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In her 1949 poem, “The Life of Poetry,” Jewish American poet Muriel Rukeyser asks, in the midst of exile, refuge, flight and terror: “And poetry—among all this—where is there a place for poetry?”¹ Rukeyser’s question clearly draws upon Theodor Adorno’s provocation that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbarism.”² Asking this question poetically, Rukeyser takes up the logic of Adorno’s provocation to insist on continuing to write literature after unspeakable ethnocidal violence—which, rather than creating the condition of impossibility for poetic production, actually compels poesis. Unspeakable devastation necessitates the work of making something out of violence in order to articulate a sense of Being, force us to re(-)member (and put together anew), and imagine a mode of b/Being in the world that can refute the possibility of such brutality’s repetition. For Rukeyser, the place for poetry “among all this” is right in the thick of it.

Although speaking to the condition of Jews after the Holocaust and the (im)possibility of poetry amid anti-Semitic terror, the problematic with which Rukeyser grapples is likewise central for the making of the Black Atlantic, especially as proposed by Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*. Reading Gilroy alongside Rukeyser provokes the question: in the wake of terror, enslavement, colonialism and violence, is there a place for literature? Where is there a place for the author? To reframe Adorno’s proposition, there is no place for Black Atlantic literature amid unspeakable violence if the author is not grappling with and writing the absolute terrors of experience—scenes of horror must be (re)made through cultural production or there can be no poesis. Because poesis cannot cease amid the unspeakable, it must speak the unspeakable aloud and constantly make something out of it. To invoke Slavoj Žižek, how and with what can Black Atlantic literature and authorship “tarry with,” and must it?³ That is, to return again to Adorno’s provocation, the Black Atlantic author must persistently and steadfastly “tarry with” the unspeakable and continue to write of and through suffering and terror to face

it, to reconcile with it, to “live with” it—without attempting to affirm or transcend it. The Black Atlantic author must persist in tenaciously writing through and within the violence that defines their experiences, revealing the necessity of such literature and the importance of producing such a literary practice.

To heed Rukeyser by engaging our reconstructed question—that is, in the Black Atlantic, what is the place for literature and authorship?—is to propose that we grapple with the thought and provocations of her and Gilroy as intimately interconnected. Thinking Rukeyser’s question alongside *The Black Atlantic* emphasizes—insists—on the necessity and imminence of Black Atlantic authorship and literature for continuing Gilroy’s project of thinking the Atlantic as a space for conceptualizing interconnected diasporic Black authorship; resisting absolutism and exceptionalism; and in requiring that Black Atlantic literature and cultural production as a whole are positioned at the center of not only retelling, but “living with” and writing through the hauntings of Black Atlantic experience. Just as Gilroy is a necessary starting point as a prominent thinker of Black Atlantic cultural production and author of a foremost and widely read book on the Black Atlantic space, it is significant that Rukeyser provides this essay’s foundational question because she, too, wrestles with cultural production in the wake of immense ethnic persecution and violence in the Jewish diaspora. Much like Black Atlantic authors such as Aimé Césaire, as a poet, Rukeyser attempted to create a language, style, and prose that could bear the weight of her thinking and experience where language and form fell short. In other words, both Gilroy and Rukeyser interrogate and challenge the ways in which populations that have experienced “all this,” in Rukeyser’s words, confront and try to articulate the weight and terrors of their experiences.

Because this essay engages a Jewish poet’s provocation in order to think the Black Atlantic, it is crucial to acknowledge both the significance of this invocation and Gilroy’s assessment of the intimate interconnection and solidarity between the Black and Jewish diasporas. In particular, Gilroy devotes a portion of his book’s final chapter to yoking Black and Jewish experiences, which he does largely through a conceptualization of Exodus as a crucial connection between Black Atlantic and Jewish diasporic imaginaries. Recognizing Exodus as a story that is central to Jewish history and the population’s contemporary political consciousness and poetics, Gilroy also argues that the Exodus imaginary persists, however differently, in Black Atlantic self-conceptualization and cultural production. Understanding that historical and continued solidarity is imperative for these two groups, this essay questions the efficacy of attending to the interconnections between the two experiences through Exodus—for Exodus does not mean the same for both populations and comparing or conjoining them as such does a disservice to both. By critiquing Gilroy’s engagement with Exodus, this essay encourages a reorientation away from confining or defining the Black Atlantic

experience, and its connection with that of the Jewish diaspora, to such narratives. Questions from Jewish thinkers such as Rukeyser are generative in (re)thinking the place of Black Atlantic literature and authorship, as well as its solidarity with the Jewish diaspora; the two experiences need not be compared.

In this context, this essay, and the questions it seeks to complicate, insist on the necessity of the work of Black Atlantic literature and authorship. As Gilroy points out, the “status of the social story-telling activity has changed as the novel has become a more important genre, reducing the power of autobiography and altering the idea of tradition as the relationship between orality and literacy has itself been transformed.”⁴ The Black Atlantic speaks through an ever-shifting genre, yet the *need to speak*, the *need for a place* for self-expression and self-actualization, is continuous.

What is the place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship? It is, as Toni Morrison writes arguably most directly in *Beloved*, but almost everywhere else in her oeuvre, to “live with” the terrors of what changed as the first enslaved Africans sailed across the Atlantic; to “live with” the hauntings of what still lies deep below the sea; and to remain attentive to what happens on both sides of the ocean as the residents of the Black Atlantic—an oceanic people, a submarine people—cross.

Proposing Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* as the window through which to answer these questions requires an acknowledgment: much of his work centers as much on music as it does on literature. Indeed, the same question may be asked for music, because Gilroy argues that “story-telling and music-making contributed to an alternative public sphere,” which became an “integral component of insubordinate racial countercultures” and self-actualization.⁵ Music is a way in which language is embodied, an oral tradition that traces Black Atlantic history and interaction, and, in doing so, rejects all claims to purity and exceptionalism from any location in the Black Atlantic and diaspora as a whole.

This essay, however, will focus on the place for/of literature and authorship as Gilroy thinks them through an engagement with Richard Wright’s life and work, and also through the work of other Black Atlantic authors, primarily C.L.R. James, Toni Morrison, Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant. In doing so, of import here is not to answer exhaustively our reconstructed question from Rukeyser, because Black Atlantic authors and their literature show that their place is ever-shifting and transforming, like the populations about which they write and of which they are a part. This process of transformation amid (dis)location is grounded in the Black Atlantic experience of terror and diaspora, about which Gilroy writes.

