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Thinking the Impossible Survivance and Arrivance of the ‘Speaking Commodity’

Conjuring the Specters of Chris Hani, Slavery, and Blackness in Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*

Alexander van Biema

Cornell University

I don’t expect to live long. As we move closer to elections, covert operations will be stepped up. They will get me sooner or later.¹

– Chris Hani, “Comrade Chris Hani Speaks”

In the name of the Enlightenment and Reason, you [Hegel] then rise up to condemn any *obscurity* in the presentation of the general concept: “Negroid form” equals obscurantism plus occultism, mystery plus mysticism and mystification. Blackness is never far from the obscure and the occult. Spiritualism is but a spiritism. But, on the other hand, “Negroid form” might signal the enslavement of these pseudo-concepts that have no autonomy. For they are working merely as *objects* in the service of men, *for men*.²

But in saying “if commodities could speak” (*Könnten die Waren sprechen*), Marx implies that they cannot speak. He makes them speak (like the economist he is accusing) but in order to make them say, paradoxically, that inasmuch as they are exchange-values, they speak, and that they speak or maintain a commerce among themselves only insofar as they speak. That to them, in any case, one can at least lend speech. To speak, to adopt or borrow speech, and to be exchange-value is here the same thing.³

– Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

To begin to think the thought of Jacques Derrida as in/of Africa and the African(a) diaspora demands an attentiveness to the impossible survivance and arrivance of enslaved Africans (“speaking commodities”⁴) in the

Americas. The invocation of the concept of survivance is meant to signify and articulate the feel of being natally interdicted from the capacity to claim coherent space-time coordinates because of trans-Atlantic slavery and its afterlives.⁵ For this reason, the (dis)avowal of survivance can never be complete because it resists completion (in linear space-time). It is from within our *common incompleteness*⁶ that survivance becomes think-able, feel-able and say-able. This is to say, the question of survivance is a fundamentally *ante-national* and *anti-national*⁷ quest(ion) that enables us to ask the always unasked question: how do you survive survival? And, resonantly, does the arrivant sur-vive (non-)arrival (arrivance) and survivance?⁸

To think with and through these questions, let us begin with Peggy Kamuf's generative mistranslation of the French noun *nègre* (and *à l'état nègre*) as "Negroid" or "Negroid form" and once as "blackness"⁹ in Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1994). Importantly, in the original French edition of *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée, 1993), published a year prior to its English translation by Kamuf, footnote 7 for the fifth and final chapter titled "Apparition of the Inapparent: The phenomenological 'conjuring trick'"¹⁰ states: "Quand *L'Idéologie allemande* rappelle l'origine hégélienne de la philosophie de l'histoire de Stirner, elle insiste sur une autre thématique du nègre, celle pour laquelle « La négritude (*die Negerhaftigkeit*), c'est " l'enfant ". » (p. 194 et suiv.)."¹¹ In the footnote, Derrida translates the German "*die Negerhaftigkeit*" as "négritude,"¹² which is immensely significant for numerous reasons, but perhaps most importantly is that Derrida is subtly making a reference to the literary-philosophical Négritude movement of the French Caribbean and Francophone Africa. This is to say, Kamuf's curious choice, which is far from apolitical, to translate *nègre* as "Negroid" negates the complexity that the imperialist, racial-colonial word/concept *nègre* is held by and holds (in abeyance).

In *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003), Brent Hayes Edwards' explicates the multilingual, trans-imperial genealogy and "paleonomy"¹³ of the word "nègre":

