure

point for Western formulations of community as contingent on difference. For this reason, I start the main body of the present text with an analysis of Freudian mourning.

Freud writes that mourning is 'regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (Freud, 2001 [1917]: 243). From this seemingly straightforward definition, Freud constructs a formulation of mourning as a psychic *process* of incremental libidinal withdrawal from attachment to a 'lost object' that is prompted and animated by repeat encounters between a subject's psychic perception of an object as 'lost', 'reality tested' in relation to physiological perception of the object as 'lost'.[8] Here Freud differentiates 'loss' encountered in relation to the failure to *physiologically* perceive an 'object' in the *external* world, from 'loss' encountered in relation to failure to *psychically* perceive an 'object' in the *internal* world. Neither 'loss' is ontologically determined, for instance by biological processes, and neither is independent of the psychic subject's perceptions; both describe *the situated perception from the vantage point of the psychic subject*.

Whilst informed by physiological perception, mourning is a process inaugurated and reproduced by psychic perception; only once the psychic subject consciously perceives the physiological perception of 'loss' as 'real', does the process of mourning in relation to the 'lost object' begin. By way of example: My friend was medically declared dead on 13 January 2014. I learned of my friend's death on 14 January 2014 from an email I received. I could not fully believe what I read, not because I thought the message was untrue; I just could not process it as real. I went to my friend's funeral on 15 January 2014. I saw my friend's mother weeping over the coffin that was said to hold my friend's dead body. I went to the crematorium and the cemetery. Still, that my friend was dead did not seem real to me. A few days later, I thought about how I wanted to call my friend to meet for a long overdue drink, but that if I tried, no matter how many times I tried, I would never receive a response. We would never get that drink together. Finally, it really hit me that she was dead. This story renarrativised along a Freudian framework proceeds as follows: As an embodied subject, I physiologically encountered 'loss' in relation to 'my friend' on 14 January 2014, when I read the email message that she had died the day before. So, for me, my friend was not physiologically 'lost' until 14 January 2014. Even though I did not deny the physiological perception of my friend as 'lost object' and attended her funeral accordingly, my psyche did not consciously perceive as 'real'

[8] Freud's notion of 'reality testing' is premised on his 'reality principle', whereby 'the psychical apparatus [has] to decide to form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world and to endeavor to make a real alteration in them [because] what [is] presented in the mind [is] no longer what [is] agreeable but what [is] real, even if it happen[s] to be disagreeable' (Freud, 2010[1911]: 2553). In reality-testing, the 'new demands [make] a succession of adaptations necessary in the psychical apparatus, which, owing to our insufficient or uncertain knowledge, we can only retail very cursorily. The increased significance of external reality heighten[s] the importance, too, of the sense-organs that are directed towards that external world, and of the *consciousness* attached to them' (*ibid.*: 2554). According to Freud, the reality principle supersedes the pleasure principle.

my friend's death until confronted with the 'reality' that we would never make good on our longstanding date. So, for me, my friend was not psychically 'lost' until I perceived as psychic 'reality' that we would never meet again, and it was only then that my mourning began in relation to whom I perceive as my 'lost' friend.

Freud describes mourning as an all-consuming psychic task; he writes:

> Reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object. This demand arouses understandable opposition—it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them. This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Normally, respect for reality gains the day. (*ibid.*: 243)

While the obsessional aspect of mourning can be so intense that it can incorrectly be perceived as pathological, Freud claims that it is a healthy and crucial process for the production of the mature tri-partite psychic self (Freud, 2001 [1917], 2010 [1920], 2010 [1923]). During the mourning process, 'each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hyper-cathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it' (Freud, 2001 [1917]: 244). The seemingly free libido attempts to recathexise, or psychically reconnect, with a psychic 'replacement object'. However, the perceived 'loss' of the 'object' not only produces the 'lost object', but also an abandoned 'vestige of object-cathexis' (Freud, 2010 [1923]: 3963). This object is not a remainder of the lost object, but marks the absence of the 'lost object' as a psychic *reminder* of it (Freud, 2010 [1923]: 3962–3963). The libido attempts to fill this vacuole with the 'replacement object', but these attempts uncertainly never fully succeed in this task. These failed attempts turn the mourning subject's conscious attention to the irreplaceability of the 'lost object' and, in this way, is thus *reminded* first and foremost of its 'loss'. At the same time, as the 'abandoned vestige' can never be filled, so too can the libido never fully be decathexised from the 'lost object'. Thus, this *reminding* also brings up 'memories and expectations in which the libido' is *still* bound to the object; in other words, the mourning subject *remembers* the object—i.e. it perceives the object as re-membered to the libido. However, the perceived presence of the impoverished

'replacement object' breaks this perception of remembering as re-membering, and the mourning subject is *reminded* once again of the 'object' as 'lost'.[9]

The psychic interactivity between the 'replacement object' and the 'vestige of object-cathexis' not only re/produces reminding and remembering, but also the psychic subject's ego (as that which is not 'lost') and super-ego (as that which reminds the ego of the 'object' as 'lost') (Freud, 2010 [1923]).[10] Moreover, as the super-ego 'is a precipitate of the first object-cathexes of the id' (*ibid.*: 3982) and its reminding is critical to the continued production of the ego, it can be seen how mourning is not only critical to the production, but also to the ongoing *re*production of a healthy psychic self. In other words, according to Freud, mourning is an endless process and necessarily so for the appearance and health of the mature psychic subject. This is not to say that mourning production is constant and continuous. Mourning is endless in that it can always be reproduced when the subject perceives the insufficiency of the 'replacement object' in relation to the 'vestige of object-cathexis', which reminds the subject of the loss of the 'object'.[11] Roland Barthes speaks to the irreplaceability of the the 'lost object' and the interminable mourning it produces in *Camera Lucida*:

> It is said that mourning, by its gradual labor, slowly erases pain; I could not, cannot believe this; because, for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless. For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a *quality* (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable. (Barthes, 1981: 75)

Freud similarly writes in a letter to Ludwig Binswanger, whose son had recently died, 'We know that the acute sorrow we feel after such a loss will never run its course, but also that we will remain inconsolable, and will never find a substitute … And that is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating love that we do not want to abandon' (Freud, 1922 in Fichtner, 2003: 196).

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[9] Jacques Lacan's 'objet petit a' (Lacan, 1978 [1964)] and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's 'introjected object' (Abraham and Torok, 2005) have a similar function in their respective psychic subject construction theories. Catherine Malabou writes, 'for Lacan, originary separation—characterized as separation of the ego and the subject—is interpreted as the inscription of alterity, or lack, within the ego: "…in the circuit, the ego is really separated from the subject by the *petit a*, that is to say by the other"' (Malabou, 2012: 131). Joan Copjec similarly asserts that the 'fantasy substitutes the *object a* for the subject' (Copjec, 1999: 256). However, to clarify, 'the objet petit a' or 'fantasy substitute' is neither a poor replica nor remainder of the Lacanian '"Thing"—; the absolute other of the subject, this "prehistoric Other that it is impossible to forget"' (Malabou, 2012: 124). Rather, it is an object produced by mourning that serves as a *reminder* of the 'object'.

[10] As the 'precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes' (Freud, 2010 [1923]: 3963), Tammy Clewell describes the ego as 'elegiac' (Clewell, 2004: 43).

[11] In 'On transience' and 'Mourning and melancholia', Freud formulated mourning as a finite process that comes to a 'spontaneous end' (Freud, 2010 [1916]: 3097; 2001 [1917]); he revised the durational quality of mourning in later writings (see Freud, 2010 [1920], 2010 [1923]).

The mourning process takes 'great expense of time and cathectic energy' and results in some 'grave departures from the normal attitude to life'; however, according to Freud, 'we look upon any interference with [mourning] as useless or even harmful', because a disruption or complicating of mourning leads to the pathological condition of melancholia (Freud, 2001 [1917]: 244, 243). Mourning and melancholia share similar characteristics in that:

> Profound mourning, the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, contains the same painful frame of mind [as that of melancholia], the same loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall him—the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thought of him. (*ibid.*: 243)

However, 'in contradistinction to mourning, in which *there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious*', Freud marks melancholia as 'in some way related to an object-loss which has *withdrawn from consciousness*' (*ibid.*: 244, my emphasis). Melancholia can result, for instance, from an unconscious disavowal of the 'object' as 'lost'; a conscious perception of the 'lost object' in which the melancholic 'knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him'; or a complication in the production of the 'replacement object' (*ibid.*).[12] In the previous example, had my failure to psychically perceive the 'loss' of my friend endured despite continued physiological perceptions of 'loss' of my friend in external 'reality' then, according to Freud, over the course of the past three years I would have developed a melancholic subjectivity rather than one that mourns.

Freud writes, 'in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself' (*ibid.*: 245).[13] In processing 'loss', the mourning subject's 'super-ego can confront the ego and treat it like an object; and it often treats it very harshly' (Freud, 2010 [1926]: 4365), but it does not deform or harm the ego; instead, it contributes to its generation. In contrast, the melancholic's super-ego is punishing and violent, such that the melancholic experiences 'extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale' (*ibid.*). As 'mental health very much depends on the super-ego's being normally

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[12] Jacques Derrida writes, 'It would be unfaithful to delude oneself into believing that the other living *in us* is living *in himself*' (Derrida, 1986: 21). From a Freudian perspective, this delusion is unfaithful not to the 'other' but to the one who deludes, as it transforms mourning into melancholia. According to Melanie Klein (1940), the child's disavowal of its first loss as perceived separation from its mother results in the child's inability to mourn, which leads to melancholia. Klein (*ibid.*: 21) further adds that each subsequent loss the melancholic perceives reproduces, builds on, and adds to this first disavowed mourning, thus reproducing melancholic subjectivity. Judith Butler writes that melancholia comes in the form of an 'identity based upon the refusal to avow an attachment and, hence, the refusal to grieve' (Butler, 1997a: 138).

[13] Vamik D. Volkan also advances 'ambivalence' as a factor that differentiates mourning from melancholia, and 'complicated mourning' as that produced by a subject's conscious psychic perception of 'loss' without ambivalence, which does not yield ego-loss—and is thus distinct from melancholia—but also fails to return the subject to 'normal attitudes of life' (Volkan, 2007).

developed' (*ibid.*), it can be seen here how Freud's formulation positions mourning as a process that is not only productive, but healthy.

This repositioning of mourning as an active, productive and healthy process departs from a Western tradition of equating mourning with acedia (Kowalik *et al.*, 2009: 48).[14] The separating out of physiological perception and psychic perception allows for an exploration and articulation of mourning unbounded by specific external framings, gestures, performances, or materials that are socially, culturally, religiously, and/or personally deemed as forms of mourning (see Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]). This is not to say that Freud dismisses beliefs, customs, practices, and rituals in relation to mourning, or positions them as merely representative or performing psychic order. Rather, the displacing of the primacy of externalised forms—e.g. the recitation of the burial *Kaddish* at Jewish funerals; the construction of biers out of jute matting, coir, white and red muslin, bamboo, and ropes for Hindu funerals; crying; stoicism; the public/private mourning binary[15]—facilitates explorations and articulations of the relational dynamics within and between internal and external realities, as well as between the psychic subject and the 'object' it perceives or fails to perceive. Freud's assertion that the external manifestations of mourning and melancholia appear the same but their internal operations are vitally different, underlines the significance of this parsing-out. Thus, this move facilitates a rethinking of mourning processes, both internal and external, not only as performances that 'merely describe some state of affairs', but also as performative operations that 'accomplish, in their very enunciation, an action that generates effects', thereby encouraging 'a heightened willingness to credit a performative dimension in all ritual, ceremonial, scripted behaviors' (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995: 3, 2; see also Austin, 1962; Derrida, 1977 [1972], 2001).

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[14] Kowalik *et al.* trace the origins of 'acedic mourning' to medieval Platonic and Stoic strains of Christianity that advanced 'confidence in the therapeutic efficacy of consolation based on the belief in salvation' set against the notion that the 'failure to cease mourning, reflected the state of sloth, *acedia*' (Kowalik *et al.*, 2009: 48). Kowalik *et al.* write:

> The historical chain of association is somewhat convoluted but nevertheless can be approximately constructed as follows: in popular medieval conceptions *acedia* was regarded as spiritual idleness or negligence in performing one's physical duties toward God (e.g., failure to fast, sleeping in church, etc.). Thomas Aquinas removed *acedia* from the context of the physical hardships posed by devotion and defined it instead as the vice opposed to *caritas*, the joy experienced in the contemporary of the divine good. *Acedia* thus became identified with *tristitia*, sadness or sorrow. There were of course many different possible manifestations of *tristitia*, but with respect to mourning, it meant failure to recognize and affirm the "goodness" of death as the transition to a Christian afterlife. (*ibid.*)

In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas writes, 'It is written (2 Cor. 7.20): "The sorrow of the world worketh death." But such is sloth [acedia]; for it is not sorrow "according to God," which is contrasted with sorrow of the world. Therefore it is a mortal sin' and 'Sloth [Acedia], according to Damascene (De Fide Orth. ii, 14) is an oppressive sorrow, which, to wit, so weighs upon man's mind, that he wants to do nothing; thus acid things are also cold. Hence sloth implies a certain weariness of work, as appears from a gloss on Ps. 106:18, "Their soul abhorred all manner of meat," and from the definition of some who say that sloth is a "sluggishness of the mind which neglects to begin good."' (Aquinas, 2016 [1276]: 1794).

[15] See Appendix 2.

Freud's construction of mourning not only draws an interfacing relation between an internal, psychic self exposed to an external physiological 'reality' to that self, but also a non-hierarchical situated perspective of the mourning subject in relation to the imperceivable 'lost object'. The mourning subject's exposure to unknowability, uncertainty, indeterminacy, and unpredictability produces conditions whereby it can neither place itself nor the 'object' in an absolutely certain spatial ordering or a decidedly closed antithetical one. This rendering of mourning as situated perception may be seen as aligning with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theorisation of the phenomenology of perception where 'the question is always to know how I can be open to phenomena that transcend me and that, nevertheless, only exist to the extent that I take them up and live them, *how the presence to myself (Urpräsenz) that defines me and that conditions every external presence is simultaneously a depresentation (Entgegenwärtigung) and throws me outside of myself*' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]: 422). It may also be likened to Donna Haraway's situated knowledge, in that the mourning subject's perspective is a 'partial perspective' open to uncertain knowledge and new unknowns (Haraway, 1988).

Viewed in this way, mourning emerges as an epistemic process. More specifically, Freud's formulation allows for a positioning of mourning as an epistemic concern on an aesthetic register and, conversely, an examination of aesthetics as an epistemic concern. By 'aesthetics', I draw on Jacques Rancière's articulation:

> I mean here 'aesthetic' in a sense close to the Kantian idea of 'a priori forms of sensibility': it is not a matter of art and taste; it is, first of all, a matter of time and space. [...] It deals with time and space as forms of configuration of our 'place' in society, forms of distribution of the common and the private, and of assignation to everybody of his or her own part. (Rancière, 2005: 13)

Achille Mbembe defines politics as 'that difference that disorients the very idea of the limit' (Mbembe, 2003: 16). Taken together with Rancière's definition of aesthetics as that which 'deals with' limit, politics can be seen as the work of aesthetics. Furthermore, if 'politics is ... death that lives a human life' (*ibid.*: 14–15), then the mourning subject, whose emergence and activity are animated by its attention to its perceived difference, may be seen as a political subject.

With a view towards mourning as a process that produces the mourning subject as perspectively *differentiated* from and through its perceived relation to a 'lost object', thereby producing a *political subject*, the potential for rethinking community as contingent on difference through mourning appears.

1.2 Mourning Producing Impossible Community

Jean-Luc Nancy pursues this potential in *The Inoperative Community*, written at a time when states that had acclaimed communism were perceived as 'agents of its betrayal' and thus realising the hopes of May 1968 seemed impossible, and with the 'very basis of the communist ideal [...] appearing most problematic' Marxist Communism had been declared a failed project (Nancy, 1991 [1986]: 2).[16] In the wake of what he perceived as the demise of community, Nancy writes:

> The gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, the one that possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer (by virtue of some unknown decree or necessity, for we bear witness also to the exhaustion of thinking through History), is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of the community. (*ibid.*: 1)

In an effort to rescue it from 'the modern world', Nancy reformulates community as emerging when one is 'revealed by the death of the other person ... because death is itself the true community of mortal beings: their impossible communion. The community therefore occupies the following singular space: it takes upon itself the *impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being as subject*' (*ibid.*: 15). According to Nancy, the mourning subject's perception of the 'death' of the 'other' produces the 'compearance' of community and differentiated entities, which he calls 'plural singularities'. Community as 'plural singularities' are 'being-in-common' and do not—because, as different, they cannot—collapse into a fused, closed form of 'being common'. Moreover, according to Nancy, what facilitates the tearing apart of 'the presentation of finitude in and by community [is] the presentation of the *triple mourning* that I must go through: that of the death of the other, that of my birth, and that of my death. Community is the carrying out of this triple mourning' (*ibid.*: 30, my emphasis).

In Freud and Nancy's formulations, the 'object' and 'other' exist prior to the mourning subject's perception of them as 'lost' or 'dead'. Also, loss and death do not disappear the 'object' or 'other'; each continues to maintain a presence within the respective narratives after and through the mourning subject's perception of 'loss'. What also surfaces here is that mourning is not determined by a perception of biological death. This begets the question: What defines 'loss' and 'death' within these constructions of mourning?

One way to approach this question is to consider what changes with mourning. For Freud, perception of 'loss' produces a perceived shift *from the vantage point of the mourning subject* in

[16] Nancy ventures his rethinking of community through Georges Bataille's oeuvre, which he perceives as having 'gone farthest into the crucial experience of the modern destiny of community' in part because Bataille 'went through the ordeal of seeing communism "betrayed"' (Nancy, 1991 [1986]: 16).

relation to the 'object'; what is 'lost' is not the 'object' to itself, but the 'object' as 'not lost' *to the mourning subject*. For Nancy, perception of 'death' brings a perceived shift *from the vantage point of the mourning subject* in relation to the 'other'; what is 'dead' is not the 'other' to itself, but the 'other' as 'not dead' *to the mourning subject*. Here 'loss' and 'death' can be said to mark the *mourning subject's* situated perception of *its* relational shift in failing to perceive the 'object' or 'other'. 'Loss'/'death' signals to the *alterity* that the mourning subject perceives as impossibly, irrevocably intransgressible, which makes the 'object'/'other' uncertainly ever unreachable *to the mourning subject*. Thus, 'loss'/'death' refers to the mourning subject's perception of *its own* finitude, without which alterity would not appear; 'loss'/'death' do not—and by definition, uncertainly cannot—refer to the finitude of the 'object' or 'other'.[17]

To signal the relational shift that occurs between the mourning subject and 'object'/'other' with the perceived 'loss'/'death' as alterity, I will refer to the 'lost object'/compeared 'plural singularity' as the 'alter-object' in this text. The semantic employment of 'mourning *subject*' and 'alter-*object*' signals towards mourning as a process formulated from the perspective of the mourner; it is not meant to suggest commodification or use-value, nor is it intended to invoke a static, spatialised hierarchy of 'subject' over 'object', or vice versa. Calling the mourner a 'subject' attends to the situated direction from which the narrative emerges and is not meant to suggest a privileging of the mourner's perspective over that of the 'alter-object'; indeed, one can read the mourning subject's perception of delimited accessibility to the 'object' as a *lack* of privilege.

With a view towards mourning as situated perception, why Nancy requires 'the death of the other, that of my birth, and that of my death', but not 'the birth of the other' for the compearance of community of 'plural singularities' becomes clearer: 'The death of the other' can be seen as referring not to ontological death, but to the *perceived relational shift in relation to the 'object'* as 'lost' from the perspective of the mourning subject. The psychic self perceiving 'death' in relation to the 'other person' also produces a different perception of itself—from undifferentiated to differentiated from the 'other'. Thus, in addition to the perspectival shift that the psychic self perceives on encountering 'death of the other person' in relation to the 'alter-object', its perception of itself also changes—and 'my death' refers to the *perceived shift in how 'I perceive myself'*.

The mourning subject uncertainly cannot birth the 'alter-object' as 'mourning subject' for itself. For this to occur would require the mourning subject's inhabiting the 'other''s position.

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[17] I advance an amendment to Freud's definition of mourning as a process of 'reality-testing [that shows] that the loved object no longer exists' to reality-testing that shows that the loved object no longer exists *as it exists without the acknowledgement of the object's alterity*.

For the mourning subject to do this would require its not perceiving 'loss' or 'death', which marks its separation from the 'other', effectively disappearing both the mourning subject and the perceived 'other'. This makes apparent that only the *other as mourning subject* perceiving death can produce the *other as other for itself*. Thus, suggesting that the mourning subject can birth the *other as other for the other* makes for a logical fallacy. As Nancy writes, 'it is in the death of the other ... that community enjoins me to its ownmost register, but this does not occur through the mediation of specular recognition. For *I* do not recognize *myself* in the death of the other—whose limit nonetheless exposes me irreversibly' (Nancy, 1991 [1986]: 33).

What, then, is 'my birth'?

'My birth' may be said to refer to the *mourning subject's new perception of itself as such*—i.e. mourning subject as 'not other'. At the same time, 'my birth' also speaks to the *mourning subject's new perception of the uncertain possibility that it too may be perceived as 'alter-object'* by possible 'others'. For while the mourning subject cannot for certain see from the vantage point of an 'other as mourning subject', its self-perception produces its perceiving the *possibility* that an 'other' may perceive 'loss'/'death' in relation to it.

Maurice Blanchot, drawing on the work of Georges Bataille,[18] attends to the mourning subject's view towards the uncertain possibility of both perceiving and being perceived in *The Unavowable Community*, writing:

> Why "community?" The answer he [Bataille] gives is rather clear: "There exists a principle of insufficiency at the root of each being..." (the principle of incompleteness). A being, insufficient as it is, does not attempt to associate itself with another being to make up a substance of integrity. The *awareness of the insufficiency* arises from the fact that it puts itself in question, which question needs the other or another to be enacted. Left on its own, a being closes itself, falls asleep and calms down. A being is either alone or knows itself to be alone only when it is not.

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[18] Blanchot, who considered Bataille a close friend and colleague, criticised Nancy's construction of 'inoperative community' as a misreading of Bataille's work and its failure to account for directionality, time beyond immanence, and relational absence, asserting that it presents 'the principle of a transparent humanity essentially produced by itself alone, in an "immanent" humanity ... Nothing is left out, in the final analysis. Here lies the seemingly healthy origin of the sickest totalitarianism' (Blanchot, 1988:2). Blanchot asks, 'What does the community pretend to in its stubbornness to only keep of "you and me" such relations of asymmetry that suspend the *tutoyement* [the familiar form of address]? Why does the relation of transcendence that is introduced with it displace authority, unity, interiority by confronting them with the exigency of the outside which is its non-directive region?' (*ibid.*: 10).

Blanchot's 'awareness of the insufficiency' arising from the 'presence for another who absents himself by dying' as producing 'myself' resonates with Freudian mourning. Freud's critical positioning of 'impoverishment' and 'failure' as productive also parallels Blanchot's writing: 'Insufficiency cannot be derived from a model of sufficiency. It is not looking for what may put an end to it, but for the excess of a lack that grows ever deeper even as it fills itself up. No doubt insufficiency wants to be contested, but that contention even if it arose from me alone, is always exposure to some other (or to the other) who is alone able—because of his very *position*—to bring me into play' (Blanchot, 1988: 8).

> [...] What, then, calls me into question most radically? Not my relation to myself as finite or as the consciousness of being before death or for death, but my presence for another who absents himself by dying. To remain present in the proximity of another who by dying removes himself definitively, to take upon myself another's death as the only death that concerns me, this is what puts me beside myself, this is the only separation that can open me, in its very impossibility, to the Openness of a community. (Blanchot, 1988: 9)

Here, being 'beside myself' can be likened to 'my birth' as speaking to the shift in the mourner's perception of itself. Indeed, Blanchot, quoting Bataille, writes: 'A man alive, who sees a fellow man die, can survive only *beside himself*' (*ibid.*, emphasis in the original). Perceiving itself as mourning subject, the psychic self sees itself looking out to 'insufficiency' when it 'sees a fellow man die'; perceiving itself as a possible 'alter-object', the psychic self sees itself possibly being looked at by 'another who absents himself by dying'. In other words, the former speaks to the condition of *perceiving*; the latter describes the condition of possibly being *exposed* to perception.

In both instances, the mourning subject perceives its own insufficiency and being 'always in a situation of dissymmetry in relation to the one looking at that Other' (*ibid.*: 3). In so doing, the mourning subject perceives its exposure to community, which according to Blanchot, 'is what exposes by exposing itself. It includes the exteriority of being that excludes it—an exteriority that thought does not master' (*ibid.*: 12). It is worth restating that the mourning subject's perceiving of the uncertain impossibility of absolutely knowing this perception of exteriority to be true, and perceiving itself perceiving are also critically important here. This is because it is the intersecting of perception of being uncertainly exposed *and* uncertainly perceiving that produces self-perception of being neither purely isolated nor wholly exposed.

Community of difference can be seen here as produced with the mourning subject's perception of alterity in relation to an 'object' that it perceives as uncertainly, irrevocably, and interminably imperceivable. As such, according to Blanchot by way of Bataille, it is a 'negative community' (*ibid.*). As the production of mourning subjectivity relies on the co-production of 'negative community', it is also, according to Blanchot, an 'unavowable community' (*ibid.*). Blanchot also writes, quoting Bataille, that this 'community can last only at the level of the intensity of death; it falls apart as soon as it fails the particular greatness of danger' (*ibid.*: 10). In other words, production of negative community hinges on the mourning subject's perceived exposure to uncertainty and unknowing that transcends its perceived finitude and which it can uncertainly never completely know. As such, it is a community towards which the mourning subject is indeterminately and uncertainly open without certain resolve. Thus, 'negative community' is also an 'impossible community'.

1.3 Mourning Producing Moaning

Jacques Derrida writes that 'the gift of death … puts me into relation *with the relation* with the transcendence of the other' (Derrida, 2007 [1999]: 8, my emphasis).[19] Put another way, a mourning subject's perception of 'impossible community', also produces the possiblity to perceive space(s) and time(s) (Blanchot, 1982; Derrida, 2001 [1993b]). Derrida, for instance, writing 'that one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die', attends to mourning producing the temporal form of anticipation (Derrida, 2001 [1993b]: 107; see also Derrida, 1997, 2001, 2007 [1999]).[20] Julia Kristeva writing, 'If I did not agree to lose mother, I could neither imagine nor name her' attends to mourning producing the space and (thus the) desire for language (Kristeva, 1989: 41; see also Merleau-Ponty 1984 [1942], 2012 [1945]). Blanchot and Nancy respectively discuss the space of 'literature' (Blanchot, 1982) and 'art' (Nancy, 1991 [1986]) as that which would not be needed, let alone exist, without perceived alterity.

For a mourning subject who perceives indeterminate uncertainty in relation to 'impossible community', I propose that mourning may produce a perceiving of spatio-temporalities as *uncertain and indeterminate*, and that this may in turn produce 'moaning' as one possible response to such an encounter. Here 'moaning' describes the practice of exploring perceived indeterminate uncertainty arising from mourning, and a 'moan' describes that which is produced through moaning as a means to carry out this exploration.

A moan serves as a kind of ambient gauge for the mourning subject, whose moaning is carried out with the uncertainty that the mourning subject does not know what, when or how it will encounter. To clarify, moans are not actions and utterances necessarily defined by aesthetic qualities or by social and cultural parameters. This is not to say that an audible utterance produced from the movement of air passing along the vocal chords of a mourning subject can

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[19] In essays written in relation to his mourning of named colleagues and in *The Gift of Death* and *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida develops a theory wherein an individual's perception of 'temporal dissymmetry' in relation to an 'other' emerging at 'the level of the intensity of death' produces a recognition of alterity that produces 'impossible mourning' (Derrida, 2001, 2007 [1999], 1997). Derrida's 'temporal dissymmetry' can be likened to Freud's 'loss', Klein's 'separation', and Nancy and Blanchot's 'death'. Although Derrida said, 'I don't much like the word community' (Derrida, 1992: 366), I perceive his 'friendship' as a formulation of community contingent on difference.

[20] Derrida writes in his elegiac essay to Jean-Marie Benoist, a former student and colleague who died on 1 August 1990: 'To have a friend, to look at him, to follow him with your eyes, to admire him in friendship, is to know in a more intense way, already injured, always insistent, and more and more unforgettable, that one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die. One of us, each says to himself, the day will come when one of the two of us will see himself no longer seeing the other and so will carry the other within him a while longer, his eyes following without seeing, the world suspended by some unique tear, each time unique, through which everything from then on, through which the world itself—and this day will come—will come to be reflected quivering, reflecting disappearance itself: the world, the whole world, the world itself, for death takes from us not only some particular life within the world, some moment that belongs to us, but, each time, without limit, someone through whom the world, and first of all our own world, will have opened up in a both finite and infinite—mortally infinite-way. That is the blurred and transparent testimony borne by this tear, this small, infinitely small, tear, which the mourning of friends passes through and endures even before death, and always singularly so, always irreplaceably' (Derrida, 2001 [1993b]: 107).

not be described as a moan. A mourning subject may indeed consider a wail that it utters as a moan, but so too may it consider silence as a moan, as well as that which it produces on other sensorial registers (e.g. visual, haptic, olfactoric). A mourning subject may also identify as a moan that which is socially or culturally identified as a mourning custom or ritual, such as the wearing of black clothes to funerals. At the same time, it may also identify as a moan that which it does not normatively consider a mourning tradition. In other words, the assignation of 'moaning' and what are perceived as 'moans' is subjective and specific to, and situated from, the perspective of a particular mourning subject.

Approached in this way, 'moaning' and 'moans' facilitate explication of mourning as a mode of perceptual uncertain knowledge production for the mourning subject.[21] For instance, it may be said that through moaning, a mourning subject may produce a 'moan' in relation to an 'alter-object'. The mourning subject's uncertain failure to perceive the 'alter-object' in relation to its moan reproduces perception of the 'object' as irrevocably and interminably 'lost', which in turn reproduces mourning; in this way, moaning in relation to 'impossible community' may be seen as *performative*. This moaning is 'impossible' and interminable because it uncertainly fails in rendering the mourning subject's capacity to perceive the 'object' as 'not lost'.

At the same time, moaning in relation to an 'alter-object' may be perceived as marking the space and time of perceived 'loss'. Moaning may refer to an 'alter-object'; however, since the object is imperceivable, it cannot be said that a moan is directed 'towards' it. As Blanchot writes, 'The one for whom I write is the one whom one cannot know, he is the unknown, and the relationship with the unknown, even in writing, exposes me to death or finitude, that death which does not have it in it to appease death' (Blanchot, 1988: 24). The 'writing' Blanchot describes is a moaning that focuses on 'death' as that which makes 'the one' interminably and irrevocably imperceivable. As that which represents the perceived space and time produced by mourning, moaning in relation to 'impossible community' may be seen as a *performance* of loss. While the perception of 'loss' in relation to an 'object' is necessary for the perceiving of spatio-temporalities, a mourning subject need not perform moaning in relation to a specific 'alter-object'. The perception of the 'loss' of an 'object' is enough to produce the conditions whereby the mourning subject's moaning is that 'which does not address anybody and which, through its relationship with the unknown, initiates … ["]the community of those who have no community"' (*ibid.*).

[21] The etymological origin of 'mourning' and 'mourn' can be traced back to 'moan' (Harper, 2017), and I take up the term 'moaning' as this etymological link speak to the relations I am attempting to draw here.

1.4 Moaning Producing the Possibility of Possible Communities

But what of community in relation to 'singular pluralities', which a mourning subject perceives as uncertainly, possibly perceivable?

Melanie Klein's formulation of the human subject's 'first loss' in 'Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states' (1940) offers a way into this question. According to Klein, the child's first mourning comes with its recognition of itself as separate from its 'mother'; this perceived 'loss' of the 'mother' as separate, births the psychic life of the child. The child as mourning subject perceives a 'new mother'. For the mourning child to perceive the 'new mother' is not to perceive the primordial 'mother' who is imperceivably 'lost'. The perceived 'new mother' is a 'replacement object'. As such, the child's perception of the 'new mother' reminds it of the 'lost mother', which produces its mourning subjectivity, which in turn produces the child's capacity to perceive the 'new mother'. Blanchot writes, 'the experience … is communicable only because, in its essence, it is an opening to the outside and an opening to others' (Blanchot, 1988: 22). Put another way, failed perception in the first instance (of 'lost mother') allows for perception in the second (of 'new mother').[22]

The mourning subject's perception of perceived 'others' produces the *possibility* of what Blanchot calls 'the ideal community of literary communication' (Blanchot, 1982: 21). The *perception* of this ideal community appears by way of the mourning subject's perception of 'impossible community', which not only opens the possibility for perceiving 'possible others', but also produces the mourning subject's perception of its own uncertain exposure to unknowns and of the spatio-temporal conditions for producing moans. However, while the mourning subject may *perceive* 'the ideal community of literary communication', according to Blanchot, its realisation is only ever *ideal*. A consideration of Louis Althusser's 'philosophy of the encounter' offers a way towards understanding why this may be so (Althusser, 2006 [1994]). Reflecting on his viewing of paintings by 'Le Douanier' Henri Rousseau,

[22] The mourning subject's encounter with its perceptions and readings as uncertain prompts a reconsideration of the qualified differentiation between the impossibly imperceivable 'alter-object' and the possibly perceivable 'other'. As both are produced from the perspective of the mourning subject, it follows that the qualification of 'impossibly imperceivable' and 'possibly perceivable' are also produced from the perspective of the mourning subject. This seemly preposterous notion is frequently used in the 'I thought you were dead' narrative motif, whereby a character perceives another to have died, only later to learn that they are alive. For example, in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio believes that Hero has died in Act 4 but learns in Act 5 that she is alive (2005 [1598]). The ontological uncertainty of 'death' also comes into view when considered in relation to the multiplicity of medical and legal definitions of 'death', and the debates that ensue over them, who has the right to decide which definition to use, and who can make 'end-of-life' decisions for those declared unfit to make these decisions on their own behalf, as in the case of 'Terri Schiavo' (see Appendix 3). Thus, I advance that these perceptions are not incontestable, ontological fact, but uncertain knowledge produced from situated perception. As such, they are uncertainly unstable, dynamic and contingent. At the same time, as can be seen with Klein's formulation, for an 'alter-object' to then be 'perceived' does not undo the perceiving of alterity.

Althusser writes:

> As a rule, when two people do encounter one another, they merely cross paths at a greater or lesser distance without noticing each other, and the encounter does not even take place. The forest is the equivalent of the Epicurean void in which the parallel rain of the atoms falls: it is a pseudo-Brownian void in which individuals cross each other's paths, that is to say, do not meet except in brief con-junctions that do not last. (*ibid.*: 184)

In contrast to Althusser's people who 'do encounter one another', a mourning subject uncertainly does not directly encounter an 'other'. Such an encountering would collapse the spacetimes that separate and, in turn, disappear otherwise separate entities into a singularity of the encounter, 'just as water "takes hold" when ice is there waiting for it, or milk does when it curdles, or mayonnaise when it emulsifies' (*ibid.*: 192). Rather, I propose that a mourning subject uncertainly only ever encounters its perceptions of 'others' in relation to that which it *perceives* as possible moans, and that the mourning subject's uncertainty suspends perceived elements from congealing into a singularity.

A mourning subject's moans ambiently gauge with uncertainty absence and presence through a process not unlike echolocation. With moaning, a mourning subject can not only gauge the impossibility of perceiving an 'alter-object', but also the possibility of perceiving a 'possible other'. The mourning subject may produce a moan in relation to or intended *for a perceived* 'possible other'; it may also produce moans as a way by which *to perceive* the possibility of 'possible others'. However, a mourning subject cannot know for certain whether, how or if a 'possible other' perceives its utterance as a moan. This is because, again, for a mourning subject to absolutely know an other's perspective disappears alterity, mourning, and—to use Nancy's phrasing—'plural singularities' into a singular singularity. Thus, the mourning subject perceives an 'other' as only ever *possibly* moaning and therefore as only ever a '*possible* other', and perceives an utterance as only ever a *possible* moan.