Intersections Between the Jewish and Black Diaspora/Experience

Rukeyser's question already requires a reconsideration of the sources that we use to engage the Black Atlantic and what thinkers, genres and spaces we allow to inform our thinking. Invoking Rukeyser to speak of the Black Atlantic engages the difficulty of critiquing what Gilroy calls "the small world of Black cultural and intellectual history," which "is similarly populated by those who fear that the integrity of Black particularity could be compromised by attempts to pen a complex dialogue with other consciousnesses of affliction."⁶ To cite Rukeyser is to acknowledge that her words bear weight on that with which we are grappling in the Black Atlantic. It is to engage with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of citationality, which is to say that we are conforming to a model of iterability when we invoke Rukeyser's question—engaging with "this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called 'normal.'"⁷ For Derrida, although citationality is not transcendental, the context in which we cite changes the meaning of the original signifier—in this case, Rukeyser's question. Once we write Rukeyser's original question into a new context—that is, grappling with the place for literature and authorship in the Black Atlantic—the meaning of her question changes. To cite Rukeyser in this essay is to graft her into a different context—believing it to be a generative invocation—and thus to transform the meaning of her question through an acknowledgment of the (non)iterability of it. Or, rather, to insist on the iterability of her question with an acknowledgment that, as Gilles Deleuze suggests, every repetition (or, citation) breeds difference.⁸ Living and writing within this aporia, this essay's project must be to make legible and understandable Rukeyser's question as we cite it in the Black Atlantic context, with a crucial acknowledgment that it can never be divorced from its originary source. We must always resist the total contextual abstraction of that which we cite by writing in a way that allows for iterability, citationality, and transformations, as well as a recognition of the original context and its significance. Thus, to cite Rukeyser is not only to transpose her question into the Black Atlantic context, but also to speak to the interconnection between the Black and Jewish experiences, about which Gilroy has an enduring concern.

This line of inquiry is central not only in questioning the place of Black Atlantic authorship and literature, but also in how and with whom it can "sit with."⁹ With whom can the Black Atlantic converse? And, to repeat Žižek, with whom can the Black Atlantic "tarry?" Rukeyser's poetry and thinking reveal that the Black Atlantic is not an insular, exceptional and absolutist project, but rather one that is part of broader global modernities, violences and silent subjugations. Thus, although acknowledging that specificity matters, Gilroy's project embraces the "common identity and interests" between global anti-colonial struggles to expose how they are "universally

the same.”¹⁰ In attempting to broaden the way in which we approach and understand global anticolonial struggles, Gilroy encourages us to look beyond the rational. That is, the rationality that Western modernity provides must be exceeded in order to think the world otherwise, thereby opening a potential for solidarity by abbreviating absolutism and refusing exceptionalism.

Gilroy calls for renewed interaction with and interrogation of the intimate link between Black and Jewish experiences, despite their discreteness. A priori here we should note is Gilroy’s inattention to the Afro-Jewish population, an acknowledgment of the already-entangled Black-Jewish tradition that escapes *The Black Atlantic’s* critical intervention—itsself a silence that merits its own critique, it is a project that cannot be taken up here. Although Gilroy points to the ways in which the Jewish and Black diasporas are conceptually linked and frames their theoretical entanglements as generative, these diasporas are also already overlapping and entangled. Other scholars have already begun the critical work of revealing how the Afro-Jewish diaspora has its own set of subjugations and silences, issues of migrancy, erasure and subordination, but also of creation. To speak of the interconnection between the Black and Jewish experiences without an understanding that there is a natural affinity between them, for they are already entangled, is also central in rethinking and anti-essentializing the Black Atlantic. Gilroy, unfortunately, poses this as a crucial tenet only at the end of his project for conceiving the Black Atlantic.

Although Gilroy offers a lengthy call for a renewed discourse between Black and Jewish populations in order to understand their historical and continued interconnectedness, he stops short of questioning whether the two should be conceived together, for what purpose, and who it is that benefits and suffers from this conjoining. Gilroy insists that his project is not to “undermine the uniqueness of the Holocaust,” nor the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the violence thereafter.¹¹ However, his project goes beyond that of forging solidarities between Jewish and Black Atlantic experiences—a legacy of solidarity which has certainly been generative and meaningful for both populations. He attempts to draw (sometimes false) equivalences between the populations to construct a deeper bond. We must question why he does this. In many ways, both the Black and Jewish diasporas must grapple with what it means to live “in the wake,” as Christina Sharpe would say, of ethnocidal violence, terror and forced dispersion—they must find ways to “live with” enslavement, the Holocaust and their many and varied afterlives.¹² However, this forced confrontation with the hauntings of ethnocidal violence, as Sharpe points out, does not make the two experiences equivalent, nor does it render an inherent need to conjoin them when critiquing the Black Atlantic condition. In her work, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Sharpe reflects on her initial conceptualization of the “wake,” which was through a course she taught about the “traumatic histories” of the Holocaust and the (mostly United

States/North American) trans-Atlantic slave trade.¹³ Sharpe draws clear distinction between Jewish and Black experiences, despite the foundation of the course being a thinking together of the two.

If one were to understand both the Black Atlantic and Jewish populations as living “in the wake,” their “wakes” are entirely different—to draw an equivalence is to do a disservice to both. To live in the wake or, for the purposes of this essay, to write in the wake for the Black Atlantic author, would be to acknowledge the absolute opacity of “blackness’s ongoing and irresolvable abjection”¹⁴ born of existing within “the afterlife of property.”¹⁵ The Black Atlantic author must grapple with the unceasing need to write and live within and outside of a dehumanizing history of life as property. The Holocaust has its own brutal and dehumanizing hauntings, and no equivalence need be drawn. They are not the same—how or in what ways does Gilroy benefit from insisting on thinking these experiences together and comparing them? What are the effects of Gilroy’s conjoining? Who suffers?

Sharpe points out how her “students held onto whatever empathy they might have for reading about the Holocaust but not for North American slavery.”¹⁶ Sharpe makes clear that it is the Black Atlantic populations who continually know this unevenness of empathy, for the epistemological violence of wake consciousness for the Black Atlantic writer is not the same as that of the Jewish writer—it cannot be, for their histories are distinct. For Sharpe, needing to compare Black and Jewish suffering in order to make Black Atlantic suffering intelligible is but one more violence against both populations—although she herself, through the nature of her course, continues the cycle of comparison to which there is no end and for which there is never a winner, whatever so preposterous a designation may be understood to mean. It is both populations that suffer as they face an unnecessary comparison of their traumas in order to make their painful histories comprehensible. White supremacy and those who perpetrated the very logics that spurred these different violences benefit from this essentialization and elision of specificity—these are the threats this insistent conjoining poses.