Because [Jack Forbes's] *Africans and Native Americans* is structured around multilinguistic etymological studies of the use of various racial terms (*negro*, *mulat(t)o*, *mestizo*, *pardo*, *loro*, *moor*, and *mustee*), the work is especially instructive about the historical relationship between *Negro* and *nègre*. In French, the first translations of African narratives of the early Spanish and Portuguese explorers and slave traders in the mid-sixteenth century almost exclusively used *noir* for the Spanish or Portuguese *negro* (meaning "black," the color), which was read as representing solely a color description. Only in the late 1500s and early 1600s did there begin to develop an understanding of *negro* that considered the term to represent a particular people and to mark their "difference." Other linguists including Simone Delesalle and Lucette Valensi have charted

the way the word *nègre* came to be used in French to represent that specific alterity. As the French entered the slave trade (the Code Noir, the legal basis of the trade in France, was established in 1685), there developed an association between *nègre* and *esclave* (“slave”) as synonyms, cemented in early dictionaries including Savary’s *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (1723), the work that single-handedly defined the French conception of Africans as a “race of slaves” in a phrasing copied in almost all the dictionaries of the next two hundred years.¹⁴

The anti-black racism that infuses, and is inadvertently theorized within, the work of G.W.F. Hegel, Max Stirner, and parts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ corpus is well-known and need not be recited here.¹⁵ Derrida’s meticulous attention to the ethical-political and aesthetic stakes of translation demand that we ask about the elision of the German idiomatic equivalents (i.e. *negere*, *neger*, *negerrasse*) of the French term *nègre*; Derrida compels us to inquire about the absence of the German in Hayes Edwards’ genealogy of the necessarily unsettled and unsettling term *nègre* cited above. In *Specters of Marx*, the ineradicable traces of the entangled histories of German imperialism¹⁶ concatenate around the racist term *nègre* and its German cognate *negere*, the revolutionary figure of Martin Thembisile (Chris) Hani, and the speculative Marxist discourse of the “commodity that can speak”¹⁷ (in *The German Ideology* and *Capital*, Volume I).

Of the many spectral and ghostly intertexts that *Specters of Marx* inhabits and is in turn inhabited by, arguably the most important, for the specific purposes of this essay, is Marx and Engels’ *The German Ideology* (1932). Apart from *The German Ideology*, there is a “shadow archive”¹⁸ composed of Chris Hani’s speeches, writings, and interviews, who was assassinated 12 days prior to Derrida’s lecture, which permeates *Specters of Marx*.

To conjure the specter is to release an ungovernable proliferation of questions, which calls us to think anew Derrida’s decision to dedicate *Specters of Marx* to the then-recently assassinated black South African communist party leader, and pivotal actor within the armed wing of the ANC, *Umkhonto weSizwe* (Spear of the Nation)¹⁹ or MK, Chris Hani.²⁰ The dedication to Hani manifests as an epitaphic and epigraphic exergue that is in but not of *Specters of Marx*.²¹ Apart from this singular citation of the proper name of Chris Hani, the innumerable hauntological ghosts, specters and spirits that inhabit and in turn are inhabited by Hani, and manifest through the invocation of his name, are constitutively absent within the body proper of the text. Etymologically, exergue signifies that which is (or comes from) outside of the/a work.²² It is an inscription — or, after Akira Mizuta Lippit (2005), an *ex-scription*²³ — that is neither completely in nor of the interior(ity) or exterior(ity) of the work. This is to say, Chris Hani comes to name and violently stand-in for a constitutively improper, fungible, fugitive in-/ex- scription that *de*-scribes itself (that is, it is under erasure) while becoming the shadow of the work *Specters of Marx*. While emerging from a different historical context and social

text, I am reminded here of Sojourner Truth's analysis of photography as a form of "selling the shadow to support the substance". Truth decided to sell her paradoxically fungible photographic visage (or "shadow") to support the "substance" of the abolition of slavery (in fact, the quote "selling the shadow to support the substance" was inscribed on each of the photographs she sold). While the referent of photography is not present in Derrida's dedication to Hani, there is a sense in which the constitutive fungibility that Derrida's *exordium* imputes onto Hani results in Derrida "selling the shadow [Hani] to support the substance" of the work (*Specters*). In other words, Derrida can be said to deploy the (im)proper name of Chris Hani only to have the name pre-figuratively undermine the work of *Specters* without ever fully announcing itself in the spectral body (proper) of *Specters*. Neither fully a legible, discrete beginning nor end, Hani (pre-)occupies the non-place of the dedicatory interregnum in *Specters*. To illustrate this let us look to the third paragraph of the Dedication wherein Chris Hani is named, "and yet" he is simultaneously unnamed in that he first must become (in the first sentence of the Dedication) "One name for another, a part for the whole: the historic violence of Apartheid can always be treated as a metonymy"²⁴ (emphasis in original). Here Derrida troubles the unruly line between the metonymic fungibility²⁵ of Black life, flesh, and historicity. This metonymic fungibility and supplementarity is constitutive of the labor (and "work of mourning") Chris Hani's (im)proper name is conscripted to perform in and for *Specters* both in death and life or, as Derrida (2020) elaborates elsewhere, life-death²⁶:

But one should never speak of the assassination of a man as a figure, not even an exemplary figure in the logic of an emblem, a rhetoric of the flag or of martyrdom. A man's life, as unique as his death, will always be more than a paradigm and something other than a symbol. And this is precisely what a proper name should always name.

And yet. And yet, keeping this in mind and having recourse to a common noun, I recall that it is a communist as such, a communist as communist, whom a Polish emigrant and his accomplices, all the assassins of Chris Hani, put to death a few days ago, April 10th. (emphasis in original).

What is the afterlife of this violent interchangeability of the "exemplary"²⁷ Black South African "communist as communist" figure, emblem, proper name, paradigm, symbol, singularity, and cipher that is Chris Hani in *Specters*? How are Chris Hani's words and actions ambivalently and contradictorily employed as an intertext in *Specters* that is conscripted, interpolated, and abducted by Derrida? Here, the point is *not* to get lost in an indictment of the uses and abuses of Chris Hani and apartheid in *Specters* (and, one might add, throughout Derrida's oeuvre). Rather, labor is needed to reread the contradictions immanent within the affective intensity of Derrida's gesture of solidarity. In doing so, we begin to understand how aware Derrida is of the incalculable risks that attend and subtend his desire and request to speak with and for, be spoken to by, and be (dis)possessed by the ghost, specter, and

spirit of Chris Hani: "Allow me to salute the memory of Chris Hani and to dedicate this lecture to him."²⁸

To whom and to what is Derrida's "Allow me..." addressed? In the immediate, yet never not out-of-joint, present of the plenary address where *Specters of Marx* was initially given, the audience and co-participants of the conference "Whither Marxism? Global Crises in International Perspective," given at University of California, Riverside on April 22-23, 1993, are the recipients of Derrida's request in the form of his "Dedication" prior to the beginning of his lecture.²⁹ However, we must remember that for Derrida every address (of which making a *salute* is a form) creates the addressee.³⁰ In "salut[ing] the memory of Chris Hani," Derrida is thus always already saluting the memories (and histories) of numerous others and other Others (such as the innumerable peoples subject to the absolute viciousness and brutality of apartheid, colonialism, empire, capitalism, etc.), whose being-present precedes and exceeds the establishment of (a/their) presence. These interminable salutations (*adieu*) perpetually mark and re-mark a shuttling between arriving without arrival and departing without departure. It is impossible to disentangle the history and afterlife of (settler) colonialism in South Africa, the trans-Atlantic and trans-Indian Ocean slave trades, African chattel slavery, and the "commodity that can speak" from the (im)proper name of Chris Hani. Derrida fails to know this to be true, but nonetheless this failure of knowing/knowledge makes it possible for us to think how Derrida's (un)knowing is reliant on the avowal of an always provisional capacity to access and articulate these histories and memories of struggle vis-à-vis what is for Derrida the more (philosophically) familiar terrain of Marx, Hegel, Stirner, Shakespeare and Martin Heidegger (among others). This is to say, if Derrida wants to salute Chris Hani he must simultaneously consent to salute what Fred Moten terms the "history of blackness."³¹ Where Marx and Engels, according to Derrida, are only able to think the possibility of "commerce between commodities"³² via ventriloquizing and theatricalizing³³ registers, Derrida picks up on the incipient critique of the sovereign subject (and its co-constitutive metaphysics of presence) that underlies *The German Ideology* and any Marxist project worthy of the name. This is to say that while the dedicatory exergue to Chris Hani that precedes the (formal) beginning or *exordium*³⁴ of *Specters* is ostensibly interred in the placeless place of the preface, Hani returns as a revenant in Derrida's convoking and discursive linking of the *nègre* and the "commodity that can speak".³⁵