As a mourning subject's perception of a moan is uncertain, it would be misleading to say that moans are exchanged. However, drawing on Althusser's conceptualisation of 'aleatory materialism', it might be said that mourning subjects unpredictably *encounter* utterances that they may or may not perceive as moans (*ibid.*). Althusser describes 'the void' as that which 'set[s] out from *nothing*, and from the infinitesimal aleatory variation of nothing constituted by the swerve of the fall' (*ibid.*: 174, 175). Moans can be likened to Althusser's 'infinity of atoms … falling parallel to each other in the void', that can 'undergo encounters [*sont recontrables*] only in this exceptional parallelism, this parallelism *without encounter or union*' (*ibid.*: 168, 177). A mourning subject's encounters with utterances perceived as moans, 'may not take place, just as it may take place. Nothing determines, no principle of decision

determines this alternative in advance' (*ibid.*: 174). Althusser's assertion that 'every encounter is aleatory, not only in its origins (nothing ever guarantees an encounter), but also in its effects [...] in that nothing in the elements of the encounter prefigures, before the actual encounter, the contours and determinations of the being that will emerge from it' also can be said of the mourning subject's encounters with perceived utterances (*ibid.*: 193). Viewed in this way, it can be said that a mourning subject uncertainly cannot pre-determine what will be produced from moaning. The mourning subject's *uncertainty* in relation to a possible 'moan' produced by a 'possible other' suspends the mourning subject's perceiving that 'the ideal community of literary communication' has been produced, thus making it appear, as Blanchot writes, ideal.

At this point, it might be advanced, as Blanchot does, that (1) the mourning subject's perception of uncertainty renders impossible the mourning subject's perceiving that 'literary community' can be produced in relation to 'possible others'. And, in turn, that 'literary community' in relation to perceived 'possible others' is not only ideal, but impossible. It would appear that for the mourning subject to draw this conclusion would require its perceiving its perception of uncertainty as certain. It might also be advanced that (2) the mourning subject may still produce the perception that on perceiving a moan produced by a 'possible other', it has indeed produced 'literary community' in relation to a 'possible other'. Ignoring for the moment the paradoxical problem of the mourning subject's determining that 'literary community' has been produced 'for itself', it would appear that for the mourning subject to draw this conclusion would require its perceiving its self-perception as certain. To come to either conclusion would require the mourning subject to observe its own mourning production.

Observing mourning production requires conscious perception of mourning, which requires a conscious perception of alterity. This conscious perception of alterity produces the mourning subjectivity of the observer, and in turn the conditions for the production of moaning. In other words, observation of mourning produces the observer's conscious perception that its observations are situated and uncertain; in other words, observation of mourning becomes moaning. Thus, the positionality of the observer as mourning subject affects its observations. In the case of self-observation, the 'observing mourning effect' produces the observer's conscious perception of alterity *in relation to itself*. This makes the mourning subject's determination, prediction and observation of its *own* mourning and moaning production elusive. It makes it impossible for the mourning subject to exactly and absolutely determine what moans and perceptions it produces, will produce and has produced. As the observer is also a mourning subject, it cannot measure to what extent its 'observing mourning effect' has on its observations. In other words, *the 'observing mourning effect' produces a condition whereby*

the mourning subject cannot know for certain its own mourning and moaning production—it uncertainly cannot take on a meta-position not only in relation to others, but also to itself.[23]

Turning attention to the paradox noted earlier: For the mourning subject to know itself absolutely requires also knowing absolutely its finitude. As such, it also marks its finitude in relation to an externality. In making this determination, so too it determines the limits of alterity—it defines it. As such, it disappears its perception of uncertainty in relation to alterity, as well as its perceived exposure to it. Thus, this absolute knowledge of itself would disappear the mourning subject. As Emmanuel Levinas writes, 'the radical impossibility to see myself from outside and to speak in the same sense of myself and of the others; in consequence, also the impossibility of totalization' (Levinas, 1991: 46). Thus, the 'observing mourning effect' saves the mourning subject from itself.

The consequences of the mourning subject's encounter with the inability to absolutely know itself are such that (1) it cannot with certainty deem the production of 'literary community' impossible and (2) it cannot with certainty perceive that it has produced 'literary community' only by perceiving a moan produced by a 'possible other'. This produces the following very interesting situation: The mourning subject's inability to determine for certain that 'literary community' is impossible, produces the perception of its *possibility*. The mourning subject's inability to absolutely know its own mourning and moaning production, also suspends its self-disappearing determination that 'literary community' has been produced 'for itself'. Taken together, I advance that the mourning subject's uncertain perception of a *possible* moan produced by a '*possible* other' may produce the conditions whereby it may perceive that 'literary community' may *possibly* have been produced. Moreover, the possibility of unverifiably realising 'literary community' generates the mourning subject's perception of moans as produced by 'possible others' not as signifying an impenetrably dominating, to-be-feared big Other (see Žižek, 1997), but as undetermined, uncertain ways of encountering new as-yet unknowns, and thus prompt the mourning subject's moaning. From this point on in this text, I refer to this 'literary community' in relation to perceived 'possible others' in relation to whom the mourning subject perceives community as 'possible community'.

1.5 Moaning Perceiving

Consideration of Douglas Crimp's analysis of Simon Watney's *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (1987), presented in his essay 'Mourning and militancy' (1989), offers

[23] It might be said that the mourning subject encountering 'loss' in relation to 'knowing itself' renders perceivable what Freud calls the 'unconscious'.

insight into moaning as an ambient gauge for perceiving 'possible community'. During the 1980s, Crimp and Watney were writing in the midst of the AIDS crisis in the United States and as members of a New York City gay community that was both particularly hard hit by and actively fighting against the devastating, fatal effects of the rampant spread of homophobic misinformation on the disease, and the government's persistent homophobic refusal of healthcare coverage for AIDS patients and funding for AIDS research.[24] In 1989, Crimp published 'Mourning and militancy', in which he makes a claim for mourning the AIDS-related deaths of gay family and friends as not an acedic 'solitary undertaking', but as a vital 'shared activity' (Crimp, 1989: 7). By way of a reading of Watney's description of his experience in attending the funeral of his friend and ex-lover who had died of AIDS (Watney, 1987), Crimp argues that mourning cannot and should not 'simply be converted' into militancy, not least because it is critical to the production of militancy (Crimp, 1989: 5).

In *Policing Desire,* Watney observes that at the funeral, the cause of his friend's death was cited as 'an unspecified disease', and 'in the congregation of some forty people there were two other gay men' containing their grief 'within the confines of manly acceptability' (Watney, 1987 quoted in Crimp, 1989: 8). Watney relates how his friend's father explicitly asks him to refer to his friend as 'Bruno', although 'My friend was not called Bruno' (*ibid.*). Put another way: Watney as mourning subject produces a moan (e.g. visible attendance at the funeral) in relation to his gay friend who died from AIDS whom he perceives as 'alter-object'. At the funeral, he visually perceives utterances produced by perceived 'others' (e.g. forty people in the congregation) that are possibly open to his moan. Watney's perception of utterances that are possibly open to his moan (e.g. visible attendance at the funeral) produces the perception that 'possible community' has been produced with the other attendees. However, this perception quickly disappears upon his encounter with visual and aural utterances that he sees and hears as injunctions on his mourning in relation to his friend whom he mourns not only as biologically dead, but as his gay friend who died from AIDS (e.g. no mentioning of AIDS, containment of grief 'within the confines of manly acceptability', request to call his friend 'Bruno').

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[24] While the first signs of the AIDS epidemic were reported in 1981, then President Ronald Reagan did not publicly address the issue until six years later, towards the end of his second term, on 31 May 1987 at the Third International Conference on AIDS in Washington; by then, 35,058 Americans had been diagnosed and 20,849 had died from AIDS (White, 2004). In an op-ed titled 'Homosexuals and retribution' published in *The New York Post* on 24 May 1983, former GOP presidential candidate, Nixon adviser and Reagan's Director of Communications from 1985 to 1987, Pat Buchanan asserted that 'The poor homosexuals — they have declared war upon nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution [with AIDS]' (Buchanan, 1983). By 1989 in New York City, AIDS had become the leading cause of death of men aged 25 to 44 (31.6% of men aged 25 to 34, 35.2% of men aged 35 to 44) and one of the leading causes of death among women aged 25 to 44 (26.1% and 17%); of the 100,000 cases of AIDS that had been reported nationwide between 1980 and 1989, 26,336 were reported in the state of New York, and 87% of these cases were in New York City (Jonsen and Stryker, eds., 1993).

What comes into view here is that when a mourning subject perceives an utterance (in this instance, in the form of visual and aural feedback, as well as a lack thereof which is not restricted to the aural, and can also be perceived as failure to perceive) as not only *closed* but attempting to *close down* the moan—i.e. injunctions—perception of 'possible community' fails to materialise. Moreover, it produces the perception that the perceived 'other' does not perceive the mourning subject as a differentiated, separate 'other'. Perception of an utterance as open or closed is not contingent on the mourning subject perceiving an 'other''s utterance as same or similar its own moaning. I may moan in relation to my perceiving my 'father' as 'dead' and a friend may moan in relation to his perceiving his 'partner' as 'dead'. I do not perceive my friend's utterence in relation to his 'alter-object partner' as closing down my moan in relation to my 'alter-object father'. Moreover, regardless of whether I moan in relation to my perceived 'alter-object father', I may still moan as a way of perceiving my friend's utterances in relation to his 'alter-object partner'. In these instances, I do not perceive that my friend and I mourn the same or even similarly, but I do perceive the utterances as open. In turn, I perceive in these instances the production of 'possible community' in relation to my friend.

In contrast, Watney encounters visual and aural utterances which he perceives as injunctions on his moaning in relation to his gay friend who died of AIDS. This in turn produces an uncertain perception that 'others' producing these injunctions do not perceive Watney as 'other', but rather, as undifferentiated and of themselves—otherwise, they would not expect him to do as they do and do as they say. This scenario recalls Althusser's essay on 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses' (1971), in which he writes, 'all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects' (*ibid.*). By way of example, Althusser advances that when a 'concrete individual' responds to a policeman's hail of 'Hey, you there!', the individual becomes interpellated within the ideology of the police as a 'suspect' (*ibid.*). This interpellation into a 'concrete subject' as 'suspect' occurs regardless of guilt; whether or not the policeman's hail was directed towards the responding individual; whether the response affirms or protests the hail; and whether or not the hail is merely a turning towards it. By not mentioning AIDS, performing 'manly acceptability', referring to his dead friend as 'Bruno', and refraining from uttering the name he otherwise called him, Watney's moaning is replaced with performing the injunction. In turn, Watney appears interpellated into the ideological framework that produces the injunction—in Watney's case, the ideological framework of heteronormativity. In other words, he appears to visibly affirm the perception of him as fused in heteronormativity with the other funeral attendees, and perception of him as a gay man mourning his gay friend who died of AIDS disappears from the field of perception.

This injuncting of moans is familiarly explained or excused as a harmless, simple matter of respect for mourning customs over those that are not customary; as temporary prioritising of the congregation's moans and momentary suspension of Watney's singular, unique moans in the specific funerary context; or as an enduring majority rule deeming what is 'appropriate' in 'public' versus 'private' mourning. However, in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009), Judith Butler argues that enforcement and observance of interdictions on mourning essentially lead to defining and confining what constitutes a death worth and not worth mourning according to the rules of the interdiction.[25] I would critically add that by determining what constitutes a mournable death, interdictions also determine what is a mournable *life*—that such interdictions not only deny *death* to those deemed 'unmournable', but also deny *life* to the 'unmournable'. Moreover, the interdiction radiates and directly determines *who is allowed to mourn,* and interdictions on moaning provide an opening to interdictions on alterity—of perceived difference—and communities of difference.

For instance, were Watney to disavow his moaning—through performing the injunction or ceasing to moan—he would not only eliminate his capacity to perceive 'possible community' in relation to his moaning as a gay man in relation to his gay friend who died of AIDS, but preclude *any* possibility of his perceiving *any* 'possible community' as having been produced. This is so even without his performance of injunctive interpellation into heteronormative ideology. This is because his disavowal of moaning withdraws both his capacity to perceive moaning *and* the possibility of his moan being perceived by others who moan. Furthermore, not unlike the way Watney perceives the 'manly acceptability' carried out by the 'two other gay men' at the funeral, another mourning subject moaning in relation to homosexuality and/or AIDS-related death may perceive Watney's disavowal of moaning not only as a performance of the injunction, but as a performative of it.

Thus, in addition to denying himself the possibility of perceiving 'possible community', Watney's disavowal of moaning potentially decreases the chance for other mourning subjects who moan in relation to and/or whose moans are open to homosexuality and AIDS-related death to perceive 'possible community' as having been produced, and potentially contributes to the increased production of disavowed moaning in relation to homosexuality and AIDS-related death. Viewed in this way, it may be seen how Watney's disavowal of moaning may potentially contribute to the production of a condition where mourning subjects perceive that moaning homosexuality, AIDS-related death, and AIDS-related death as related to homophobia is impermissible for the production of *any* 'possible community'. Thus, the potential implications and consequences of a mourning subject's moaning/disavowing

[25] While Butler uses 'grievability' and 'mournability' interchangeably, I do not.

moaning can be seen as incredibly critical and profound for the production of communities of difference.

While disavowed moaning does not necessarily preclude a mourning subject's production of 'impossible mourning' and 'impossible community', perceiving the production of 'possible community' as impossible can disrupt the psychic subject's production of 'impossible community'. Butler explores this dynamic in 'Melancholy gender/refused identity' (1997a), wherein she maps how heteronormative injunctions placed on homosexuality complicate mourning, leading to the production of melancholic subjectivity rather than to one of mourning. Building on G.W.F. Hegel's theory of the 'unhappy consciousness', Butler writes that 'the master, who at first appears to be "external" to the slave, reemerges as the slave's own conscience (Butler, 1997b: 3). The unhappiness of the consciousness that emerges is its own self-beratement, the effect of the transmutation of the master into a psychic reality'. According to Butler, heteronormativity is a 'master' subject that refuses homosexuality, and when the psychic self internally reproduces this positioning, the psychic self becomes 'subject to a double disavowal, never-having-loved and a never-having lost. This "never-never" thus founds the heterosexual subject ... [as] an identity based upon the refusal to vow an attachment and, hence, the refusal to grieve' and hence a melancholic subject (Butler, 1997a: 139–149). From Butler's mapping of the production of 'never-never', it can be seen how a mourning subject's disavowal of moaning as a disavowal of the possibility of 'possible community', can lead to its disavowal of perceiving 'impossible community', thus turning and disappearing mourning into melancholia. In the case of double disavowal, not only does the mourning subject uncertainly disappear from the field of possible perception, but it disappears altogether and, with it, the 'alter-object' and the uncertain space and time between; all is consumed by the totalising conditions of the injunction, including the injunction itself.

However, melancholia is not the only response a mourning subject can produce in relation to a perceived injunction on moaning. Crimp cites how Watney's encounter with the perceived injunctions at his friend's funeral did not lead to his disavowal of moaning, but instead compelled him to become more vocal and active in the fight for gay rights and AIDS awareness and to write *Policing Desire*:

> Thus one of our foremost international AIDS activists became engaged in the struggle; no further memories of Bruno are invoked. It is probably no exaggeration to say that each of us has a story like this, that during the AIDS crisis there is an all but inevitable connection between the memories and hopes associated with our lost friends and the daily assaults on our consciousness. Seldom has a society so savaged people during their hour of loss. "We look upon any interference with [mourning] as inadvisable or even harmful," warns Freud. But for anyone living daily with the AIDS crisis, ruthless interference with our bereavement is as ordinary an occurrence as reading the *New York Times*. The

> violence we encounter is relentless, the violence of silence and omission almost as impossible to endure as the violence of unleashed hatred and outright murder. Because this violence also desecrates the memories of our dead, we rise in anger to vindicate them. For many of us, mourning *becomes* militancy. (Crimp, 1989: 9)

For Crimp, psychic production does not simply convert into militancy. Rather, moaning operates as reproduced, incomplete constants with which the mourning subject explores 'space'/ 'time'/ 'external reality' and encounters new uncertain knowledge and new unknowns. The mourning subject's assessment of these findings yields uncertain perceptions of having produced or failed to produce 'possible community' with perceived 'others'. Moreover, by gauging what is visually and aurally perceived in relation to what fails to be visually and aurally perceived, moans can be said to gauge from the mourning subject's perspective *what and who is considered mournable and unmournable; who is allowed and not allowed to mourn; and when, how, and according to whom*.

Crimp's reading of Watney's story reveals that the perceiving of an utterance as an injunction, and 'what' constitutes this, is processual, gradual, and does not readily manifest from an isolated, individual encounter. Indeed, when a mourning subject physiologically perceives or fails to perceive an utterance, but fails to produce a psychic perception of it as an injunction, it may produce additional moans to conduct what Freud would call further 'reality-testing'. Watney's perception of utterances as injunctions on his moaning as a gay man in relation to his gay friend who died of AIDS, are informed by other encounters with utterances as perceived in relation to his moaning—e.g. homophobic slurs, hate crimes against gays, failure by the media and the government to promote AIDS awareness, promotion of alarmist and prejudicial misinformation about homosexuality and AIDS as a 'gay disease', lack of support and funding for AIDS research and AIDS patients, as well as Watney's experience at the funeral of his friend (*ibid.*). While the spatio-temporal particularities of each encounter mark them as different, the overlaying and comparing of perceived feedback in relation to the mourning subject's perceptions of its moans, brings into relief elements that may be said to be common amongst them and facilitates a mapping of shared contours. According to Crimp, the processing of his own accumulated perceived feedback from moaning reveals to him a pattern of social and political prejudice against and discrimination of homosexuals in late-twentieth century America (*ibid.*). Moreover, this perception informs *Crimp's* perception of Watney's encounters at the funeral as 'demand[s] for hypocrisy' and

'social opprobrium' (*ibid.*: 8).[26] Crimp's perceived feedback in relation to his moans makes visible the frames of social and political conditions that may otherwise go unseen as incontestable givens, and in so doing brings into view that these 'frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated' (Butler, 2009: 1).

Thus, the 'exclusive devotion' of mourning revises from an 'opposition [that] can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place' (Freud, 2001 [1917]: 423) to an intense *turning towards* that makes visible a reality that was otherwise invisible. The mourning subject's intense perception of the reality of what it *can no longer* perceive, produces an intense perception of what it *can* uncertainly perceive. As the perceived knowledge produced by moaning requires multiple encounters—encounters that are unpredictable and not determined in shape, form, duration—it is slow to manifest, dynamic, indeterminate, uncertain, and interminably open. Thus, it is not to be confused with what Susan Sontag calls 'interpretation' (Sontag, 1966), a mode of perception that is insular and in claiming certainty, is determined and closed. What also surfaces here is that critical to the production of perceived patterns is less the repetition of material or durational forms by which or contexts wherein utterances are made, but how and what the mourning subject perceives from them.

According to Rancière, the political dimension of the 'aesthetic regime' resides in the ability for aesthetic attention and activity to disrupt and reconfigure hierarchies,

> including the privilege of speech over visibility as well as the hierarchy of the arts, their subject matter, and their genres. By promoting the equality of represented subjects, the indifference of style with regard to content, and the immanence of meaning in things themselves, the aesthetic regime destroys the system of genres. (Rancière, 2004: 81)

Mourning and moaning do not promote hierarchies either amongst perceived subjects, styles, contents, and meanings, or in what the mourning subject perceives and perceives it fails to perceive. On the contrary, the processes of mourning interminably and indeterminately call these elements and their configurations into question. Thus, as a method that uncertainly and indeterminately makes visible the otherwise invisible and reminds of the possibility of political change, moaning can be described as a mode of political activity.

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[26] This recalls Kristeva's theory of language development, whereby the child's first mourning of the mother produces semiotics as uncodified, directionally indeterminate utterance; it is 'detected in the first mimetic utterances of infants as "rhythms and intonations anterior to the first phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, and sentences"' (Kristeva, 1980: 133, 1989). The semiotic precedes the development of semantic/symbolic language, which is a system of symbols with attached meanings—i.e. signs—agreed upon among differentiated entities. The production of semantic language does not negate the pre-linguistic processes of semiotics, which the mourning subject continues to re/produce. Moreover, Kristeva advances that melancholia, as the failure to accept the death of the mother, complicates language acquisition.

At the same time, it is critical to underline that as the mourning subject perceives its perception as uncertain and indeterminate, moaning's perceiving is not a matter of gauging against 'normalcy' because, as Crimp writes, 'there is no such thing as ever fully achieving [normalcy], *for anyone*' (Crimp, 1989: 7). Thus moaning operates in a similar but markedly different way from Rancière's 'distribution of the sensible', which 'produces a system of self-evident facts of perception based on the set horizons and modalities of what is visible and audible as well as that can be said, thought, made, or done' (Rancière, 2004: 85). Rather, moaning may be described as a way by which the mourning subject distributes not 'the sensible' but the sensible that *it perceives*. Not self-evident 'facts of perception' but *uncertain perceptions of perception* render perceived systems that are uncertainly incomplete, unstable, unpredictable and, in turn, open to new unknowns and change.

As the processes of mourning and moaning are animated by and contingent on encounters that cannot be fully known, determined, or predicted, they can neither be worked nor put to work. Further to the impossibility of 'mourning work', Derrida writes:

> There is thus no metalanguage for the language in which a work of mourning is at work. This is also why one should not be able to say anything about the work of mourning, anything about this subject, since it cannot become a theme, only another experience of mourning that comes to work over the one who intends to speak. To speak of mourning or of anything else. And that is why whoever thus works *at* the work of mourning learns the impossible—and that mourning is interminable. Inconsolable. Irreconcilable. (Derrida, 2001 [1993a]: 143)[27]

Derrida's statement suggests that, aporetically, failed attempts to work mourning or work at mourning are important, because they expose the mourning subject to the perceived impossibility of taking on a meta-position in relation to mourning. Moreover, by once again exposing the mourning subject to the impossibility of resolving mourning, these failed attempts generate mourning production. Butler similarly writes:

> In a phenomenological sense, mourning is part of any epistemological act that "intends" or "anticipates" the fullness of an object, because that "end" cannot be reached, and that fullness is elusive. But this situation becomes true only under those conditions in which "fulfilment" or "satisfaction" suffers the same fate as the forms of eschatological closure. [...] Mourning is the relation to the "object" only under the conditions in which history, and the narrative coherence and direction it once promised, has been shattered. (Butler, 2003: 471)

In that it is 'unpredictable', 'irreversible', 'boundless', and 'never move[s] in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners', mourning may be described as

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[27] From Derrida's presentation at a conference honouring his colleague and friend, Louis Marin, who died on 29 October 1992.

something akin to Hannah Arendt's 'action' (Arendt, 1958: 191, 220, 190, 23, 190). Mourning is also like action in that although it 'may have a definite beginning', it 'never ... has a predictable end'; its 'boundlessness ... is only the other side of its tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, that is, its specific productivity'; and just as 'we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action' the same can be said of mourning (*ibid.*: 144, 191, 23).[28]

1.6 Conclusion

Through engagement with writings by Freud, Blanchot, Derrida, Klein, Nancy, Kristeva, Crimp, Butler and Watney, I have sought in this chapter to develop a language that may allow for further investigation of the epistemic and political possibilities of mourning as a critical process for the production of communities of difference by way of aesthetic perception. On theorising moaning as a perceptual mode of uncertain, indeterminate knowledge production that emerges from the awareness of alterity that mourning produces, I have come to propose that moaning is critical to the production of political subjectivity as a practice that continues to produce and re-produce an (im)perception of impossible community, which produces the perception of the possibility of possible community. I have also come to advance, by way of close engagement with Crimp's reading of Watney's account of his attendance at his friend's funeral, that moaning is a mode by which otherwise invisible structures and strategies of control may be perceived. Through this reading, which attends to what happens when moaning is denied or disavowed, I have also come to contend that disavowal or denial of mourning leads to the disappearance of political subjectivity. Moreover, disappearance here not only applies to the would-be mourned but also to the would-be mourning subject. At this juncture, I find that in advancing mourning and moaning as critical operations for the perceiving of possible new relations, communities, and political subjectivities, the following questions emerge: How do these ideas transmit among differentiated others? How might moaning operate beyond a gesture that creates and speaks to 'inoperative', 'negative', or 'impossible' space? How might moaning not just open and gauge the *possibility* of, but also *perceive* that which produces the perception of possible 'others'? I explore these questions in the next chapter.

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[28] Mourning also differs from Arendtian action: mourning does not make claims for 'human distinctness'; for categorical distinctions between 'organic' and 'inorganic' matter; that 'we are all the same, that is, human'; or claims '*the fact* that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world' (Arendt, 1958: 176, 176, 128, my emphasis). Arendt writes: 'the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, appears only at their end, frequently when all the participants are dead. Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants' (*ibid.*: 192). In this, mourning markedly differs from action, for mourning does not 'reveal itself fully' to anyone: 'what is' being produced, 'what will' be produced and 'what has been' produced from mourning evades capture.

2. Perceiving Black Mo'nin'

2.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I advance that for a mourning subject to perceive a possible 'other' requires at least that it perceive an utterance as open to its moaning. But how is it possible to perceive this? If moaning both makes and speaks to differentiation, does it not only ever always already inevitably fail to bridge the gap that it makes? Does moaning only ever make and speak to the 'impossibility' of alterity or, as in Simon Watney's (1987) experience, expose that which injuncts moaning? If not, how does moaning perceive an 'open' utterance as something other than generally expansively open? Put another way: What else, if anything, might moaning be able to perceive?

This first set of questions yields a second set of questions: How do the structures that the ambient gauging of moaning expose become constituted and instituted in the first place, such that these structures seem to disappear beyond the scope of awareness and transform into ubiquitous, incontestable givens? If the feedback rendered by moaning exposes and registers structures as constructions that can also be dismantled—how and what, if at all, differentiates a moan from these structures?

In this chapter, I start to work through these questions by way of Fred Moten's formulation of 'black mo'nin'' and his critique of ocularcentrism, presented in his essay 'Black mo'nin'' (2003) and set in relation to Moten's encounters with the postmortem photographs of the body of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy who was lynched by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in 1955. Commissioned by and widely, publicly circulated at the request of Emmett Till's mother, Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley, these images, along with the events around the murder trial that acquitted Bryant and Milam, have been identified as a tipping point for the American Civil Rights Movement.

First published in 2003 as part of David L. Eng and David Kazajian's edited volume *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003), 'Black mo'nin'' also appears in Moten's book *In the Break: The*

Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition (2003), published in the same year. For Moten, as for Gonzales-Torres and Rancière, 'a political imperative … is never disconnected from an aesthetic one' (*ibid.*: 62; see Gonzales-Torres in Specter, 1995; Rancière, 2005, 2006), and in attending to the aesthetics of the black radical tradition, Moten builds and contributes to a project of socio-political thought and practices that communicates and examines the histories, movements, control, and racialisation of black lives and bodies from the perspective of the black experience. Black radicalism 'takes as a first premise', writes Cedric J.Robinson in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 'that for a people to survive in struggle it must be on its own terms: the collective wisdom which is a synthesis of culture and the experience of that struggle' (Robinson, 2000 [1983]: n.p., preface). 'Framed by orders of human exploitation woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of Western civilization' (*ibid.*: 73), black radicalism practices and approaches black modernity as a diasporic condition not only produced and shaped by the interrelated complexities of the transatlantic slave trade, racial construction, colonialism, and capitalism, but also—significantly—by practices of resistance against and refusal of these oppressive regimes (Gilroy, 1995; Robinson, 2000 [1983]). Relatedly, the black radical tradition resists narratives framed on the order of nationalism, ethnicity, psychoanalysis, Marxist political economy, and the Enlightenment, which are identified as Western Eurocentric projects that obscure histories of racial construction and oppression through mutually excluding universalist claims (*ibid.*). While '[t]he social cauldron of Black radicalism is Western society', according to Robinson:

> Black radicalism is a negation of Western civilization, but not in the direct sense of a simple dialectical negation. It is certain that the evolving tradition of Black radicalism owes its peculiar moment to the historical interdiction of African life by European agents. […] This experience, though, was merely the condition for Black radicalism—its immediate reason for and object of being—but not the foundation for its nature or character. Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis. It is not a variant of Western radicalism whose proponents happen to be Black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era … (Robinson, 2000 [1983]: 73)

Robinson locates the emergence of a black radical literature in texts by black intellectuals including Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois, whose work, Robin D.G. Kelley writes, 'shift[ed] the center of radical thought and revolution from Europe to the so-called "periphery"—to the colonial territories, marginalized colored people of the metropolitan centers of capital, and those Frantz Fanon identified as the "wretched of the earth"' (Kelley, 2000 [1983]: xli; see also Robinson, 2000 [1983]; Moten, 2003). The writings and activities of Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, Harold Cruse, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Stokely Carmichael, Claudia Jones, Angela Y. Davis, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy,

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Tina Campt, as well as Fanon, Kelley, Robinson, and Moten, among many others, which position and approach blackness as a critical departure point and site for a necessary rethinking of politics and political possibility, can be seen as contributing to this school of thought. At the same time, contributions to the black radical tradition are not delimited to the work of 'intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, operating without the benefits that flow either from a relationship to the modern state or from secure institutional locations within the cultural industries' (Gilroy, 1995: 76, 77). Paul Gilroy writes, '[t]he invented traditions of musical expression … are equally important in the study of diaspora and modernity because they have supported the formation of a distinct, often priestly caste of organic intellectuals' (*ibid*: 76). Black music is viewed as a 'distinctive counterculture of modernity' (Bauman in Gilroy, 1995: 36) made, improvised and communicated under oppressive regimes, by way of what Moten describes as a 'radically exterior aurality' (Moten, 2003: 6) and what Gilroy describes as the emergent condition of 'double-consciousness' (a term Gilroy adopts from W.E.B. Du Bois; Gilroy, 1995). According to Gilroy, black music as a 'philosophical discourse which refuses the modern, occidental separation of ethics and aesthetics, culture and politics' has been and continues to be critical to the development of a black (anti-)modern condition of black and European double-consciousness that is 'an expanded West but not completely of it' and, moreover, 'challenge[s] the privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness' (*ibid.*: 39, 58, 74).

With *In the Break*, Moten furthers Gilroy's proposition by advancing that 'by challenging the reducibility of phonic matter to verbal meaning or conventional musical form' and effecting 'a revaluation of that revaluation of value', black music actively '*disrupts* and resists certain formations of identity and interpretation' (Moten, 2003: 6, 7, my emphasis). As that which cannot be driven, defined, or anticipated by a metastructure, Moten advances that the improvisatory movement of black music not only attests to 'the fact that objects can and do resist' (*ibid.*: 1) and that those who make it resist capture by regimes that oppress through structural control, but also that black music

> cuts and augments meaning with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription. That irruption breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside: here what is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration. (*ibid.*: 14)

Critical to Moten's proposition of black music, as that which breaks and makes for the possibility of new configurations, is his qualification of black music as a *phonic* substance: as an intelligible form of expression that 'disrupts the totalizing force of the primality' and subjects primality as a 'model of subjection to a radical breakdown', and simultaneously

resists capture in 'logocentrism, which has at its heart a paradoxically phonocentric deafness' (*ibid.*: 185).[29]

In exploring his proposition that '*being material*' is indistinguishable from '*being maternal*' (*ibid.*: 16, emphasis in the original), Moten considers the music and words of Duke Ellington, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor, and other musicians. At the same time, Moten also extends and complexifies material understandings of and hermeneutic engagement with black music, in his attention to the phonic resonance of Frederick Douglass' Aunt Hester's scream as an 'objection to exchange'; his critique of the 'reduction of the phonic substance of language' of the Western psychoanalytic tradition; and in positing that the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's lynched body 'and photographs in general bear a phonic substance' (*ibid.*: 11, 177, 197).

As an irreducible, intelligible sound with a material resistant frequency of improvisational making that resonates and vibrates in and through multiple forms and media, black music 'is understood as content that irrupts into generic form, enacting a radical disorganization of that form' and carries blackness as the 'always disruptive surprise moving in the rich nonfullness of every term it modifies' (*ibid.*: 192, 255). Moten admits that 'to record this improvisational immanence—where untraceable, anoriginal rootedness and unenclosed, disclosing outness converge, where that convergence is articulation by and through an infinitesimal and unbridgeable break—is a daunting task' (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, he takes on this daunting task throughout *In the Break*, not least of which in his articulation of 'black mo'nin'.

In his essay 'Black mo'nin'', Moten investigates 'the augmentation of mourning by the sound of moaning, by a religious and political formulation of morning [*sic*] that animates the photograph with a powerfully *mater*ial resistance' (*ibid.*: 198, emphasis in the original) through his encounter with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body commissioned by his mother. 'Moaning' as proposed by Moten here is not the same as the 'moaning' I have formulated in Chapter 1 as an indeterminate mode of perceptual uncertain knowledge that is set in motion in relation to an awareness of alterity. The 'moaning' to which Moten refers is a 'black mo'nin'' that 'cuts and augments mourning and morning [*sic*]' with the sound of blackness, with a 'cut or break that is easily configured as a loss, [that is] also reconfigured as an augmentation' (*ibid.*: 198, 178). It is a sound that resonates, resists, and speaks to the impossibility of capture, and it does not injunct, which is at the same time not to say that it

[29] Thus Moten writes that while 'we've got to cut the ongoing "reduction of the phonic substance"', he cautions, 'We'll have to do this while keeping in mind all that remains urgent and needful and open in the critique of phonologocentricism' (Moten, 2003: 201).

does not 'cut' or 'augment' those who hear it. It is a sound—a black music—that Moten resoundingly argues is irreducible and audible and therefore, I would say, perceivable. Over the course of my research, on encountering and hearing Moten's articulation of black mo'nin', I perceived not so much an answer as a way into the questions with which I have opened this chapter. I perceived that possibly, yes, there might be more that may be perceived through moaning beyond injunctions and 'impossibility'. For these reasons, I have explored this possibility by—to borrow Moten's phrasing—lingering in the break that his attention to black mo'nin' opens.

In this chapter, I share the journey of this lingering. In the first section, to facilitate a deeper understanding and consideration of Moten's proposition, I turn to the publicly circulated postmortem photographs of the postmortem body of Emmett Till, the historical accounts of the contexts in which they were publicly circulated, and the responses they elicited. In this section, I also include these images so that you, the reader, may also encounter them and reflect on your own perceptions of them, not only while reading this chapter but also, if desired, in re-turning to them later on. In writing that I invite the reader to 're-turn' as opposed to 'return', I suggest that with perceptions of new knowledge and unknowns that come with further reading of the text, as well as with perceptual encounters that extend beyond the frame of this text, looking again is uncertainly never an exact enactment of the first instance of looking, but rather a new encounter and experience.

In the second section, I further examine Moten's formulation of black mo'nin' and his attention to its audibility. I advance in this section that for black mo'nin' to be heard requires perceptual engagement that is open to its possibility, and I claim moaning as one way by which a viewer of the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body may perceive black mo'nin'. Drawing on Moten's perception of black mo'nin', I construct a theory of 'moaning aesthetics' as an open, uncertain, re-distributing perceiving of sights and sounds that also critically involves turning away and re-turning to the photographic image, whereby black mo'nin' can be heard. In the third section, I turn to Moten's critique of ocularcentrism as a perceptual mode that occludes and excludes the perception of black mo'nin'. With this in mind, I effect a reading of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981) through which I formulate 'hegemonic aesthetics' as a closed, self-affirming cycle between hearing and seeing. I conclude this chapter with a comparative reflection on moaning aesthetics and hegemonic aesthetics.