Despite the dangers, Gilroy devotes a portion of his book’s final chapter to the yoking of Black and Jewish experience. He apprehends Exodus, for example, as an integral part of Jewish history and contemporary political self-conceptualization and poetics. Gilroy notes that Exodus also, though differently, looms large in the Black Atlantic imaginary, particularly in neo-nationalist movements. Citing Albert Raboteau and James Cone, Gilroy shows how equally critical is the “idea [that] the suffering of both Blacks and Jews has a special redemptive power, not for themselves alone but for humanity as a whole.”¹⁷ Let us, for a moment, “tarry with” the question of redemption in the Black and Jewish traditions. Raboteau, who Gilroy cites, writes about forgiveness and redemption in the African American religious tradition, and the possibility that forgiveness is itself redemptive for the Black American subject. Gilroy also inverts this conceptualization of redemption

and engages Raboteau's understanding of a redemption born of struggle, as well as the idea that the experience of violence is in and of itself redemptive. Is this not a myth of whiteness and white supremacist Christianity's violence? Is the redemptive capacity of terror born of a project of legitimization and justification, or rather, the glorification of suffering? How is the veneration of redemption intimately entangled with power?

To return to Žižek, the objective of the Black Atlantic author and writer must not be redemption, because redemption obviates the need to "live with" and to "tarry with" suffering, trauma and the unspeakable. Although distinct from the project of Black Atlantic literature and authorship with which this essay grapples, Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" exemplifies the Black Atlantic turn toward transcendence and the idea that freedom and redemption are inherently intertwined in the emancipation from "mental slavery." Rather than writing freedom as born of a confrontation with brutalities and "living with" the haunting, Marley writes what becomes an appeal to transcendence. Transcendence and redemption become seductive and refute the project of "tarrying with" the terror of experience, and rather seeks redemption to transcend the secular now.

In refuting transcendence and redemption without confrontation, the Black Atlantic writer conceptualizes "the (in)finite field, in the possibilities, difficulties, cruelties, intensities, desires of our world" so that they "stringently oppose any inclining toward transcendence."¹⁸ Undertaking the act of writing with the purpose of redemption is a very different project than that of writing in order to face and "live with" the haunting. In an absolute refusal of Marley's proposition of the entanglement between freedom, transcendence and redemption, is not the project of the Black Atlantic author to coexist and remain with the hauntings of suffering, not be redeemed by it? The place for the Black Atlantic author is simultaneously terrifying and courageous because it forces them to learn how to live with the presence of unspeakable suffering and death, which is at the very center of Toni Morrison's writing. The question remains as to whether the act of "living with" is itself redemptive—if, through the project of ceaseless writing and making something to "tarry with" the horrors of the Black Atlantic, this ends in redemption. This is unclear, and maybe even undesirable, and so one can never say too many times that a crucial task for Black Atlantic literature is to show the many ways in which one must "live with." The writer must never work or think for the possibility or the proposition of transcending the haunting.

Gilroy does not draw into question the idea that struggle merits redemption, although he does speak to the turn towards death and suicide, particularly slave suicide, as an act of transcendent redemption in Black Atlantic literature. And not only a transcendence but also a redemptive "turn towards an African home."¹⁹ C.L.R. James writes about the death-as-redemption phenomenon in *The Black Jacobins*, speaking both to the enslaved

people “jump[ing] overboard, uttering cries of triumph, as they cleared the vessel and disappeared below the surface,”²⁰ but also of how “life was hard and death, they believed, meant not only release but a return to Africa.”²¹ Here, death is a means through which those enslaved on the Black Atlantic both relieved themselves of suffering and were redeemed. This form of redemption through death is made possible through a submersion in the Atlantic waters—becoming one with the Black Atlantic, making the Atlantic black. This aquatic immersion is an act of resistance against the capitalization of the Black body and is distinct from transcendence. It is a coming into Being in the water, and in doing so, a return to former ways of being—it is almost, literally, an attempt to float home. Death in the Atlantic propels another life—an afterlife—that is entirely born of the ocean. Those who dive overboard and into the deep-sea rewrite what it means to live within and escape the afterlife of property about which Sharpe writes; they become otherworldly, aquatic Beings. Whether looking at this history through Raboteau’s theological understanding of it in the Black Christian tradition, or by engaging it as a practice of Black redemptive imagination through Gilroy, we see that the question of redemption, in the wake of violence, looms large in the Black Atlantic imaginary. It is precisely its seeming ubiquity that demands that we question it.

This new question compels us to return to the Exodus origin story or imaginary. First, however, it is critical to note that Gilroy acknowledges the inhumanity, suffering, and brutality of the Holocaust and the Jewish dispersion thereafter. Yet, he does not link the diasporic Black Atlantic imaginary to the diaspora born of the twentieth-century anti-Semitic cruelties and crimes in Europe. He rather turns to the story of Exodus to link the experiences of the two diasporas. Gilroy contextualizes his argument in the presence of Exodus in the self-conceptualization of prominent black figures, including Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King Jr., both of whom, according to him, “drew on the power of Old Testament patriarchy to cement their own political authority” by resonating with the figure of Moses.²² Gilroy argues that the Exodus story—concretely, for the Jewish population, and in the imaginary, for the Black Atlantic tradition—created for both groups a diasporic resource. Again, the possibility of and hope for redemption becomes central because the Exodus narrative is one of redemption and vindication in Jewish history as Moses leads the population out of the brutalities of enslavement. In this context, Gilroy posits Exodus as a salient means through which solidarity may be formed between Black and Jewish populations, but he does not pose the foundational question: Is there any equivalence to draw between the two Exoduses? Unlike the Israelite Exodus from Egypt, which was an escape from enslavement, the Exodus of the trans-Atlantic slave trade tore Africans from the continent, their lives and livelihoods and forced them into enslavement and its terrors.

Both Exodus stories are defined, however, by a journey out of Africa. Gilroy does not speak to the inherent Afrophobic nature of the Exodus narrative—that is, that it is only through the flight and exile from Africa that redemption is found. He does not address the dangers of Black Atlantic populations drawing on a story in which an escape from Africa is an act of liberation. For those Africans enslaved, there was no escape, refuge, or redemption in the Black Atlantic Exodus; it placed survival, and little else, at the forefront of the imaginary. The Black Atlantic Exodus represented a coming into enslavement and the dehumanizing brutality of the plantation system in the West—the very conditions which continue to haunt Black Atlantic literature and authorship.