The inauguration of the imperial, racial-colonial nomenclature that transits between *nègre* (French), *Negerhaftigkeit* or "Negro-ness" (German), *zwarte* (Dutch), "Negro", "Negroid form", and blackness is inseparable from the commodity-form.³⁶ Derrida demonstrates that the always disfigured figure of "the obscure 'Negroid'" or, as it's rendered in the French edition of *Spectres*, "l'obscur, la « nègre »"³⁷, in *The German Ideology* (and Volume I of *Capital*³⁸) is "not even a concept"³⁹. In doing so, Derrida reveals how the

conceptual integrity and collective coherence of the commodity-form⁴⁰, commodification, and the subject/object binary distinction itself are all dependent on the displacement, *dissed place*⁴¹, exorcism, and extraction of the insurgency that is blackness:

There is in sum, no doubt, but a single ghost, a ghost of ghosts, and it is but a concept, *not even a concept*, the obscure “Negroid” [*la nègre*] presentation of a larger concept, more *englobing* than all the others, indeed it is but a name, a metonymy that lends itself to any and all substitutions (the part for the whole that it then exceeds, the effect for the cause of which it is in turn the cause, and so forth). Nominalism, conceptualism, realism: all of that is routed by the Thing or the Athing called ghost. The taxonomic order becomes too easy, at once arbitrary and impossible...⁴² [emphasis added].

The “englobing” globality or *mondialisation* of *la nègre*, Derrida writes, “lends itself to any and all substitutions (the part for the whole that it then exceeds, the effect for the case of which it is in turn the cause, and so forth).” Let us recall here Edwards’ genealogical and etymological tracing of *nègre* cited in the beginning of this paper. As noted earlier, the multiplicity of polysemous valences that the word, concept, and figure of the *nègre* holds, signifies, and generates is obscured by Peggy Kamuf’s decision to translate “l’obscure, la nègre” into English as “the obscure Negroid”. One of the earliest usages of the term “negroid” is in an English translation of Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (*Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*) (1853).⁴³ In *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines*, “variété mélanienne” (melanian variety) and *nègre* are the terms Gobineau uses to categorize the “black” within his proto-eugenic, racial typology.⁴⁴ The Greek etymology of the suffix *-oid* (from *oidēs*) in “Negroid” signifies resemblance, as in the form or likeness of the “Negro” or the “Black” (which is a tautology *par excellence*).

While it is highly likely Derrida would have been familiar with Gobineau’s⁴⁵ *Essai* (though I have yet to find evidence of this) given its notoriety within the discourse of scientific racism in Francophone and Anglophone letters, we might say that Peggy Kamuf’s decision to translate *nègre* as “Negroid” conflates these distinct but interconnected genealogies of gendered, imperial-colonial-racial-capitalist, hierarchical taxonomies and typologies of difference. According to Derrida, “The taxonomic order becomes too easy, at once arbitrary and impossible.”⁴⁶ Could we read this as an anticipatory meta-commentary on the ease with which Kamuf translates *nègre* into a terminal assemblage of “Negroid” (eight usages), “Negro” (one usage), and “Blackness” (one usage) in *Specters*? When translation encounters blackness (“...the Thing or the Athing called ghost...”⁴⁷), terminological precision seemingly becomes an unnecessary appendage and prosthetic that is marked as dispensable. If Derrida can be said to be avoiding uttering the proper name Chris Hani in the body of the text of *Specters*, the ghosted void of the spectral figure and name Chris Hani reappears in a sublated⁴⁸ form in

Derrida's deconstruction of the fungible exemplarity of the speaking commodity-*cum-nègre*.