2.1 Encountering the Postmortem Photographs of Emmett Till

On 28 August 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black American was kidnapped and killed by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in Money, Mississippi. Till, who was from Chicago and visiting his relatives for the first time, suffered this violence for allegedly whistling at Carolyn Bryant, a white woman and Roy Bryant's wife, four days earlier in a grocery store. By their own accounts, Bryant and Milam beat Till, gouged out his eyes, shot him in the head, tied a 32-kilogram cotton gin around his neck with barbed wire, and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie River. On 31 August, Till's mutilated body was found. On 2 September in Chicago, his mother 'Mamie' Elizabeth Till-Bradley[30] received her son's body in a large, sealed wooden crate with a written warning issued by the State of Mississippi that opening it was against the law. By this time, the story of Emmett's murder was being closely followed by local, national, and international media, who were also present at the train station where Till-Bradley received the box containing Emmett's body. Till-Bradley had the box opened against repeated warnings that doing so violated the law. Recollecting the first time she saw her son's body, Till-Bradley writes:

> At a glance, the body didn't even appear human. I remember thinking it looked like something from outer space, something you might see at one of those Saturday matinees. Or maybe that's only what I wanted to think so that I wouldn't have to admit that this was my son. Suddenly, as I stood there gazing down at the body, something came over me. It was like an electric shock. In fact, it was terror. I felt it through every bone in my body. I stiffened. [...] this body looked like something out of a horror movie. (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 134)

Against funerary convention, Till-Bradley chose to hold an open-casket viewing of her son's mutilated body. She writes that when asked if she wanted Emmett retouched, 'I shook my head. "No," I said. That was the way I wanted him presented. "Let the world see what I've seen"' (*ibid.*: 139). Till-Bradley also had postmortem photographs of her son's corpse taken and circulated by the media (reprinted on pp. 61–65). Reflecting on her decision-making, Till-Bradley writes:

> I didn't really know what was motivating me, what was making me do what I was doing during this period. It was something I can't explain, something working through me, something that would cause me to say things that would become clear to me the instant I'd speak them. But the feeling was strong in me and I understood clearly what had to be done. It would be important for people to look at what had happened on a late Mississippi night when nobody was looking, to consider what might happen again if we didn't look out. [...] I wanted to make it as real and as visible to people as I could possibly make it. I

[30] Till-Bradley's surname later changed to Till-Mobley. *Death of Innocence* (2003) is published under 'Till-Mobley' and accordingly cited in this text. However, I refer to her as 'Till-Bradley' in this dissertation, because it is the name commonly used by scholars.

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> knew that if they walked by that casket, if people opened the pages of *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender*, if other people could see it with their *own* eyes, then together we might find a way to express what we had seen. It was important to do that, I thought, to help people recognize the horrible problems we were facing in the South. (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 139)

More than 50,000 people viewed Till's body over the course of five days. The postmortem photographs of Emmett Till—published in *Jet Magazine, The Chicago Defender*, and the *San Antonio Express,* amongst numerous other publications—were widely circulated, as was coverage of his funeral and the murder trial of Bryant and Milam.[31] Also critical to generating continued interest in the events related to Emmett Till's killing was the organised support and involvement of major labour organisations—including the United Steel Workers Union, United Automobile Workers, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—whose members disseminated information in their places of work and to train passengers (Hudson-Weems, 2006).

On 23 September, after a five-day trial and 67-minute-long deliberation, Bryant and Milam were acquitted of murdering Till. Six weeks later, Bryant and Milam were also acquitted of kidnapping and released from custody. Protected against double jeopardy, Milam and Bryant fully admitted to torturing and killing Emmett Till only a few months after the conclusion of the trial, in an interview published on 24 January 1956 in *Look* magazine (Huie, 1956).

When the news of Emmett Till's killing first broke, the immediate response across the country was condemnation of the murder and calls for investigation and swift justice. However, Till-Bradley recalls that once the NAACP issued a statement that said 'Emmett's murderers "felt free to lynch him" because of the racist climate that state leaders there had accepted... Mississippi's governor—with the ironic name Hugh White—shot back a telegram to the NAACP to argue that Emmett's killing was not a lynching, but a "straight out murder"' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145; see also Newton, 2002; Linder, 2012; Michaeli, 2016). Douglas O. Linder similarly observes that initial local responses damning Bryant and Milam shifted once Till's murder began to be framed as racial violence facilitated by a pervasive, insidious, and active social sanctioning of discrimination against blacks; he writes:

> ... following the discovery of Till's body, there was reason to hope that justice might follow. Mississippi Governor Hugh White telegrammed District Attorney Gerald Chatham "urging vigorous prosecution of the case." For his part, Chatham said, "Murder is murder whether it is black or white, and we are handling this case like all parties are

[31] In Germany: *Freies Volk* 'The life of a negro isn't worth a whistle'; Belgium: *Le Peuple*, 'Le drapeau rouge (the red flag)'; France: *Le Monde* 'The Sumner trial marks, perhaps, an opening of consciousness'; *L'Aurore* 'The scandalous acquittal in Sumner'; *Le Figaro,* 'The shame of the Sumner jury'; *L'Humanité*, 'After the mockery of justice in Mississippi: emotion in Paris'.

> white." Mississippi citizens expressed shock over the crime. Ben Roy, a white merchant in Money, told reporters, "Nobody here, Negro or white, approves of things like that." Local newspapers added their condemnation. The *Greenwood Commonwealth* editorialized, "The citizens of this area are determined that the guilty parties shall be punished to the full extent of the law."
>
> Then everything changed. When Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, described Till's killing as a "lynching" and opined that "the state of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children," many Mississippians were deeply offended and angered. … the strident remarks of Wilkins and other northern opponents of segregation caused the local power structure to dig in, and throw its support to Bryant and Milam, two men they otherwise might have been happy to see put away. All five lawyers in the town of Sumner, where the Bryant-Milam trial would be held, agreed to serve as defense counsel. One of the defense lawyers acknowledged later that he only agreed to represent Bryant and Milam after "Mississippi began to be run down." (Linder, 2012)

Most of the documents and all of the transcripts from the trial were subsequently destroyed. However, Clenora Hudson-Weems' analysis of the seventeen extant documents and accounts of the proceedings presents a reading of the trial where 'although Circuit Court Judge Curtis M. Swango remained fair and impartial throughout the murder and kidnapping trial, he was helpless to stop an all-white male jury that carried out the prescriptive course of action for southern racism and returned verdicts of not guilty on both charges' (Hudson-Weems, 2006: 29).

Public outcry against the verdicts came in the form of protests, rallies, editorials, political organisation, and continued media coverage of these responses. Not long after the conclusion of the trial, what would become known as the American Civil Rights Movement visibly gained momentum, accelerated, and took hold of the country. Moten observes, 'Emmett Till—which is to say to his death, which is to say to the famous picturing and display, staging and performance, of his death or of him in death' has often been attributed critical 'agency that set in motion this nation's profoundest political insurrection and resurrection, the resurrection of reconstruction, a second reconstruction like a second coming of the Lord' (Moten, 2003: 195). On her defiance to 'go to the back of the bus' on 1 December 1955, Rosa Parks has been quoted saying, 'I thought about Emmett Till, and I could not go back. My legs and feet were hurting, that is a stereotype' (Bailey, 1970: 45). According to Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., 'In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* broke the legal back of segregation. But the murder of Emmett Till broke the emotional back of segregation' (Jackson Sr., 2003: xii). Alvin Chambliss has cited Emmett Till's killing and case as a primary motivation in his becoming a civil rights attorney (Hudson-Weems, 2006: 86). Civil rights activist and sociologist Joyce A. Ladner writes that the events around Emmett Till's killing 'showed people how intractable a problem could be and how difficult a solution would be' and catalytically sparked the first sit-ins and read-ins protesting segregation of public institutions in the US (*ibid.*: 84).

2.2 Moaning Aesthetics: Moaning and Fred Moten's 'Black Mo'nin''

Moten locates the 'force Till's death exerted' in the postmortem photograph of Emmett Till's body (Moten, 2003: 196). Specifically, he locates it what he calls 'black mo'nin': the 'phonic substance' or 'phonographic content' of the photograph, the 'sound before the photograph' wherein 'the whistle is just as crucial as the moan; train whistle, maybe; [Emmett Till's] whistle carrying the echo of the train that took particular origins north, the train that brought him home and took him home and brought him home' (*ibid.*: 202), 'a disruption of the disruption that would have captured, an arrest of the spirit that arrests a repetitive close (*ibid.*: 199).

Black mo'nin' is an irreducible sound that cuts and augments the postmortem photograph of Emmett Till, and cuts and augments through the postmortem photograph of Emmett Till. It is a sound that is 'not just a sound' and 'not just a negation of the present either, in the form of an ongoing displacement of the concrete', but rather is 'an abundance—in abundance—of the present, an abundance of affirmation in abundance of the negative, in abundance of disappearance' (*ibid.*: 200). It is the sound of blackness, of 'the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that anarranges every line … a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity' (*ibid.*: 1).

In bringing attention to the aural here, Moten does not declaim the significance of the visual, nor does he call for a hierarchical reordering of aesthetic registers where aurality reigns. In saying that black mo'nin' is the sound that comes *before* the photograph, Moten is not making a claim that the sound comes *above* the image. Rather, in proposing that black mo'nin' becomes audible in cutting the photograph, Moten's theorisation suggests that the visual materiality of the postmortem photograph of Emmett Till is critical to the audibility of the 'syncopation, performance, and the anarchic organization of phonic substance' (*ibid.*: 85) of black mo'nin'. This is because, he writes, 'sound and recording are fundamentally connected in their disruptive necessity to language, photography, and performance' (*ibid.*: 205). Put another way, as sound requires a medium through which it can resonate and become audible, black mo'nin' requires the postmortem photograph of Emmett Till to cut and become audible. Thus, the sounding of black mo'nin' operates on a complex interplay between visual and aural registers. I would also add here that, by extension, the perceiver's attention to both the visual and the aural—not just to one sensorial register or the other—is critical for the hearing of black mo'nin.

Operating on multiple phenomenological registers and as an epistemological concern, black mo'nin' is not inherently or determinately linked to some unquestionably socio-political,

aesthetic, or ethical truth. Rather, Moten offers, that with encountering the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body, in hearing black mo'nin' by seeing the image, 'the looker is in danger of slipping, not away, but into something less comfortable than horror—aesthetic judgment, denial, laughter, some out and unprecedented reflection, movement, murder, song' (*ibid.*: 201). The critical importance of black mo'nin' and its perception lies in its ability to 'cut' the image and expose the possibility of change, which in and of itself is a transformative act. As Moten writes, '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 [Emmett Till] seems to keep disappearing as we look at him it is because we look away, which is what makes *possible and impossible* representation, reproduction, dream' (*ibid.*: 200, my emphasis).

Moten writes that it is not only in the act of looking at, but also the act of *turning away* from the image that opens the possibility for a viewer of the postmortem images of Emmett Till to hear the phonic substance of the image. While observing that the 'fear of another castration is all bound up in this aversion of the eye', so too does he write that the 'blindness held in the aversion of the eye [...] makes music' (*ibid*: 199). In this blind aversion—wherein the viewer is blind to the 'fear of another castration'—the viewer encounters an 'aural aesthetic [that] is not the simple reemergence of the voice of presence, the visible and graphic word' (*ibid.*: 201), but a multiplicity of sounds that, set in relation to the new visual encounter with Emmett Till's image, demand aesthetic organisation and/or reorganisation.

However, here I would argue that to look away with 'blind aversion'—with a suspension, ignoring, or disavowal of an existing fear of castration, of being made incomplete, undone, cut, broken, disrupted, augmented, exposed, lost—is not enough to sustain the viewer's capacity to hear black mo'nin' and be augmented by the improvisational making of its music. As already noted, according to Moten, blackness is an *extended* movement and an *ongoing* irruption (Moten, 2003: 1). Thus, to hear and be transformed by it, requires extended and ongoing exposure to it. With the fear of castration only suspended or disavowed, the hearing of black mo'nin' is at risk of occlusion and exclusion with even the slightest retuning of perception that brings this fear back into the viewer's field of perception.

Therefore, I would argue that for black mo'nin' not only to be perceived, but to be heard and continue to be heard requires that the viewer encounter black mo'nin' with having had already gone through castration, such that there is no fear to suspend or disavow that could at any time regulate, shape, or close off the possibility of continued perception and engagement with it; such that the viewer is already and continues to be exposed and open to the uncertain, indeterminate, and 'abundant' possibilities of perception in relation to encountering and

turning away from the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body; such that when the viewer looks away, they turn not with a blind aversion but rather with an *uncertain aversion,* with an open, indeterminate curiosity towards what and how they are perceiving.

Bringing in here moaning as an indeterminate perceptual mode that is open to uncertain knowledge production that emerges from mourning as an encounter with alterity in relation to a conscious awareness of 'loss' (as formulated in Chapter 1), I would advance that moaning is not only one perceptual mode by which a viewer might perceive black mo'nin', but that it is the mode of perception by which black mo'nin' is heard and continues to be heard by a viewer. This is not to say that moaning precedes black mo'nin' or the other way around,[32] but I am proposing that both are necessary for the viewer to hear black mo'nin'—that it is the mutual encountering of the disruptive, augmenting, improvisational sound of black mo'nin' with the viewer's perceptual openness to the possibilities of the production of new, unknown knowledge that 'makes music'.

If the viewer attends to the various sounds that amplify not so much in the blind aversion, but in the uncertain aversion, embracing the 'redoubled and reanimating passion, the passion of a seeing that is involuntary and uncontrollable, *a seeing that redoubles itself as sound*' (*ibid.*: 2001, my emphasis), then the act of turning away from the image also turns into an act of *turning towards* the new knowledge that the encounter with the visual image has produced. Moreover, this turns looking away into a new encounter that prompts looking again and looking away again, looking again, looking away again, and so on, as movements, seeing and hearing that are never a simple rote looping of the same.

This movement of turning towards and away with an openness to the unknown possibilities perceived in the 'uncertain aversion', which is open to perceiving augmentation and disruption as well as to the possibility of being augmented and disrupted, makes for an improvisational recursion. Each turn is not a return as in a repetition of the same, but rather a 're-turn' that is prompted, informed, and changed with each movement and uncertain, indeterminate perceptual encounter. Without the perceiver's continued foregrounding of uncertainty and indeterminacy that opens up attention to the improvisational and the unanticipatable, the looking away and turning back would emulsify into a repetitive close, closed-off from the 'abundance' of black mo'nin'.

With attention to both the visual *and* the aural on the perceptual register of moaning, 'mourning turns' (*ibid.*: 201) from a process that solely represents and reinforces structures

[32] This is further explored in Chapter 4.

perceived as ontological givens, into an action that—in reproducing encounters with perception as open and disruptive—also opens up indeterminate, epistemological possibilities. In Chapter 1, I advanced that moaning is not defined or determined by a particular set of aesthetic, phenomenological qualities. At the same time, through this consideration of moaning as a mode of perception specifically in relation with black mo'nin', one kind of moaning that operates on the dynamic interplay of perception on the registers of visual and aural aesthetics emerges. I would advance that this 'moaning aesthetics' is one of many ways by which moaning can manifest as an uncertain perceptual gauge of unknown knowledge. While 'moaning aesthetics', as a perceptual mode of moaning that specifically refers to the open, uncertain, re-distributing perceiving of sights and sounds, has been formulated and articulated specifically in relation to Moten's aesthetic formulation of black mo'nin', as it is indeterminate and not directed by black mo'nin', the range of that which can be potentially perceived on the register of 'moaning aesthetics' is not limited to black mo'nin'.

2.3 Hegemonic Aesthetics: Ocularcentrism and Obfuscuration

The critical importance of the perceptual mode by which the viewer engages with their encountering the postmortem images of the body of Emmett Till becomes all the more apparent in view of Moten's critique of ocularcentrism as a prescriptive, structured mode of perception that in its privileging of the visual over the aural, sight over sound, seeing over hearing, occludes and excludes the viewer's capacity to hear black mo'nin'. Moten argues against this 'hegemony of the visual' (*ibid.*: 250), which he locates in Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981), writing:

> In positing [Emmett Till's] photo and photographs in general bear a phonic substance, I want to challenge not only only the ocularcentrism that generally—perhaps necessarily—shapes theories of the nature of photography and our experience of photography but also that mode of semiotic objectification and inquiry that privileges the analytic-interpretative reduction of phonic materiality and/or nonmeaning over something like a mimetic improvisation of and with that materiality that move in excess of meaning. (*ibid.*: 197).

In other words, Moten critiques ocularcentrism as a mode of cognitive engagement that closes the epistemological possibilities of perceptual phenomenon by neutralising the phonic as merely representative of a pre-existing political and aesthetic order.

Moten writes, 'Against the backdrop of Emmett Till, the *silencing* of a photograph in the name of that interstitial space between the Photograph and Photography is also the *silencing dismissal* of a performance in the name of that interstitial space between Performance and

Performativity' (*ibid.*: 204, my emphasis). Proceeding from this statement and the idea that black mo'nin' is perceived in the 'aversion of the eye' (*ibid.*: 199), it is possible to argue that the 'hegemony of the visual' operates by silencing aurality altogether, and that the sounds emanating from the photographic images of lynched black individuals other than Emmett Till failed to be heard, because their shouts were silenced by a pervasive cultural determination that lynched black individuals should not and/or could not be mourned. With this understanding, one might claim that ocularcentrism silences both the shout of the lynched individuals and the moans of those who mourn them, and that this silence, in turn, yields an image that is also silent. According to the flow of this logic, this silence carries over such that, on turning away from an image, instead of discovering an aural 're-doubled looking', one hears nothing.

This articulation accords with Diana Taylor's formulation of 'percepticide' as 'the self-blinding of the general population' (Taylor, 1997: 123). Through a focused consideration of Argentina's 'Dirty War',[33] when in the years between 1976 and 1983 the country was under military dictatorial rule and an estimated 30,000 individuals were disappeared, Taylor presents in *Disappearing Acts*, 'how a small group of power brokers (in this case the military) engenders and controls a viewing public through the performance of national identity, traditions, and goals' (*ibid.*: ix). She writes that under the regime of *la última junta militar* or *la última dictadura* a 'network of surreptitious looks positioned and silenced those who did not condone or identify with the military project', and that the 'triumph of the atrocity was that it forced people to look away—a gesture that undid their sense of personal and communal cohesion even as it seemed to bracket them from their volatile surroundings' (*ibid.*: 122). For Taylor, the 'undoing' of looking away did not present a population 'positioned by means of the spectacle' with the possibility of hearing, whether it be of a singularity or plurality of sounds, hierarchised or otherwise; rather, she advances that 'Spectacles of violence rendered the population silent, deaf, and blind' (*ibid.*: 123).

The idea that the 'hegemony of the visual' effects silence aligns with a conclusion that Michèle Barrett observes has often been drawn in response to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'Can the subaltern speak?' (Barrett, 2004). In her essay, Spivak recounts how in 1926 India, 16-year-old Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri committed suicide by hanging herself. Spivak writes that suicide was generally seen as an act carried out by women who were illicitly pregnant, especially in instances where a widow committed suicide instead of carrying out the socially expected act of self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her dead husband (Spivak, 1988). However, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time of her suicide, her act could not be

[33] Also called the 'Process of National Re-organization' by the military regime.

read in this way. Given the incongruity between the normative reading of Bhaduri's actions and evidence that resists this reading, Spivak asked a colleague, 'a Bengali woman, a philosopher and Sanskritist whose early intellectual production is almost identical to my own', to investigate for her Bhuvaneswari's life and death (*ibid.*: 308). However, Spivak recounts that in answer to her request, her colleague curiously responded as follows: '(a) Why, when her two sisters, Saileswari and Raseswari, led such full and wonderful lives, are you interested in the hapless Bhuvaneswari? (b) I asked her nieces. It appears that it was a case of illicit love' (*ibid.*).

Barrett observes that many scholars advance that the reason why Spivak's colleague does not hear something other than the dominating narrative of Bhaduri's suicide as pregnancy from an illicit affair, even in light of visible details that resist this narrative framing, is because Bhaduri, as a subaltern subject inhabiting 'the dreary myth of a passive Asian femininity', cannot speak (Barrett, 2004: 359). In other words, Spivak's colleague cannot hear Bhaduri's speech, because a hegemonic discourse renders Bhaduri speechless—it silences her. However, in *Moving Devi*, Spivak argues against this reading; she answers her own question with 'there are many subalterns [...] their speech is still unheard' (Spivak, 2001: 120). In other words, according to Spivak, Bhuvaneswari *can* speak—the subaltern is not silent—but Spivak's colleague *does not hear her*. Thus, Barrett advances, 'the critical question is "*can the hegemonic ear hear anything?*" rather than the literal one of "can the subaltern speak?"' (Barrett, 2004: 359). If the 'hegemonic ear' is taken to be deaf, this question becomes rhetorical and the answer readily: no, the hegemonic ear cannot hear anything. But if the 'hegemonic ear' is approached as potentially functioning, then in turn I advance that the critical question is '*how and what does the hegemonic hear?*' rather than the close-ended one of 'can the hegemonic ear hear anything?'

Consideration of a friend's reaction to *4'33"* (1960) as recounted by John Cage offers useful insight here. Composed 'for any instrument and any combination of instruments', Cage's *4'33"* consists of three movements—33", 2'40", and 1'20"—without commonly identified scripted musical notation. The piece debuted at the 1960 Woodstock Artists Association for the Benefit Artists Welfare Fund, during which pianist David Tudor sat at a piano but did not bring his fingers to press down on the ivory keys that sat before him for the four-minute and thirty-three-second duration of the performance. According to Cage, 'There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot' (Cage, 1991). Yet *4'33"* is often called and described as Cage's 'silent piece' (MOMA, 2013). In a letter to his friend, Helen Wolff, Cage pushes against this nomenclature, writing:

> The piece is not actually silent (there will never be silence until death comes which never comes); it is full of sound, but sounds which I did not think of beforehand, which I hear for the first time the same time others hear. What we hear is determined by our own emptiness, our own receptivity; we receive to the extent we are empty to do so. If one is full, or in the course of its performance becomes full of an idea, for example, that this piece is a trick for shock and bewilderment then it is just that. (Cage, 2013 [1954])

Further to Cage's assertion that the piece is far from silent, he relates to Wolff how '[a] friend of mine was disturbed by *4'33"* and said with some heat that I apparently thought him stupid and incapable of hearing the sounds of everyday life which he informed me he could and with pleasure. I asked him why, if in private he could hear, he was disturbed to foresee doing so in public. This he had to say, "You have a point"' (*ibid.*). Drawing on Cage's retelling, it becomes clear that what Cage's friend heard in *4'33"*—in seeing a performer with an instrument and not playing it—was not only the 'sounds of everyday life' but also the sound of a voice telling him 'you are stupid and incapable of hearing the sounds of everyday life'—a voice that the friend initially attributes to Cage, but whose attribution is thrown into question when conversing with Cage.

Following on Moten's claim that while the sound of black mo'nin' is occludable, it is irreducible (Moten, 2003: 175); Spivak's assertion that the 'subaltern is not silent'; and Cage's that 'there is always something to see, something to hear', the possibility of formulating an alternative response to the question of *Can the hegemonic ear hear anything?* emerges. Namely that yes, the hegemonic ear hears and hears very well: it hears the dominating shout of ocularcentrism. This ocularcentric shout does not silence other sounds—it shouts over and drowns them out. This drowning out involves a refined procedure of tuning, of adjusting the ear not to 'not hear' but to 'listen for', which is not simply a matter of deafening amplification. From this perspective, ocularcentrism appears to actively and necessarily operate by employing a *hegemonic voice:* a voice that does not silence other sounds per se, but sets the conditions for the making of an ear into a *hegemonic ear* (to use Barrett's terminology)—an ear that only *listens to* a single *voice* as the only voice and only *hears* other sounds, if at all, by *listening for* and *listening through* the perceived direction of this 'only' voice.[34] Furthermore, I would advance that the 'hegemony of the visual' does not effect a blinding—'self-blinding' or otherwise as Taylor suggests (Taylor, 1997)—but rather the opposite: exercising ocularcentrism requires a very active, seeing eye.

I therefore advance a modified version of Moten's formulation of ocularcentrism, as that which does not *in practice* reduce, exclude, dismiss, diminish, or oppose the shout; on the

[34] In using 'voice' here and throughout the text, I draw on its vernacular usage as a term that refers to a logocentric expression of a formed opinion that is determined in its performance; therefore, while it is not necessarily hegemonic, it is notably different from the improvisational phonic substance of black mo'nin'.

contrary ocularcentrism wholly embraces and uses aurality and, furthermore, uses it to declare *what* it is and *how* it should be perceived. In this reformulation, ocularcentrism employs multiple aesthetic registers that work together; the dynamics between visual and aural aesthetics actively move in direct and proportional relation with one another, not inversely or antithetically. In other words, I advance that the conditioning of aesthetic perception neither blinds nor silences.[35]

If it is taken on board that 'there is always something to see, something to hear' and the hegemonic ear can and does hear—that it hears the hegemonic voice of ocularcentrism—then the question emerges: How does ocularcentrism manage to achieve the (seemingly contradictory) transformation of a voice into a hegemonic voice, and an ear into a hegemonic ear? And how can this be claimed when it *appears* otherwise? Moten advances *Camera Lucida* as the example par excellence of that which both epitomises and practices an ocularcentric mode of engagement with the photographic image. Thus, I revisit Barthes' text to attend to this question.

Moten writes that Barthes's ocularcentrism 'in search for a universal language and a universal science of language … exclu[des] the sound/shout of the photograph' (Moten, 2003: 205); it does not, however, exclude the sound/shout of Barthes' voice. Approaching Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981) with this in mind, as well as with Barrett's reframing of Spivak's question and Cage's assertion that there is always something to hear, I now cannot but seem to *hear* in Barthes' assertion, 'In these images, no *punctum*: a certain shock but no disturbance; the photograph can "shout," not wound' (*ibid.*: 41), that he 'doth protest too much'[36]—I cannot but seem to hear *Barthes'* voice. More specifically, I hear Barthes exercising his *voice* to solicit the reader to inhabit his position as *Spectator* and direct the reader's attention towards the visual and away from the aural.

It is through the exercise of his *voice* set in relation to image that Barthes distinguishes the 'two themes in Photography' as *punctum* and *studium*. It is through his textual *utterance* that Barthes directs the reader's attention to the *punctum* that 'wounds' and 'pricks', which is always a *visual* detail—e.g. 'Tzara's hand resting on the door frame'; 'not the gesture but the

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[35] I also advance that conflating the politics of aesthetics with the physiological capacities of seeing/hearing is problematically reductive. This is in part because, even with the understanding that such conflation is to be read on a metaphorical level, it inexplicably and unnecessarily makes broad political claims of individuals who are physiologically blind and/or deaf. Also, as the discussions on seeing and/or hearing in this text, and those referenced, do not simply stay within the metaphorical register of seeing/hearing, but engage with the physiological phenomenon of perception, the notion that only in this should the reader understand that 'blindness' and 'deafness' be taken metaphorically, appears problematically imprecise. Finally, this conflation closes down the possibility of examining how perception might shift beyond a mystical logic (metaphorical or otherwise) of restored sight/hearing.

[36] Quoting Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which things are revealed to be not as they seem.

slightly repellent substance of those spatulate nails, at once soft and hard-edged'; 'the second boy's crossed arms' (*ibid.*: 27, 96, 45, 52). Barthes declares that the *punctum* is not 'all of the photograph', but a detail that 'is bound to arrest my *gaze*' that 'attracts or distresses me' and 'arouses great sympathy in me, almost a kind of tenderness' (*ibid.*: 51, 40, 43, my emphasis). By soliciting the reader to seek out the visual detail that 'pricks', Barthes' voice indirectly draws attention away from the 'shout' of the photographic image.

Critical to the making of the 'hegemony of the visual', Barthes' *voice* also guides the reader's attention away from the aural activity of his voice by calling attention to the sound of the image and locating it within photographic images that he deems 'invested with no more than *studium*' (*ibid.*: 27). He declares that photographic images that 'can "shout", not wound' are 'unary' and 'banal', possessing 'no duality, no indirection, no disturbance' and 'no *punctum*: a certain shock but no disturbance' (*ibid.*: 41, 76). Barthes writes towards the end of *Camera Lucida* that the 'means of taming the Photograph is to generalize, to gregarize, banalize it until it is no longer confronted by any image in relation to which it can mark itself, assert its special character, its scandal, its madness' (*ibid.*: 118), and it appears that he tames sound in this manner. As per Moten's observation, in Barthes' declaring that the '*studium* is of the order of *liking*, not *loving*' and that he found 'the truth of the face I had loved' in the *punctum* of the Winter Garden photograph, he declares a structural hierarchy of images that visually 'wound' over those that aurally 'shout' (*ibid.*: 67, 27, 67).

At the same time, while in locating and embedding sound in *studium* Barthes' voice expresses an indifference towards the aural, his voice does not deny, refuse or disavow it; he never calls for a total closing of the ear or silencing of the shout. The nuance that comes with what Barthes does *not* say is critical for the realisation of ocularcentrism. A total closing of the ear to the aural would also close it off from Barthes' voice; however, subordinating the aural to the visual produces and maintains a space from which *his* voice can speak and be heard without contradiction, without question or pause on the part of the reader.

Barthes also never overtly or directly claims that he speaks from a position of vocal hegemony over that of the reader. On the contrary, he declares throughout his text that the *punctum* 'bruises me, is poignant to me', that 'many photographs are, alas, inert under my gaze', and that it is 'for me' that the Winter Garden Photograph achieves jouissance (*ibid.*: 27, 70). Furthermore, Barthes does not advance his voice from the position of the 'Author',[37] but 'from my *Spectator's* viewpoint' (*ibid.*: 42). But just because Barthes does not declare his voice as authorial does not mean that his voice does not assume this position.

[37] Barthes declared the 'Author' 'dead' in 1967 (Barthes, 1977).

Indeed, I argue that in order for Barthes' voice to achieve the necessary hegemonic status for the institution of an ocularcentric paradigm, it *must* deny its dominance. Such a denial allows for uninterrupted focus on the visual. Conversely, Barthes' declaring vocal dominance would draw attention to the aural and away from the visual, breaking the spell of ocularcentric logic, wherein Barthes' voice seemingly speaks from a position of subordination to that of the visual. It would overtly run counter to the assertion that sound is relatively unworthy of attention and subordinant to the visual aesthetics it purports to elevate. It would reveal the magic trick of ocularcentrism—whereby the *appearance* of structuring the visual register over the aural is one effected by both registers working in tandem to disarm the reader of its conscious agency of perceptual awareness. It would divert the reader's attention to aural awareness. It would open up the possibility of hearing other voices. It would out Barthes' voice as a detail and the capacity for sound to interrupt and wound. In other words, Barthes' proclaimed indifference towards aurality is not a disavowal of aurality, but a seduction of the reader towards disavowing their own attention to aurality; without this seduction, Barthes' voice does not achieve the hegemonic status necessary for the reader's assumption of his ocularcentric logic.

The covert hegemony of Barthes' voice required for the institution of ocularcentrism cannot be achieved without a susceptible ear that, more to the point, takes on the hegemonic voice as its own. Barthes creates the conditions for this possibility in proclaiming his position as that of the *Spectator*. In doing so, he presents a setting in which the reader not only can listen to his proposed way of perceiving photographs, but is also implicitly invited to assume and enact Barthes' *Spectator*ship—all without overtly calling attention to the authorial exercising of his voice. Barthes' presenting to the reader the photographs to which he refers and his describing and qualifying what he sees in each, can be viewed as soliciting the reader to take on *his Spectator*'s perspective and to see what he sees *in the way he sees it*. The openness of the reader's ears and eyes, then, serves as a means by which Barthes' mode of processing perceptual phenomenon can potentially territorialise that of the reader. However, again, the 'hegemony of the visual's takeover—which is also the *undeclared* 'hegemony of the aural'—requires the reader to accept such solicitations not only by inhabiting the subject position of the *Spectator* and appropriating its eyes and ears with those that Barthes draws in his own likeness, but in giving up attention to and awareness of the possibility of other ways with which to cognitively process perceptual phenomena.

Barthes declares that the *punctum* is a 'detail [that] overwhelms the entirety of my reading' and 'has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion'; that 'while remaining a "detail," it fills the whole picture'; that it 'is at once brief and active'; that it 'takes the spectator outside

its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see'; and that 'once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined)' (*ibid.*: 45, 49, 57, 59). Like Moten's blind aversion and my uncertain aversion, the blind field produced from Barthes' *punctum* extends beyond the space and time of the photographic material, as well as beyond the space and time of an immediate visual encounter with an image; however, Barthes' *punctum* territorialises the expanded fields of the visual and the aural in a markedly different way from either the blind aversion or the uncertain aversion. The blind aversion and the uncertain aversion produce the conditions for hearing a multiplicity of, and sometimes seemingly incongruent, voices (e.g. Mamie Till-Bradley's moan, the whistle of the train, Emmett Till's whistle, the not-guilty verdict of Bryant and Milam, among others). In contrast, the expansion of the 'unlocatable' (*ibid.*: 57) visual *punctum* extends the dominion of the voice that accompanies it—a voice that, as the incarnation of the divine and allows for the seeing 'toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together' (*ibid.*: 59), is not to be questioned or further explored.

The blind field is where Barthes 'discovers' affirmation of that which he already knows to the extent that seeing becomes unnecessary. He writes, '… the *punctum* should be revealed only after the fact when the photograph is no longer in front of me and I think back on it. I may know better a photograph I remember than a photograph I am looking at, as if direct vision oriented its language wrongly, engaging it in an effort of description which will always miss its point of effect, the *punctum*' (*ibid.*: 53).[38] The uncontested supremacy of the unnamed ocularcentric voice over both other sounds and visuality is no more apparent than in this passage, where Barthes advances that relative to his remembrance, even the visual language of the *punctum* image is 'wrong'. And having served its sole purpose in presenting and affirming Barthes' remembrance, the visual material of the image becomes irrelevant; for Barthes, the image, having revealed to him his *punctum* only needs subsequently to be *thought* about, and 'looking again' is not only unnecessary but a sign of the *Spectator* having missed the point of looking. Furthermore, unlike blind or uncertain aversion, Barthes' blind field does not effect a 'redoubled seeing' that prompts 'a fear of castration'. This is not to say that there is no 'redoubled seeing' in the form of hearing in the blind field; on the contrary, Barthes by his own account sees and hears very well—in the blind field, he hears his voice of remembrance substantiated by the looking at and away from the photograph that reveals his *punctum* and, animated and animating, he erects his remembrance as divined knowledge.

[38] Barthes' 'knowing better' recalls Slavoj Žižek and Robert Pfaller's interpassive subject, which in 'knowing better' defers activity to an external party (Žižek, 1998; Pfaller, 2014); further discussed in Chapter 3.

Barthes presents what he calls the 'Winter Garden Photograph' as the epitome of an image with *punctum*. Describing this photograph of his mother as a child, which he found after her death, he writes:

> In this little girl's image I saw the kindness which had formed her being immediately and forever, without her having inherited it from anyone [...] Her kindness was specifically *out-of-play*, it belonged to no system, or at least it was located at the limits of a morality (evangelical, for instance); I could not define it better than by this feature (among others): that during the whole of our life together, she never made a single "observation." This extreme and particular circumstance, so abstract in relation to an image, was nonetheless present in the face revealed in the photograph I had just discovered. "Not a just image, just an image," Godard says. But my grief wanted a just image, an image which would be both justice and accuracy—*justesse*: just an image, but a just image. Such, for me, was the Winter Garden Photograph. (*ibid.*: 69–70)

In marked contrast to Till-Bradley's sharing of the photographic image of her son's postmortem face with the desire to 'Let the world see what I've seen', Barthes shares the 'face revealed in the photograph' of his mother only via his textual description of the visual image. Famously, the images of Barthes' mother[39] are the only images he discusses but does not visually reproduce in *Camera Lucid*a.[40] I cautiously speculate that without Till-Bradley's sharing of Emmett Till's untouched postmortem image, Moten would not have encountered and re-encountered this image, and thus would not have written:

> His casket was opened, his face was shown, is seen—now in the photograph—and allowed to open a revelation that first is manifest in the shudder the shutter continues to produce, the trembling, a general disruption of the ways in which we gaze at the face and at the dead, a disruption of the oppressive ethics and coercive law of reckless eyeballing, reckless whistling, which contains within it a call, the disruption of the disruption that would have captured, an arrest of the spirit that arrests, a repetitive close. (Moten, 2003: 199)

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[39] The 'Winter Garden Photograph'; 'her latest, taken the summer before her death'; and 'photographs of her which had left me so unsatisfied' (Barthes, 1981: 71).