Exodus is the window through which Gilroy conceptualizes Blackness and Jewishness together. In his anti-essentialization project, he does not address the fallacy of drawing an equivalence between the two Exoduses. Nor does he account for the many Black Atlantic populations whose imaginaries do not look to Exodus as their origin story or as an experience that links them to the Jewish diaspora. For Gilroy, it is the Exodus story that makes the concept of diaspora and the condition of (dis)location generative in thinking the relationship between Black and Jewish experience. Gilroy reminds us that, born of these supposedly mutually experienced Exoduses, both the Black and Jewish diaspora pose the difficult political questions of “the status of ethnic identity, the power of cultural nationalism, and the manner in which carefully preserved social histories of ethnocidal suffering can function to supply ethical and political legitimacy.”²³ Gilroy shows how the very “condition of exile, forced separation from the homeland,” and the unceasing experience of ethnically-based oppression and terror allow for the legitimization of aspirations for cultural nationalism and of claims to exceptionalism.²⁴ Without disregarding the immense violence both groups have endured and continue to experience, one must articulate how the instrumentalization of such legitimization both within and outside of their respective communities fuels the inherently oppressive project of cultural nationalism. Legitimation constructs and is reinforced by discourses of exceptionalism for Black Atlantic and Jewish populations, thus enabling the oppressed to justify their cultural nationalist aspirations without fear of reprisal. This legitimization serves the interests of cultural nationalist movements that seek to usurp the right to life and sovereignty of others (with an understanding that no sovereignty is without violence) under their own claims to historical subjugation, ethnocidal violence and terror, while refusing to question the effect on the other others, that is, those who suffer from these nationalist and proto-nationalist projects. Legitimation mystifies the violence inherent to all sovereignty and nationalist movements, of which these two movements are—despite their proposed exceptionalism—no exception.

Interrogating the power of cultural nationalism and exceptionalism inherent to both experiences in the wake of ethnocidal violence and their

contemporary political manifestations illuminates one way in which branches of these diasporas have common ideological underpinnings. Gilroy points to Black neo-nationalist movements, and Africentricity in particular, as displaying a peculiar combination of both Zionism and anti-Semitism.²⁵ Africentricity, according to Gilroy, claims a continuity of African culture amid dislocation, “rely[ing] upon a linear idea of time that is enclosed at each end by the grand narrative of African advancement [...] momentarily interrupted by slavery and colonialism, which make no substantial impact upon African tradition or the capacity of black intellectuals to align themselves with it.”²⁶ While idealizing purity and a continuity with an African past, Africentrism engages (supposedly without contradiction) the vehemently modern idea of territorial sovereignty, Black nationalist projects and inalienable rights to land. In its claim to the purity of ancient tradition, the right to territorial sovereignty and the desire to return to a homeland, Black nationalist aspirations align with the Zionist project.

Gilroy references Martin Delaney, himself a part of an early Africentric imaginary, who had aspirations “of autonomous black settlement in Central and South America,”²⁷ as part of a broader ambition for Black territorial nationalism. In Delaney’s *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, he both “call[s] for American citizenship and in favour of a plan for black emigration to Central or South America that would be announced by his first book.”²⁸ Calls to colonize Central and South American lands such as Delaney’s were made in the mid-1840s. They are part of a long history of sects of Black Atlantic cultural nationalist movements making claims over land to which they are not indigenous. Delaney speaks of Central or South America as spaces of refuge where Black Americans can assert their territorial sovereignty, again invoking an exceptionalism that justifies perpetrating their own violence, dispossession and erasure of another population.

Delaney’s contemporaries manifest in Black neo-nationalist movements such as the Republic of New Afrika, which is known as a “Black separatist movement.”²⁹ The primary goal of this organization is to create an “independent Black majority country situated in the southeastern United States, in the heart of an area of Black majority population, identified as Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina.” Although, unlike Delaney, they do not seek to travel far from their current (dis)location in order to establish a settler colony, nowhere is there an acknowledgment that an indigenous population exists in these spaces that already has been and continues to be dispossessed of their land, sovereignty and right to life. Rather, it frames the Black majority population as the indigenous, rightful people who belong in these states, and thus the New Afrika movement has an unarguable right to establish their own sovereign rule on and govern the land. The mystification of the settler colonial nature of such ethnic nationalist

movements, both historically and currently, returns us to those who or whose territorial aspirations benefit from the project of legitimation.

Gilroy does not attend to the violent assumptions written into these movements' presumption of the right of all non-nationed people to have a territorially inscribed sovereign homeland,³⁰ the "right to return" somewhere, or the right to turn into or be made into the indigenous through persecution. Nor does he question the lands on which these movements choose to lay claim. In doing so, he does not directly address the utter absence of any acknowledgment or discourse on indigeneity written into these cultural nationalist projects. Nor does he speak to the way in which sovereignty always assumes violence in its territorially inscribed borders, for at the heart of sovereignty is a project of displacement, dispossession, subjugation, destruction, erasure and even extermination of the Other. For Gilroy, sovereignty, its inherent violences and its capitalist underpinnings (which can never be separated) are all given and need not be put into question. Both the Zionist project and those of Black neo-nationalists, particularly but not exclusively in the United States, rely on the already assumed erasure and genocide, whether physical or in terms of the law,³¹ of the indigenous population. This is accompanied by an assertion of their own exceptional indigeneity, which takes precedence over the actual indigenous people—these groups' indigeneity becomes entirely irrefutable and claims a natural and ineffable right to the land.

Herein lies the danger of this insistence on exceptionalism—yoked together by plight and promise, these movements at their most extreme represent a dangerous turn towards a perpetuation of the very same logics of violence which created them. Exceptionalism becomes the means through which these movements monopolize a right to violence before seeking to immunize themselves by declaring rightful and original occupancy. The violence of their actions never seems to enter these nationalist movements' thinking—the victims of violence understand themselves to be immunized against any such charge themselves. This allows them to elide criticism and construct an exceptional indigeneity—born of, made in, history—that precedes and exceeds the actual indigenous inhabitants of the land. It is a reminder that the oppressed can always become the oppressor, that nothing is absolute, that there are violences written both within the groups' dispersions and their proposed solutions, and that no historic victim will inherently become an advocate for the right to live of the Other.