If we attend to the “the contradictions that render humanism untenable,”⁴⁹ as Derrida calls on us to do, then the centuries-long procession of specters, spirits and ghosts of premature death that haunt black life can be conjured without being immediately conjured away. Chris Hani knew he would become part of this procession before the advent of the event of his assassination. In South African historian Dr. Luli Callinicos' interview with Hani cited in the epigraph, which occurred ten days prior to Hani's murder, Hani already knew that death, as it were, was around the corner. More than clairvoyance or prophecy, Hani was an astute reader and student of history who listened to the pulse of the movement and trembling of revolution:

Now I had seen the lot of black workers, extreme forms of exploitation. Slave wages, no trade union rights, and for me the appeal of socialism was extremely great. Where it was said that workers create wealth but in the final analysis they get nothing. They get peanuts in order to survive and continue working for the capitalists. So it was that simple approach, that simple understanding, which was a product of my own observation in addition to theory. *I didn't get involved with the workers' struggle out of theory alone.* It was a combination of theory and my own class background. I never faltered in my belief in socialism despite all the problems currently. For me that belief is strong because that is still the life of the majority of the people with whom I share a common background⁵⁰ [emphasis added].

The revolutionary activity of the Black worker and “workers' struggle”, for Hani, is itself “theory” but under another name and form that is obscured by the dominant understanding of theory as mere abstraction. Hani's faith in socialism derives from *theoria in the flesh*⁵¹ — where *theoria* is a centrifugal journey of problematization without guarantees.⁵² While we should be careful not to suggest that Derrida conflates the speaking commodity-*cum-nègre* with Hani, the dialects internal to the dialectical, non-didactic lessons that Derrida is addressed and (dis)possessed by, come to him, and thus to us, by way of the impossible survivance and arrivance of the ghosts, specters, and spirits of Chris Hani and the speaking commodity-*cum-nègre*. While Derrida does not himself demand that (Western) Marxism make itself accountable to, and know itself to be intimately addressed by and implicated in, the murder of Chris Hani, he allows us to make this demand on his behalf and in his name. The dominant terms of order renders the appearance of the (enslaved) Black worker licit and legible on the condition that the Black worker disappear as a Subject and reappear instead as the illicit, illegible, criminalized objecthood of the speaking commodity.⁵³ Derrida invites us to take seriously how the ghostly objecthood of the *nègre-cum-speaking* commodity is precisely what makes blackness a “properly revolutionary” dis(sed)position that is always already⁵⁴ a being-towards-*defending the dead*⁵⁵:

This anxiety in the face of the ghost is properly revolutionary. If death weighs on the living brain of the living, and still more on the brains of revolutionaries, it must then have some spectral density. To weigh (*Jasten*) is also to charge, tax, impose, in debt, accuse, assign, enjoin. And the more life there is, the graver the specter of the other becomes, the heavier its imposition. And the more the living have to answer for it. *To answer for the dead, to respond to the dead.*⁵⁶

Whither the “spectral density” of the *black* (South African) specters, spirits, and ghosts of Marx? While Derrida does not claim Chris Hani as one of the innumerable Black (South African) specters, spirits, and ghosts of Marx who ‘we’ must “answer for”, Derrida enables us to claim Chris Hani in this way. Hani’s death must, to quote Derrida’s paraphrasing of the famous opening line of Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), “weig[h] on the living brain of the living, and still more on the brains of revolutionaries.”⁵⁷ In the service of the concomitant necessity and impossibility of such a weighing and witnessing of the incalculable, immeasurable *visitations* of the “specter of the other”, let us listen to the end of Chris Hani’s speech given at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESIA) on December, 20th-21st of 1991:

...this is a period where all of us must exercise the maximum degree of responsibility. It is not helpful for any of us to raise the *spectre* of civil war. Anyone with knowledge of what has happened in Angola and Mozambique must know that words like "civil war" should not be lightly bandied about. Let us rather redouble our efforts to bury any possibility of such a fate enveloping us [emphasis added].⁵⁸