[40] Peggy Phelan might argue that Barthes' omission of his mother's image is a negation of the 'Mother's genitals':

> "What founds our *gender economy* (division of the sexes and their mutual evaluation) is the exclusion of *the mother*, more specifically her body, more precisely yet, her *genitals*. these cannot, must not be *seen*" (original emphasis; MacCannell, *Figuring Lacan*: 106). The discursive and iconic "nothingness" of the Mother's genitals is what culture and metaphor cannot face. They must be effaced in order to allow the phallus to operate as that which always marks, values, and wounds. Castration is a response to this blindness to the mother's genitals. In "The Uncanny" Freud suggests that the fear of blindness is a displacement of the deeper fear of castration but surely it works the other way as well, or maybe even more strongly. Averting the eyes from the "nothing" of the mother's genitals is the blindness which fuels castration. (Phelan, 1993: 151)

Phelan seems to equate aversion with blindness. Following Moten (2003), I would argue that aversion of the 'nothingness' is not blindness, but an overload of a seeing and hearing that in a self-substantiating closed-loop system generates a singular, totalising output of meaning that fuels castration/to which castration is a response.

Barthes disallows the possibility of his reader opening such a revelation in relation to the images of his mother. On the one hand, if ocularcentrism is understood as a valorisation of the visual, then Barthes' omission of the image seems paradoxical. On the other, Barthes' omission of the visual imagery of the Winter Garden Photograph fits smoothly within the logic of an ocularcentrism that is less a valorisation of the visual, and more a putting to work of the visual in the service of an undeclared sovereign positioning of Barthes' voice over other voices and aesthetic registers.

Barthes states that his mother's kindness was ontologically unique and defined by her not making 'a single "observation"'; making observations throughout *Camera Lucida,* Barthes is, by his own definition, not kind. But neither is Barthes, by his own admission, interested in reproducing his mother's kindness;[41] through looking, he seeks 'justice and accuracy'. As he locates his discovery of both in the blind field of the *punctum* 'divined' from looking at *and* away from the Winter Garden Photograph, I advance that Barthes also positions this justice as divine. Furthermore, as he writes that the *punctum* 'is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*' and with his encounter of the Winter Garden Photograph 'for once, photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance', I advance that new knowledge is not to be found in Barthes' blind field—only affirmation, which is equated as divine justice and evidence of the truth of his remembrance (Barthes, 1981: 55, 70).

Barthes writes that he 'discovered [the Winter Garden] photograph by moving back through Time. The Greeks entered into Death backward: what they had before them was their past. In the same way I worked back through a life, not my own, but the life of someone I love' (*ibid.*: 71). Reading *Camera Lucida* backwards—starting with his discussion of the Winter Garden Photograph and proceeding to his discussion of the *studium*—reveals that the *punctum* Barthes discovered in the encounter *and* turning away from the Winter Garden Photograph serves both as the basis for his ocularcentric logic and the gauge by which he judges all other photographs. It is the means by which he determines when 'confronting millions of photographs, including those which have a good *studium,* I sense no blind field: everything which happens within the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond' (*ibid.*: 57). It is the means by which Barthes as *Spectator*ial jury, judge, and executioner determines whether an image is accurate, just, and truthful such that it is worthy of 'passing beyond' into the blind field of his awareness or, if not, should be left to 'die absolutely' within the frame.

Images for Barthes are just if they accord with his remembrance positioned as truth, i.e. as certain knowledge. Images that do not fit within remembrance, that present new knowledge,

[41] Which, according to Barthes, in its singularity, could not be reproduced anyway.

that *shout* injustice—such as the postmortem images of Emmett Till—are left to die within the borders of the image's frame. The scream of injustice that dominates Barthes' perception and exacts this fate onto images without *punctum* is not the moan of injustice to which Emmett Till was subject, but the injustice that Barthes as *Spectator* perceives in the image's failure to deliver the 'certainty of remembrance'. To clarify, the importance Barthes places on remembrance is not what marks a voice/ear as hegemonic. By way of comparison, the sounds Moten hears in black mo'nin' can also be located in Moten's remembrance; it is not as though in turning away from Emmett Till's photograph, Moten suddenly encounters the measurably audible moan of Mamie Till-Bradley, the whistles of trains travelling north in the distance, or Emmett Till's whistle on the streets of Money, Mississippi. It is Barthes' positioning of *his* remembrance revealed by the visual *punctum* as the dominant mode through which to read all other photographs in a closed system that denies the possibility of new knowledge production, that makes Barthes' voice hegemonic.

Barthes writes:

> The *studium* is a kind of education (knowledge and civility, "politeness") which allows me to discover the *Operator*, to experience the intentions which establish and animate his practice, but to experience them "in reverse," according to my will as a *Spectator*. It is rather as if I had to read the Photographer's myths in the Photograph, fraternizing with them not quite believing in them.
>
> These myths, obviously aim (this is what myth is for) at reconciling the Photograph with society (is this necessary?—Yes, indeed: the Photograph is *dangerous*) by endowing it with *functions* which are, for the Photographer, so many alibis. These functions are: to inform, to represent, to surprise, to cause, to signify, to provoke desire. And I, the *Spectator*, I recognize them with more or less pleasure: I invest them with my *studium* (which is never my delight or my pain). (*ibid.*: 28)

If the *punctum* is understood to be *studium's* counterpart, then I advance that Barthes' *punctum* can only be encountered with a photograph that does *not* allow the *Spectator* 'to discover the *Operator*'. By dismissing images in which the *Operator* can be discovered, Barthes not only dissuades the reader's turning attention towards aural aesthetics, but also from *locating* the origin from which the aural emanates. In describing the *Operator*'s intentions as myths and that he experiences *studium* images 'with more or less pleasure', Barthes' dismissal of this experience seems to stem from disinterest and ambivalence. But his proverbial yawn belies the critical importance of the *Operator*'s unlocatability for Barthes' philosophy of the truthful, just, divine *punctum*. Such a search would reveal that the *Operator* of the *punctum* image is never the Photographer, but the *Spectator* who is neither divine nor just in exacting unequivocal judgements on all photographic images according to his limited, situated, specific remembrance. Such a search would reveal that the *punctum* is not a divine, all-knowing wound

inflicted by an image that exposes the *Spectator* to universal 'justice' and 'truth', but rather the *Spectator*'s perception of a detail that visually represents and in so doing only legitimises and substantiates to him that which he 'always already' knows. Finally, it would expose Barthes' mode of looking—of his demarcation of *studium* and *punctum*—as a myth endowed with the function of functionalising perceptual engagement with the photographic image (both in looking and turning away, and in hearing without paying attention to hearing) to legitimise his remembrance as sovereign. Therefore, locating the *Operator* of the photograph with *punctum* would both expose the '*danger*' of and undo the fragile construction of the 'hegemony of the visual' that is the 'hegemony of the aural'.

Barthes does not prescribe his mode of looking (that is also his undeclared mode of listening) to all images. He specifies that his is a looking at Photography, which Barthes differentiates, for instance, from watching movies; he writes, 'Do I add to the image in movies? I don't think so; I don't have time: in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not *pensiveness;* whence the interest, for me, of the photogram' (*ibid.*: 55). But this circumscribing, this framing the conditions for the looking he describes and considers, does not necessarily make Barthes' any less hegemonic. Even if the hegemonic voice does not claim rule over other visual territories, within that of Photography—in the space and time of looking and looking away from the photographic image—his voice reigns.

This analysis by way of Moten's critique of *Camera Lucida* as ocularcentric is not meant to insist that Barthes' voice is ontologically hegemonic, to depict him or rather the voice of his narrator as that of a self-deluding meglomaniac, or to suggest that Barthes intends by way of *Camera Lucida* to territorialise his reader's aesthetic perception. It is also not meant to suggest that Barthes or readers of *Camera Lucida* abide to such a strict practice of engagement with photographs or this work of writing; indeed, I could readily contend that from another perspective, Barthes' *Camera Lucida* could be perceived as operating on the register of a moaning aesthetics.[42] Rather, it has been undertaken, specifically following Moten's critique and reading of *Camera Lucida* as exemplary of the 'hegemony of the visual', to explore and better understand the mechanics of ocularcentrism as a metastructural mode of processing perceptual encounters, and how it works to reinforce pre-existing dominant orders and deter the production of new knowledge.

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[42] Derrida readily offers a different reading of *Camera Lucida* in his elegiac essay 'The deaths of Roland Barthes'. Derrida writes that in 'searching *like him,* as him, for in the situation in which I have been writing since his death, a certain mimetism is at once a duty (to take him into oneself, to identify with him in order to let him speak within oneself, to make him present and faithfully to represent him) and the worst of temptations, the most indecent and most murderous' (Derrida, 2001 [1980]: 38), he encounters the impossibility of such a task, which puts him in relation with alterity in relation to Barthes and confronts him with the awareness that 'Roland Barthes is the name of a friend whom, in the end, beyond a certain familiarity, I knew very little' (*ibid.*: 56).

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I formulate a conception of 'moaning aesthetics' as a mode of perception whereby an encounter with the visual and aural and the movement of and between them opens up the possibility of perceiving a multiplicity of voices and, in turn, a redistributing of the visual and aural in ways and directions that are indeterminate and uncertain. The hearing of a plurality of sounds in the 'uncertain aversion' exposes, much like sonar, the aesthetic scaffolding of perceptual modes not as ubiquitous givens but as tenuous reproduced constructions that can also be located, questioned, and deconstructed. The ear perceiving on a register of moaning aesthetics is not trained to 'listen for', but rather is open to hearing a range of sounds that are neither predicted nor expected. To hear by way of moaning is to hear sounds that cannot be located-as-captured, but situated-yet-exposed; furthermore, hearing moaning also produces an awareness of one's own situated-yet-exposed positioning in relation to an unfamiliar, but nonetheless seemingly explorable terrain. Visual encounters with images that render by way of moaning the hearing of new sounds also open up the possibility of perceiving the relational movement between the visual and aural in a range of new and different ways, which in and of itself is a form of new knowledge production. Perceived sights and sounds are not perhaps 'as yet' to be determined as true or just. This is not to say that such determinations are not necessarily indefinitely withheld or suspended, but I advance that they are not made within a mode of moaning aesthetics. If there is an ethics to be located within or articulated in relation to this register, then it is at most an apophatic one.

In contrast, but not antithetically, I also propose a revision to ocularcentrism that I call 'hegemonic aesthetics', as a mode of perception that participates within a closed, deterministic, self-referential and self-affirming structuring of the visual and the aural that occludes its own architectural rendering. The generation of 'hegemonic aesthetics' requires a 'hegemonic ear' that hears what it perceives as an unlocatable 'hegemonic voice'. Perceived as the omniscient sovereign Voice of an unlocatable *Operator*, the 'hegemonic ear' listens to and for this sound as the 'only sound' to which all sights and sounds are subjected. This 'all sights and sounds' does not necessarily encompass all sights and sounds in the universe, etc., but can be delimited by the hegemonic voice—e.g. Barthes delimits the metastructural voice in *Camera Lucida* to looking at Photography—such that it isolates a particular aural and visual relation within a solipsistic, closed-functioning world. Visual encounters with images as framed by the hegemonic voice, which are also aural encounters with the voice, function to reaffirm, reinforce, re-perform, and reproduce the voice as omnipotent, true, just, and incontestable, and perpetuate the exercising of a hegemonic aesthetics. As the sovereign voice governs and sanctions that which is true and just, what is worth seeing (i.e. 'living' on the

register of aesthetics), I advance that within a mode of hegemonic aesthetics, ethics is the order of the day.

If there is a relational structuring between moaning and hegemonic aesthetics, it is not hierarchical, but it would also be imprecise to call it heterogeneous. For instance, the voice of Barthes is perceived as one that judges what is worthy of visual attention (*punctum* images) and those that are not (*studium* images), but it is *not* perceived as the only voice; therefore, what is heard as its judgement is not taken as the only mode with which to hear and judge all other perceptual encounters with Photography. One's perception is also not taken as unequivocally true or just; that too is unstable and open to questioning. With voices perceived concurrently and possibly relatable to one another, voices are not ordered hierarchically—even a voice of judgement, even voices perceived as 'one's own'—and thus times and spaces are stretched, expanded, produced.

I do not advance either 'hegemonic aesthetics' or 'moaning aesthetics' as inherently ethical or unethical, nor do I advance these two modes as inherently mutually exclusive. As the mode in which they are perceived involves a complexity of other factors, I also do not advance here that either Barthes' nor Till-Bradley's utterances are ontologically 'hegemonic' or 'moaning' materially or otherwise. As Till-Bradley's commissioning and circulation of the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till can be set in relation to her encounter with her son's death, Barthes' writing and circulation of *Camera Lucida* can be set in relation to his encounter with his mother's death. In other words, operating within a regime of 'hegemonic aesthetics' or with the indeterminate possibilities that come with 'moaning aesthetics' is not contingent on whether or not image and/or sound is perceived as a response to an encounter with death. Additionally, 'hegemonic aesthetics' and 'moaning aesthetics' both involve a perceived interplay between the visual and the aural. As both require the capacity to see and hear, neither the practising of a 'hegemonic aesthetics' nor that of a 'moaning aesthetics' blinds, deafens, or silences. Thus, whether a sound is between an aesthetics of hegemony or that of moaning is neither historically nor materially determined.

At the same time, advancing a perception of the movement between the visual and the aural as hegemonic or moaning—that both engage the eye *and* the ear of the beholder—is not to say that the perception of how sight and sound relate is simply a matter of isolated, differentiated, subjective taste. The analysis of Barthes' text demonstrates and builds on that which has been advanced by Moten, Spivak, Barrett, Taylor, and Cage, among others: that the moving of attention towards and away from the modes, contexts, and conditions in which visuals and sounds are presented, framed *and* perceived as relational or otherwise, as well as the action of re-looking and re-hearing, critically inform and come into play as to how and what modes of

aesthetic perception are practised—and in turn, to the closing or opening of possibilities for the production of new knowledge.

I have come to these formulations through close engagement with Fred Moten's conceptualisation of black mo'nin' and the postmortem images of the body of Emmett Till. It is an investigation that I came upon through questions about how and what, if at all, might be perceived by moaning other than affirmations of impossible community through a failure to perceive or injunctions through the perceiving of utterances that deny the mourning subject's mourning. Through this consideration of Moten's work, I come away with the epistemological possibilities of a perceptual mode that facilitates the perception of black mo'nin'. At the same time, from this exploration, as it has manifested through an encountering with the photographs of Emmett Till's lynched body, emerge new questions regarding the photographs of the lynchings of other black persons that largely took place before, but also came after, Emmett Till—questions about the failure of their wide, public circulation even in overtly anti-lynching contexts to elicit a response and social movement on a scale and magnitude on par with that which Moten and others historically attribute to the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as having evoked. While it is through my encounter with the postmortem images of Emmett Till's body and Moten's writing on his own encounter with them that I have arrived at these questions, in the next chapter, at this point in time, I turn away from the postmortem images of Emmett Till's body. But this is not a turn either into a blind aversion or a blind field. It is a turn compelled by and made with these emergent, unanticipated, unexpected but no less urgent questions reverberating in my ear. In turning with and into the space and time of uncertain aversion, I turn towards, encounter, and re-encounter the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and four unidentified black persons; the pro-lynching contexts in which they were originally produced and circulated; and the anti-lynching contexts in which they were reproduced and circulated.

3. Perceiving Hegemonic Aesthetics

3.0 Introduction

Talmadge Anderson, an activist, scholar and founder of Washington State University's first African American cultural centre, has stated:

> The Emmett Till lynching brought me to a realization of what America was really like. Before then, I had known that black people were under foot in the American society. After Till, it brought to me the focus of what the inhumanity of racism was/is. For all blacks at that particular age and time, it brought to us a realization of how brutal and atrocious racism is. I think it shook black in America. Without Emmett Till, King would not have been successful ... It was the nucleus, the impetus of the Movement, not the Rosa Parks incident (Anderson quoted in Hudson-Weems, 2006: 86).

Clenora Hudson-Weems similarly writes, 'Emmett Till has been called the sacrificial lamb of the Civil Rights Movement. As [David] Jordan writes: "There was no way for progress to be made without someone dying ... There had to be sacrificial lambs and this is what Emmett Till was"' (Huson-Weems, 2006: 52).

Yet, as Till-Bradley herself has observed, 'Emmett's death was part of an oppressive pattern in Mississippi, "an everyday occurrence"' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 144) that included more than 3,000 reported public lynchings of black individuals from the late nineteenth-century to 1968, when the last incidence of lynching was officially recorded.[43] Thousands of images of the beaten, dragged, sectioned, mutilated, burnt, and hung bodies of lynched black persons were widely circulated by media outlets and exchanged hands in the form of photographs and souvenir postcards (see Hale, 1998; Allen, 2000; Wood, 2005, 2009; Apel, 2007; Smith, 2007). Thus, Moten writes 'in its particularity [Till's murder] is not unlike a vast chain of such events that stretches across a long history of brutal violence' (Moten, 2003: 195). Yet these lynchings and the photographic imagery of them did not spur collective social action in the way that Emmett Till's killing has been identified to have done.

[43] Further discussed in Chapter 3.

This leads to the following questions: Why? What was it about Emmett Till's killing, his death, his image, and the circulation of his postmortem image that, as Moten writes, 'even if [Emmett Till's] death marked panic and even if that panic had already led to the deaths of so many, so that his death was already haunted—its force only the animating spirit of a train of horrors—something happened. Something real—in that it might have been otherwise—happened' (Moten, 2003: 196)? Put another way, what was it about the killings, deaths, photographic images, and circulation of those that were 'so many, so that [Till's] death was already haunted' such that 'something real' did *not* happen?

To say that the mass circulation of the postmortem images of Emmett Till contributed to an unprecedented movement towards social and political racial equality in the US is not to say that Moten's perception of black mo'nin' was ubiquitous, nor that all who perceived black mo'nin' supported or desired social change. It also is not to say that Emmett Till's death and the events that followed it awoke a sleeping fully formed dragon, that it somehow ignited the movement of a critical mass of society that had been always already against racism but until this moment was passive and in need of activation against the members of society who actively ruled and enforced a white-dominated racist social order. As noted in Chapter 2, when news of Emmett Till's killing first broke, the loudest and seemingly unanimous outcry over it aligned with Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's description of it as 'a brutal, terrible crime' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 144). This sentiment was also voiced by Mississippi locals, authorities and press (Linder, 2012). It was not until Emmett Till's death was qualified as a 'lynching' that the tenor of public sentiment change, and split. Also, as advanced in Chapter 2, historical accounts locate the spark for the 'war of words' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145) in the 1 September release of NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins' statement:

> It would appear from this lynching that the State of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children. The killers of this boy felt free to lynch him because there is in the entire state no restraining influence of decency, not in the state capital, among the daily newspapers, the clergy nor any segment of the so-called better citizen. (Wilkins, 1955)

These same accounts advance Mississippi Governor Hugh White's insistence that Emmett Till's death was a 'straight-out murder' and refusal to call it a 'lynching', as proof of Wilkins' assertion (Newton, 2002; Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003; Linder, 2012; Michaeli, 2016). Till-Bradley recalls thinking at the time:

> What a strange debate this was turning out to be. Lynching or murder. As if defining it one way or the other would make a difference. This was the vicious torture/killing of a defenseless boy, by men who had seemed to turn it into a good time. Blood sport. And the only reason Emmett was killed was because he was black. That sure sounded like a

> lynching to me, and to every other reasonable person who would come to see my son's killing as part of a pattern. (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145)

This historical narrative suggests that the social division produced in relation to Emmett Till's killing was not over whether he deserved to be killed or if Bryant and Milam were guilty of killing him. It suggests that social rupture emerged from disagreement over what, as Till-Bradley writes, *sounded* like a lynching. I would advance that Till-Bradley's connecting what 'sounded like a lynching' to 'com[ing] to see my son's killing as part of a pattern' reflects the critical interplay between the aural and the visual in the generation of knowledge, as well as the closing-off and opening-up of possibilities of new uncertain knowledge.

Keeping in mind the conceptualisations formulated in Chapter 2 of aesthetic perception—as the tenuous interplay between aural and visual registers, which has the capacity to produce closure or openness towards the possibilities of new knowledge—it might be advanced that in contrast to the postmortem images of Emmett Till produced and circulated by his mother, the photographs of other lynchings, which were produced by those who carried out and/or supported the practice of lynching, reproduced a hegemonic voice that silenced those whom lynching was intended to subjugate, such that there is no black mo'nin' to cut through these images. However, an assertion of 'silenced black mo'nin'' seems inadequate and problematically conclusive if perception is approached here as a matter of (1) attention by way of seeing and hearing, (2) that neither a 'hegemonic voice' nor 'black mo'nin'' is ontologically determined, and (3) one sound does not have the capacity in and of itself to silence another sound. Also, if the idea that *how a viewer hears* is critical to the success or failure of effecting a 'hegemony of the visual' (i.e. the making of the 'hegemonic ear' requires totalised listening to and for a voice as the *only voice* in relation to a visual image) is carried forward, then the questions asked above need refining as follows: How is it viewers encountered the postmortem images of Emmett Till on the register of moaning aesthetics, such that they heard black mo'nin', and not on the register of hegemonic aesthetics that would have otherwise occluded or excluded its irreducible sound? Why did the viewing and circulation of other lynching images not similarly register in amplitude or frequency?

In pursuing these questions in this chapter, I first turn to the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and those of four unidentified black persons. These photographs are reprinted on the next set of pages following this chapter introduction.

I do not include these photographs here to shock, upset, pain, sadden, or incite fear or a sense of entrapment in the reader. Yet I am aware from my own experience and in researching others' experiences, that encountering these images may affect in these ways, and that re-encounterings do not necessarily lead to a dissipation of these feelings but, on the contrary, can lead to a more acute and deepening of these responses. Thus, I include these images aware of the possibility that despite my having no desire to do so, that encountering them may be difficult for the reader to experience.

At the same time, I include these photographs here because this chapter not only contends with the historical legacies that lynching photographs represent and of which their material existence reminds, but also and more specifically it investigates the complexities and political implications of their perceptual legacies. The particularity of these implications only become (un)known through aesthetic, phenomenological encounters and re-encounters with these images, and the critical ideas presented in this chapter only emerge from the admittedly fraught re/encounters with them. In stating this, I do not just refer to the thoughts that I set out in these pages in relation to my own phenomenological, aesthetic encounters with these images, but also to the writings by James Allen, James Cameron, Hilton Als, Dora Apel, Grace Hale, Leon Litwack, Shawn Michelle Smith, and Amy L. Wood.

I reprint the photographs discussed in this chapter before the main text, so that the reader might first perceive the sights and sounds that are already available to them, and so as not to inadvertently close off access to these perceptual aesthetic experiences through a looking guided by a voice or voices of lynching/anti-lynching as presented in the text, or by the voice of the text itself. Following the pages that present reprintings of the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and of four unidentified black individuals, the text presents an examination of the historical and political contexts in which lynching photographs were produced and shared by pro-lynching and anti-lynching factions in the era of Jim Crow, as well as engagements with lynching photographs by present-day scholars.

Through this investigation, I come to advance that the standardising and uniformisation of lynching practices by lynching advocates, coupled with ideological positionings that conflated objectivity with photography and blackness with criminality, were critical to the production of a convoluted self-perception on the part of lynching advocates and participants, whereby

agency allowed a view of themselves as model citizens on behalf of 'justice' and truth' and justify their actions. Drawing on Robert Pfaller's conceptualisation of the 'interpassive subject' in *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions without Owners* (2014), I propose that the lyncher's view towards itself can be understood as that of 'self-perceiving interactive object', which is a 'self-deceiving interpassive subject' position that obscures its self-claimed role of 'judge, jury, and executioner' through a deferral of agency.

Next, I examine how lynching photographs were re-presented and circulated by anti-lynching advocates, which generated views towards and contributed to increased activity against lynching as a racially motivated extreme form of extrajudicial violence. I contend that anti-lynching appropriation of lynching photographs, which also drew on the ideology of photography as objective to bring attention to lynching as racial terror, operated on a directly antithetical hegemonic aesthetic register to that of 'lynching as justice'. However, while anti-lynching appropriation of lynching photographs played a significant role in the fight against white supremacist ideology and practices, I also discuss how this appropriation caused debate amongst those against lynching, and further consider the complex problems they present to those against lynching through a close reading of James Cameron and Hilton Als' separate writings on their encounters with lynching photographs. In the last section, I discuss the diametrically opposed relationship of lynching/anti-lynching on the order of aesthetic perception, and propose that by operating within a closed, self-affirming aesthetic regime, both lynching and anti-lynching approaches to lynching photographs effectively disappear political possibility from the field of perception, which also disappears the possibility to hear black mo'nin' on a viewer's ecnounter with them. Moreover, I argue that under these conditions, an imbalance of perception effects an imbalance of power between lyncher/lynched, that does not break but doubly reinscribes the dominant/dominated relation between lyncher/lynched.

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3.1 Perceiving the Hegemonic Aesthetics of 'Lynching as Justice against Criminality'

While it may have seemed strange to Till-Bradley at the time, the debate over lynching as racial violence had been raging for more than half a century prior to Emmett's death, and indeed Till-Bradley's baffled reaction to the contest of 'lynching or murder' may be perceived as a testament to the very active anti-lynching efforts of those who came before her.

In radical contrast to Till-Bradley's perception of lynching as 'the vicious torture/killing of a defenseless boy [...] because he was black', those who endorsed lynching perceived it as not only 'sounding like' but *as* a legitimate form of carrying out extralegal justice. This perception of lynching as 'rough justice' (Pfeifer, 2004) had been in operation for decades pre-Jim Crow[44] in the American South, West, and Midwest, when most lynched individuals were white, but also included a number of blacks, Native Americans, Mexicans, and Asians (Litwack, 2000; Pfeifer, 2004; Webster, 2007). According to Pfeifer, supporters of lynching as 'rough justice' shared a commitment to 'a cultural complex that demanded the harsh, personal, informal, and communally supervised punishment of what was *perceived* as serious criminal behavior' (Pfeifer, 2004: 3, my emphasis). Those who lynched did not perceive themselves as making judgements, but as carrying out the work of the 'law' of society. In other words, inversely to Till-Bradley's definition of lynching, *those who lynched* saw themselves as the *victims* of crimes committed by *those they lynched*, whom they perceived as *guilty perpetrators.* Furthermore, lynch law functioned as a tautology whereby the lynching of an accused person confirmed their guilt. As the visible act of lynching affirmed to the lynchers as *Spectators* the voiced innocence of the lynchers and the guilt of the perpetrators accorded to the law of an unlocatable, omniscient *Operator* called 'society', lynch law can be described as having operated on a hegemonic aesthetic register.

Beginning in the 1880s, the number of documented lynchings of black individuals exponentially rose both in absolute numbers and relative to total numbers of lynchings. In 1919, the NAACP (1919) published in *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918,* the first comprehensive study of lynchings of this period, their findings that of the 3,224 lynchings documented between 1889 and 1918, an overwhelming majority of 2,522 (78.22%) were of black persons, and that the majority of these lynchings were of black men. While precise figures of subsequent studies vary in reporting and analysis methods, the number of lynchings annually recorded in the US—ranging from one to over two-hundred from the 1880s to the 1960s—consistently report that over 70% of them were of black lives, which Leon F. Litwack (1998: 284) estimates as averaging to 'some two to three blacks ... hanged, burned at

[44] The Jim Crow era dates from 1877 to the mid-1960s.

the stake, or quietly murdered every week'.[45] And while the overall number of lynchings declined sharply in the 1920s, lynching records show that of individuals who were lynched from the 1920s to 1968, 90% were black (Hale, 1998; Litwack, 1998; Tuskegee University Archives Repository, 2010; Equal Justice Initiative, 2015).

This rise in the number and percentage of lynchings of black persons did not go unnoticed, unacknowledged, or unreported. On the contrary, in the early decades of the twentieth century, even as occurrences of documented lynchings decreased, the writing, distribution, and circulation of accounts of and reports on the lynchings of blacks increased (see Hale, 1998; Litwack, 1998, 2000; Wood 2005, 2009; Seguin, 2014). According to Grace Elizabeth Hale, developments in communications and transportation technology that spread news farther, wider, and faster at an unprecedented rate led to 'the majority of Americans—white and black, northern and southern—learn[ing] about these events from newspapers and to a lesser extent books, pamphlets, and radio announcements' (Hale, 1998: 206).

With the development and expansion of communications technology, by the beginning of the 1890s, 'narratives constructed by witnesses, participants, and journalists assumed a standardized form' (*ibid*: 206). More specifically, scholars identify that from the 1880s to the 1920s, Southern press reports adopted a highly racialised rhetoric—employing the regular usage of epithets such 'negro rapist', 'negro murderer' and 'black scoundrel' as 'standard'—which dramatically shifted and proliferated a discourse around lynching that directly contributed to the production of a climate where violence against blacks was framed not only normal, but necessary (Wells, 1892, 1899; Tolnay and Beck, 1995; Hale, 1998; Litwack, 1998; Apel, 2004; Wood, 2005, 2009; Webster, 2007; Seguin, 2014; Michaeli, 2016). Charles Seguin's analysis of computer-generated scraping of American newspapers from 1880 to 1925 supports these claims. He identifies patterns whereby 'lynching apologists, particularly in the southern states, alleged that lynching was necessitated by the threat to white women from black rapists' and 'headlines such as "Murderer Lynched" or "Negro Brute Lynched" painted

[45] While exact numbers in statistical reports of lynching range, they agree with this percentage breakdown (see Tolnay and Beck, 1995; Litwack, 1998, 2000; JanMohamed, 2005; Cook, 2011). Abdul R. JanMohamed attributes data variation largely to the fact that lynchings were extralegal and no official records were kept on them (JanMohamed, 2005). The Tuskegee Institute's records—that of 4,743 documented lynchings which took place in the US from 1882 to 1968, 3,446 (72.65%) were of black persons—are the most commonly used; Ralph Ginzburg writes that in 1959 the Tuskegee Institute defined lynching as follows: 'There must be legal evidence that a person was killed. That person must have met death illegally. A group of three or more persons must have participated in the killing. The group must have acted under the pretext of service to justice, race or tradition' (Ginzburg, 1988[1962]: 245). Litwack asserts that estimates are conservative and '[a]s many if not more black were victims of legal lynchings (quick trials and executions) and private white violence and "[hunts," murdered by a variety of means in isolated rural sections and dumped into rivers or creeks' (Litwack, 1998: 284). Orlando Patterson estimates that over 5,000 black people were lynched in the US between the end of the Civil War and 1968 (Patterson, 1998: 173). Tolnay and Beck advance that as lynchings received wide media coverage, the number of underreported lynchings is most likely low (Tolnay and Beck, 1995). In 2015 the Equal Justice Initiative presented evidence that 3,959 lynchings of black people took place from 1887 to 1950 in twelve states—over 700 more lynchings than in previous reports (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015).

lynching as a natural, even desirable, consequence of black criminality'; in these ways, according to Seguin, 'newspapers strove to legitimate the practice of lynching' (*ibid.*).[46] In contrast to their depictions of blacks as naturally criminal, Amy Louise Wood observes that these same reports described 'the diverse masses at these lynchings as a form of class unity—often in terms of a collective "body of citizens"' (Wood, 2005: 374). Observing that Southern news reports of lynchings 'often showed a remarkable consistency', Wood writes:

> In otherwise distinct regions and places, news reporters frequently tended to describe lynch mobs ... as methodical, orderly, and united. They would recount that the lynchers, although certainly impassioned with righteous anger, acted with cool-headed deliberation and systematic organization. The mobs, accordingly, comprised 'the best citizens' carrying out their masculine duty, sometimes before the eyes of women and children. These images of a powerful, yet controlled white citizenry were not uncommonly recorded over and against corresponding images of unruly and savage black men. The lynching victim was, at the moment of their capture or death, at times described as the inhuman 'prey' or 'fiend' that white supremacist ideology purported them to be. Other reports took care to describe the victim as struggling, crying, pleading, lacking in the self-control and mastery that supposedly characterized the mob. (*ibid.*: 373)

According to Hale, the increased, standardised production and circulation of racialised aural accounts of lynchings worked hand-in-hand to shift it as 'a practice from quiet vigilante justice to modern spectacle' (Hale, 1998: 209). In some instances, newspapers and pamphlets announced in advance the date, time, and location of where a lynching would take place; railroads provided additional services; employers gave workers the day off; parents wrote notes asking for their children to be excused from school; and schools delayed openings or closed for the day so that educators and children could attend lynchings (Hale, 1998; Litwack, 2000). Hale writes that these 'well-choreographed' lynchings:

> opened with a chase or jail attack, followed rapidly by the public identification of the captured African American by the alleged white victim or the victim's relatives, announcement of the upcoming event to draw the crowd, and selection and preparation of the site. The main event then began with a period of mutilation—often including emasculation—and torture to extract confessions and entertain the crowd, and built to a climax of slow burning, hanging, and/or shooting to complete the killing. The finale consisted of frenzied souvenir gathering and display of the body and the collected parts. (Hale, 1998: 204)

The number of people in attendance at a spectacle lynching varied from a dozen to several thousands. The physical violence they carried out included but was not limited to beating, whipping, burning, shooting, stabbing, skinning, scalping, hanging, and tearing apart the

[46] Seguin applies machine learning methods to 'scrape' the 1880 to 1925 archives of '*The Atlanta Constitution*—the leading national Southern paper, *The Chicago Tribune*—a northern paper with a strong anti-lynching editorial bent, and *The New York Times*—the national paper of record and staple of scholarly analyses' for frequency of particular word usage in lynching-related reports (Seguin, 2014).

person's body. They collected the lynched person's teeth, hair, ears, skin, toes, fingers, bones, genitals, pieces of other organs, pieces of their clothing, and pieces of the rope used to hang them, which were kept, gifted, sold, and displayed, for instance in local store windows, as souvenirs. The lynching 'body of citizens' consisted of persons across class boundaries, including law enforcement agents, elected officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and farmers as amongst the 'best citizens' of this body (Brundage, 1993; Litwack, 2000; Apel, 2004).[47] 'Neither crazed fiends nor the dregs of white society', Litwack writes, 'the bulk of the lynchers tended to be ordinary and respectable people, few of whom had any difficulty justifying their atrocities in the name of maintaining the social and racial order and the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race' (Litwack, 2000: 19).

The production and circulation of photographic images of lynchings also became a common and important part of spectacle lynchings. Taken by photographers of their own accord and/or commissioned by lynchers, these images were not captured surreptitiously. Aware that they were being photographed, far from obscuring or covering their faces, persons in the lynching crowd often posed for and looked straight into the camera, as in these photographs taken of the triple lynching of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie on 15 June 1920 in Duluth, Minnesota (reprinted on p. 91) and the lynching of Lige Daniels on 3 August 1920 in Center, Texas (reprinted on p. 92). In these images, members of the crowd surrounding and posing with the bodily remains of the person(s) they have lynched appear to be craning their necks to ensure their visage is captured in the image. This posturing by members of the 'body of citizens' can also be observed in this photograph taken of the lynching of William Brown on 28 September 1919 in Omaha, Nebraska (reprinted on p. 93), in which the seemingly endless crowd poses surrounding the burning body of William Brown in the centre foreground. Furthermore, when viewing these images, I cannot discern anything that differentiates executioners from spectators.

The prominence of 'lynching photographs' in the choreography and making of spectacle lynchings becomes all the more apparent when considered in relation to the amount of time, organisation, and effort that was needed to produce them and their social status as objects. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the taking of photographs required the transporting and setting-up of expensive, relatively elaborate equipment. Capturing a clear image of any figure, let alone a crowd of people, required cooperation on the part of the photographed subject(s) to remain still for the duration of long exposure times. While the accessibility, affordability, and technological capacities of photographic equipment

[47] In the aftermath of the lynching of Sam Hose on 12 April 1899 in Atlanta, Georgia, Litwack writes, 'one of the participants reportedly left for the state capitol, hoping to deliver a slice of Sam Hose's heart to the governor of Georgia, who would call Same Hose's deeds "*the most diabolical in the annals of crime*"' (Litwack, 2000: 9).

rapidly increased, throughout this period photographs were still largely viewed as the outputs of professionals whose services were rendered for visually capturing important social occasions, such as weddings, christenings, funerals, and family reunions, and marking the middle-class status of their patrons. Moreover, it was common practice for photographers to sign and copyright images by etching their names into the negative prior to printing. As can be seen in these images of the lynching of Laura Nelson on 25 May 1911 in Okemah, Oklahoma taken by 'G.H. Farnum' (reprinted on pp. 94, 95) and this image of the lynching of Will James on 11 November 1909 in Cairo, Illinois taken by 'LeBlock' (reprinted on p. 96), photographers also applied this practice of signing by etching to lynching photographs; thus suggesting that the production and social marking of lynching photographs was not unlike that of other photographs produced at the time.