For Gilroy, indigeneity seems like a non-question. He does not entertain the idea that one of the consequences of Zionism and Black neo-nationalism is the further deracination, erasure and killing of Palestinians and Indigenous Americans, respectively. Gilroy briefly mentions that "more recent political factors like the identification of Blacks with the Palestinian struggle [...] intervene in any attempts to develop a dialogue about the significance" of interconnections between the Black and Jewish experience.³² One must first

question what Gilroy means by “recent” and what is at stake for him in denying the long tradition of solidarity between Black and Palestinian populations—for solidarity with Palestinians is a truly global and well-established phenomenon that extends to all continents. Likewise, Black and Palestinian solidarity is long-standing and almost as old as the state of Israel itself. Protests by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the early 1960s and Malcolm X’s infamous meeting with leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964 reveal how the civil rights movement in the United States saw itself as intimately tied up with the project of Palestinian liberation. Although Gilroy refuses to address this, it is by looking to these links between Black and Palestinian liberation that we see the Atlantic linking global anticolonial solidarities—one to which Gilroy’s project claims to be committed—through an understanding that terror is multifaceted and not exceptional. Yet, Gilroy refuses to speak on this solidarity movement and does not go deeper into questions of the reason so many Black Atlantic populations are aligning not with Zionism, but with the Palestinian struggle. Equally important is that he does not distinguish between Black solidarity with Jews and with the Zionist movement—for, though they may overlap, they are not the same. These key distinctions are left unattended by Gilroy.

Indeed, we must question what the implications are for Black solidarity with Palestinians—how does this alignment throw Gilroy’s political project into question, and also Black neo-nationalist sloganeering which, in many ways, seeks to impose indigeneity, thereby mirroring the violence of Zionism? These competing solidarities problematize notions of an essentialized and absolute Black identity, which again is at the foundation of Gilroy’s project (which is why it is even more surprising that he does not speak to this connection). If we persist in/with this line of critique, it forces us to “live with” the idea that, within a group, there is always the potential for an identification with both the oppressed and the oppressor, itself an acknowledgment that in this dichotomy the other is never either wholly one or the other. This is a provocation that challenges the aporia in Gilroy’s work. Whether he speaks to it or not, this is what he gives us to think; we must think it because he does not. He refuses to do so.

The Place of Literature and Authors in *The Black Atlantic*

Having considered the context and implications of citing and reconstructing Rukeyser’s question, let us return to the place of Black Atlantic literature and authorship, which is ever-shifting, as there are outside forces that seek to confine and silence it. The place for the Black Atlantic writer is not in a space of equal representation. Like W.E.B. Du Bois’ reference to the “talented tenth,” Gilroy acknowledges that the place of the Black Atlantic author and literature is one in which, as Grant Farred would suggest, there is a “burden of over-representation.”³³ Perhaps even more importantly for Gilroy, the place for the

Black Atlantic writer and their literature is one in which there is a *specific* and forced representation. They become a token, a figurehead, one that must speak authentically about their issues; they must remain *in place*, must speak the absolute Truth about their race (which has already been overdetermined by the demands of history), and remain faithful to tradition. In the enforced alignment between tradition and a requirement of absolute authenticity, Gilroy's critique of a tension between modernity and tradition in Black Atlantic literature comes to the fore. Instead of reinforcing the modern-traditional dichotomy, Gilroy argues that the Black Atlantic is necessarily complicit in both—any search for purity or authenticity will surely be foiled, undone and rendered unsustainable by a realization that only the embrace of one's hybridity can produce a literature that speaks to the realities and potentials of Black Atlantic experience. Thus, Black Atlantic literature, Gilroy argues, must reckon with two competing claims: the romanticized idea of a return to an untouched, pure and authentic Blackness, like that of Africentricity; and the reality that the Black Atlantic is produced by and produces, and is in turn living with and through, Western modernity.³⁴ Gilroy challenges the idea that the place for the Black Atlantic author is in the project of programs like *Presence Africain*, for example, wherein "the creative political responsibilities fell upon the caste of Black intellectuals responsible for both demonstrating and reproducing that unity."³⁵

Is the place for the Black Atlantic author in conformity? In Rukeyser's terms, and that which Gilroy makes clear as his political project, it is not. Gilroy speaks to the possible ways in which:

Black artists experience community through a special paradox. It affords them certain protections and compensations, yet it is also a source of constraint. It provides them with an imaginative entitlement to elaborate the consciousness of racial adversity while limiting them as artists to the exploration of that adversity.³⁶

For the Black Atlantic author, as Farred writes, it is a project wherein there is "a refusal of the metaphysical, even as the metaphysical lurks with the intent of manifesting itself."³⁷ The place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship thus becomes in the refusal of expectation, essentialization and ethnic absolutism. Authors such as Richard Wright challenge the essentialist claim to absolute Black unity that erases difference within the community and propose instead to embrace the many valences of the Black Atlantic through their work. Figures like Wright urge that tradition can "'no longer [be] a guide' for the creative aspirations of Black artists."³⁸ They insist that the Black Atlantic artist and author acknowledge, refuse and think beyond the rational in order to draw reason itself into question.

That is, to challenge the rationality and reason of Western Enlightenment and modernity, the rationalism that justifies racial essentialization and the rational conceptualization of the world which looks

solely to the concrete here and now. Exceeding modernity's understanding of the rational, the Black Atlantic writer must challenge, for example, the world in which "a slaves' desires to run away from bondage were still sometimes being rationalised by medical opinion as an illness-drapetomania or dysaesthesia Aetheopis."³⁹ They must put into question what sort of rationality could justify the bifurcation of freedom and enactment of terror based on wholly constructed racial divisions and the will-to-possess for the perpetuation of the modernizing project. Thus, while the place of the Black Atlantic author and artist is in the refusal of tradition as untouchable and pristine, it must also lie in the refusal of Western modernity and its definition of rationality. It also means deconstructing what Black Atlantic figures such as Delaney purport as "anti-mystical racial rationalism [which] required that blacks of all shades, classes, and ethnic groups give up the merely accidental differences that served only to mask the deeper unity waiting to be constructed"⁴⁰ in order to do away with any attempts at rationalizing racial essentialization and absolutism. In this way, Gilroy shows that the place, or the power, of Black Atlantic authorship and literature is to challenge the "rational" dichotomy between modern and traditional, and thus expose the many fallacies of self-essentialization and absolutism.