In a settler colony, is the “*spectre* of civil war” not always-already present, at-hand, and handy (as it were)? Hani implicitly recognizes that this “*spectre* of civil war” cannot ever be entirely ‘buried’ and conjured away in a white settler colony such as South Africa where Black people are the majority and the ruling elite is composed of a white settler minority. And yet, Hani knows that “...words like ‘civil war’ should not be lightly bandied about.” One of the many ghostly seeds planted by the “*spectre* of civil war,” which Hani undoubtedly knows, is the heightened (settler) paranoia that attends the ever-present “...colonial threat to drive the settlers into the sea...”⁵⁹ It is with this in mind that when Hani says “...this is a period where all of us must exercise the maximum degree of responsibility,” we can hear an echo reverberate that comes to us by way of the conclusion of Hani’s article titled “The Wankie Campaign”, published in the “Souvenir Edition: 25th Anniversary of MK” of *Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe* (the primary journal of the armed wing of the ANC) in 1986. Hani writes:

It was important for us to rough it and to participate in creating favourable conditions for ourselves. This is what a revolutionary is and that is what revolutions are about. Namely a movement participating and

creating conditions for itself. You never wait because no favourable conditions can come on their own without the participation of the subjective factor and the subjective factor in this case was our movement and its army, MK.⁶⁰

For the occupied, the enslaved, the dispossessed, engaging in revolutionary armed struggle is of absolute necessity in attaining the capacity to "...participate in creating favourable conditions for ourselves" precisely because "...no favourable conditions can come on their own without the participation of the subjective factor..." Chris Hani knows that the creation of "favourable conditions" for revolution is what facilitates collective survivance and arrivance. Survivance and arrivance are premised on the love of, yearning for, and the wisdom of the un-intelligible that only revolution can bring forth in its totality; however, the question of whether what the revolution births, and provides a berth for, will save or enslave, poison or heal can never be known in advance — in many ways, Hani's assassination is an embodiment of this pharmakon.⁶¹ In this sense, the absolute arrivant can only ever lay claim to arrivance and survivance with an unconditional promise that they avow the pharmakon that is its simultaneous conditions of possibility and impossibility.

When survivance *and* arrivance are understood as a pharmakon, one can attend to how the blurring of the giving and taking of life haunts the human and more-than-human life (*la nègre-cum-speaking commodity*) that was "never meant to survive"⁶² and "never meant to appear"⁶³. To be displaced and out of place is to be made to carry and be carried by a *dissed* place (after M. NourbeSe Philip). The inherently spectral survivance and arrivance of Chris Hani, blackness, and the speaking commodity-*cum-nègre* is a pharmakon: it makes the attempt to mediate the ghosts, specters and spirits of the past, that is not and never will be past, both possible and impossible. To say this is to acknowledge that Hani receives and is given the dedication from Derrida, but he is not the prophet of revolution that Marx or Derrida had in mind; rather, Hani is an afterthought for Derrida, which is worth considering. More than being simply worthy of consideration, the simultaneous foregrounding and backgrounding of Hani in *Specters* creates the insurgent ground and line from which we can unconditionally receive, tend to, and care for the histories held within the ghostly visitations of Chris Hani, blackness, and the speaking commodity-*cum-nègre*.