Made by and for those who lynched and endorsed lynching, lynching photographs were often materially finished as souvenir postcards that were purchased from photographers and local vendors who sold them door-to-door, on the street, and in shops such as groceries and pharmacies. Shared with and mailed to family and friends as souvenir postcards, they were circulated in a form and mode that was common for photographs of various kinds and not exclusive to lynching imagery, especially in the decades prior to the 1920s when most newspapers and magazines had yet to gain the technical capacity to reprint photographic images. According to Nicole Brittingham Furlonge, as with other souvenir postcards, lynching photographs were shared in 'the same spirit as one might post photographs on Facebook today: as a general update as a way to share the experience of those who could not attend' (Furlonge, 2014). As such, in addition to photographic imagery, these postcards carried written inscriptions, both those that were mass printed with the image and those drafted by the sender.

Like the writings of the Southern press, the messages on these postcards—etched by the photographer or printer or written by the sender—often did not simply communicate factual information, such as the date and site of the lynching. Inscriptions would communicate criminal allegations as fact, such as the message 'Williams Richard Dilon lynched for murdering Policeman Chas. Collins 3/7/04 - by M.P.S.' etched into the film negative of this photograph of the lynching of Richard Dillon on 7 March 1904 in Minnesota (reprinted on p. 97) and the handwritten note of 'Killed Jim Rush' added on the reverse of this photograph of the lynching of August Goodman on 4 November 1905 in Bainbridge, Georgia (reprinted on p. 98). They also adopted the racist rhetoric of the 'negro brute', such as the handwritten note of 'Burning the negro who killed Jim Mitchell' added on this image of the burnt remains of an unidentified black person lynched in 1910 in Texas (reprinted on p. 99). Still other inscriptions speak to Dora Apel's observation that spectacle lynchings were

'community events like carnivals and street fairs' (Apel, 2004: 23), such as the handwritten note of 'This is the Barbecue we had last night my picture and to the left with a cross over it your son Joe' on the reverse of this photograph of the lynching of Jesse Washington on 16 May 1916 in Robinson, Texas (reprinted on p. 100). In these ways, the photocard not only served as a medium for increasing the probability of visual encounters with lynching imagery but also for increasing that of aural encounters with the voice of 'lynching as justice against criminality' equating blackness with criminality.

In 1908, the US Postmaster General banned the mailing of the written inscriptions on lynching photographs as part of the Comstock Laws, which were first set up in 1873 for the 'Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use'.[48] On the one hand, as Furlonge advances, the ban can be viewed as indicative of the popularity of the mailing of lynching photographs (Furlonge, 2014). On the other, it can be seen as a mark of success on the part of anti-lynching efforts to change perception of lynching as a form of just punishment to that of immoral and obscene activity. However, as the ban was placed only on the inscriptions accompanying lynching photographs, and not on the images themselves, it can also be read as a mark of limited success. Moreover, the ban did not necessarily decrease the circulation of lynching photographs and the writings inscribed on them, as they easily could be sent in the mail enclosed in envelopes (Wood, 2005). Furthermore, as the sharing of lynching photographs in person and via post had already become customary, and the ban came years before photographic reprinting became common practice in most press publications, it did not practically disrupt the circulation of these images amongst those who supported lynching.

Therefore, in this way, hundreds to thousands of copies of photographic images of lynchings were printed and exchanged, including one taken by Lawrence Beitler of the lynched bodies of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith (reprinted on p. 101). On 7 August 1930 in Marion, Indiana, Shipp and Smith were arrested as suspects for the murder of Claude Deeter and rape of Mary Ball, a white couple. A mob of an estimated 10,000 descended on the jailhouse in which Shipp and Abram were being held, sledgehammered their way to them, took them from the jailhouse, and subsequently beat and hung the two men. The crowd then took fifteen to twenty minutes for the taking of photographs, including one taken by Beitler, a local studio photographer, that proved so popular he spent the next ten days and nights printing thousands of copies and selling them at fifty cents a piece (Cameron, 2016 [1993]).

[48] The Comstock Law was a federal act passed by the US Congress on 3 March 1873 (Statute 598). It made illegal the use of the US Postal Service for the posting of materials of 'obscene', 'lewd', 'lascivious', or 'immoral nature' that at the time of its passing included erotica, pornography, contraceptives, sex toys, and literature that alluded to or contained information on birth control and reproductive health.

Scholars advance that in addition to the standardising of modes of production, circulation, distribution, and reception, the standardising of the formal visual content and form of lynching photographs also critically contributed to a 'normalised' perception of the lynching of black persons in the US (see Wells, 1892, 1895, 1899; Hale, 1998; Litwack, 2000; Apel, 2004, 2007; Wood, 2005, 2009; Smith, 2007; Seguin, 2014; Michaeli, 2016). In her article, 'Lynching photography and the visual reproduction of white supremacy' (2005), Amy L. Wood engages with the over 130 photographs in the *Without Sanctuary* collection of James Allen (see Allen *et al.*, 2000), with a view towards uniformity to advance this claim. Looking through Allen's collection, amassed over a 25-year period and first publicly displayed as an exhibition in 2000,[49] Wood advances that much in the way in which verbal and written pro-lynching accounts have been observed to share formal rhetorical properties:

> … no conspicuous distinctions can be made between images taken across various regions of the South or even across time. Over and over again, we see three general types of images: the lynching victim's hanging body, disheveled and limp, alone in the frame; large crowds of spectators, taken from a distance; and perhaps the most horrid of all, proud white men grouped together around their lifeless victim. (Wood, 2005: 375).[50]

At this time, in order to further examine and better understand the implications that this kind of uniformisation of the formal properties of the visual content in these lynching photographs might have on perception, I re-encounter the photographs in Allen's collection guided by Wood's analysis and look for the patterns she advances. Like Wood, I encounter image after image of lynched bodies hanging alone in the frame.[51] However, in the image taken by 'LeBlock' of the 'half-burnt head of James' on a stake after the lynching of Will James (reprinted on p. 96) and this image of the lynching of an unidentified black male from 1900 (reprinted on p. 102), I also encounter images that frame in isolation the body or bodily remains of persons who were lynched in other ways, often beyond recognition. I consider that Wood's 'first type' might be expanded to include images that frame in isolation, alone, the body or bodily remains of the person who was lynched.

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[49] Since 2000, Allen has shared this collection in print (Allen *et al.*, 2000), online (http://withoutsanctuary.org) and in exhibitions throughout the US.

[50] Wood also writes, 'We must certainly be cautious about making claims about the standardization of lynching photographs. The number of photographs that have survived over time represents a small fraction of the total number of lynchings that occurred, and there is no precise way to determine just how many lynchings were actually photographed. Photographers certainly took more images than we now have access to, and there surely could be thousands of images that were lost or destroyed, or have not yet been recovered. But, the uniformity among existing photographs indicates that photographing a lynching was probably quite common.' (Wood, 2005: 375).

[51] Images in Allen's collection that can be placed in Wood's first category include these that were taken of the lynchings of George Meadows on 15 January 1880 in Pratt Mines, Alabama (reprinted on p. 103); Garfield Burley and Curtis Brown on 8 October 1902 in Newbern, Tennessee (reprinted on p. 104); Lee Hall on 7 February 1903 in Wrightsville, Georgia (reprinted on p. 105); Bennie Simmons on 13 June 1913 in Anadarko, Oklahoma (reprinted on p. 106); Will Moore on 20 May 1919 in Ten Mile, Mississippi (reprinted on p. 107); Clyde Johnson on 3 August 1935 in Yreka, California (reprinted on p. 108); and the aforementioned photographs of the lynching of Richard Dillon (reprinted on p. 97) and Laura Nelson (reprinted on p. 94).

Looking at images that can be viewed through the lens of Wood's 'second type' of 'large crowds of spectators, taken from a distance', I see that in many of them, the crowd appears to extend well beyond the frame, creating the appearance that capturing the whole crowd within the photographic border is impossible—that the crowd is not only 'large' but endless. Also, while in some of these photographs only the figures of the lynching crowd are visible, as in this image of the lynching of Jesse Washington (reprinted on p. 109), more often than not the 'body of citizens' appears as completely encircling the person they are lynching, as in this image which portrays Jesse Washington's body burning in the centre of the frame amidst a crowd that surrounds on all sides, entirely fills the rest of the visual field, and seemingly expands infinitely past its edges (reprinted on p. 110). Encompassed by the multitudes of people who comprise the lynching crowd, I see the lynched person in these images as no less isolated than those in the images of Wood's first category.

Wood's description of the 'third type' of lynching photographs as those of 'proud white men grouped together around their lifeless victim' can be applied to, among others, the aforementioned images of the triple lynching of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie (reprinted on p. 91); the lynching of Lige Daniels (reprinted on p. 92); and the lynching of William Brown (reprinted on p. 93); as well as to this image of the lynching of Leonard Woods taken on 29 November 1927 in Pound Gap, Kentucky (reprinted on p. 111); and this image of the lynching of John Richards taken on 12 January 1916 in Goldsboro, North Carolina (reprinted on p. 112). However, while white men appear to comprise the majority of the people in these photographs, women and children also appear and pose as part of the lynching 'body of citizens', as in this image of the lynching of an unidentified black male dated from 1920 (reprinted on p. 113); this image of the lynching of Rubin Stacy on 19 July 1935 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (reprinted on p. 114); this image of the lynching of W.C. or R.C. Williams on 15 October 1938 in Ruston, Louisiana (reprinted on p. 115); and the aforementioned image of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith (reprinted on p. 101). Therefore, I would amend Wood's description of these images to 'proud white *persons* grouped together around their lifeless victim'.

In images of Wood's 'third type', the person who has been lynched appears in the centre of the frame, singular as visibly mutilated in marked contrast to the robust figures of the rest of the people in the frame; once again the image of the lynched person appears isolated and forlorn. Moreover, what constitutes the 'lifeless victim' in these photographs ranges from what I perceive as the image of a body to parts of a body, as in this image of the lynching of Jesse Washington (reprinted on p. 100) and this image of the lynching of an unidentified black male dated to 1902 in Georgia (reprinted on p. 116). In other photographs still, bodily remains are mutilated beyond the point of recognition: it is only from reading the etched

inscription that I learn that what I am looking at in this photograph of the lynching of Will James are the 'Ashes of James' (reprinted on p. 117).

In performing this re-encountering that looks for the compositional patterns across these photographs—in adopting this more than discomforting and disturbing engagement with these photographs that risks reproducing the perceptual logics of lynching—I perceive how these lynching photographs could have been seen as tending towards uniformity, and how this mode of perceiving them would have aided a viewing that occluded the hearing of black mo'nin'. In addition to Wood's perceptions along this register, I also perceive across the lynching photographs in Allen's collection other elements that make them tend towards uniformity. Namely, whether photographed with or without other human figures in the same frame, I perceive the mutilated figure of the black person in each of these photographs as alone, cut-off from, and beyond the reach of others except those of the white persons who lynch them. Contrastingly, I perceive images of apparently alert, self-aware, physically full- and able-bodied white persons as multiplied and multiplying, having formed and forming a human wall that surrounds and polices the black person they lynch and seemingly extends beyond the edge of the material photograph. My perception of a finite, lonely, lynched black figure completely surrounded by an endless, expansive, ever-present crowd of white figures ever-ready to lynch is also still generated when I look at photographs in which a few or no lynchers appear, for my visual perception recalls the voice of aural encounters that speak to this perception. My visual perception of this pattern as 'standardised' is not solely produced by my looking at these photographs as already described above and looking at them in relation to one another in this way, but also from my making a relation between my visual encounters and my aural encounters with the written inscriptions that accompany the images, written accounts of the lynchings as reported by those who endorsed them, and historical narrations of spectacle lynchings and the modes of production and circulation of visual and aural representations of them.

According to Hale, with the uniformisation and mass production of verbal, written, and photographic accounts of lynchings, 'the rapidly multiplying stories of these public tortures became virtually interchangeable' (Hale, 1998: 206), producing a notion that, Litwack writes, 'none of them were particularly exceptional' (Litwack, 2000: 18). Thus, even while lynchings decreased throughout the first half of the twentieth century, 'spectacle lynchings became more powerful' (Hale, 1998: 206) in that the coverage of them produced the sense that 'Now-a-days ... it seems the killing of Negroes is not so extraordinary an occurrence as to need explanation; it has become so common that it no longer surprises. We read of such things as we read of fires that burn a cabin or a town' (bishop of the Southern Methodist Church, 1900 quoted in Litwack, 2000: 19). Here, the operative value of standardisation is not owed to its

directly lending to the subscription of 'lynching as justice against criminality' ideology; the repeating of uniform design does not in-and-of-itself necessarily generate adherence to or dismissal of the ideology of 'lynching as justice against criminality'. But by generating the perception that lynching black persons was a common, 'normal' occurrence, standardisation can be seen as having created conditions for the perceiving of a 'blind field'—that what I perceive when viewing the photograph persists beyond the frame and when I look away from it—and in so doing, having contributed to the production of perception operating on a hegemonic aesthetic register. However, what the 'truth' would have looked like in this primed 'blind field' to the hegemonic eye, would have been contingent on the 'hegemonic voice' to which the 'hegemonic ear' was listening.

I have earlier discussed the possibility that the perception of 'lynching as justice against criminality' relied on listening to racialised rhetoric accusing black persons of criminality through the ideological filter of extrajudicial 'lynch law'; that this mode of listening facilitated the reception of alleged black criminality as factual and 'natural' criminality, and in turn contributed to the perceptual production of the lynching of black persons as just. While selective listening to these voices as constitutive sounds of the 'hegemonic voice' of 'lynching as justice against criminality' would have been enough to produce a corresponding 'hegemonic ear', I advance that it may not have been enough to establish 'lynching as justice against criminality' as a *hegemonic aesthetics* beyond the *Spectators* present at a lynching event. This is not to say that a 'hegemonic ear' requires a corresponding 'hegemonic eye' to produce and reproduce hegemonic listening. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, in order for a 'hegemonic voice' to establish 'true' aesthetic sovereignty requires a reign that extends beyond that of the 'hegemonic ear', that commands both the aural *and* the visual, and that the gaining of this sovereign position requires that the 'hegemonic voice' not only be heard by a 'hegemonic ear', but also for a 'hegemonic eye' to *see* what it *says*.

Having extended the spatio-temporal reach of each spectacle lynching beyond that of the specific time and location of it as a finite event, lynching photographs as mass produced and distributed material objects have been identified as having critically contributed to the reproduction and expansion of an ideology that condoned the lynching of black persons, and racial violence more generally, in the US (Hale, 1998; Litwack, 2000; Apel, 2004, 2007; Wood,

2005, 2009; Smith, 2007).[52] I advance that lynching photographs were also critical in the social institution of 'lynching as justice against criminality', because they provided the means for producing the visual encounters necessary to generate a perceptual cycle on the register of a hegemonic aesthetics in which the 'hegemonic voice' can ring 'true'. Proceeding with looking at the direction of the voice of 'lynching as justice against criminality', these images can appear as representing the victory of justice over criminality. The figures of the white persons are seen as a courageous, dutiful 'body of citizens' who, through their heroic collective efforts, have performed the hard work of containing and eliminating the threat of rape, murder, and vandalism. In direct contrast, the often unrecognisable bodily remains of the lynched black person are seen as visual evidence of the successful elimination of a threat to security and restoration of safety and peace for the law-abiding, good, moral members of society, of whom the black person, by virtue of being black and therefore criminal, is not. As this visual encounter affirms that which the lynching supporter always already knows, as there is nothing more to learn from looking at the lynching photograph, the viewer can look away and not look at it again. Thus, in looking away, the viewer turns not with a blind aversion or uncertain aversion, but towards and into a blind field. And in this blind field, lynching black persons is not only 'common' and 'normal' but also 'right' and 'just'.

I can readily offer a very different visual perception of these lynching photographs, as anti-lynching activists did at the time and many others have since. Indeed, voices that opposed lynching and the 'truth' that lynching advocates purported, and called it out as brutal, lethal racial violence—which will be discussed in the next section—were loud, constant, and active from the end of the 1880s onwards. And perhaps those who advocated the lynching of black people also saw things differently from this rendering I have presented. However, I advance here that the rise in circulation of lynching photographs concurrent with that of the racialisation of Southern press accounts; the modes by which lynching photographs were produced and circulated for decades; and the written inscriptions on surviving souvenir photocards suggest that those who perceived lynching photographs as visual affirmation of the 'hegemonic voice' of 'lynching as justice against criminality' were not unique. Furthermore, I advance that a number of factors facilitated the production and reproduction of the 'hegemonic eye' and the spatio-temporal expansion of this blind field as 'true', not least of which being the common belief in the supposedly undeniable indexical qualities of

[52] According to Rob Nixon 'slow violence' is 'a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all' (Nixon, 2011: 2). While Nixon applies this term to his analysis of the intersections between capitalism and environmental decisions on the poor of the Global South, his articulation is also useful in the present discussion. As an event that occurs at a particular spatio-temporal moment, spectacle lynching as event can be viewed as 'fast violence'. At the same time, as a key ingredient in the assembly line for the production of aural and visual representations of spectacle lynchings, which extend the spatio-temporal reach of lynchings to the extent that they were perceived as commonplace, spectacle lynchings also can be seen as critically important to the generation of 'slow violence'.

photographs as 'true' and 'objective' representations of 'nature' and 'fact' and the relatively controlled regulation of lynching photographs by lynching sympathisers (Hale, 1998; Litwack, 2000; Wood, 2005, 2009; Smith, 2007).

The *constructed* notion that the photograph was an objective, empirical, unquestionable, incontestable representation of 'nature' and 'fact' was one that was widely championed idea at the end of the nineteeth and well into the twentieth century. According to documentary photographer and sociologist Lewis Hine, 'The photograph has an added realism of its own; it has an inherent attraction not found in other forms of illustration. For this reason *the average person believes implicitly that the photograph cannot falsify*' (Hine, 1980 [1909]: 111, my emphasis). Speaking in June 1909 at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections on 'Social photography, how the camera may help in the social uplift' and advocating the use of photography as a means to expose and prompt social reform, Hine's observation that photography was generally seen to be 'true' was far from new or unpopular. In 1894, writing on 'What is a sign?', Charles S. Peirce advanced that photographs 'are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature' (Peirce, 2015 [1894]). As an image produced by the force of nature—and unaffected by the hand of man—Peirce placed photographs within the category of signs 'that are the very hinges of the gates of their science' (*ibid.*). Writing in 1913, Marius De Zayas similarly declared that 'Photography is the plastic verification of a fact. [...] it is the means by which the man of instinct, reason and experience approaches nature in order to attain the evidence of reality' (De Zayas, 1980 [1913]: 130). Paul Strand, a protégée of Hine's, also advanced that 'the photographer has joined the ranks of all true seekers after knowledge, be it intuitive and aesthetic or conceptual and scientific' (Strand, 1980 [1922]: 151) because:

> Photography, which is the first and only important contribution thus far, of science to the arts, finds its *raison d'être*, like all media, in a complete uniqueness of means. This is an absolute unqualified objectivity. Unlike the other arts which are really anti-photographic, this objectivity is of the very essence of photography, its contribution and at the same time its limitation. (Strand, 1980 [1917]: 141–142)

And writing in 1939, Paul Valery not only proposed that photography could 'prompt us to revive, if not rejuvenate, the ancient and difficult problem of *objectivity*', but also solve it:

> ... the awkward and somewhat desperate solution of eliciting testimony from the few, in order to establish for all mankind a thing's objective existence, [is] easily destroyed by a mere sensitized plate. [...] The snapshot has rectified our errors both of *deficiency* and of *excess*. It shows us what we would see if we were uniformly sensitive to everything that light imprints upon our retinas, and nothing else. Thus it might not be impossible at least to limit, if not to abolish, the classic problem I mentioned, by ascribing objective value to

> every impression whose replica, whose likeness, we are able to capture—impartial light being the only intermediary between the model and its representation. (Valery, 1980 [1939]: 196–197)

Calling on this pervasive ideological notion that photographs evince 'truth', 'nature', 'fact', 'reality', the lynching 'best citizens' could perceive and claim that what they saw in lynching photographs was that of 'absolute unqualified objectivity' and not of their own making. As Wood writes, 'The realistic reproduction of a lynching photograph embodied an act of authenticity which substantiated and reinforced not only the violence they committed and witnessed, but the racist ideologies that justified and incited that violence: a united and orderly white citizenry in full control and mastery over savage and inhuman black men' (Wood, 2005: 376). Furthermore, according to the voice of 'objective photography', lynching citizens did not need to question their perception; indeed, they could have argued that as photography represented 'nature' and 'truth', they *should not* question their visual perception of them, as to do so would be unnatural, false, and unscientific. The same could be said for lynching photographers, for according to the voice of 'objective photography', the *Operator* is not the person who frames, takes, develops, and prints the image, but the 'impartial' mechanism that is the camera and the chemical reactions between film, emulsion, and exposure to light.

The voice of 'objective photography' can be seen as having helped produce the perception of alleged criminality—not least of which was voiced in the writing inscribed on the photographs themselves such as 'Three Negroes at Duluth, Minn. for rape. Oct 1919 by mps' on the aforementioned image of the lynching of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie (reprinted on p. 91)—as verifiable fact. Thus, 'photography could act as a critical tool in providing the proof that affirmed the validity of lynching' (Wood, 2005: 380). Moreover, lynching citizens also could have comfortably claimed that lynching photographs, perceived as verifiable proof of the security threat of the 'negro brute' and the brave social justice work performed by the 'body of citizens' against it, were a positive form of 'social photography' not unlike Hine's 'work portrait' photographs that celebrated the work of industrial labourers; in this way, they could even perceive and claim lynching photographs as contributing to the social good.

Regulation of the circulation of lynching photographs also can be seen as having aided the perceptual production of the 'true' blind field of 'lynching as justice against criminality'. As discussed earlier, lynching photographs were shared primarily by hand and via post. This continued to be the case in and after the 1920s, even after most newspapers and presses had acquired the technological means to reprint photographs and presumably had access to lynching photographs (*ibid.*: 378). Citing instances wherein 'outsiders, including journalists,

attempted to photograph lynchings' or obtain lynching photographs but were stymied in or met resistance before achieving their efforts 'on the grounds of "bad publicity"', Wood proposes that lynching citizens were 'more protective about who they showed the images to' in reaction to 'growing condemnation against lynching in the rest of the country' (*ibid.*: 378, 393). That the Southern press did not take to reprinting lynching photographs and the 'body of citizens' were careful with whom they shared them can be viewed in a way similar to the Comstock Laws' ban on written inscriptions on posted lynching photographs. On the one hand, as these practices restricted the circulation and distribution of lynching photographs, they can be seen as a testament to anti-lynching efforts and growing social condemnation of the lynching of black persons further afield. On the other hand, self-restricted distribution practices also worked to close off the possible production of visual encounters that might generate alternative, competing perceptions of these photographs; thus, they helped solidify and make more impenetrable and insular the hegemonic aesthetic operations of 'lynching as justice against criminality'.

Mapped onto the structuring of ocularcentrism, those who endorsed the lynching of blacks as 'true' and 'just' can be viewed as having taken on the role of the *Spectator*. Turning attention solely towards this situatedness as citizens performing work in response to and observance of 'lynch law' and 'objective photography', it *obfuscurated*—in that it *obfuscated* attention away from and thus *obscured*—the source of the *Operator* declaring this law as none other than themselves 'combin[ing] the roles of judge, jury, and executioner' (Litwack, 2000: 10).[53] Furthermore, produced within a social, cultural, and economic milieu that privileged whites in every aspect of society—e.g. cultural, political, economic—the hegemonic ear and the hegemonic eye were hardly wanting in additional sounds and sights to feed this perceptual cycle.[54]

An analogy can usefully be drawn between the mapping of ocularcentricism by way of Moten's critique of Barthes' writing of *Camera Lucida* offered in Chapter 2 and what I advance to be the ocularcentrism of the lynching advocate. Not unlike how Barthes perpetuates the 'truth' of his remembrance by recalling his *Spectator*ing of self-determined *punctum* imagery as visual affirmation of it, the lynching advocate perpetuates the 'truth' of 'lynching as justice against criminality' by recalling his *Spectator*ing of lynching photographs as visual affirmation of it. A parallel can also be drawn between Barthes' delimiting his mode of looking in *Camera Lucida* only to Photography and that of the lyncher's delimiting lynching

[53] I propose and employ the neologism of 'obfuscuration' to underscore that the operating together of obfuscation and obscuration is critical to the manifesting of ocularcentrism.

[54] Indeed, the blind field produced by the hegemonic aesthetic regime of 'lynching as justice against criminality', can be seen as contributing to a wider, broader system that produced and fed the hegemonic ear and the hegemonic eye of white supremacy; see Footnote 44. Further discussed in the next section.

only to criminality, in that neither declaration actually diminishes the hegemonic range of the voice of the unnamed *Operator* (which is their own). At the same time, Barthes' ocularcentrism and that of the lynching citizen differ in a number of critical ways. An obvious difference is that while Barthes's ocularcentrism gives him(self) the authority to let live or die 'absolutely' that which he sees within the photographic frame, the ocularcentrism of 'lynching as justice against criminality' gives the lyncher the authority to let live or die 'absolutely' another person socially, politically, and physically. Barthes' ocularcentrism diverts attention away and diminishes encounters from *studium* photographs (and therefore away from voices other than his own) by deeming them unworthy of his attention. In contrast, the ocularcentrism of the 'lynching citizen' diverts attention away from and diminishes possible encounters with photographs that may yield new, different, or conflicting perceptions (and therefore away from voices other than their own) by employing the hegemonic voice of 'lynch law' and that of 'objective photography', which amplifies the voice of 'lynching as justice against criminality' and drowns out others.

From the perspective of lyncher as *Spectator*, listening to the hegemonic voice of 'lynch law' and that of 'objective photography' produces the perception that 'lynching as justice against criminality' *emerges from* the listening to voices that are not only indisputable, but unbiased, independent, and heterogeneous. Further to this perception, Wood asserts that lynching photographs 'gained further cultural force because they *co-existed* within a host of conventions and assumptions about photography' (Wood, 2005: 1, my emphasis), suggesting that these conventions operated alongside one another on the same lateral, horizontal plane. However, I would argue that in relation to the voice of 'lynching as justice against criminality', the voice of 'lynch law' and that of 'objective photography' did not so much 'co-exist'—as in *laterally* assist in generating 'lynching as justice against criminality'—as operate *under* the covert direction of the voice that always already espoused 'lynching as justice against criminality' as white supremacy.

The 'hegemonic ear' of the lynching advocate purportedly listening to the 'hegemonic voice' that accuses black persons of criminality, in turning attention towards criminality in the service of lynch law, turns attention away from the location of the voice that makes these criminal allegations in the first place. Likewise, the 'hegemonic ear' of the lynching advocate listening to the 'hegemonic voice' that determines photographs as indisputable reality, in turning attention towards lynching photographs as objective, turns attention away from the location of the voice that directs the production, distribution, and visual readings of these photographs in the first place. In this ocularcentric construction of 'lynching as justice against criminality', obfuscuration allows the voice of 'lynching as justice against criminality' to surreptitiously govern both 'lynch law' and 'objective photography' from a higher order,

which allows for the lynching advocate not to perceive and locate the voice of the *Operator* of 'lynching as justice against criminality' as their own white supremacist voice.

In *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions without Owners* (2014), Robert Pfaller conceptualises and analyses the complex relations that manifest when a subject assigns an object to carry out an activity on that subject's behalf and in so doing the subject claims the action as their own. This 'believing or enjoying through the other' is what Pfaller calls 'interpassivity' (*ibid.*). By way of explanation of this phenomenon, Pfaller describes the scenario whereby a person programmes a VCR to record a show off of the television but never watches the television show. In recording the television show, the VCR 'watches' the television show; in having programmed the VCR to carry out this task and owning the VCR, the person also claims the watching of the television show. In this scenario, Pfaller identifies the person programming the VCR as an 'interpassive subject' and, from this perspective, the television show as the 'object' of the interpassive subject. The VCR, which carries out a task without agency as it records as per the direction and means-end logic imposed on it by the interpassive subject, is made into an 'interactive object'.

It may sound strange or crass, but pursuing an analogy between Pfaller's VCR recording scenario and that of the hegemonic aesthetic regime of 'lynching as justice against criminality' is useful in unpacking how those who endorsed the lynching of black people could have repeatedly avoided perceiving theirs as the racist actions enacted from a fusional subject position of 'judge, jury, and executioner' and in locating the epistemological obstacles in penetrating this otherwise closed system. Following Pfaller's example, the person who is lynched can be likened to the television show, lynching to the recording of the television show, and the lyncher to *both* the person who programmes the VCR *and* the VCR. However, unlike the person who claims ownership of an act by delegation, the lyncher does not claim their interpassive subject position. Rather, the lyncher assigns that subject position to Nature/Truth/Justice. The lyncher claims only the position of the interactive object. In so doing, the lyncher purports only to be carrying out 'the work' of lynching on behalf of the interpassive subject; the lyncher 'believes and enjoys' but makes no claims for the voice of 'the law', which the lyncher purportedly does not make but only answers to by way of lynching black people.

The subject that subscribes to the insular cyclical movements of 'lynching as justice against criminality' can be mapped out as an active subject that splits subjectivity into 'interpassive subject' (i.e. *Operator)* and 'interactive object' (i.e. *Spectator*); it inhabits two places at once. These dual subjectivities work together to flank, isolate, and claim its desired object—i.e. the black person. However, this split subject does not perceive its movements and the architecture of its subjectivity as such by claiming only to perceive itself as the 'interactive

object'. By not perceiving itself as the 'interpassive subject', this subject does not perceive its 'objectivity' as a subjectivity of its own making, or that this split subjectivity places at its centre the object of its desire. Moreover, as the object maintains the separation between the subjectivity of the 'interpassive subject' and that of the 'interactive object', the very survival of this split subjectivity depends on this centring of the object.

If, as Pfaller describes, the interpassive subject is a subject that makes illusions without owners, then the 'self-perceiving interactive object', which is also a 'self-*de*ceiving interpassive subject', can be described as a subject that makes illusions *with* owners but obscures this ownership by producing and only perceiving a *second order of illusions* without owners. If the operations of the interpassive subject can be described as complex, then the operations of the self-deceiving interactive object can be described as strategically convoluted for the sake of self-preservation. Proceeding on a self-produced second order of illusions, obfuscurating itself as *Operator* from itself, the person who condones the lynching of black people claiming a delimited situation and location can perceive and claim that lynching is not performative, but necessary performance. Delegating the voice that 'objectively' equates blackness with criminality to an unlocatable *Operator*, the lyncher perceives and therefore re-presents not just to others, but to *onesself*, the torture and killing of black persons as 'justice'. If the interpassive subject is a decentred subject, then the self-deceiving interactive object is an uncentred distributed subject and, with the object positioned at its centre, a highly unstable one.

Wood writes that 'because they were unstable and unfixed' that 'white supremacist beliefs required a constant repeating and a constant re-envisioning' (Wood, 2005: 376). Regularly encountering printed and verbal accounts aurally, and photographic imagery visually, which fed this self-produced second order of illusions that allowed for the obfuscurating of the location of the *Operator* from itself, allowed for the 'ignor[ing of] any information that contradicted the people's verdict' (Litwack, 2000: 9). In turn, as Litwack writes, 'there was little reason to question the deep convictions on which whites acted; they came, in fact, to believe in their own rhetoric, much as the defenders of slavery had' (*ibid.*: 22). For instance, encounters with statistical findings that an overwhelming majority of persons who were lynched were black did not necessarily disrupt the tautological perception of lynching, nor did it necessarily produce a perception that the 'true' social order which lynchings served was predicated on racism. That the majority of those who were lynched were black was often perceived as affirmation of the 'truth' that those who endorsed lynching 'always already knew': lynching is a legitimate form of achieving justice and only those who deserve to be lynched—who are unquestionably guilty of accused crimes—are lynched; therefore, that the majority of those who were lynched were black was taken as indicative of 'the horrible and beastial propensities of the Negro Race' (*Commercial*, 1892 quoted in Wells, 2005 [1892]).

Put another way, in contrast to Pfeifer's analysis that in rough justice, 'the understanding of what was serious criminal behavior was heavily mediated by factors of race, gender, class, and circumstance' (Pfeifer, 2004: 3-4), pro-lynching logic flowed in an inverse direction. With lynching perceived as the just work of the righteous in the service of an impartial, unquestionable, infinite judgement of serious criminal behaviour such as 'barbarism which preys upon weak and defenseless women' (*Commercial,* 1892 quoted in Wells, 2005 [1892]), that mostly blacks were lynched was perceived as evidence that blacks were 'prone' to violence and crime (Webster, 2007: 73) and 'seized by uncontrollable, savage, sexual passions that were inherent in the race' (Litwack, 2000: 23). As written in one Mississippi newspaper, 'the men who do the lynchings [...] sincerely believe they have the best interest of their fellow men and women at heart' (*Savannah Morning News* quoted in Litwack, 2000: 20). In this way, 'the inhumanity, depravity, bestiality, and savagery practiced by white participants in lynchings [was] justified in the name of humanity, morality, justice, civilization, and Christianity' (Litwack, 2000: 23).

3.2 Perceiving the Hegemonic Aesthetics of 'Lynching as Racial Violence' and 'Strange Fruit'

At the same time that the voicing and visualising of lynchings as just means by society's 'best citizens' to carry out 'the merited fate [of the] black villain' (Seguin, 2014) grew in amplification, frequency, and reach through new modes of reproduction and distribution, so too did the voicing of a radically different perception of lynchings as racial violence. The calling out of lynchings as a lethal form of violence that targeted blacks in the service of white supremacy sounded as early as the 1880s and substantially grew louder in the 1890s and continued well into the 1960s.

Noting with growing concern the marked increase in the lynching of black persons in the 1880s, systematic accounts of lynchings began to be recorded by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1882, the Tuskegee Institute in 1892, and the NAACP in 1912. As discussed earlier, these data collection efforts were critical for compiling reports that statistically substantiated growing perceptions that the victims of reported lynchings were overwhelmingly black. Although encountering reports that statistically broke down lynchings along racial breakdowns did not necessarily break the perceptual tautology of those who advocated lynching, it did make it difficult to dismiss claims that blacks were disproportionately lynched as exaggerated or hyperbolic. Thus, these reports were critical in bringing anti-lynching and anti-racism legislation to the debate floor of the federal and state governments, including the 1918 *Dyer*

Anti-Lynching Bill, submitted by Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri as the first anti-lynching bill introduced to Congress.[55]

Advances in communications technology were as critical to the rise and spread of the voices that opposed lynching and perceived it as racial violence, as they were to those who supported and perceived lynching as a form of social justice. In addition to smaller and regional publications, the *Chicago Tribune, The Chicago Defender, New York Age, McClure's Magazine,* and the NAACP's *The Crisis,* were all major publications (each with a circulation of or over 100,000) that printed reports reflecting and supporting an editorial stance actively and openly opposed to lynching and racial inequality.[56] Notably, the voice of journalist and newspaper owner of *Free Speech,* Ida B. Wells, became critical to anti-lynching and anti-racism movements. Following the triple lynching on 5 March 1892 of her friends Tom Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Will Stewart who ran a thriving grocery in Memphis, Tennessee, Wells began investigating and analysing the criminal allegations made against lynched black persons and reported her findings in *New York Age.* Amongst numerous articles, editorials, and lectures she published and delivered throughout her lifetime, Wells published *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases*, which included and expanded upon her writings in *New York Age*, in 1892 and was reprinted in 1893 and 1894; *The Red Record* in 1895, which presented in-depth analysis of lynchings in the US from the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation through to her present day; and *Lynch Law in Georgia* in 1899, in which Wells presented and analysed accounts from news sources with varying editorial leanings of the lynching of twelve black men over the course of six weeks in Georgia.