Likewise, it means engaging what Gilroy terms a "politics of transfiguration,"⁴¹ wherein the Black Atlantic writer must create (through ceaseless poesis) a new form of rationality that exceeds those which came before without making abject the modernity to which it is heir. In doing so, the Black Atlantic author "reveals the hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity."⁴² Thinking in and through this politics of transfiguration, the Black Atlantic author must write "new desires, social relations and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance *and* between that group and its erstwhile oppressors."⁴³ By exceeding previous rationalities, the Black Atlantic author creates the concept anew—writing a Black Atlantic rationality that surpasses the present material conditions and gives life to "utopian desires."⁴⁴ It is a rationality that thinks beyond that which is the now—the limits of the now. It is to think for the utopia (with an understanding that the dystopian is always looming large and ever-present, for there is no utopia that does not contain within itself the seeds of the dystopian and the prospect of its own undoing).

In this sense, Gilroy articulates how Black Atlantic artists and authors, or creative workers in general, must write and create in a way that exceeds their current realities—they must look beyond that which they concretely experience. He articulates how the "relationship between reality and the artistic image is not always simple and direct" because "image and emotion possess a logic of their own," as well as their own counter logic.⁴⁵ It is in Gilroy's assertion that the Black Atlantic author must write outside of reality/rationality, while remaining in tune with the intensely political conditions around them, that explains the importance of Morrison's *Beloved*.

In her novel, Morrison writes the hauntings of enslavement and the Black American condition otherwise, thinking beyond reality and towards an understanding of the tangibility of “slavery and its afterlives.”⁴⁶ One crucial role of the Black Atlantic writer is not only to describe the condition of Blackness, but to exceed the work of the ethnographic in order to speak to it in an imaginary that exceeds reality and creates its own rationality. It is to imagine the world otherwise.

The work of the Black Atlantic writer is ever precarious and in jeopardy. Seeking to write in a different register, their work is always at risk of being understood through “almost exclusively literary enquiries.”⁴⁷ Not always acknowledged as part of another class of Black political intellectuals, their work falls victim to the rigidity of disciplinary boundaries and the label of fiction, which is never wholly fiction at all, for even history itself produces its own fictions. For Gilroy, Wright is the ultimate exemplification of this refusal and confinement. Gilroy articulates how Wright was misunderstood because, among many other reasons, he was restricted to the category of literary figure and thus his intensely political nature and politicized cultural productions were hollowed out. As Wright’s work took a global anticolonial political and philosophical turn, his critics argued that his “inappropriately cosmopolitan outlooks” threatened “his precious and authentic Negro sensibility.”⁴⁸ Instead, according to those who critiqued him, Wright “should have been content to remain confined within the intellectual ghetto to which Negro literary expression is still too frequently consigned” because his ventures outside of the United States—and in that (dis)location, his move from the strictly literary sphere—were understood to make him less of an authentically Black American literary figure; critics framed Wright as distracted, distanced, and out of touch with his “own” culture and his “own” people.⁴⁹ Wright’s extension to political and philosophical work became his own undoing, for he could no longer assert the absolute authenticity to which he once held claim. The place for the Black Atlantic writer for Wright, then, is in the absolute refusal of absolutism, the embrace of hybridity and the writing for a future yet-to-be imagined, a project which he already undertakes in his challenging of absolute claims to authenticity.

In challenging claims to purity and the insistence on constructing a boundary between traditionality and modernity, Édouard Glissant speaks to the difference between African and Western storytelling traditions—that is, that Western poetics always includes the ‘*unsayable*,’ and thus the erasable, whereas the African text *says it all*, or leaves *nothing unsaid*.⁵⁰ The poetics of unsayability reflects, according to Glissant, “the ultimate manifestation of the economics of the right to property,”⁵¹ which is why he links the literary tradition to the fundamental accumulation of capital and capitalist modes of production. As Gilroy and Glissant both note, already the Black Atlantic does not just inherit the African storytelling tradition, for it is an intimate component of—or rather, its creation through the trans-Atlantic slave trade

was the first act of—Western modernity. Given its location within Western modernity, Glissant critiques an essentialized and romanticized (re)turn to Africa and African modes of being, seeing and writing. Thus, Black Atlantic storytelling must grapple with this quintessentially Western mode of storytelling as well: Where is there a place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship within the unsayable? It is in the writing of that which exceeds Western rationality and the present material conditions—it is in writing the not-yet. As Glissant would say, it is in the scream that renders the unsaid silences audible. This scream, although speaking the unspeakable, may not always be intelligible. This initial or continued unintelligibility—but a fierce determination to say that which is unsaid—is central in endeavoring to undertake the project of creating the language and register which is not-yet. It is in finding new ways to voice and give voice to that which is deemed unsayable; to refuse the unsayable and thus break through the silence.

For Glissant, the place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship is writing-as-*poesis*. Glissant undertakes the work of finding how to proceed with *poesis*, and with what materials, in what language and through what means it must be done—because *poesis* must be ceaseless. And because *poesis* is unabating, it is exhausting and requires a confrontation with the always verifiable limits of the Self. Glissant looks at language and economy together to think the world *from* and despite (dis)location. He insists that “we need to develop a poetics of the ‘subject,’ if only because we have been too long ‘objectified’ or rather ‘objected to.’”⁵² He calls for the creation of a new language through which the Black Atlantic author writes their subjecthood/selfness. “Poetics of the subject” is inherent in what Glissant terms as “free or natural poetics,” which is one in which “any collective yearning for expression that is not opposed to itself either at the level of what it wishes to express or at the level of the language that it puts into practice.”⁵³ For Glissant, Black Atlantic authorship must undertake this *poesis* by writing itself into subjecthood through an expression that is wholly theirs—for to speak the unspeakable, the Black Atlantic author must write in a language where there is “no incompatibility between desire and expression.”⁵⁴ Thus, the Black Atlantic author must seek to say the unsayable by refining and creating an autonomous language that can bear thinking as well as cultivate a communal consciousness.

To think relationally, to think the Black Atlantic not as a finite, essentialized and absolutist space, but as a rhizomatic web⁵⁵ of horizontally reaching identities and processes of continuous and ceaseless transformation, is also central to the Glissantian project. It is to, quite literally, create a new language of productivity that can bear the weight of what Glissant posits as non-history, or a history without history.⁵⁶ For Glissant, particularly in *Poetics of Relation*, it is to understand the ship, and for the purposes of this analysis, the sea, as a space of enforced productivity and death where the human becomes capital, after which it transitions into un-human labor. Something

happens for Glissant on the ever-fluid, ever-distorting surface of the Atlantic, for the point at which the ship hits the water is a point of rhizomatic contact—it leaves an imprint; a difficult to discern but nonetheless immutable mark is left upon the sea. The ocean carries these unerasable, yet ethereal, imprints—themselves a haunting—onto the sand. This imprint, though undetectable, is haunting to all who experience it and are of the Black Atlantic; it is not about verticality.⁵⁷ Glissant speaks to what happens as the ship crosses; the never-ending transformation (or, creolization) that this journey sets in motion; and the forced poetics,⁵⁸ the silencing and the terror that ensue. That is the place for literature and the Black Atlantic writer for Glissant—in the scream of a people forcing their way out of a forced poetics; it is a space that the Black Atlantic participates in making and wherein they *make something*.