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- ¹ Luli Callinicos, “Comrade Chris Hani Speaks”: Interview, *SA Labour Bulletin*, Volume 17, No. 2, p.15.
- ² Jacques Derrida, trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge, 2006), p. 172.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- ⁴ Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 5-6. Of the scant scholarship that exists on the problem for thought (after Nahum Chandler) that the “commodity that can speak” produces in the context of Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, Andrés Fabián Henao Castro’s *The Militant Intellect: Critical Theory’s Conceptual Personae* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022) is perhaps one of the only scholars to have taken up this question (at least within the context of the Anglophone academy) in Chapter 4 of his aforementioned book titled “The Deconstructive Militant: Jacques Derrida’s Specter” (pp. 96-113).
- ⁵ I am drawing here from Jamaican historian Orlando Patterson’s influential monograph *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982) where Patterson identifies “natal alienation” as one of the three elements (“general dishonor” and “total powerlessness” being the other two) constitutive of the historically (*not* ontologically) determined concept of “social death”. Black Studies scholar Frank Wilderson has ontologized Patterson’s initially historically contingent formulation of “social death” with the trans-historical and ahistorical equation of Blackness and “social death” (or, in Wilderson’s words, the condition of the Slave and “slaveness”). While I disagree on many fronts with Frank Wilderson, the notion that (European) Humanism is unable to “imagine” that there is a structurally imposed incapacity of Black folks in the Americas (and the planet writ large) to claim cartographic coherence (and thereby discrete “temporal” and “spatial” coordinates), that Wilderson identifies and elaborates, is a generative formulation (even in its many limitations): “It [Humanism] cannot imagine an object who has been positioned by gratuitous violence and who has no cartographic and temporal capacities to lose—a sentient being for whom recognition and incorporation is impossible” (pp. 54-55). See *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Duke University Press, 2010).
- ⁶ Fred Moten & Stefano Harney, *All Incomplete* (Minor Compositions, 2021), p. 24. Additionally, see Cedric J. Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 196-197.
- ⁷ The notion of the *ante-* and *anti-* national comes from Fred Moten. See Fred Moten, “Licia’s Lectures on Nothing”. *Current Musicology*, no. 102, Apr. 2018, doi:10.7916/cm.v0i102.5371.
- ⁸ These two questions are a remixing and paraphrasing of a question from Samson Okoth Opondo’s *tour de force* book titled *Diplomatic Para-Citations: Genre, Foreign Bodies, and the Ethics of Co-Habitation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), p. 431.
- ⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 171-173.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- ¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée, 1993), p. 219. Kamuf’s translation of the footnote reads as follows: “When *The German Ideology* recalls the Hegelian origin of Stirner’s philosophy of history, it insists on another thematics of the Negro, the one for which “ ‘The Negroid character [*die Negerhaftigkeit*] represents *antiquity*, dependence on *things*’ (*child*),” pp. 163 ff” (*Specters of Marx*, p. 238).

- ¹² The implications of this invocation of *négritude* are many, and it enables us to speculate the extent to which Derrida was aware of the work that in Martinique and Paris, Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, along with Senghor, and others, were engaged in around surrealism and Négritude.
- ¹³ Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, p. 25.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁵ See Rei Terada, *Metaracial: Hegel, Antiracism, and Political Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 2023). Additionally, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁶ On the German empire in the Pacific Islands, see Peter J. Hemenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (ANU Press, 2016). For the history of German imperialism/colonialism in Southern/Western Africa (as well as its historically intimate ties with both the Third Reich and the Shoah), see Klaus Bachmann, *Genocidal Empires: German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich* (Peter Lang, 2018).
- ¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 197-199.
- ¹⁸ Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 25.
- ¹⁹ On the history of MK, armed struggle in Southern Africa, the Black Consciousness Movement, and the Azanian Black Radical Tradition, see Toivo Tukongeni Paul Wilson Asheke's groundbreaking monograph titled *Arming Black Consciousness: The Azanian Black Nationalist Tradition and South Africa's Armed Struggle* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).
- ²⁰ I am inspired here by a brief meditation from Kaushik Sunder Rajan on *Specters'* dedication to Chris Hani and his characterization of this dedication as a “whisper” (p. 170). See the Conclusion (titled “Toward a Diasporic Anthropology”) to Kaushik Sunder Rajan's *Multisituated: Ethnography as Diasporic Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2021), pp. 169-171.
- ²¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. XIV-XV.
- ²² See Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (University of California Press, 2012).
- ²³ See Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
- ²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. XIV.
- ²⁵ On the concept of “fungibility” in relation to enslaved Africans in the Americas, see Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997).
- ²⁶ Jacques Derrida, et al. *Life Death* (University of Chicago Press, 2020). Additionally, in a resonant but *not* equivalent context, the argument I am proposing here around the uses and abuses of the proper names “Chris Hani” and “Apartheid” in *Specters* is haunted by Berry Daina Ramey's profound book titled *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved from Womb to Grave in the Building of a Nation* (Random House, 2018).
- ²⁷ On the question of South Africa and its exemplarity (with Chris Hani an “exemplary example” of this) in Derrida's corpus, see Jan Steyn, “Setting, an Example: Derrida's *South Africa (and Ours)*” in *Derrida and Africa: Jacques Derrida As a Figure for African Thought* (Lexington Books, 2020), pp. 47-64.
- ²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. XV.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, xii.