Wells presented detailed breakdowns of reports and postmortem investigations of case after case of black persons who had been lynched for allegedly, among other crimes, raping white women, killing white persons, and vandalising property, and analysis of the wording of reports and testimonies of these cases. Wells writes, 'The Southern press champions burning men alive, and says, "Consider the facts." The colored people join issue and also say, "Consider the facts"' (Wells, 1899: 1). In *Southern Horrors* (2005 [1892]), Wells re-presents numerous documented reports of white women stating, often against their own self-interest, having engaged in consensual relations with black men. In *Lynch Law in Georgia*, Wells brings to the fore, 'Of the twelve men lynched during that reign of unspeakable barbarism, only one was even charged with an assault upon a woman. Yet Southern apologists justify their

[55] The US House of Representatives passed this bill; however, it was filibustered and failed to reach the Senate for a vote in 1922, 1923 and 1924. Nearly 200 anti-lynching bills were introduced and failed passage into federal law from 1918 to 1964, after which anti-lynching legislation efforts became subsumed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On 13 June 2005, the US Senate issued an official apology for never approving a law against lynching. As of this writing, there is still no US federal law against lynching.

[56] At its height, each copy of *The Chicago Defender* sold was read by an estimated four to five Americans, putting its readership at over 500,000 (PBS, 2005).

savagery on the ground that Negroes are lynched only because of their crimes against women' and that Samuel 'Hose' Wilkes 'who was brutally tortured at Newnan, Ga., and then burned to death, never assaulted Mrs. Cranford and that he killed Alfred Cranford in self-defense' (Wells, 1899: 1, 13). Thus, Wells addressed and exposed the 'old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women' (*ibid.*: 1). Wells conducted analysis of the social and economic status of black men who were lynched—among them, nine black men for allegedly having burned down three houses in 1899 Georgia[57] and Wells' friends Moss, McDowell, and Stewart—and investigations into reports related to their lynchings, from which she clearly evidenced that far from 'negro brutes', these persons often 'were not criminals, they were hardworking, law-abiding citizens, men of families. They had assaulted no woman, and, after the lapse of nearly a month, it could not be claimed that the fury of an insane mob made their butchery excusable' (*ibid.*: 2). Far from a practice in the service of unfettered justice, Wells identified lynching as a means by which whites attempted to control the economic, social, and political advancement of blacks.[58] In these ways, Wells directly contested the narrative of lynching as 'justice' and evidentially asserted, 'the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning [and that the] awful death-roll that Judge Lynch is calling every week is appalling, not only because of the lives it takes, the rank cruelty and outrage to the victims, but because of the prejudice it fosters and the stain it places against the good name of a weak race' (Wells, 2005 [1892]).

By way of publishing their own observer accounts of spectacle lynchings, anti-lynching and anti-racism advocates also directly and indirectly challenged reports describing lynchings as having been carried out in a controlled and orderly manner by the 'best citizens' against the 'negro murderer' as a matter of moral and social duty. For instance, *The Sandusky Star* (1904) described the 7 March 1904 lynching of Richard Dickerson as 'one of the most horrible in the history of the country and Springfield stands aghast today at the work of her citizens', and the *Lima Times Democrat* printed on its front page, under the headline 'MOB', that 'The scene when the negro was secured by the mob beggars description. No human being was ever handled more roughly. Men knocked each other down in their mad desire to take a hand in the lynching' (*Lima Times Democrat,* 1904: 1). In his *McClure's Magazine* series on 'What is a lynching?: a study of mob justice South and North', Ray Stannard Baker also described the lynching of Dickerson:

> Well, on Monday afternoon the mob began to gather. At first it was an absurd, ineffectual crowd, made up largely of lawless boys of sixteen to twenty—a pronounced

[57] See Louis P. Le Vin (1899).

[58] Recent scholarship examining Wells' work and records that were not available to her, substantiate and expand upon her conclusions; see Tolnay and Beck (1995) and Webster (2007).

> feature of every mob—with a wide fringe of more respectable citizens, their hands in their pockets and no convictions in their souls, looking on curiously, helplessly. They gathered hooting around the jail, cowardly, at first, as all mobs are, but growing bolder as darkness came on and no move was made to check them. [...] They murdered the negro in cold blood in the jail doorway; then they dragged him to the principal business street and hung him to a telegraph-pole, afterwards riddling his lifeless body with revolver shots. (Baker, 1905: 425–426)

A white journalist, Baker was one of a number of anti-lynching activists and writers who reported on lynchings attended and investigated undercover. Similar to Wells, Baker published his accounts and conclusions in magazines and newspapers, later collected and printed as a book in 1908 as *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy*. In his articles, Baker not only condemned the actions of the 'lynching mob' as 'evil', but contested and inverted accounts of lynchers as heroic and socially respectable, writing: 'The newspaper reports are fond of describing lynching mobs as "made up of the foremost citizens of the town." In no cases that I know of, either South or North, has a mob been made up of what may be called the best citizens' (*ibid.*: 425–426).

Baker described lynchings as carried out by 'mobs' abiding to 'mob justice', which is 'the method by which good citizens turn over the law and the government to the criminal or irresponsible classes' (*ibid.*: 425). According to Baker, lynch mobs manifested in areas that 'nearly always has a previous bad record of homicide' where ruling society did not observe the judicial system as legitimate to the extent that threats to court judges were 'frequently repeated both on the night of the lynching and on the day following' (*ibid.*: 424, 425). Furthermore, he observed that the lynch mob 'never stops with the thing it sets out to do [...] it releases that which is ugly, violent, revengeful in the community as in the individual human heart' (*ibid.*: 307). Baker depicted the carrying-out of spectacle lynchings as actively driven by 'the criminal classes'—men 'from the back rooms of the swarming saloons' and 'the sort of idle boys "who hang around cigar stores"' (*ibid.*: 426, 425). However, he no less charged the non-action of 'best citizens' with perpetuating mob violence, describing their being 'stricken with a sort of dry rot, a moral paralysis', standing 'afar off ... letting it go on', and refusing to prosecute against lynching as 'good citizenship lying flat on its back with political corruption squatting on its neck' (*ibid.*: 425, 426, 427). In his account of the lynching of Dickerson, Baker writes:

> The local troops—to say nothing of the police force—which might easily have broken up the mob, remained sedulously in their armories, doubtful of authority, knowing that there were threats to burn and destroy, and making not one move towards the production of the public. [...]

> But the worst feature of all in this Springfield lynching was the apathy of the public. No one really seemed to care. A "[n-word]" had been hanged: what of it? But the law itself had been lynched. What of that? (*ibid*.: 424, 427)

In his construction of the lynching 'criminal mob', Baker, like Wells, inverted the roles of who is guilty and innocent from the rendition of the lynching 'body of citizens'; Baker identified lynchers as the guilty perpetrators of criminal activity—i.e. lynching—meted out on an innocent victim. Moreover, Baker declared that children too are innocent victims of the corruption and moral bankruptcy of lynching 'mob law', writing:

> And with the crowds of men both here and at the morgue where the body was publicly exhibited, came young boys in knickerbockers, and little girls and women by scores, horrified but curious. They came even with baby carriages! Men made jokes: "A dead [n-word] is a good [n-word]." And the purblind, dollars-and-cents man, most despicable of all, was congratulating the public:
>
> "It'll save the county a lot of money!"
>
> Significant lessons, these, for the young! (*ibid*.: 426)

Before becoming NAACP Executive Secretary in 1931, Walter Francis White also attended and investigated forty-one lynchings undercover by 'passing' as a white person, and published his reports in *The Crisis*. In contrast to Baker's accounts, White does not overtly call lynchers or those who support lynching 'evil' or 'irresponsible', nor does he map lynch mobs as configured of 'criminal classes' actively brutalising their victim at the centre of a spectacle where the 'best citizens' stand and watch along the periphery. Writing on his investigation of a 1918 incident in which 'a Negro woman, about to give birth to a child, was lynched with almost unmentionable brutality along with ten men in Georgia', White recounts being told that among the lynch mob 'were prosperous farmers, business men, bankers, newspaper reporters and editors, and several law-enforcement officers' (White, 2007 [1929]: 2, 3). In a separate investigation he made in 1926 'to inquire into the lynching of two colored boys and a colored woman', White writes of a Ku Klux Klan member he met who 'had been quite honest in his activities as a Kluxer, for corrupt officials and widespread criminal activities had caused him and other local men to believe that the only cure rested in a secret extra-legal organization' (*ibid*.: 4). Here White gives voice to the Kluxer's own reasoned context for his extrajudicial activity, and thus presents a 'best citizen' who is not only not apathetic, paralysed, or peripheral, but motivated by a desire to be responsible.

Rather, White describes lynching advocates as insular and uneducated, and draws connections between these conditions and a racist mindset. He describes lynchers as 'obtuse' and 'morons' and declares, 'lynchings were not difficult to inquire into because … those who perpetrated

them were in nearly every instance simple-minded and easily fooled individuals' (*ibid.*: 1). Further to this, White writes:

> Most lynchings take place in small towns and rural regions where the natives know practically nothing of what is going on outside their own immediate neighborhoods. Newspapers, books, magazines, theatres, visitors and other vehicles for the transmission of information and ideas are usually as strange among them as dry-point etchings. But those who live in so sterile an atmosphere usually esteem their own perspicacity in about the same degree as they are isolated from the world of ideas. They gabble on ad infinitum, apparently unable to keep from talking.
>
> In any American village, North or South, East or West, there is no problem which cannot be solved in half an hour by the morons who lounge about the village store. [...] When to their isolation is added an emotional fixation, such as the rural South has on the Negro, one can sense the atmosphere from which spring the Heflins, the Ku Kluxers, the two-gun Bible-beaters, the lynchers and the anti-evolutionists. And one can see why no great amount of cleverness or courage is needed to acquire information in such a forlorn place about the latest lynching. (*ibid.*)

In his 1926 investigation, White writes that 'I spent some days in the region and found that the three Negroes who had been lynched were about as guilty of the murder of which they were charged as I was' (*ibid.*: 4). In his investigation of the 1918 lynchings, he similarly learns from an individual who took part in them that the lynched persons were innocent of allegations. Additionally, White quotes his interviewee describing the white man who was purportedly killed by the black persons who were lynched as 'a hard one, all right. Never paid his debts to white men or [n-word]s and wasn't liked much around here' (*ibid.*: 3). When asked 'Why, then, did you lynch the [n-word]s for killing such a man?', White reports his interviewee responding, 'It's a matter of safety—we gotta show [n-word]s that they mustn't touch a white man, no matter how low-down and ornery he is' (*ibid.*). Thus, through his descriptions and direct quoting of his conversations with lynching advocates, White presents an aural image of lynching societies as operating within a closed system where 'lynch law' is heard as *the* law and black persons are seen as inherently inferior; where both perceptions thrive and reify one another with practices and threats against black persons *and* court and police officials; and where a voting body restricted to whites vote in political representatives whose views align with and in turn reproduce these ideologies. Thus, White re-presents those supporting and practising the lynching of black persons as operating according to recursive structural logic.

Seguin observes that throughout the 1880s and 1890s, articles containing criminal descriptors of lynching victims declined significantly, while the frequency with which the word 'alleged' to 'describe the supposed crimes of lynching victims' rose (Seguin, 2014). According to Seguin, 'using the "alleged" descriptor was one small step in casting doubt on the guilt of the lynching victim, and also hinted towards the absence of due process' (*ibid.*). At the same time, Seguin's

results may also be perceived as indicative of the growth of the anti-lynching voice—that it was heard to the extent that publications supportive of the lynchings of black persons modified their rhetoric so as not to incriminate themselves by making blatantly libelous declarations. This rhetorical adjustment also may be perceived as tacit acknowledgement that accusations were indeed 'alleged', as opposed to based on substantial evidence. Further to this reading, Seguin's analysis also 'shows the rise of the articles referencing the terms "lawlessness", "lawless," "anarchic," "anarchy", and "mob rule" … were found in articles that were critical of the lack of due process in lynchings (even if they were still quite racist in most other respects)' (*ibid.*). Likewise, while federal anti-lynching legislation time and again failed passage, that the legality of lynching became an actively debated issue on the floors of the federal and state governments can be viewed as a testament to the increased amplitude of the collective voices opposed to lynching as extrajudicial, racial violence.

The same may be said in view of of the anti-lynching and anti-racism efforts which emerged with the appropriation of lynching photography; as Sontag writes, 'photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses' (Sontag, 2003: 13). While the circulation and distribution of lynching photographs were relatively controlled by those who made them, anti-lynching publications, organisations, and activists nonetheless managed to procure copies of them. For instance, the wide dissemination amongst pro-lynchers of Beitler's photograph of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith (reprinted on p. 101) also made it easier for those against lynching to obtain a copy. Indeed, this image received such widespread circulation and distribution that it has come to be called 'the most iconic photograph of lynching in America' (NPR, 2010), '*the* generic lynching photograph, suitable to illustrate the point of white racism and violence without considering when or where' (Madison, 2001: 116), and 'emblematic of spectacle lynching' (Apel, 2007: 69).

Reprinted within the pages of *The Crisis*,[59] *Jet Magazine, The Chicago Defender,* and *New York Age,* among others, and as part of anti-lynching campaigns, lynching photographs were displayed alongside written calls against and cries of the practice as racially-motivated violence. *The Chicago Defender* reprinted Beitler's photograph with a damning caption that began with 'AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY' followed by a brief report regarding the woman whom the lynch mob accused Shipp and Smith of having attacked:

> No doctor's examination had been made of the woman, neither could she identify Shipp or Smith. The police made no resistance to the lynchers and assisted in fanning the flames of hatred by hanging the shirt of one of the dead men in the jail window all day Thursday. (*The Chicago Defender*, 1930 in Smith, 2007: 21)

[59] The NAACP began collecting lynching photographs in 1909.

Similar to Baker's framing of white children as victims initiated unwittingly into the criminality of lynching, as part of an anti-lynching campaign the NAACP reprinted the image of the lynching of Rubin Stacy (reprinted on p. 114) alongside text that read 'Do not look at the Negro. His earthly problems are ended. Instead, look at the seven WHITE children who gaze at this gruesome spectacle. Is it horror or gloating on the face of the neatly dressed seven-year-old girl on the right? Is the tiny four-year-old on the left old enough, one wonders, to comprehend the barbarian her elders have perpetrated?' (1936 in Apel, 2007: 60). Wood notes that in a 1912 campaign, the NAACP not only appropriated the photograph of the lynching of John Lee on 13 August 1911 in Durant, Oklahoma, but also the distribution method of photocard souvenirs; however, and in contrast to pro-lynching photocards, inscribed on the NAACP photocard was the organisation's contact information and an invitation to contact them if 'you are interested in joining our protest' (Wood, 2009: 195).

Encounters with re-presentations of lynching photographs accompanying the voice of anti-lynching and anti-racism amassed unprecedented attention. They elicited audible condemnation of the practice from foreign press, governments, and officials and generated support and activity of anti-lynching efforts across the country (Wood, 2005; Apel, 2007; Smith; 2007). Their impact could be perceived both politically, for instance in the intensified legislative debates that presented lynching photographs as evidence of anti-lynching claims, and socially. A visual encounter with Beitler's photograph, which '"haunted" him for days' (Blair, 2012), compelled Abel Meeropol, a Jewish schoolteacher in the Bronx and 'a ferocious anti-racist' (Heft, 2012), to write:

Bitter Fruit (1935)

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

Elizabeth Blair writes that 'while the lyrics never mention lynching, the metaphor is painfully clear' that Meeropol's 'bitter fruit' are the hung bodies of lynched persons (Blair, 2012). It is

Meeropol's poem, which was published in the union journal *The New York Teacher* in 1935, that was later made famous by Billie Holiday as *Strange Fruit* in 1939—the song that came to be emblematic of spectacle lynching (NPR, 2010; Heft, 2012).

While their arguments were diametrically opposed, the ways in which lynching photographs were used by both sides of the lynching debate to amplify their respective voices were similar. They both employed developments in mass communications technology to grow the possible scale and frequency with which their message might be encountered and perceived. While anti-lynching publications and campaigns were in part intended to reach those who may not have been aware of or had as yet to perceive lynching as extrajudicial, racial terror (e.g. the foreign press), their audience largely consisted of persons who already opposed lynching. In displaying lynching photographs alongside written inscriptions condemning the practice, those who were against lynching also called upon the voice of 'objective photography' to substantiate and reinforce their articulation as 'nature', 'fact', and 'truth'. However, viewed with the voice of 'objective photography' in mind in relation to calls opposing lynching, lynch law, and white supremacy, these images were perceived as evidential affirmation of the nature/fact/truth of lynching as an unjust, violent, barbaric, immoral, and racist practice (Litwack, 2000; Wood, 2005, 2009; Smith, 2007).

Reflecting on her research, Wood concludes that the anti-lynching and anti-racist appropriation of lynching photographs 'project[ed] an alternative, counter*hegemonic* truth about lynching' (Wood, 2005: 392, my emphasis). Wood's use of the word 'counterhegemonic' here aptly qualifies on which aesthetic register the perception of lynching photographs represented as visual 'evidence' of the aural 'truth' in anti-lynching publications and campaigns can be described as having operated—i.e. a hegemonic aesthetic register. The voice of anti-lynching counters that of pro-lynching; however, this voice that declares lynching as racial terror enacted by white supremacists is perceived as that of nature, law, justice—i.e. as *Operator*. The *Spectator* who perceives the photographic image as evidence of the hegemonic voice of the disembodied, omniscient, all-knowing *Operator* hears with a hegemonic ear this voice declaring that which it always already knows—that lynching is unjust, violent, and racist. Perceived as affirmation of that which is 'always already known', the anti-lynching ocularcentric viewing of the lynching photograph expands the 'blind field' of the anti-lynching voice as 'real' and 'true' beyond the material borders of the photographic image.

Here, hegemonic aesthetic operations can be viewed as having usefully and critically facilitated not only the production and articulation of an anti-lynching position, but also as a means by which it could be perceived and perpetuated. It can also be seen as a method by which those against lynching exercised and grew their voice and, through a weaponising of

photographs that were made in and to support the opposite position, reclaimed the territory of the visual. Drawing in part on observations of how 'the black press used the [lynching] photograph to unmask white privilege' (Smith, 2007: 23) and 'rather than simply exacerbating or legitimizing racial violence, the modern consumption of these images played a role in the eventual decline of lynching' (Wood, 2005: 392), Apel concludes that 'taken out of their original context, such photos, like lynching photos, are significant tools of visual and political power ... transforming those activities in which the perpetrators took pride into a public sense of shame, provoking political conscience' and that 'lynching photos demonstrate the logic of white supremacy' (Apel, 2007: 78). Thus, according to Hale , spectacle lynching can be seen as having 'given way to the growing anti-lynching crusade's attempt to make a spectacle of lynching' (Hale, 1998: 226).

Yet, while the use of lynching photographs can be perceived as having been critically important in amplifying calls against lynching, it also has been and continues to be considered controversial. On 1 October 1919, the unabashedly anti-lynching *Chicago Tribune* published an edited version of a photograph of the lynching of William Brown with an accompanying statement that the editors had decided to crop-out the image of Brown's lynched body because it was 'too revolting for publication' (*Chicago Tribune*, 1919 in Wood, 2009: 212). Despite the unprecedented circulation of Beitler's photograph, mainstream Indianapolis newspapers chose not to reprint photographs of the 1930 lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith because, as per a statement issued by the *Indianapolis News*, 'they were "revolting" and "common decency and good taste" forbade publication' (Madison, 2001: 106). Wood observes that whereas lynching photographs were reprinted in pamphlet form and by the black press as part of anti-lynching and anti-racism campaigns from the 1890s onwards, it was not until 1937, with *Time* and *Life* magazines' reprinting of images of the lynching of Robert McDaniels and Roosevelt Townes on 14 April 1937, that a national, white-owned, mainstream publication published a lynching photograph in concert with an anti-lynching position (Wood, 2009: 212). In 2000, over half a century later, James Allen recalled that in his search to find a venue in Atlanta, Georgia to exhibit his collection of lynching photographs, 'Most of the institutions weren't even willing to look at the images. They didn't want to even crack the book. They didn't want to discuss it' (Allen in interview with Hatcher, 2002).

In these instances, there is little to suggest that the decision not to reproduce lynching photographs in their entirety or at all stems from interests to protect white supremacist insularity or tacit solidarity with it. Indeed, considering the *Chicago Tribune's* historical role and continued legacy as a vocal and active opponent of lynching and racism that dates back to the nineteenth century, it would be more reasonable to conclude that the newspaper's decision to edit the image of the lynching of William Brown was seen as a move to advance the anti-

lynching position. However, viewed in light of the arguments and examples of how appropriated display of lynching photographs advanced the anti-lynching and anti-racism cause, encounters with qualifications of lynching photographs as 'revolting' and unpublishable yields the question: what made these images appear 'revolting' and how and why did their appropriated circulation and reproduction appear problematic for the furthering of anti-lynching and anti-racism?

For Allen, the *Without Sanctuary* exhibit presents lynching photographs as a 'national shame' manifested from the racism produced by 'the cold steel trigger in the human heart' (Allen, 2005). Nonetheless, Anthony W. Lee observes that at the first exhibition of Allen's collection at the Roth Horowitz gallery in 2000, 'similarities between the crowd in New York and those in the photographs must have been most acute. … [Visitors] appeared, and possibly felt, like the people in the pictures. "Viewers are left with an exhibit that is too close to the spectacle created by the lynchers themselves," the historian Grace Hale lamented' (Lee, 2007: 6). Hale's expressed concern that the exhibit's reproduction is 'too close' to that of spectacle lynchings is more specifically a concern that it reproduces conditions whereby the viewer of the photograph may all too easily adopt the *Spectator* role of the white lyncher.[60] This concern echoes those of Laura Mulvey of the 'male gaze' in relation to the viewing of narrative cinema (Mulvey, 1975). In her 1975 essay on 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', Mulvey, advances that 'in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (*ibid.*: 9), where the male gaze dominates and projects its phantasy onto the female. In narrative cinema, the director uses filmic techniques (e.g. camera angle, lighting, focus, plot, who is given what dialogue and who is not) to re-present the 'female', constituted by and according to the order of his 'male gaze', as objectified, on-screen spectacle (*ibid.*). 'One of the oldest conventions of photography', writes Lee, is 'to include a figure as a surrogate viewer, to orchestrate that figure in such a way, pointing, laughing, smiling, gesturing, as to cue our own proper regard of the scene' (Lee, 2007: 6). Building on this convention, Mulvey also claims that not only is the objectification of 'female' reproduced through a performance of the 'male gaze' by a film's male protagonist, but that it is also reproduced by the viewer who, in allowing the film to direct visual and aural attention, unconsciously identifies with and adopts the gaze of the male protagonist, which is none other than a re-presentation of the director's 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975).[61]

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[60] Which recalls Barthes's ocularcentricism in *Camera Lucida* (1981).

[61] Gonzalez-Torres states, 'after twenty years of feminist discourse and feminist theory we have come to realize that "just looking" is not *just* looking but that *looking* is invested with identity: gender, socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation … Looking is invested with lots of other texts' (Gonzalez-Torres *et al.*, 1993). Gonzalez-Torres' contexts as 'other texts' are not just those in which an image is displayed, but also those recalled—re-membered, re-minded—by the viewer when confronted with visual encounter. Moten's critique of Barthes' ocularcentrism can be seen as not unlike Mulvey's critique of the 'male gaze' (Moten, 2003).

According to Allen:

> ... the photographer was more than a perceptive spectator at lynchings. The photographic art played as significant a role in the ritual as torture or souvenir grabbing—a sort of two-dimensional biblical swine, a receptacle for a collective sinful self. Lust propelled their commercial reproduction and distribution, facilitating the endless replay of anguish. Even dead, the victims were without sanctuary. (Allen, 2005)

A parallel can be drawn between Mulvey's film director with the male gaze and Allen's photographer with the white supremacist lynching gaze; in turn, a parallel can be drawn between Mulvey's 'male protagonist' as seen within the filmic frame and that of the white lyncher as seen within the photographic frame. Furthermore, like Mulvey's perception of the narrative film as that which extends and transmits the objectification of the male gaze beyond the female's bodily limits into and through the realm of visual representation, Allen perceives the lynching photograph not only as that which presents an *image* of 'reality' and 'truth' on a two-dimensional fibre surface materialised from chemical processes, but its production and viewing *as* a form of the 'reality' and 'truth' of lynching that actively extends through visual representation the anguish of lynching beyond the lynched person's mortal limits.

Considering how the viewing and reproducing of lynching photographs may be perceived *as* lynching and, as such, opening up the possibility for the adoption and further reproduction of the white supremacist lynching gaze by unwitting spectators—thereby growing the 'receptacle for a collective sinful self'—the decision by anti-lynching publications not to publish lynching photographs becomes legible. It also can be seen how these publications could have perceived as 'revolting' not only the lynching photographs in and of themselves, but so too the practice of reprinting them.[62] Indeed, Hale's 'lament' at the end of the twentieth century can be heard as echoing those that voiced similar concerns at the beginning of the century (Wood, 2009; see also Smith, 2007). For instance, one reader wrote multiple letters to *The Crisis* regarding their 'gruesome' coverage of lynchings (NAACP, 1937; see also Wood, 2009). *The Crisis* advances through the reader's own words ('I have been devoting much of my time, energy and finances in that same direction [as the NAACP]') that he writes as a fellow opponent of lynching and racism (NAACP, 1937: 61). The reader wrote first in response to the publication's reprinting in May 1936 a photograph of the lynching of Lint Shaw on 28 April 1936 in Royston, Georgia 'protesting that the printing of such pictures did not aid the fight against lynching, but served

[62] By presenting lynching photographs not only as representational evidence but *as* an expansion of lynching that evinces the dangerous extent of its immoral, corrupting power, anti-lynching proponents also made a good case as to why lynching photographs should *not* be reprinted. Thus, paradoxically, the hegemonic aesthetics operation of anti-lynching produces a logical case for its own obsolescence. However, this fusional logic is problematic, because eliminating the practice of lynching photography is not the same as ending the practice of lynching. Moreover, this desisting of reproducing lynching photographs within an anti-lynching and anti-racist context did not have any effect on either practice within the realm of pro-lynching and white supremacy. In this way, it can be seen as an argument that unwittingly and inadvertently makes a case for hiding a problem that is otherwise in plain sight.

only to create racial hatred', and a second time in response to their January 1937 report on 'A Texas lynching' that 'In my humble judgment, and please accept my opinion for what it is worth, such publicity tends to increase race hatred' (*ibid.*).

The Crisis wrote that they responded to their reader 'whose sincerity is unquestioned, that it had not been the experience of the NAACP or *The Crisis* that the exposure of the horrors of lynching tended to increase racial antagonism. We stated our belief that very often the sheer horror of lynching serves to rouse ordinarily lethargic people to action' (*ibid.*). In other words, the editors believed that the 'sheer horror' produced from visual encounters with lynching photographs would avert 'ordinarily lethargic people' from reproducing the hegemonic aesthetic perceptual cycle of 'lynching as justice against criminality' and prompt action against it. However, if 'action' is understood as movement that is open to uncertainty, I would argue that this perception of horror in relation to the viewing of lynching photographs under these conditions does not necessarily prompt action.

As already discussed, viewed in relation to the voice of 'objective photography', the lynching photograph is perceived as representing 'reality'. In turn, whether in relation to the voice that supports or opposes lynching, when visually encountering the 'evidential' lynching photograph, the viewer perceives a 'reality' wherein an individual can be seen as only operating in one of two modes: lynching or lynched. Turning away from the lynching photograph 'as evidence' with this perspective in mind, the blind field that expands in the hegemonic eye makes a visibility that perceives a social order consisting of only these two figurations in the realm of lynching. The perception of this social order as the ontological 'reality' of lynching expands this visualisation seemingly limitlessly, thereby if not foreclosing altogether, then at least obscuring the seeing and/or hearing of an opening towards the possibility (let alone the production) of new social modes, configurations, distributions, or figurations in a 'reality' where lynching is also perceived. Following this analysis, I would claim that while the anti-lynching perceptual cycle generated by the viewing of lynching photographs on a register of hegemonic aesthetics made it easier to see and to hear that lynching was unjust, immoral, brutal, racist, and violent, it also inadvertently made it more difficult to see and hear the possibility of action. Here it can be seen how while, as Martha Watterson writes in her review of *Without Sanctuary*, the 'exhibition makes the viewer confront and accept the realities of racism, fear, and the lynchmob mentality' (Watterson, 2005), it may not prompt the viewer to produce anything beyond this acceptance. Or, as Hilton Als writes, in 2000, of his looking at the lynching photographs in Allen's collection, 'I couldn't look past the pictures, really' (Als, 2000: 43).

This is not to say that perceiving the 'reality' of lynch/lynched yields adoption of the lynching white supremacist's *Spectator*ship as the only, inevitable next step. Lee writes that it 'is seemingly nowhere more disjunctive, nowhere less suitable' than in a visual encounter with a lynching photograph, for a viewer opposed to lynching to adopt the position of a 'surrogate viewer … if by that we mean giving ourselves up wholly to the irrationality of the mob and its violence' (Lee, 2007: 6). In refusing this gaze, the anti-lynching viewer operating on a perceptual cycle of hegemonic aesthetics encounters two options with which to proceed in their turning away from the lynching photograph: adopt the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person or turn away from the 'reality' of lynching altogether.

Reflecting on his viewing of the lynching photographs exhibited in *Without Sanctuary,* Als writes from the 'surrogate view' of the lynched black person:

> Of course, one big difference between the people documented in these pictures and me is that I am not dead, have not been lynched or scalded or burned or whipped or stoned. But I have been looked at, watched, and it's the experience of being watched, and seeing the harm in people's eyes—that is the prelude to becoming a dead [n-word], like those seen here, that has made me understand, finally, what the word "[n-word]" means, and why people have used it, and the way I use it here, now: as a metaphorical lynching before the real one. (Als, 2000: 39)

According to Als, the *Spectator* of the lynched black person perceives the condition of the '[n-word]' lynched by eyes only as temporally different from the 'dead [n-word]' lynched by hands: the lynched black *Spectator* is 'always already' lynched. James Cameron's account of nearly being lynched on 7 August 1930 along with Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith can be viewed as operating on a similar perceptual register as that of Als (Cameron, 2016 [1982]: 94).[63] Cameron writes of his looking at the lynching crowd and seeing the faces of people as 'images of mobsters on filmstrips that surrounded me everywhere I looked'. According to Shawn Michelle Smith, Cameron communicates 'as if he understands how he is about to pass into the realm of representation himself, how his life's story is about to be stilled in the image of a hanging corpse, how he is about to take a place in the national imagery of racialized torture and murder' (Smith, 2007: 18). Put another way, Cameron's perception of his impending lynching is manifested with the hegemonic eye and ear produced by earlier visual and aural encounters with lynching photographs. As such, it might be said that for Cameron, not only does the 'metaphorical lynching' precede the real one, but it is the primary violence lynching enacts that allows for the 'real one' to occur. Seen in this way, it might even be said that for Cameron, the 'real lynching' represents the 'metaphorical lynching' as opposed to the other way around.

[63] Cameron is the only known person to have survived a lynching.

Als' account speaks to how in adopting the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person as represented in lynching photographs, he is ever watched by the lynching, white supremacist gaze, and thus subjected and subjugated by it. In her essay on the 'persistence of vision', Haraway writes of the myth of the 'conquering gaze from nowhere', whereby vision 'becomes unregulated gluttony; all seems not just mythically about the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice. And like the god trick, this eye fucks the world' (Haraway, 1988: 582). Als' writing calls attention to this 'god trick' of the white supremacist gaze that fucks the black person, which he cannot see as it seemingly sees 'everything from nowhere', but which he *hears* upon encountering the lynching photographs, such that Als writes 'according to these pictures, I shouldn't be talking to you right now: I'm a little on the [n-word] side, meant to be seen and not heard, my tongue hanged and with it, my mind' (Als, 2000: 39).

By exercising his voice in his essay, Als may be perceived as defying the voice of white supremacy, as taking action, as doing, as contributing to what Wood describes as the historical legacy of anti-lynching that 'transformed the original intent of the photograph and constructed an alternative social memory of the event' (Wood, 2005: 392). However, Als quickly refutes this reading, stating, 'In writing this, I have become a cliché, another colored person writing about a [n-word]'s life. I'm feeding, somewhat, into what the essayist George W.S. Trow, has called "white euphoria", which is defined by white people exercising their largesse in my face as they say' (Als, 2000: 40). When speaking from the perspective of a '[n-word]', Als asserts that by writing, he does not escape or change the gaze or voice of white supremacy—he does not exercise autonomous agency, but performs the activities of a role as defined by it, even when he draws attention to it as a performance, as he does here. So long as he hears and sees from the perspective of a '[n-word]', Als not only performs, but also reproduces in this performance, the 'god trick' of white supremacy.

For Cameron on 7 August 1930, looking away from the lynching photograph as a would-be lynched black person was a looking into the crowd that was about to lynch him, where he:

> recognized a few faces from homes near my own neighborhood. I saw customers whose shoes I had shined many times. Boys and girls I had gone to school with were among them. People I had watched buying tickets regularly at the the interurban station ticket window. People who had sold me foodstuffs in stores, and neighbors whose lawns I had mowed and whose yards I had washed and polished. These people populated the crowd around the jail. (Cameron, 2016 [1982]: 78)

According to Cameron, as a black American living in the first half of the twentieth century, looking away from the lynching photograph was a turning towards a 'time of terror', during

which 'the social and personal effects of Jim Crow laws and customs on everyday African American life were … devastating' (*ibid.*: xxii). Looking away from a lynching photograph was a looking at the 'reality' of its blind field as reinforced and reaffirmed by encounters with the daily lived reality of Jim Crow America, of which Cameron writes:

> Segregated educational programs and buildings for blacks were generally of lower quality than for whites, as were the separate rest rooms, railroad cars, waiting rooms, and balcony sections of movie theaters. White swimming pools, parks, hotels, restaurants, and many other businesses refused entrance to blacks. Those few that served black people humiliated them, making them go to the back door for service.
>
> The Jim Crow system taught even the lowest-status white American that he was superior to any black person. A white child never need address a black adult as Mr. or Mrs., but could call a black man of any age "boy" or "uncle" and any black woman "auntie." Blacks were expected to tip their hats and step off the sidewalk to allow whites to pass. It was dangerous for blacks to make and sustain eye contact with whites. White employers often raped black women and girls who worked in their homes. Their husbands and fathers could not defend them without the risk of being beaten, jailed, or killed. If a black boy or man accidentally bumped into or even glanced at a white girl or woman, he could be lynched. (*ibid.*: xxii–xxiii)

Viewed in this light, Bryan Stevenson's terminological use of 'terror lynching' to describe that which 'claimed the lives of African American men, women, and children who were forced to endure the fear, humiliation, and barbarity of this widespread phenomenon unaided' (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015: 3) becomes applicable not only to the specifically spatio-temporally locatable extrajudicial events of spectacle lynchings, but also to the daily conditions that reproduced and reinforced the perceptual cycle of white hegemony over 'metaphorically lynched' black persons.

Cameron's account testifies to the stimulation shock and revulsion that the viewing of lynching photographs can produce in those who adopt the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person both 'metaphorically' and 'actually'; however, it also demonstrates that the production of this horror does not necessarily beget the action for which *The Crisis* editors hoped. Instead, for Cameron, it produces a blind field of terror. Thus, it can be seen how viewing a lynching photograph on the register of hegemonic aesthetics, even as accompaniment to the voice of anti-lynching, does not necessarily produce conditions whereby the viewer can perceive a break from visible 'reality'; it might be said to generate a perceptual cycle that re-members, but does not re-mind. In relation to calls against lynching, this exclusive re-membering is problematic and counteractive, because the manifestation of these calls requires the recursive reproduction of the perception that what is seen and heard *is* ontological 'reality'—in this case, the order of white supremacy that subjugates black persons and calls for their lynching—from

which there is no way out. Furthermore, it requires and is produced from the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person and, as such, contributes to the reproduction of this 'reality'.