Like Glissant, Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* shows that the role of the Black Atlantic author and literature can be to create a language that can give voice to all the formal registers of their scream—it is a language that is not-yet recognized, an informal register, a register that is ceaselessly becoming and being made. When the “need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression” through the language that he speaks, Césaire must find a way to write himself into the Black Atlantic condition otherwise.⁵⁹ Césaire crafts a new idiom to deal with an experience that cannot be bound by the language which he speaks or in the form in which he writes. Grappling with the shift from oral to written, while still undertaking the unceasing work of attempting to embody the Creole language in writing, Césaire creates a new genre when none exists that can encapsulate the brutality of his experience—work which his Martinican successors, Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, most prominent among them, continue to undertake. Césaire's engagement with Surrealist poetry and the creation of a new genre attempted to embody diaspora, return and the abjection and estrangement that comes with post-enslavement, postcolonial movement and a colonized education. He finds a new way to write himself into and out of the discomfiture of his condition and “stringently opposes any inclining toward transcendence,”⁶⁰ and in doing so, refuses resolution. Gilroy suggests, taking up Adorno's language, that “some Black writers have already begun the vital work of enquiring into terrors that exhaust the resources of language amidst the debris of a catastrophe which prohibits the existence of their art at the same time as demanding its continuance.”⁶¹ This is Césaire's project, but he is not alone. The Black Atlantic author is never alone, remember? They are always *living with*, or writing with, another. For Césaire, one who frames himself as post-autochthon—that is, he *is* the trees, the mountains, the soil, the sea—he writes literature that is not only from the Black Atlantic but is the Being of Black Atlantic. That is the place for literature and the Black Atlantic writer—in the darkness, on the shores and ever-present upon the waves of alterity.

As he refuses resolution and forces the reader and writer to “live with” the discomfiture of terror, Wright’s work, and James’ *The Black Jacobins*, give us a different way to think about the place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship. In many ways, James’ literature consolidates the unsayable (and, thinking with Michel-Rolph Trouillot, the “unthinkable”⁶²). Gilroy speaks to Wright’s journey as a Black Atlantic author in coming to the realization that it is necessary to write something that forces the reader to confront and problematize all that they think they know and understand. Whereas when Wright wrote *Uncle Tom’s Children*, the white reader “could read and weep over [it] and feel good about [themselves],” he realized that it was his role to write something that “would be so hard and deep that they [the reader] would have to face it without the consolation of tears.”⁶³ He writes of terror in a way that disallows any mourning or discussion to take place on behalf of his readers. Wright forces his readers to look at the horrors, and in turn, makes it clear to them that the horrors are looking back at them, too—for this confrontation is reciprocal, inescapable and immensely vulnerable.⁶⁴

James’ *The Black Jacobins* similarly compels a confrontation with the unsayable so that the reader cannot look away from that which he writes. James precludes the possibility of debate by laying out the violence of the San Domingue Revolution without sanitization. From the beginning, he speaks to the suicides on the slave ships and the “bestial practices [that] were normal features of slave life”⁶⁵ as the Atlantic carried the Black bodies that became cargo on the journey to San Domingo—something of which Gilroy also makes brief mention. This is James’ first writing of the unspeakable and its oceanic impulses. He also speaks to the many revolutionary battles on the island shores, and the way that, for months after the revolution, the people could not eat the fish⁶⁶—there was something in the ocean that remained and remembered; the Black Atlantic itself is—is always—a haunting. The residents of newly independent Haiti knew that there was something still there—blood, death, the soil, the body, dead and alive—wrapped up and sucked into the current of the Atlantic, only to be cast back on the shores for all to live with, again. “Living with” that which the ocean remembers. We see that, unlike Glissant, James does not refuse verticality, for he looks beneath the surface of the ocean to what lies deep below. Through James, we see that this is another place for / of the Black Atlantic author and literature—in a space of brutal self-confrontation and entanglement from which no one can look away, and it always remains liable to wash up on the shores and hide itself deep in the sea.

Writing of the ineradicable and haunting traces from which no one can turn away is Morrison and her novel, *Beloved*, which is a text of great significance for Gilroy. He understands *Beloved* as “constituted by the tension between the racial self and the racial community;” thus, again, reminding us that the Black Atlantic is not an essentialized monolith.⁶⁷ Morrison speaks to an experience that is universal in the Black Atlantic—the impossibility of

forgetting the horror, and the necessity of “living with” that haunting. An essential part of “living with” terror and its afterlives is a refusal of any claim to untouched traditionality, thus challenging Africentrist claims. For Morrison, Black Atlantic writing involves a necessary reckoning with modernity and its violences. Rather than seeking to write with the mythical purity of traditional African cultural modes, Morrison understands that “the significance and meaning of these [African] survivals get irrevocably sundered from their origins”—what remains is an ineradicable trace of what came before the violent dislocation.⁶⁸ Like Glissant, Césaire and many other authors alongside whom Morrison writes, she does not fear the transformation and mixings inherent to Black Atlantic b/Being and creation.

Gilroy spends much time meditating on *Beloved* and the narrative of Margaret Garner—stories which reveal the ways in which Black Atlantic storytelling can bring life to haunting and re-memorialize an experience of the unspeakable. Morrison writes something that one cannot forget, a truth and haunting so indestructible that it threatens to tear the house down, literally⁶⁹—and with it, all our senses of what truth *is*. This takes us back to the question of the Black Atlantic artist understanding the world in a different way. Morrison shows how the “desire to forget the terrors of slavery and the simultaneous impossibility of forgetting”⁷⁰ is a central component of Black Atlantic storytelling—perhaps the most critical part. Because if the Black Atlantic author is not writing the unforgettable, then what is there to write? To return to Adorno’s provocation, the Black Atlantic writer must write because it is possible, through literature, to articulate the haunting of unspeakable human devastation and to re(-)member a way of b/Being in the world. Undertaking the work of writing literature “among all this” human brutality, terror, and haunting, is a project that cannot cease and must continue to be explained. No matter who it is, the Black Atlantic author writes of the haunting that defines this mode of b/Being, and Morrison brings that to life (quite literally, through the character of *Beloved*, but also through her prose). Morrison reanimates the haunting and allows it to speak, move and live. Through Morrison, we understand that that is the true place for literature and the Black Atlantic writer—writing *with* the haunting, writing within the haunting and writing in order to make the haunting sayable.