- ³⁰ Jacques Derrida, trans. David Wood, et al., *On the Name* (Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 37-38.
- ³¹ Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, p. 1.
- ³² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 208.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xx.
- ³⁵ The background of this convoking and discursive linking is a racialized-gendered, sexualized, classed Negro -philic and -phobic discourse well-established and sedimented in the 19th century by Marx and Engels, Hegel, and Stirner (along with a plethora of others). For an exploration of these questions in the context of the discourse on the fetish, fetishization, and the “fetishization of commodities”, see J. Lorand Matory, *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make* (Duke University Press, 2018).
- ³⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 195.
- ³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée, 1993), p. 220.
- ³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 6.
- ³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 173.
- ⁴⁰ See R. A. Judy, “The Unfungible Flow of Liquid Blackness.” *liquid blackness* 1 April 2021; 5 (1): 27-36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/26923874-8932565>.
- ⁴¹ M. NourbeSe Philip, ‘Dis Place—The Space Between’ in *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays* (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1997), p. 77.
- ⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 173.
- ⁴³ On the history of the English translation of Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* in the U.S. context, see Michelle M. Wright, “Nigger Peasants from France: Missing Translations of American Anxieties on Race and the Nation.” *Callaloo*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1999, pp. 831-52.
- ⁴⁴ Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (Librairie De Firmin Didot Freres [Paris], 1853), pp. 35 & 195.
- ⁴⁵ Another European theorist of race, racialization, and racial difference is the 19th century French Orientalist Ernest Renan who Derrida was aware of and whose writings on language and the nation Derrida cites in “White Mythology” (1974) and elsewhere. See Jacques Derrida, trans. F. C. T. Moore, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy.” *New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1974, p. 12.
- ⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 173.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- ⁴⁸ We should, of course, think here of Hegel’s concept of the *aufhebung*.
- ⁴⁹ Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines*, p. 181.
- ⁵⁰ Luli Callinicos, “Interview with Comrade Chris Hani” (23 and 31 March, 1993), transcribed by Sheila Weinberg, p. 4.
- ⁵¹ On the black and women of color feminist concept of “theory in the flesh”, see Barbara Christian’s now classic article titled “The Race for Theory.” *Cultural Critique*, no. 6, 1987, pp. 51-63.

- ⁵² On *theoria* and the “embassy of theory”, see Costas M. Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- ⁵³ Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, pp. 8, 18, and 71.
- ⁵⁴ On the concept of the “always already”, see: Louis Althusser, “Ideology and ideological state apparatuses.” In L. Althusser (Ed.), *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).
- ⁵⁵ The refrain “defend the dead” is a citation from M. NourbeSe Philip’s profound poem *Zong!*. See M. NourbeSe Philip and Setaey Adamu Boateng, *Zong!* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008), p. 25.
- ⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 135-136.
- ⁵⁷ Karl Marx, trans. Daniel De Leon, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: Labor News, 1951), p. 15.
- ⁵⁸ See CODESA: First Plenary Session: Direct Transcription & Relevant Documents: 20 & 21 December 1991. South Africa, SEEMAC Transcriptions, 1991., p. 102.
- ⁵⁹ Sharad Chari, *Gramsci at Sea* (University of Minnesota Press, 2023), p. 1.
- ⁶⁰ Chris Hani, “The Wankie Campaign,” *Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe*, souvenir issue (1986): p. 37.
- ⁶¹ On the concept of the “pharmakon”, see the section entitled “Plato’s Pharmacy” in Jacques Derrida’s *Dissemination* (1981). See Jacques Derrida, trans. Barbara Johnson, *Dissemination* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- ⁶² Audre Lorde, *Poetry Foundation*, “A Litany for Survival” (1978). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147275/a-litany-for-survival>. Accessed Nov. 17, 2023.
- ⁶³ Tavia Nyong’o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (NYU Press, 2019), p. 3.