This is not to say that, when looking away from lynching photographs, 'terror' was all that black persons and others who opposed lynching and racial violence could turn towards in twentieth-century America, nor that it is all that can be turned towards now. As Litwack writes, during the years of Jim Crow, 'In the face of relentless white hostility, blacks drew inward, constructing in their communities a separate world, a replica of the society from which they had been excluded, with their own schools, churches, businesses, fraternal orders, cultural practices, and forms of activism and expression' (Litwack, 2000: 30). Attempting to escape an adoption of the perceptual position of a '[n-word]' at the turn of the twenty-first century, Als also recalls that 'For a long time, I avoided being the black guy, that is being black-identified. Back then, I felt that adopting black nationalism limited my world, my world view' (Al, 2000: 40). Als' recalling his ability to avoid 'being the black guy' for 'a long time' suggests that when turning away from the lynching photographs, 'terror' is not the only 'reality' towards which he can turn—that he has encountered an alternative 'reality' where lynching does not figure. However, as by definition there is no crossover between alternative 'reality' and the 'reality' of lynching, when his visual encounter with the lynching photograph reproduces the perception of 'being watched' as a '[n-word]', Als' turn towards an alternative 'reality' disappears from view. In his essay, Als again attempts this escape by turning away, declaring, 'I will never write from this [n-word]ish point of view again. This is my farewell. I mean to be courtly and grand. No gold watch is necessary, as I bow out of the [n-word] business' (*ibid.*). But immediately following this declaration, Als recounts numerous instances when 'being watched' made him 'feel [n-word]-ish': crossing the street at night 'so as not to make the white woman walking in front of me feel fear'; on leaving a restaurant, being assaulted by 'four or five cops … pointing guns at my head' because 'I looked just like someone else'; being raided by police with guns pointing who later explained, 'We thought you were a carjacker' (*ibid.*: 41). Despite his attempts to avoid 'being the black guy', Als writes, 'Now I know from experience that the world has been limited for me by people who see me as a [n-word], very much in the way the dead eyes and flashbulb smiles in these photographs say: See what we do to the [n-word]s!' (*ibid.*: 40).

Als' account counters *The Crisis* editors' hoped-for outcome and Wood's claim that 'To look at these images and to respond with horror was to move from the position of spectator to moral witness' (Wood, 2009: 199). In looking at and away from lynching photographs with horror, Als does not move to the position of moral witness, which does not even appear within his perceptual range. He does not take on the *Spectator*ship of the lynching 'crazy looking white people, as crazy and empty-looking in the face as the white people who stare at

me' (*ibid.*: 40). He attempts to avoid taking on the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person. But in his attempt to look away without a '[n-word]ish point of view', Als turns towards encounter after encounter wherein he perceives his being perceived as a '[n-word]', which recalls the 'god trick' of the voice that declares white lyncher/black lynched as 'reality' and his escaping the '[n-word] business' as *un*realistic. With these encounters, Als is re-minded of and in turn unwillingly remembers his being perceived as a '[n-word]'—he perceives himself as re-membered by the 'reality' of lynching. Thus, Als writes, '"[N-word]" is a slow death. And that's the slow death I feel all the time now, as a colored man' (*ibid.*: 39). In this 'slow death', what is broken—is killed—by 'being watched' with the lynching eyes of white supremacy is the attempted hegemonic aesthetic production of a blind field where the perception of 'seeing the harm in people's eyes' does not and never will manifest.

But even if Als were able to certainly, absolutely, never perceive 'being watched' again, I would argue that he still does not escape the perceived 'reality' of lynching or anti-lynching with this turning away. Als' complete turning away from the '[n-word]ish business' is a refusal to adopt the *Spectator*ship of the lynched person. This refusal is produced by his perception of the lynched person as wrongly but inescapably subjected and subjugated by the white supremacist gaze that fucks the world. With the perception that 'reality' as represented by the lynching photograph is comprised of only lynch/lynched, Als perceives this turning away altogether as the only way with which he himself can escape being watched by this gaze. To produce this logic, Als does not entirely adopt the *Spectator*ship of the lyncher that perceives and kills the lynched person as 'negro brute'; however, it requires his perceiving and accordingly abandoning the lynched person as 'strange fruit'—only and evermore an irredeemable, unreachable captive of white supremacy. The production of this perception of the lynched person as forevermore 'strange fruit' requires producing the perception that the white supremacist gaze that interpellates it as such is also forevermore. Thus, turning away altogether from the lynching photograph not only fails to interrupt or break the production of white supremacist ideology but also inadvertently reproduces it, and in this way may be seen as even more problematic than turning towards 'terror'.

Following this analysis, I advance that the appropriated use of lynching photographs was double-edged. On one hand, re-presented in contexts and accompanying the voice of anti-lynching, visual encounters with lynching photographs contributed to the production, growth, and expansion of perceptions of lynching as racist, unjust, immoral, brutal violence. On the other hand, Cameron and Als' accounts attest to how visual encounters with lynching images on the register of an anti-lynching hegemonic aesthetics can occlude the perception of new, unknown possibilities *within* the 'reality' of the photographic frame. As a result, when turning away from the lynching photograph with an anti-lynching hegemonic ear and eye, both the

viewer who adopts the *Spectator*ship of the lynched black person *and* the viewer who attempts total escape beyond the perceived 'reality' of lynching become interpellated back into the ideological apparatus of white supremacy. Thus, the anti-lynching viewer becomes caught in a double-bind[64] in the terrifying blind field of the 'reality' of the lynching photograph.

3.3. Hegemonic Aesthetics Disappearing

A comparative parallel may be drawn between lynching and Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as 'social death' (Patterson, 192: 1). Both can be described as 'extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power … and of total powerlessness' (*ibid.*). However, they also critically differ. Patterson observes that the imbalance of power between master/slave as dominant/dominated is directly perceived as such 'from the viewpoint of the master' and 'from the viewpoint of the slave' (*ibid.*). In contrast, the social power dynamic of lyncher/lynched as dominant/dominated is directly perceived as such *only from the viewpoint of the lynched*. The lyncher does not perceive its direct part in this relation. Instead, the lyncher perceives the dynamic as: Lynch Law/free person. The lyncher perceives itself and the lynched as responding to the same meta-voice; in other words, in relation to Lynch Law, the lyncher perceives itself and the lynched as undifferentiated except by the voice of Justice that sanctions innocence and guilt. The lyncher does not perceive that the voice of Judge Lynch is *its own*, let alone that it operates on a self-proclaimed social order of white supremacy. In this way, the lyncher perceiving on the aurally and visually overloaded hegemonic aesthetic register of Lynch Law obscures its own capacity to perceive racial difference as that on which lynching is determined. This failing to perceive other sights and sounds is not produced because the lyncher is 'blind' or 'deaf', metaphorically or literally. Rather, through the mechanisms of an obfuscurating perceptual cycle, the lyncher hears the voice of Lynch Law as coming from an external, race-blind, omnipresent, omniscient omnipotence and sees as ontological evidence the blind field of reaffirmation of this voice.

Operating within the closed blind field of the hegemonic aesthetics of lynching/anti-lynching manifests a double-bind for the person—*any* person, black, white, etc.—who perceives and protests lynching as racial violence; they are perceived as speaking from the position of the

[64] According to Bateson *et al.*, 'The ability to communicate about communication, to comment upon the meaningful actions of oneself and others, is essential for successful social intercourse' and a 'double-bind' occurs when this 'ability to communicate about communication' cannot be accessed (Bateson *et al.*, 1956). The double bind has the following characteristics: '(1) two or more persons; (2) repeated experience; (3) a primary negative injunction; (4) a secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and like the first enforced by punishments or signals which threaten survival; (5) a tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping from the field; (6) finally, the complete set of ingredients is no longer necessary when the victim has learned to perceive his universe in double bind patterns' (Sluzki *et al.*, 1977: 209).

always-already criminal '[n-word]' whose voice is not so much silenced but heard as that of the guilty voice of a criminal. The '[n-word]' may shout and scream, but within the echo chamber of hegemonic aesthetics, this voice is drowned out by the meta-voice of Lynch Law. As perceived within the hegemonic aesthetic conditions of the closed binary of lynching/anti-lynching, both the voice of the lyncher and the anti-lyncher are subsumed by the meta-voice of the Law, and the political subjectivity of *both* disappear. In other words, the closed, thesis/anti-thesis positioning of lynching/anti-lynching *disappears politics.* But there is no redemptive Hegelian sublation to be found here (see Hegel, 1977 [1807]). Instead of Absolute Knowledge comes endless, unfettered torture and killing of black persons both through the slow death of 'being watched' and the fast death of being lynched.

Viewed in this way, the mechanics that critically drive the ideological apparatus of political disappearance appears as follows: Imbalance of power comes from *imbalance of perception*. Unlike social death, it does not come from two subject positions that both perceive one as dominant over another. Instead, *political disappearing* occurs from (1) the dominant subject's *disavowed perception* of a dominant/dominated relation, which is facilitated through a deferral of its voice to a seemingly externalised, unlocatable, unquestionable source and (2) the dominated subject's subsumed oppositional attention to the dominant subject's disavowed perception.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have turned and re-turned to photographs taken at the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and four unidentified individuals as an affectively difficult but, I would advance, necessary way towards approaching the questions posited at the beginning of this chapter, of how and why was black mo'nin' not perceived in the viewing of these images in the way that the disruptive, improvisational, resistant sound of blackness was heard in encounters with the postmortem image of the body of Emmett Till.

I have encountered and re-encountered these images in relation to the historical contexts in which they were produced, circulated, and perceived and through engagement with James Cameron's and Hilton Als' accounts of their encounters with lynching images. Through an examination of the diametrically opposed contexts in which lynching photographs were produced, circulated, and encountered in the US during the first half of the twentieth century,

this chapter maps one potential response to the question of how and why the irreducible 'visual sound' of black mon'in' did not reverberate in the eyes and ears of those who encountered them, even from the position and context of anti-lynching.

Locating both lynching and anti-lynching efforts as operating within and inviting a perceptual mode that works on the register of hegemonic aesthetics, I also come to the conclusion that operating within and through a perceptual mode of hegemonic aesthetics effectively disappears political subjectivity and politics altogether. I arrive to the conclusion that the imbalanced perceptual relation between lyncher/lynched results in disappaerance by way of a comparative analysis with Orlando Patterson's theorisation of the imbalanced power relation between master/slave that results in 'social death'. At the same time, this analysis also brings to light that the effects of the hegemonic perceptual operations of slavery and lynching are not the same. From this emerges the following question: if political disappearance is not the same as death, is to be politically disappeared always and forever to be politically disappeared? The next and last chapter of this thesis investigates this question.

4. Moaning Perceiving Dis-Appearing

4.0 Introduction

Is to be politically disappeared always and forever to be politically disappeared?

This question vibrates throughout this thesis: in Chapter 1, in the discussions on mourning as critical to the production of politics, the mourning subject as a political subject, and—by way of Douglas Crimp's reading of SimonWatney's encounters with homophobia—the relationship between a denied moaning to disavowed mourning and its political implications; in Chapter 2, in the discussions on moaning aesthetics as a perceptual mode that is open to the hearing of black mo'nin' as conceptualised by Fred Moten, and on hegemonic aesthetics as a perceptual mode that closes off this possibility; and in Chapter 3, in the discussions and attention to the aesthetic modes with which lynching photographs were perceived, as a way to seek some understanding as to how and why, even in anti-lynching contexts, encounters with these photographs did not incite the social outcry and movement that encounters with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till did.

However, while it has been implicitly present from the beginning of this text, it is only now that I find the facility, the words to ask this question explicitly. It is only by having taken the particular journey in the preceding pages, that I now feel able to ask this question such that it might be heard; such that it might be perceived that I ask this question not rhetorically but with uncertainty; and such that it might be understood that I ask not in an abstract or general way, but in relation to mourning, to moaning, to black mo'nin', to aesthetics, to perception, to politics, to political subjectivity, to difference, to community as related to the specific set of concerns and materials with which I have engaged. It is only in retrospect, on looking back, on acquiring these words, that I perceive that this was a question I have been asking but unable to ask all along. Moreover, in looking again, in re-encountering the material with which encountering has facilitated this faculty of language, I perceive a way to approach this question.

I pursue in this chapter the question 'Is to be politically disappeared always and forever to be politically disappeared?' not in a generalised way, but by re-turning to the thesis: specifically, to the site of encounter with the postmortem images of Emmett Till; the site where, with the audible perception of what Moten aptly calls black mo'nin', I perceived an affirmation of the possibility of possible community by way of moaning. In the first section of this chapter, through engagement with Gillian Rose's visual analysis of Nicholas Pouissins' painting of *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion (Collected by his Widow)* (1648) and drawing on concepts that have been developed over the course of the thesis, I contend that political subjectivity can be reclaimed through a perceiving of the breaking of the blind field of hegemonic aesthetics that disappears politics in the first instance, which inaugurates a mourning that appears politics again. Moreover, I propose that this action does not reappear, but *dis-*appears a new, uncertain political subjectivity. With this in mind, I then re-turn and re-encounter the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's body and the photographs of the lynchings of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and of four unidentified black persons. I re-encounter these images alongside one another, and also in relation to memento mori photographs from James Van Der Zee's *Harlem Book of the Dead* (1978) and the Thanatos Archive. I advance that memento mori photography, which was a common middle-class practice of taking photographs of the deceased by closed relatives and friends in late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century America, operates on a hegemonic aesthetic register. Through this comparative visual analysis, I perceive the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as visually intersecting and thereby breaking the mutually excluding, hegemonic aesthetic perceptual cycles of both lynching and memento mori photographs. In turn, through analysis of my own perceptual engagement, I contend that my perceiving the visual breaking of the blind field of these hegemonic aesthetics registers, inaugurates a mourning that dis-appears politics and produces the capacity to moan, by which I perceive not only a dis-appearance of my own uncertain, indeterminate, in-process political subjectivity, but also that of Mamie Till-Bradley, Emmett Till, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and the four persons who continue to go unnamed in my encounter with their images. In the last section of this chapter, I re-turn to the debate that ensued over calling Emmett Till's killing a 'murder' or a 'lynching' and, reflecting on Simeon Wright's recalling his own uncertainty of what to call

his cousin's death, offer that although moaning is often slow in its production of uncertain, indeterminate unknowns, it is nonetheless a vital process.

4.1. Dis-appearing

It would seem that breaking the insular perceptual cycle of political disappearing requires the perceiving of uncertainly unknown spatio-temporalities—those that the 'truth' of the 'reality' of lynching/anti-lynching has neither totalised nor can totalise, whereby sights and sounds may be perceived as not always already codified by it. It requires the perceiving of spatio-temporalities, a perceiving that in turn generates the perception of uncertain, unknown possibilities, including the possibility of forming new, indeterminate, open-ended spatio-temporal relations with 'possible others'—this is a possibility that appears not 'although' but *because* it is uncertainly unverifiable.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the perceiving of uncertainly unknown spatio-temporalities comes from perceiving 'loss' in relation to an irrevocably, interminable 'object', which opens perception to uncertainty and the possibility of encountering new unknowns. Following this, it would seem that breaking the smooth operational flows of hegemonic aesthetics requires the perceiving of difference *as* dissonance—of the perceiving of a perception that breaks perception. This recalls for me Gillian Rose's discussion in 'Athens and Jerusalem: a tale of three cities' (Rose, 1997: 15-37) of Sister Wendy Beckett's reading of Nicolas Poussin's 1648 painting of *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion (Collected by his Widow)* (reprinted on p. 159). The painting depicts the widow of Phocion the Good burying the ashes of her dead husband outside the city walls of Athens. According to Plutarch, in 4th century BC, Phocion was a model citizen in private and public life who served as governor of Athens forty times over. During a period of political upheaval, his enemies convicted Phocion of treason, condemned him to death by hemlock poisoning, denied his body burial within the city walls, and denied fire for his funerary rites. Plutarch presents the circumstances of Phocion's death as indicative of the corruption of those who came into power (*ibid.*: 23). Sister Wendy sees in Poussin's rendering of 'the gesture of the wife bending down to scoop up the ashes as an act of perfect love—as Jerusalem' (*ibid.*: 25) and the classical architecture in the background as representing the order of the state—as Athens. Rose adopts Sister Wendy's parallels, but does not see Jerusalem's mourning as positioned in diametric opposition to what Wendy describes as Athens' 'implacable domination of architectural and political order' (*ibid.*: 24). Rather, she sees

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in Poussin's painting a figurative rendering of mourning as barometer of the un/lawfulness of the residing political order. Rose writes:

> The gathering of the ashes is a protest against arbitrary power; it is not a protest against power and law as such. To oppose anarchic, individual love or good to civil or public ill is to deny the third which gives meaning to both—this is the other meaning of *the third city* —the just city and just act, the just man and the just woman. (*ibid.*)

In other words, oppositional positioning between metaphorical Jerusalem and Athens is not enough to yield an as-yet unknown 'third city' in which justice cannot collapse in either the insularity of the individual or the tyranny of the state. Further to this, according to Rose, failure to take on this encounter as a dynamic, dialectical yet open relationship 'ruins the possibility of political action' (*ibid.*: 26). Thus, while Phocion's wife burying the ashes of her husband appears the frames of injustice, her enacting this gesture outside the city walls neither brings into view a way out nor changes these frames. Here, as in the anti-lynching appropriation of pro-lynching tactics, it appears that it is not enough to take an oppositional stance in order to appear politics again.

Following Rose and recalling Moten (2003), I advance that as perception is a matter of situated perspective, breaking a hegemonic aesthetic cycle requires perceiving a rupture as occurring not outside of a particular blind field—e.g. that of lynching/anti-lynching—but rather, *perceiving a breaking of the blind field itself*. Perceiving of the blind field as broken amounts to a disruption of the smooth movement between that which is heard and that which is seen—which produces the possibility of perceiving the *hegemonic aesthetic regime* and, moreover, *the perceiving of it* as 'lost'. This perception of a break in the blind field is an encounter with—to adopt Rancière's phrasing—a redistributing of the perceptual senses, the organisation of which has yet to be perceived (Rancière, 2004). It renders the perception of space and time that exposes the sounds heard and sights seen by the hegemonic ear and eye as finite and not totalising. It renders the perception of space and time that produces the possible perception of other sights and sounds beyond the conditioning of hegemonic aesthetics. Thus, with this breaking of the 'narrative coherence and direction' (Butler, 2003: 471) of hegemonic perception —i.e. with this *mourning*—so too is 'lost' the hegemonic ear and the hegemonic eye.

The mourning subject produced from perceiving 'loss' in relation to 'one's senses'—in perceiving that it has lost its senses—does not re-appear the same political subjectivity of lyncher/lynched that operates only within the lynching/anti-lynching hegemonic aesthetic regime, and which is also 'lost' with the perceived 'loss' of 'my senses'. Rather, it *dis-appears* a new politics and *dis-appears* a new political subject. 'Dis-' as per the etymological root to mean

'apart, away, asunder' and 'in a different direction' and 'exceedingly, utterly' (Harper, 2017).[65] 'Dis-' to mark that this is not an appearing that is ontologically originary. Dis-appearance is not a Kleinian 'first mourning' (Klein, 1940); as it emerges from a condition of having been disappeared, it may be likened more closely to subsequent mournings. 'Dis-' to signal that a perception of 'loss' in relation to 'one's own perception' indeterminately *dis*rupts and *dis*tributes one's own perception of politics and thus of political subjectivity, such that the possibility for perceiving new, uncertain, open configurations of political space and political relations—of 'impossible community' *and* 'possible community'—as well as the perception of these possibilities, *dis-appear*.

4.2 Re-turning to the Postmortem Photographs of Emmett Till

I re-turn to Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley writing:

> What a strange debate this was turning out to be. Lynching or murder. As if defining it one way or the other would make a difference. This was the vicious torture/killing of a defenseless boy, but men who had seemed to turn it into a good time. Blood sport. And the only reason Emmett was killed was because he was black. That sure sounded like a lynching to me, and to every other reasonable person who would come to see my son's killing as part of a pattern. (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145)

I re-encounter the postmortem images of Emmett Till. I perceive the image of Emmett Till's corpse, mutilated and bloated, but also attired in a formal suit and laid in a coffin that appears to be lined with satin (reprinted on pp. 61, 63). I see in this image Till-Bradley looking at Emmett's corpse and standing with a relative, at the head of her son's prone corpse (reprinted on p. 62). In this image, she appears to me as grief-stricken, holding onto the side of Emmett Till's coffin (reprinted on p. 64). I see in this image Emmett Till's suited, coffined corpse surrounded by flowers, family, and friends (reprinted on p. 65). The figures of Emmett Till's lynchers do not appear in the frame, nor do they appear beyond the edges of the frame as the producers and distributors of these images.

In these ways, the images of Emmett Till do not appear to be those of someone who has been lynched. This is not only because they seem to visually contrast with the other lynching photographs as discussed thus far, but because they also appear more in keeping with another practice of postmortem photography that was common in the US around the same time as lynching photographs. What Stanley Burns describes as the 'taking of a photograph of a deceased loved one' followed on earlier practices of producing death masks and postmortem

[65] This rendering of 'dis-appearance' is influenced by and uses as a point of departure Derrida's 'différance' (1982).

portrait painting as 'memento mori', a reminder that 'death comes to all' (Burns, 1990, 2013; Peck, 2015; Smoke, 2015).

Family members commissioned photographers and later themselves took these 'memento mori' photographs. They were shared amongst family and friends by hand and via post, and displayed them in homes, wore them as lockets, and carried them in pocket mirrors (Burns, 1990; Peck, 2015). The relatively high cost of postmortem photographic services reflects that these photographs were not only socially acceptable, but considered valuable family possessions and markers of middle-class status (Bunge and Mord, 2015; Smoke, 2015). Photographers advertised their postmortem photographic services in newspapers, included samples of their postmortem photographic work in portfolios, and adopted signature styles in producing them. For instance, James Van Der Zee, well-known for his images of life in Harlem and portraits of prominent black Americans, was also known for his distinctive postmortem photographs, in which he superimposed images and texts with a diffused edge around the main subject (Van Der Zee *et al.*, 1978) (reprinted on pp. 163, 164, 165).[66]

For these photographs, corpses were dressed in formal attire and staged to appear as 'sleeping beauties', according to Burns (Burns, 1990). The style, setting, and composition in postmortem photographs varied according to fashion, technological capacities, specific requests of commissioning family-friends, and the photographer's style (Burns, 1990; Smoke, 2015). Some corpses were photographed laid in a bed, chaise lounge, or coffin; 'Mrs. Wheeler', this unnamed boy, and others were made to appear sitting peacefully in a chair or resting in a private lounge (reprinted on pp. 166, 167). Concerted effort was made to conceal bodily damage, disfigurement, and decay with dress, cosmetics, grooming, lighting, posturing, binding in place body parts to combat the effects of rigor mortis, and employing shrouded assistants to pose bodies (Burns, 1990; Mord, 2015). Nonetheless, as can be seen in this image, visible decay or physical damage was not always concealable (reprinted on p. 168). Thus, viewed with an ear towards 'memento mori' photography, the mutilated and bloated appearance of Emmett Till's corpse does not exclude it from appearing as a 'sleeping beauty'.

Staging and grooming were not intended to hide that the photographed body was that of a corpse. Indeed, visual cues for the viewer to perceive death were deliberately included within the photographic frame, such as coffins, but also items and superimposed images that symbolised death, such as drums, acanthus leaves, and angels (Van Der Zee *et al.*, 1978; Burns,

[66] Commercial postmortem photography noticeably declined from the 1940s onwards (Burns, 1990). Scholars attribute this perceptible shift to technological advancements that made photographic equipment more portable and affordable, and advance that postmortem photography did not die out but only became less visible as means of production moved into the hands of family members (Burns, 1990; Arenson, 2015). The Burns Archives contains a wealth of postmortem photographs from the 1940s onwards.

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1990; Mord, 2015).[67] Rather, retouching the corpse may be seen as a way to direct attention towards the Law of Death (see Burns, 1990, 2013; Smoke, 2015). Viewing these images as reminders that 'death comes to all' was to perceive them as evidence of the objective 'truth' of human mortality as the domain of the unequivocating, incontestable judgement of Death. Looking at postmortem photographs was to perceive affirmation of the 'reality' of Death's omniscient omnipresence pervading not just the visual field within but also beyond the photograph's borders, and turning away from them was to yield a blind field of physiological life where the voice of Death reigns. In other words, viewing postmortem photographs as 'memento mori' contributed to a hegemonic aesthetic mode of perception whereby the hegemonic ear listens to the voice of Death as Law and the hegemonic eye sees postmortem photographs as affirmation of the truth of this voice.

Burns describes postmortem photography as having 'nothing to do with the photographs of violence, death, crime, or war images' (Burns, 2013). It may be said that these images were seen as have nothing to do 'with' death, because they were perceived as situated *under* and *by* the metastructuring of Death as *Operator*, for which human judgement and activities are inconsequential. Put another way, human determinations on other humans—such as criminality, ethical positioning, killing—do not appear within the perceptual cycle of 'memento mori'. As such, death by murder did not exclude the deceased from being photographed as a 'sleeping beauty'. For instance, Mary Keller's well-known murder of her husband and child immediately followed by her suicide on 25 January 1894 did not preclude the taking of this postmortem image of the family, in which the opened coffin frames wife Mary Keller and husband Emil Keller in profile with their heads turned towards together, holding their child between them not unlike an intimate, serene family portrait (Mord, 2014: 132–133) (reprinted on p. 170).[68] Thus, Emmett Till's having been 'murdered' also would not have excluded a hegemonic aesthetic perceiving of his postmortem images as 'memento mori'.

Furthermore, as with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till's, in 'memento mori' photographs it was not uncommon for family-friends to appear sitting or standing next to the corpse, or holding the corpse in their arms. Looking at these photographs of the Kramschuster family and other unnamed persons (reprinted in this thesis, pp. 171, 172, 173, 174), the image of the corpse and that of family-friends, also formally attired and posing for the camera, do not appear dramatically different. The visible similarities between these two representations draw

[67] Some postmortem photographs include imagery that may readily be identified in relation to a particular religion. For instance, VanDerZee's photographs may be seen as using Christian imagery, and thus as re-presenting death as the transition to the Kingdom of God (VanDerZee, 1978). However, the limited scholarship on postmortem photography does not evince that the production of these images was mostly of, or restricted to persons of a particular faith.

[68] Local newspapers reported the story; e.g. see *The Auburn Bulletin* (1894).

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aural attention to the 'truth' of Death: that the difference between them is an unpredictable temporal one, with the corpse as 'deceased' and the family-friends as 'will-be deceased'. This perceived relation recalls Derridean 'friendship' as anticipated mourning—as the perceiving of unpredictable, dissymmetrical temporalities in relation to a 'possible other' (Derrida, 1997; 2001 [1993b]).[69] As in Derrida's formulation, perceiving the difference of 'deceased' and 'will-be deceased' critically produces a condition whereby these figures do not appear to collapse into one and the same representational category. Viewed as 'deceased' and 'will-be deceased', I see the former appearing as the 'sleeping beauty' typically in the centre of the frame and the latter as the 'family-friends' to its side.

4.3 Perceiving Intersecting Breaking

I re-turn to the question asked at the beginning of Chapter 3: What was it about Emmett Till's killing, his death, his image, and the circulation of his postmortem image that, as Moten writes, 'even if [Emmett Till's] death marked panic and even if that panic had already led to the deaths of so many, so that his death was already haunted—its force only the animating spirit of a train of horrors—something happened. Something real—in that it might have been otherwise—happened' (Moten, 2003: 196)?

I re-turn to Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley writing:

> What a strange debate this was turning out to be. Lynching or murder. As if defining it one way or the other would make a difference. This was the vicious torture/killing of a defenseless boy, but men who had seemed to turn it into a good time. Blood sport. And the only reason Emmett was killed was because he was black. That sure sounded like a lynching to me, and to every other reasonable person who would come to see my son's killing as part of a pattern. (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145)

On hearing Till-Bradley calling her son's killing a lynching, I look again at the postmortem images of Emmett Till.

Looking at the image of Emmett Till's brutalised face and head and unusually bloated body as that of a lynched person, I turn away to look again at the mutilated lynched bodies of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson and Isaac McGhie, of Will James, Laura Nelson, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Leonard Woods, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and of four unidentified black persons as re-presented in lynching photographs. I perceive the lynched person not first

[69] Postmortem images may be perceived as visual re-presentation of Derrida's 'gift of death' (Derrida, 2007 [1999]).

and foremost as lynched as in 'disappeared', but also and at the same time I perceive the lynched person as 'dead'. Perceiving these lynched persons as dead, I perceive 'loss' in relation to them, which opens up my perception to unknown, uncertain spatio-temporalities. I perceive the otherwise seemingly limitless blind field of lynching/anti-lynching as possibly finite and exposed to uncertain, unknown spaces and times that transcend it. As such, I perceive them as irrevocably and interminably beyond not only my perception but possibly beyond that of those who subscribe to lynching. I perceive the lynched person not as unequivocally 'without sanctuary', but possibly as having found sanctuary irrevocably, interminably in the unknown space that I uncertainly cannot perceive. My perception dis-appears the possibility of producing 'impossible community' in relation to my perceiving alterity in relation to them not as 'lynched persons' but as 'alter-objects' whom I can uncertainly never fully know. In this way, I perceive an uncertainly impossibly imperceivable political subjectivity that is uncertainly, endlessly dis-appearing.

Looking again at the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as those of a lynched person—in perceiving them as a visual overlaying of memento mori photographs and lynching photographs—I perceive a parallel in the compositional arrangement of memento mori photographs with the corpse appearing in the centre and family-friends next to it, and that of lynched and lyncher in the lynching photographs. At the same time, I perceive a very different relation between the corpse and family-friend to that of lynched/lyncher, which is neither antithetical or oppositional. Rather, I perceive a parallel between the social relation of memento mori photographs with the corpse as 'deceased' and family-friends as 'will-be deceased', and the relation of '[n-word]' and 'dead [n-word]' that Als constructs when looking at the lynching photographs in James Allen's publication *Without Sanctuary*. Adopting Als' phrasing, I perceive a comparable relation between the corpse as 'deceased' and the lynched person as 'dead [n-word]'. I perceive a comparable relation between the 'will-be deceased' family-friend 'being watched' by Death and the metaphorically lynched '[n-word]' as 'being watched' by 'the harm in people's eyes'.

Looking away from the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as those of a lynched person, I perceive parallels between the methods of production and circulation of both photographic practices, and the historical time period when they were common. At the same time, I perceive that, in contrast to lynching photographs, the purposes for producing and reasons for distributing postmortem photography were common in the households of both white and black Americans. While lynching photographs were produced by those who presumably maligned, tortured, and killed the person they lynched, postmortem photographs were produced by those who presumably loved and cared for the deceased person.

Looking again at the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as those of a lynched person, I perceive the image of Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley. I perceive her image not only as the family-friend positioned in relation to the corpse in memento mori photographs, but as a family-friend in relation to the corpse in lynching photographs. I do not perceive her as peripheral to the lynching crowd like Phocion's widow burying her husband's ashes outside the city walls. I perceive her as close to her son's dead body, *amongst* the otherwise seemingly impenetrable crowd of lynchers. I do not perceive her as adopting the position of the lyncher. I do not perceive her as metaphorically lynched. Looking at her image, I perceive another, new, unknown figure in the visual field of lynching: I perceive her as Emmett Till's mother mourning in relation to the 'loss' of her lynched, dead son.

Perceiving Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley as a mourning subject, I perceive her as a political subject. Moreover, as I perceive her as a possible 'other', I perceive her image as black mo'nin'; I do not perceive her image as a fixed, determined representation that is interchangeable with her person. Rather, I perceive a visual sound that signals to the impossibility of representation, as a representation of a political subjectivity that is uncertainly ever in-process: a dis-appearing representation. I perceive in this the possibility of another surrogate viewer, whose position I may adopt in a perceived realm where I also perceive the possibility of lynching. I do not perceive in Mamie Till-Bradley's image a position that is wholly adoptable. Rather, by perceiving her dis-appearance, I perceive the possibility of a new *spectator* position that is open-ended, uncertain, and for these very reasons produces the possibility for me to adopt a new, different position, that does not collapse my image and Till-Bradley's image into one and the same. Moreover, I perceive a position that, as an anomaly within the hegemonic aesthetic regime of lynching/anti-lynching, cannot be fixed or located within it. Thus, in perceiving Emmett Till's mother as mourning in relation to the 'loss' of her lynched, dead son, I perceive a political subjectivity that not only dis-appears from my vantage point but also from that of the Voice of lynching/anti-lynching and, as such, cannot be interpellated by it.

'Visibility is a trap,' writes Peggy Phelan, 'it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession' (Phelan, 1993: 6). However, following my analysis, I would advance that visibility is only a trap if a subject is already caught in the blind field of a hegemonic aesthetic 'reality'. Seen as producing, circulating, and re-presented in the postmortem images of Emmett Till and calling his murder a lynching, Till-Bradley becomes visible without entrapping herself in the perceptual terror of Lynch Law. Or, if visibility is trap, then the visibility of Emmett Till as a lynched, murdered, black person is a trap for the advocate of Lynch Law, for the image that breaks from its ocularcentric logic also, when looked upon summons the fallacy of its narrative of 'god-trick'

surveillance; it *appears* and thus disarms the voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession that is founded on its obfuscuration.

Looking away from the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till as those of a lynched person, I look away as a mourning subject, as a dis-appearing political subject, in-process that does not perceive the 'reality' of lynching/anti-lynching as impenetrable or endless, nor do I perceive the 'reality' of Death as 'nothing to do' with 'violence, death, crime, or war'. I do not perceive the 'reality' of lynching/anti-lynching and that of 'memento mori' as operating in segregated, wholly separate realms. I perceive the 'reality' of lynching/anti-lynching and that of Death as intersecting. I perceive lynching as enacting both political disappearance and physiological death; I perceive them not as one and the same thing. I perceive my mourning as not conditioned by Lynch Law; I perceive my mourning in relation to perceived 'loss' in relation to Emmett Till, and I perceive the possibility of 'impossible' and 'possible' community. In turn, I perceive a possible way by which the perceptual cycle of the hegemonic aesthetics of lynching/anti-lynching may have broken on visually encountering the postmortem images of Emmett Till, such that Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley's black mo'nin' was heard.

Moten perceives Till-Bradley's black mo'nin' as cutting, breaking through the postmortem images of Emmett Till (Moten, 2003). While this may be so, I venture that in order for Till-Bradley's black mo'nin' to be perceived not only requires the breaking of the image of Emmett Till by way of sound but also the breaking of perceiving lynching/anti-lynching on a hegemonic aesthetic register. Thus I advance that it is not only that Till-Bradley's black mo'nin' cuts the image, but that looking at the image of Emmett Till as the memento mori of a lynched person also breaks the hegemonic ear and hegemonic eye of the viewer, which in turn renders a perception of the blind fields of lynching/anti-lynching and memento mori as slashed. And that it is in the breaking and cutting of hegemonic aesthetic perception that renders the capacity to hear Till-Bradley's black mo'nin'.

When looking at the images of Emmett Till as an intersection of lynching photography and memento mori photography, I perceive that which is invisible when they are viewed as mutually excludable: namely, the operational structures that render the perception of lynching/anti-lynching and memento mori on the register of hegemonic aesthetics. My perceiving this does not necessarily break my perception of the relational movement between sounds and sights that constitutes lynching/anti-lynching aesthetics, nor does it break that which constitutes memento mori aesthetics. Rather, it exposes their relational movements and mechanisms and, moreover, exposes these two aesthetic cycles as neither isolated nor *necessarily* mutually exclusive. Thus, my encountering the intersecting of these two aesthetic regimes facilitates my perceiving neither as hegemonic.

My perceiving the 'loss' of each as hegemonic, i.e. as wholly separate operations, in turn produces my perception of uncertainty, unknowing, and spatio-temporalities—i.e. the conditions that open my ears and eyes to perceiving new, uncertain relations between sounds and sights beyond those dictated by the voice of lynching/anti-lynching and that of memento mori. With the breaking of the closed hegemonies of my aesthetic perception, I perceive new sights and sounds. I also perceive the possibility of configuring new ways to move between sights and sounds, which also may intersect and re-distribute perceived aesthetic modes—e.g. memento mori, lynching/anti-lynching—thus dis-appearing new aesthetic operations. So that I may uncertainly perceive as-yet unknowns, I moan. Thus, in perceiving the 'loss' of hegemonic aesthetic perception, I dis-appear my own uncertain, indeterminate, in-process political subjectivity.