¹ Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry* (Current Books, 1949).

² Theodor Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

- ³ Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
- ⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1993), 200.
- ⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 200.
- ⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 215.
- ⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” (1971), Alan Bass (trans.), in *Margins of Philosophy*, 307-330, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1982), 320.
- ⁸ See: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton (trans.) (London: Athlone Press, 1994).
- ⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches* (Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp. 1968), 52.
- ¹⁰ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 148.
- ¹¹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 214.
- ¹² Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): 36.
- ¹³ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 36.
- ¹⁴ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 41.
- ¹⁵ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 43.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 208.
- ¹⁸ Grant Farred, “Theoretical Futures: The Creation of a Concept,” in *Africana Studies: Theoretical Futures*, Grant Farred (ed.), 1-15 (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2022), 2.
- ¹⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 208.
- ²⁰ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* Second edition revised ed. (New York: Vintage Books 1963), 9.
- ²¹ James, *The Black Jacobins*, 16.
- ²² Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 207.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 208.
- ²⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 211.
- ²⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 190.
- ²⁷ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 20.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ See: <https://jacksonadvocateonline.com/history-of-the-republic-of-new-afrika/>.

- ³⁰ Gilroy suggests that, despite the necessary recognition of uniqueness and specificity in the Jewish experience, there is often rhetoric in Zionist discourse that perpetuates the claim that they are the only 'non-national nation.' Although Gilroy does speak as though this is specific to the Zionist project, it is similar to the sort of exceptionalism that we see in Black neo-nationalist movements, which also display an understanding that they are a non-national nation that deserves territorial and national sovereignty of their own. See Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 213.
- ³¹ In the context of Zionism, legal regimes such as the 1950 law of return represent the erasure of the Palestinian population and the inherent violence that accompanies it through the promise of ethnic and territorial sovereignty and citizenship and the presumption of the absence of (and thus inherent deracination of) the Palestinian. In her paper, "The Race Leapt at Sauteurs": Genocide, narrative, and Indigenous exile from the Caribbean Archipelago, Melanie J. Newton would call these sorts of legal regimes "genocide on paper," as she makes reference to Taíno activist Jorge Estevez's assertion that genocide in the settler colonial project takes place both physically and on paper, that is what he references as historians' enactment of "'paper genocide'" (6) wherein they write out the presence, persistence and histories of the indigenous population in order to justify and perpetuate the settler colonial project. See: Melanie J. Newton, "'The Race Leapt at Sauteurs': Genocide, Narrative, and Indigenous Exile from the Caribbean Archipelago," *Caribbean Quarterly* 60, 2 (2014): 5-28.
- ³² Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 212.
- ³³ Grant Farred, *The Burden of Over-representation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2018).
- ³⁴ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 219. The first chapter of Gilroy's book works to reveal, through an analysis primarily of the Hegelian dialectic between lord and bondsman, how enslavement and the construction of Blackness are crucial to the project of Western modernity and thus cannot be separated from it. He deconstructs the idea of an 'untouched' and pure African past or imaginary to which those of the Black Atlantic (or those of the African diaspora anywhere) can turn or belong. Gilroy argues that the creation of the "Enlightened man" and the creation of the "Black man" were coeval emergences and the necessary first steps of modernity.
- ³⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 195.
- ³⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 182.
- ³⁷ Farred, "Theoretical Futures," 5.
- ³⁸ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 192.
- ³⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 21.
- ⁴⁰ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 28.
- ⁴¹ Although Gilroy speaks to the politics of transfiguration in the creation of Black Atlantic music, this essay argues it is also important when looking to the role of and place for Black Atlantic literature and authorship.
- ⁴² Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 39.
- ⁴³ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 38.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 169.
- ⁴⁶ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 36.

- ⁴⁷ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 147.
- ⁴⁸ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 173.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Édouard Glissant and J. Michael Dash, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 137.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 149.
- ⁵³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 120.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Glissant conceptualizes Atlantic relationality and Creolité through a theoretical engagement with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome. Rather than seeking purity and origins, the rhizome looks at webs of interconnections and multiplicity "create and re-create a web of connections that, in its multiplicity, opens up new theoretical possibilities" (Farred, 5). For Glissant, the slave ship is a rhizomatic space; he also engages the idea of the rhizome through his conceptualization of "what [he] call[s] the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11). See: Édouard Glissant & Betsy Wing, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
- ⁵⁶ Glissant speaks to the French Caribbean experience of continuous ruptures starting with the "brutal dislocation, the slave trade," which forever shifted the temporal and spatial consciousness of the Caribbean subject (60). He argues that this dislocation and rupture created a gap in history (and the impossibility of ever telling a linearized history as the Europeans tell theirs and the History of the world) and a lack of communal historical consciousness. Glissant calls this dislocation from the ability to tell a linear communal history, "and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all" as 'nonhistory.' See: Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 62.
- ⁵⁷ Here, the idea of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome again becomes critical, for the rhizome refuses verticality, and rather looks to a horizontal web of connections and roots that grow outward, rather than down.
- ⁵⁸ Glissant defines a forced poetics "as any collective desire for expression that, when it manifests itself, is negated at the same time because of the *deficiency* that stifles it, not at the level of desire, which never ceases, but at the level of expression, which is never realized" (120). For Glissant, a forced poetics occurs when an individual or a community cannot achieve expression despite its desire to—there is "an opposition between the content to be expressed and the language suggested or imposed." See: Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*.
- ⁵⁹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 120.
- ⁶⁰ Farred, "Theoretical Futures," 3.
- ⁶¹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 218.
- ⁶² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event," in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot & Hazel V Carby, 70-107 (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015).
- ⁶³ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 154.
- ⁶⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Vintage. Hollingdale & J. R (ed. and trans.) (1886).

⁶⁵ James, *The Black Jacobins*, 13.

⁶⁶ James, *The Black Jacobins*, 359.

⁶⁷ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 219.

⁶⁸ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 223.

⁶⁹ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London, England: Vintage Classics 2007). In *Beloved*, the house, 124, which is both the backdrop and active member of the narrative, is haunted. When Paul D Garner comes into 124 for the first time, it begins to shake, and the haunting is felt viscerally.

⁷⁰ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 222.