Turning my attention to the intersection between lynching/anti-lynching and memento mori, I perceive lynching—as death that always comes at the hands of persons—*as* murder. Looking and looking again and again at the images of Emmett Till, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Will James, Laura Nelson, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Leonard Woods, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and of the four black persons whose images I include in this thesis but whose names I do not know; reading the accounts by and scholarship of Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley, James Cameron, Leon F. Litwack, Hilton Als, Fred Moten, Ida B. Wells, Cleonara Hudson-Weems, Dora Apel, Shawn Michelle Smith, Amy L. Wood, Grace Hale, Charles Seguin, Ray Stannard Baker, Walter Francis White; reviewing the statistics of the NAACP, the Tuskegee Institute, *The Chicago Tribune*, I perceive lynching as having disproportionately affected black persons, and I perceive those who were lynched and are lynched not as criminal, but as having been murdered through an extreme form of racial violence. I perceive that mutually excluding the aesthetics of lynching and that of death generates the perception that lynching is not murder. I perceive that this mutual exclusion also facilitates the obfuscuration of locating lynching as a practice predicated not on criminality, but on racism. Drawing on Als' construction of the black person as 'metaphorically lynched', I perceive that the determination of Judge Lynch as one that deems black persons unmournable, as one that also forecloses the mourning of anyone who would mourn anyone perceived to be black. In turn, I perceive Judge Lynch as disappearing the possibility not only of community—both 'impossible' and 'possible'—in relation to perceived blackness, but the possibility of perceiving blackness itself. I also perceive that Lynch Law as exacting power not through direct control of physiological life/death, but by disappearing politics such that it can gain total, unfettered control of physiological life/death in the blind field of its own making. In turn, I perceive Lynch Law as a method of undeclared racial genocide.

Turning my attention to the intersection between lynching/anti-lynching and memento mori, I perceive the dis-appearing image of Mamie Till-Bradley. I perceive her as mourning her perceived 'loss' in relation to Emmet Till as lynched, murdered, dead. And in my perceiving her mourning, I perceive Emmett Till's political subjectivity dis-appearing, Till-Bradley's political subjectivity dis-appearing, and I perceive my own political subjectivity dis-appearing. I perceive the uncertain dis-appearing of 'impossible community' and the possibility of dis-appearing 'possible community' in relation to possible 'others' who mourn those who have been and are lynched as in murdered because they are perceived as black.

4.4 Dis-appearing Slowly Uncertainly

If political disappearance manifests from imbalance of perception between dominant/ dominated, then it might seem to follow that the appearing of politics from the straitjacket of lynching/anti-lynching would require a perceived breaking of the blind field from the viewpoint of the lyncher *and* the viewpoint of the anti-lyncher. It might seem that without a perceived shared perception, disappearing ensues. However, the present analysis suggests that a simultaneous breaking of hegemonic aesthetic perception is not necessary for a mourning subject to dis-appear a perception of its own uncertain political subjectivity and the possibility of perceiving political relations with possible 'others'. As mourning produces perception of uncertain space *and* time, simultaneity is also not required for the dis-appearing political subject to perceive the uncertain possibility that at some indeterminate time in the future, it may perceive that 'possible community' has been produced with a perceived possible 'other'.

The syncopated breaking of hegemonic aesthetic perception may seem strange or inherently problematic, but appears less so when considering that perceptions of 'loss' are produced at different times for different individuals. For instance, I perceived 'loss' in relation to my father when I saw the flatlining of his EKG monitor on 13 September 2009. My friend perceived 'loss' in relation to my father when I told her the next day that he had died over the phone. In this instance, expecting my friend to have perceived my father as 'lost' at the same time as I did would not make sense. This simple example also shows how a political subject may perceive the possibility that an encounter with its moaning might break the perceptual cycle of a possible 'other'.

Simeon Wright, Emmett Till's cousin who was with him on the day of his encounter with Carolyn Bryant, recalls in the weeks preceding the murder trial:

> Folks from nearby and across the country arrived at the house to talk about politics and other civil rights issues. Of course, Bobo's [Emmett Till's] murder was the main topic of discussion. Dad later said that the NAACP was calling it a lynching, but I remember that Dad often referred to it as a "slaying." I had heard of someone being lynched, but *slaying* was a new word for me. Somehow there seemed to me to be a vast difference between a murder and a slaying. To me, slaying was something committed by a gang of men, a gang that hunts you down like you were a wild animal and without mercy or reason takes your life. (Wright in interview with Hudson-Weems, 2006: 66)

As previously discussed, a number of narratives I have come across recount Wilkins' decrying the killing of Emmett Till as the 'murdering [of] children' and White's refusal to call Emmett Till's killing a 'lynching' and insisting it was a 'straight-out murder' as emblematic of the racial divide in mid-twentieth century America. These retellings suggest that those who were against lynching and perceived it as racial violence readily identified Emmett Till's killing as a lynching, while those who endorsed lynching denied this claim (see NAACP, 1955; Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145; Newton, 2009: 311; Linder, 2012; Michaeli, 2016: 326). However, Wright's account offers a different rendering that does not fit into this historicised binary.

Wright's not perceiving his cousin's killing as a lynching despite the NAACP's statement, suggests that the perceiving of Emmett Till's murder as a lynching was not necessarily straightforward or immediately apparent at the time not only to those who endorsed lynching, but also to those who were against lynching and perceived it as part of a wider pattern of racial violence. Wright's experience speaks to the perceiving of patterns—including seeing Emmett Till's 'killing as part of a pattern' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 145)—by way of moaning as a labour-intensive and slow process, and all the more so as it proceeds with an uncertain sense of not knowing. At the same time, Wright and his father's use of the word 'slaying' to describe Emmett Till's killing as 'worse than murder' also may be seen to suggest a shifting in his perception. Moten writes, 'new word, new world' (Moten, 2003: 60). Wright's 'new word' of 'slaying' may be perceived as a crack in the cycling infrastructure of hegemonic aesthetic perception—as an opening, albeit a small one, to a new world. A crack that would eventually lead to a perceptual break and his perceiving that the slaying of his cousin just because he was black as a killing that, as Till-Bradley asserts, 'sure sounded like a lynching to me'.

This is not to say that the perceiving of black mo'nin' or Emmett Till's murder as a lynching by those who encountered his postmortem images inevitably led or leads to the breaking of hegemonic aesthetic perception of lynching/anti-lynching. The overwhelming backlash voiced by the Southern media and government officials contesting Emmett Till's innocence once his murder was called a lynching; the handling of his murder trial; the acquittal of

Bryant and Milam; the unprecedented outrage over these events; the political activity and contests over the next decade that would become known as the American Civil Rights Movement; the passage of the American Civil Rights Act in 1964; the reporting of lynchings as late as 1968; the absence of federal anti-lynching legislation in the United States to this day may be viewed as testaments to the unpredictability that moaning renders.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I take a view towards a specific social and historical context wherein lynching photography and memento mori practices were, if not ubiquitous, then at least within view of the American consciousness at the time of Emmett Till's lynching. I extend one possible way by which visual encounters with the postmortem photographs of Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley's son could have broken the blind fields of hegemonic aesthetic perceptual modes of those who encountered them, such that the viewer's eyes and ears would have been opened to the hearing of the improvisational, augmenting black mo'nin' cutting through the image of his lynched body. Moreover, I claim that that this speaks to one way by which those caught in the disappearing effects of the double-binding power relations of perceptual imbalance between lyncher/lynched, may have dis-appeared a new political subjectivity and a new politics.

By stating this, it may sound as though mine has been but a speculative journey ruminating on a problem of the past to make a case for a theoretical proposition. But I would argue that this is far from what has taken place in the time and space of this investigation, let alone in the writing of this text. The claims I make here speak with a language that was not available to me, and to questions I could not articulate and did know I was asking at the outset of this investigation. Both the conclusions that I draw *and* the questions to which they attend have only emerged from my discursive, uncertain encountering and re-encountering of the particular materials engaged with here.

Put another way, the claims I make here for the dis-appearance of new political subjectivities and politics—by way of new mournings inaugurated by an aesthetic perception that perceives the breaking of perception—are not just part of a convoluted, hypothetical proposition set in relation to a theoretical viewer living in Jim Crow America encountering the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till for the first time. These are claims I make in relation to *my* encounters and re-encounters—with these photographs and those of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde

Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, Mrs. Wheeler, the Keller family, the Kramschuster family, and others whose names I do not know so I cannot write them here—from my situated, subjective position, sixty-two years in the future. But also *only* sixty-two years in the future, within living memory, in 2017, where I perceive, with alarm, that in the time between my having started the PhD and now, the concerns of this dissertation have become more, not less timely.

I perceive new closed, self-affirming hegemonic aesthetic modes of perception contributing to and generating new neo- and techno-fascisms manifesting in new forms of extreme violence: I perceive this in the extrajudicial police killing, on 17 July 2014 in Staten Island, New York, of Eric Garner, a 43-year old black man who died after officer Daniel Pantaleo put him in a chokehold, despite Garner's calling out 'I can't breathe' eleven times, and in the subsequent acquittal of Pantaleo by a grand jury whose deliberations and proceedings remain under seal by New York State law. I perceive this in James Alex Field Jr.'s driving his car into a crowd protesting a white-supremacist rally on 16 August 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, injuring nineteen protestors and killing 32-year-old Heather D. Heyer, and in Donald Trump's speaking as the country's president, distributing 'blame on both sides' for this violence. I perceive this in the assassination, on 17 June 2016 in Birstall, West Yorkshire, of Jo Cox, a 41-year-old white British Labour MP, who campaigned against Brexit and advocated for Syrian refugee rights and asylum in the UK, and was shot and stabbed to death only a few days before the EU Referendum vote, by white supremacist and right-wing nationalist Thomas Mair as he reportedly shouted 'Britain First!'.

I also perceive the 'slow violence' of these new perceptual hegemonic aesthetics registers: in hearing and seeing my Iranian-British cyclist friend's decision to shave a beard he had for more than ten years after repeatedly being harassed and met with suspicion by border agents and strangers on a recent solo bike tour through the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and France; in hearing the UK Border Force agent tell me she is thinking to deny me entry into the country because I am traveling too close to the expiration date of my visa, and in seeing her ignore the letter with which I present to her from the university's student immigration services explaining that I will be applying for a new visa immediately upon my return; in, after communicating that I have been very ill and require surgery, hearing that I am strongly advised by the university to interrupt my studies, which would mean the curtailment of my visa and along with it my access to the urgent medical care that I need; in hearing my friends and my being called 'fucking immigrants' in the Co-op in Whitstable, just because we did not know where the queue to the cashier began.

On hearing and seeing these violences both fast and slow, I freeze. I perceive myself caught in the blind field of these new hegemonic aesthetic permutations. I cannot see or hear beyond them. I cannot perceive a way out. I re-call Hilton Als' describing his encounter with the lynching photographs collected by James Allen: 'I couldn't look past the pictures, really' (Als, 2000: 43).

I re-call Mamie Elizabeth Till-Bradley recalling that in deciding, against convention, to produce and circulate postmortem photographs of her son's lynched body and to hold an open-casket funeral displaying her son's brutalised body, '*I didn't really know* what was motivating me, what was making me do what I was doing during this period' (Till-Mobley and Benson, 2003: 139, my emphasis). I perceive her perceiving and proceeding with the uncertainty of not knowing as making critical, vital difference; I perceive her moaning. With this, I re-turn yet again to the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till, and perceive her black mo'nin' (and re-call Moten's calling this black mo'nin):

> This would not be like so many other lynching cases, the hundreds, the thousands of cases where families would be forced to walk away and quietly bury their dead and their grief and their humiliation. I was not going quietly. Oh, no, I was not about to do that. (*ibid.*)

I am compelled to re-turn to the photographs of Elias Clayton, of Elmer Jackson, of Isaac McGhie, Lige Daniels, William Brown, Laura Nelson, Will James, Richard Dillon, August Goodman, Jesse Washington, Thomas Shipp, Abram Smith, George Meadows, Garfield Burley, Curtis Brown, Lee Hall, Bennie Simmons, Will Moore, Clyde Johnson, Leonard Woods, John Richards, Rubin Stacy, W.C. or R.C. Williams, and four others. I re-call that perceived as unmournable, they were lynched, and for having been lynched, they were perceived as unmournable. I perceive how this perception has changed, and how this change might have happened by way of aesthetic perception. To be clear, I do *not* perceive these various perceptions of violence as exchangeable or collapsing into one another into a singular, totalising perception of Violence. I do *not* perceive that I Know the persons I perceive in these images.

With this re-encounter I perceive the new, augmented ways with which I see and hear these images, that come with a new not knowing that comes with having taken the particular journey that is this dissertation. In this, I perceive uncertain possibility. Perceiving my re-turnings, I perceive myself unfrozen. I perceive myself dis-appearing.

I perceive myself describing, putting into words, these perceptions, these movements: I perceive myself speaking with my, political, voice. I do not perceive this voice as hegemonic; it is not the 'only' voice I hear or to which I listen. It is one with which I speak ever in

relation to, intersected with, and questioned and informed by moaning. As such, it is ever in relation to alterity and community, both impossible and possibly possible, and ever in-process and open to new (un)knowledge, questioning, and change. It is also not Moten's black mo'nin', which sounds from a particular set of material, aesthetic, historic distributions that are not the same as the ones from which my voice emerges, thus marking them as different, but this is not to say that they are closed. In my new perception of black mo'nin' *and* this, my voice, I perceive a break in my perceptual field: I perceive myself having been perceiving within a hegemonic aesthetic register that mutually excluded the intersecting possibility of black mo'nin' and my voice. In this break, I perceive unknown, uncertain possibility in re-distributions of sounds and sights and how I perceive the organisation of these aesthetic registers. I perceive the uncertain possibility of other sounds, other sights that are open and uncertain, indeterminate each in their own way and, for this very reason, the polyphonic, polysonic, polyvisual possibility of breaking new hegemonic aesthetic violences. I perceive the uncertain possibility of new possibility.

And so, I re-turn with a view towards uncertain, unknown possibilities, moaning.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Glossary of Terms

aesthetics: as per Jacques Rancière's definition 'in a sense close to the Kantian idea of 'a priori forms of sensibility': it is not a matter of art and taste; it is, first of all, a matter of time and space. [...] It deals with time and space as forms of configuration of our 'place' in society, forms of distribution of the common and the private, and of assignation to everybody of his or her own part (Rancière, 2005: 13)

alterity: that which the mourning subject perceives in relation to its encounter with its perceiving 'loss' of an 'object'

alter-object: that which the mourning subject (im)perceives as 'lost'; semantic employment of 'alter-*object*' signals towards mourning as a process formulated from the perspective of the mourner, and is not meant to suggest commodification, use-value, or to invoke a static, spatialised hierarchy of 'subject' over 'object', or vice versa; see 'alterity' and 'object'

blackness: as per Fred Moten's definition as 'the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that anarranges every line ... a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity' (Moten, 2003: 1)

black mo'nin': as per Fred Moten's definition in relation to his encounters with the postmortem photographs of Emmett Till, of the irreducible sound that 'cuts and augments mourning and morning [*sic*]' (Moten, 2003: 198) with the sound of blackness (see 'blackness')

blind aversion: as per Fred Moten's definition, wherein the viewer, in turning away from an image, is blind to the 'fear of another castration' and encounters an 'aural aesthetic [that] is not the simple reemergence of the voice of presence, the visible and graphic word' (Moten, 2003: 65)

blind field: the (im)perceived visual field produced when turning away from an image whilst perceiving on a register of hegemonic aesthetics, which expands beyond the space and time of the immediate encounter with an image and is seemingly totalised by the hegemonic voice

community: a relational possibility the mourning subject perceives in relation to its (im)perception of an alter-object (see 'impossible community') and through moaning that encounters utterances perceived in relation to possible others (see 'possible others')

difference: the relation between the mourning subject and an alter-object, as perceived from the vantage point of the mourning subject

disappearance: the negative condition of ceasing to be able to perceive or be perceived in relation to alterity that occurs with a withdrawal, disavowal, or inability on the part of the subject to mourn; the subsumption of political subjectivity and politics itself by operating on and/or being subjected to a perceptual mode of hegemonic aesthetics

dis-appearance: perceivable emergence of a new, different, uncertain political subjectivity and politics from a condition of having / having been disappeared in the first instance; 'dis-' is applied here as per the etymological root to mean 'apart, away, asunder' and 'in a different direction' and 'exceedingly, utterly' (Harper, 2017), to mark that this is not an appearing that is ontologically originary; this rendering of 'dis-appearance' is influenced by and uses as a point of departure Derrida's 'différance'

encounter: that which a mourning subject perceives on a conscious psychic and/or aesthetic, phenomenological register

hearing: aural perception that is uncertain, undirected, and indeterminate

hegemonic aesthetics: a mode of perception that participates within a closed, deterministic, self-referential, and self-affirming structuring of the visual and the aural that occludes its own architectural rendering

hegemonic ear: an ear that listens for and through the direction of the hegemonic voice

hegemonic eye: an eye whose looking is directed by the hegemonic voice

hegemonic voice: a voice that speaks and directs perceptual attention as 'the only' voice from an obscured omniscient positioning

impossible community: the negative relation the mourning subject (im)perceives through moaning in relation to an alter-object

injunction: an utterance the mourning subject perceives as refusing, rejecting or denying its moaning

interactive object: as per Pfaller's definition of an object that carries out a task without agency as per the direction and means-end logic imposed on it by an interpassive subject (Pfaller, 2014)

interpassive subject: as per Pfaller's definition of a subject that believes or enjoys through the activity deferred to an interactive object (Pfaller, 2014)

looking for/to: visual perception that operates only according to the direction of the hegemonic voice

listening for/to: aural perception that operates only according to the direction of the hegemonic voice

moaning: mode of perceptual uncertain knowledge production, the possibility of which emerges from mourning

moaning aesthetics: perceptual mode of moaning that specifically refers within this text to the open, uncertain, re-distributing perceiving of sights and sounds

mourning: subjective process that contends with psychic disruption in relation to encounters with alterity produced from a phenomenological encounter with 'loss' in relation to an 'object'

mourning subject: subject position produced on perceiving alterity in relation to an encounter with 'loss' of an 'object'; semantic employment of 'mourning *subject*' signals towards mourning as a process formulated from the perspective of the mourner, and is not meant to suggest commodification, use-value, or to invoke a static, spatialised hierarchy of 'subject' over 'object', or vice versa (see 'alter-object' and 'mourning'); also 'political subject'

obfuscurate: a double operation of obfuscating attention away from, and thereby obscuring; a critical operation in the manifestation of hegemonic aesthetics

object: when used in relation to the 'mourning subject' that which is perceived as having been 'lost' by the mourning subject (see 'mourning subject')

objective photography: an ideological, constructed notion that photographs incontestably and unequivocally evince 'truth', 'nature', 'fact', 'reality'

observing mourning effect: an effect of the mourning subject's self-observation, whereby the mourning subject cannot know for certain its own mourning and moaning production—it uncertainly cannot take on a meta-position not only in relation to others, but also to itself—that produces the mourning subject's perceiving the possibility of possible community

ocularcentrism: mode of perception that seemingly privileges visual over aural aesthetics

other: an 'object' which the mourning subject perceives itself in relation either through (im)perception of an utterance in the case of an 'alter-object', or as having possibly made an utterance in the case of a 'possible other'

perceiving/perception: conscious awareness in relation to aesthetic phenomenological encounter

politics: as per Achille Mbembe's definition of 'that difference that disorients the very idea of the limit' (Mbembe, 2003: 16)

political subject: subject position that is produced from a conscious encounter with alterity that that produces the perceptual awareness of the im/possible relation with 'others'; also 'mourning subject'

possible community: a relational possibility the mourning subject perceives by way of moaning in relation to its perception of utterances as open to its moaning

possible other: that which the mourning subject perceives as possibly having made an utterance that is open to the mourning subject's moaning

return: movement of recursion that is perceived as exact repetition of a movement already enacted

re-turn: performative, unanticipated movement of improvisational recursion that is prompted, informed, and changed by the production of new unknown knowledge perceived after having turned away in the first instance, and therefore not a repeat performance of the same (see 'return')

seeing: visual perception that is open, undirected, uncertain, and indeterminate

self-deceiving interpassive subject: see 'self-perceiving interactive object'

self-perceiving interactive object: subject that makes illusions *with* owners but obscures this ownership by producing and only perceiving a second order of illusions without owners; strategically convoluted subject construction for the sake of self-preservation; also 'self-deceiving interpassive subject'

uncertain aversion: the turning away from a visual encounter perceived on a register of moaning aesthetics, whereby the viewer turns with an open, indeterminate curiosity towards what and how they are perceiving and without a 'fear of castration' (see 'blind aversion')

uncertainty: the unknown knowledge to which the mourning subject is exposed

utterance: that which a mourning perceives through moaning in relation to a possible other

voice: vernacular usage as a term that refers to a logocentric expression of a formed opinion that is determined in its performance; therefore, while it is not necessarily hegemonic, it is notably different from the improvisational phonic substance of black mo'nin' (see 'black mo'nin')

Appendix 2. Mourning Practices Mentioned in the Dissertation

I provide here more detailed accounts of the customs that are normatively considered 'mourning rituals' which I mention in Chapter 1. While they are categorically listed in the chapter text as examples of 'externalised forms' as a way to clarify the point I am making, I question this framing, especially as even just a proverbial scratching of the surface of each of these practices reveals a complex field that resists such generalising. Although it is still admittedly insufficient, I include this appendix both to acknowledge and push against my own questionable step in Chapter 1, and simply to share some more information and references for further research on each of the practices mentioned.

'The *Kaddish* is a form of prayer used in synagogue and burial services. It is a declaration of faith, and is one of the most beautiful prayers in the Jewish liturgy. The burial *Kaddish* is a prayer affirming our faith in G-d, that at the proper time He will create the world anew, and that the deceased will be raised up to everlasting life … The *Kaddish* prayer can only be received when there is a *minyan* present (a *minyan* is a quorum of ten Jewish men in traditional congregations, although in less traditional congregations women are counted as well). As with the *Tzidduk Ha'din,* the burial *Kaddish* is not recited during festivals and holidays' (Levine, 1997: 111).

'Mexican believers enter passionately into the rituals of their Dia de los Muertos. Frank Gonzalez-Crussi describes the naive hospitality of one old Mexican woman who would put together her altar for the dead, "diligently tidy up the house, and make sure that the table was set before the church bells started sounding. Then, on the afternoon of the second of

November, she would go out to the street and actually talk to the invisible souls["] … And though our own society lacks such an institutionalized ceremony, countless North American grievers no doubt construct comparable rituals of intimacy with the dead' (Gilbert, 2006: 9).

'Crying, fear and anger are so common as to be virtually ubiquitous and most cultures provide social sanction for the expression of these emotions int he funeral rites and customs of mourning which follow bereavement. In this respect, Western cultures, which tend to discourage the overt expression of emotion at funerals, are highly deviant. They differ from most other societies and from our own society as it was a hundred years ago' (Parkes *et. al.*, 1997: 5).

See Laungani (1997) for an extensive step-by-step journey through Hindu funerary preparations and death rituals.

Appendix 3. Defining Death

I have found over the course of my research that there is no ontological definition of 'death'. Through and for this particular investigation, I have come to a view towards 'death' as an aesthetic concept that is socially and politically shaped, debated, and charged, and says more about those who make the definitions and ascribe and act on them than about those who they are said to define. This becomes all the more apparent when considering the multiple definitions of death used within medical and legal spaces, where disagreements over the physiological and biological determinants to define death abound. For further consideration of these complexities, I included here an account of what has come to be known as the 'Terry Schiavo Case' and further information on The Harvard Medical School Committee's 1968 report on *A Definition of Irreversible Coma* (1968) and *The Uniform Declaration of Death Act* (1981).

In 1994, after being in a coma for four years, medical practitioners declared Theresa Marie 'Terri' Schiavo to have entered an 'irreversible, permanent vegetative state'. Following the medical diagnosis of Terri as 'brain dead', Michael Schiavo, her husband and legal guardian, requested the removal of Terri's feeding tube. Terri's parents, Robert and Mary Schindler, filed a lawsuit challenging the diagnosis and removal of their daughter's medical care. The legal battle over Terri Schiavo's end-of-life care ensued from 1998 to 2005. It drew national attention and produced intense debates on end-of-life care. It advanced from the Sixth Circuit Court of Florida to the federal district level, where the decision to remove the feeding tube was upheld. On 10 October 2003, the Florida state court denied the Schindlers' appeal. On 15 October, Terri Schiavo's feeding tube was removed. On 21 October, the Florida Legislature passed 'Terri's Law' in an emergency session, giving Governor Jeb Bush the authority to order, against the court

ruling, Terri Schiavo's feeding tube be reinserted. On 24 September 2004, the Florida Supreme Court ruled 'Terri's Law' unconstitutional as a retroactive measure violating the separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of government. The Schindlers' four subsequent appeals to the US Supreme Court were denied. On 25 February 2005, the final ruling for the removal of Terri Schiavo's feeding tube was issued. On 18 March 2005, Terri Schiavo's feeding tube was removed. On 31 March 2005, Terri Schiavo was declared dead.

The Harvard Medical School Committee report *A Definition of Irreversible Coma* (1968) advances a definition of 'brain dead' as patients with: (1) unreceptivity and unresponsivity defined as 'a total unawareness to externally applied stimuli and inner need and complete unresponsiveness', (2) no movements or breathing defined as 'no spontaneous muscular movements or spontaneous respiration', (3) no reflexes defined as 'abolition of central nervous system activity in part by the absence of elicitable reflexes', and (4) flat electroencephalogram defined as 'flat or isoelectric EEG' described as 'great confirmatory value'. Patients with this set of diagnoses can be considered 'dead' even though the patient may have 'continued function of their circulatory system'. The report also states, 'It is further suggested that the decision to declare the person dead, and the to turn off the respirator, be made by physicians not involved in any later effort to transplant organs or tissue from the deceased individual. This is advisable in order to avoid any appearance of self-interest by the physicians involved. It should be emphasized that we recommend the patient be declared dead before any effort is made to take him off a respirator, if he is then on a respirator. The reason for this recommendation is that in our judgment it will provide a greater degree of legal protection to those involved. Otherwise, the physicians would be turning off the respirator on a person who is, under the present strict, technical application of law, still alive'. The report's recommendation regarding the harvesting of organs suggests that organs can be procured from the 'brain dead' patient even with the heart beating, including the heart.

The Uniform Declaration of Death Act (1981) states: 'An individual who has sustained either (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brainstem, is dead. A determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards'. It also advances that 'a determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards' and 'This Act shall be applied and construed to effectuate its general purpose to make uniform the law with respect to the subject of this Act among states enacting it'. It was drafted and approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL), with the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Bar Association (ABA), and the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

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Portfolio

Reflections on Art as Perceiving

The concerns of my research first emerged largely from my art practice when Jaskaran Kaur, founder and co-Director of Ensaaf (www.ensaaf.org), invited me to materialise a memorial for the tens of thousands of Sikhs who were politically disappeared throughout the 1980s and 1990s in India. Throughout my studies, art has also served as a critical mode of research. For instance, what became *Screenshots* began as a way to 'reality test' for myself Freud's assertion of mourning as an all-consuming task. This mode of engagement was not so much about seeing if Freud was right or wrong, but a way by which I might consider when and how I perceived myself to mourn, and in turn to see what it meant to perform or do mourning and moaning. Moreover, on encountering failure in my attempts to respond to the Ensaaf prompt, I quickly came to realise that if I wished to experiment with forms of memorial and moaning, I would need to guinea pig some of these ideas myself.

Taking on the proposition of art as perceiving, I allowed myself to embark on projects without knowing how or where they would end up or what they would look like, but also with attention towards what, when and how shifts occurred in the direction of various projects. With *Glti.ch* (www.Glti.ch), co-produced with Daniel Rourke over the course of several years, and the sharing of *Screenshots*, *Untitled (Space Time)*, and *Dear Gabriele*, I found that proceeding in this way was often challenging and confusing not just for me but for others. At times this mode of uncertain engagement was met with skepticism and frustration, especially early on when the seeming insufficiency of language overwhelmed. Along the way, this new approach was also met with what I perceived as curiosity and interest amongst those who were also willing to tirelessly and repeatedly stutter, try, fail, and explore uncertainty and unknowns with me.

Throughout, I have also paid critical attention to temporalities of art making and sharing. The making of *Glti.ch* events was a fun way to explore the unpredictable materiality of 'temporal dissymmetry', as per Derrida's terminology. Considerations of 're-turning' prompted me to 'turn back' to an old text-film project, *Telepathy*, and make *Telepathy V2*. They also made me approach 'found materials' in new ways, as with the fabrics and enigmatic letter that make up *Dear Gabriele* (which I found abandoned in an unassuming cupboard that I only discovered

after a year of living in the room I was renting), and with the clock hands that make up *Untitled (Space Time)*, collected from my father's workshop after he passed away. In additional, the slow planning and production of *Untitled (Space Time)*, called as such only as a shorthand, was an immersion in the aesthetics of time and making time. Engaging with notions of absence and perceived 'loss' that others do not perceive also became a critical concern that I investigated in *Dear Mr. Rubinstein (or Second Fiddle)*, *Dear Gabriele,* and *Screenshots.*

Perceiving through making also prompted my turning and re-turning again and again in different and new ways towards the art practices, pieces, and performances of others. This process has also critically informed the development of my ideas and work, and in particular rethinking the materialising of memorial as performative moaning. Notably, I have re-turned time and again to Monghue's oeuvre of paintings (n.d.–2009), John Cage's *4'33"* (1960), Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz's *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977), Felix Gonzalez-Torres' "*Untitled" (Lover Boys)* (1991), Mark Dean's *My Mum (V2-Sensitive)* (2011), Song Dong's *Waste Not* (2005–ongoing), Emily Jacir's *Materials for a Film* (2004–ongoing), Michael Archer's *A Reading for YAJ* (2014), Manuel Angel-Macia's *October* (2014), and Edward Oliver's *Double Expo* (2016).

Screenshots

2010 – ongoing
computer files

This sits on my computer, on a separate login, in a file titled 'MOURNING'. It consists of screenshots of lists of sound recordings to which I have never listened, though I did not know this would be the case when I started making these recordings. I began making the recordings at a time when, engaging with Sigmund Freud's conceptualising of mourning as a psychic operation, I began wondering what shape and form my mourning might take and what it might 'look like' if it used Freudian psychic mourning as a point of departure. When I started this experiment of sorts, I would press record when I became aware that I was thinking about people I understood to be dead, and press stop when I realised my mind had wandered elsewhere. Finding subsequently that I had no desire to listen to the files, and also aware that I had hit 'record' at times during conversations without having informed my interlocutor and deciding that I did not wish to violate this space of off-the-record conversation, I chose not to listen to or share the audio files, but instead began collating the files on my computer and taking screenshots of these files of files (screenshot of screenshots printed on p. 211). I have subsequently shared these images in various settings. Over time, I also began taking screenshots of what I shared and named the files with information (name of interlocutor, place, date, time) referring to that particular space-time of sharing. The sharing of this project

has led to conversations that have been vital to the development and direction of my ideas over the course of the PhD.

Glti.ch

2010 – 2014
multimedia and telepresent technology

A collaboration with Daniel Rourke, *Glti.ch* kluged people together through telepresent karaoke, dance, and gaming parties. *Glti.ch* events were effected not with hacks or fancy programming; we took the front end of things and tried to make something else. Breaching distances with cultural and technical make-dos of readily available technology, *Glti.ch* events exposed the course of accidents, temporal lyrical disjoints, and technical out-of-syncs. Among others, we kluged London's Old Billingsgate Market with Seoul, New York, and Paris at the Crystallize: New Media Art Lab UK & Korea exhibition; a hotel in Manchester with Seoul, Amsterdam, Berlin, and other locations at the 2012 AND Festival; and the multiple sites of Amsterdam, Birmingham and Chicago for the Gli.tc/h Festival 20111 with London, Paris and Berlin (screenshot printed on p. 212).

Walking on Eggshells

2011 – ongoing
discarded chicken eggshells collected from and by people with whom I have lived since 2011

I make literal, material interventions that riff on and challenge the idiomatic expression of 'walking on eggshells'—as in proceeding with extreme care so as not to anger, offend, or upset—with the idea that walking on eggshells makes for new terrains and spaces of engagement that with each step does not cause harm but rather becomes softer under foot (photograph of detail reprinted on p. 213). These eggshells have been strewn over desire paths in the park and on the floor for *Viva!* Thanks to Professor Sharon Morris' suggestion to recollect and reuse the eggshells for continued walking.

Dear Gabriele

2011
found materials, translation of found letter, undocumented performance

Sculptural project of a rope ladder fabricated from materials (sheets and towels) found in the closet of the room I was renting after over a year of living there, including 'A letter of a suicide' written in Italian. I scanned the letter, had it translated from Italian to English, then entwined it into the rope ladder. I performed an 'escape' from the room by climbing out of the window with the ladder one early morning. I did not record the escape and did not tell anyone

about it beforehand. I did take photographs of the set-up afterwards (reprinted on p. 214). A step in the ladder broke during my escape; I fixed it afterwards. I hung it out the window of the examination room during *Viva!*

Telepathies

2012
2 videos

A set of text films that explores collective thought and experience through the act of viewing and reading in public space. *Telepathy V1* was made in 2008, before the start of the PhD. With *Telepathy V2*, made in 2012, I overlaid the entire text (that only appears one word at a time over the course of eight minutes in *Telepathy V1*) on the screen. This doubling and spatialising of the text disrupts and produces a very different engagement with the text that is temporally controlled in the first version. I have shared these videos in sequence and side-by-side, on cinematic, television, and laptop screens (screenshot printed on p. 215).

Dear Mr. Rubinstein (or Second Fiddle)

2013 – ongoing
sheet music of *44 Duos for Two Violins, Sz. 98, BB104* by Bela Bartok, duet recordings, live practice

I practise and play the second violin part of Bartok's *44 Duos for Two Violins* in community with the absent voice of the first violin. I have experimented and continue to experiment with various modes of sharing this work: e.g. live, recorded, with the sheet music projected, placed on the wall, not at all (sheet music for the first and second duets reprinted on p. 216).

Full Moon Drinks with Tiger and Dragon

2014
photograph

Photograph from an evening spent drinking and snacking with a modular, temporary sculpture in the shape of a tiger and that of a dragon, which I made earlier in the day from unused materials and unfinished works found in what had been my father's workshop and fabrication studio (reprinted on p. 217).

Hugging to Death

2014
video

Video recording of my hugging a modular, temporary sculpture in the shape of a tiger and that of a dragon (see *Full Moon Drinks with Tiger and Dragon)* made the day before from

unused materials and unfinished works found in what had been my father's workshop and fabrication studio, in the morning hours following an evening of drinking with them (screenshot printed on p. 218).

Untitled (Space Time)

2016 – ongoing
previously found, unused clock hands

A sculpture that consists of hundreds of leftover clock hands from the stores of my father's design studio in Seoul, Korea, which I glued and strung together by hand into successive minutes, materialising a deconstruction of clock time (photograph of detail reprinted on p. 219). I have and continue to install this piece for a period of one month in the homes of family, friends, and strangers, with this intervention having opened up spaces and times for conversations about time and space that may not otherwise have been.

Viva!

14 July 2017
temporal- and site-specific installation

A temporal- and site-specific installation of the art works listed here, in the Goldsmiths Art Research Programme MARs seminar room on the second floor of the Goldsmiths Barriedale Building, staged as a spatial invitation to the examiners of the PhD viva voce to participate in a conversation that, while still attending to the institutional requirements of the exam, might also move beyond them and their stated purpose, towards another unknown place (photograph reprinted on p. 220).

Memorial to the Dis-Appeared

2010 – ongoing
in process

As yet unrealised memorial, to be made at the invitation of Jaskaran Kaur, founder and co-director of Ensaaf (www.ensaaf.org) and a long-time friend and colleague, in memory of the tens of thousands of Sikhs in the 1980s and 1990s disappeared by the state police and whose disappearances go unaccounted for in the Republic of India. The questions I investigate in my PhD project have largely emerged from my failed attempts to materialise this memorial.

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