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A Spectral Return: Non-Metaphorical Ghosts, Monsters, And Hauntology

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A Spectral Return: Non-Metaphorical Ghosts, Monsters, and Hauntology

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Woodstock, Virginia

B.A., Christopher Newport University, 2021

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of The College of William and Mary in Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
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This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
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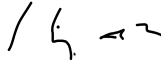
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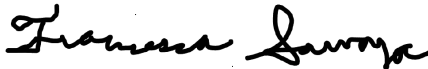Approved by the Committee, September 2023

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ABSTRACT

Uses of hauntology within academic scholarship are peculiarly metaphorical and British. This project aims to combat the overabundance of such readings to create more breadth in academic discourse on the spectral. This project does not seek to replace metaphorical or British renderings of hauntology, but to exist alongside it as overreliance on a particular formulation creates detrimental limits and barriers to scholastic innovation. The first essay examines the ghosts of Theodore "Wes" Wesley and Samuel Isaac Bailey within *Unwell: A Midwestern Gothic Mystery* (2018-2023) and *The Sheridan Tapes* (2020-present). Examining these category-defying ghosts which exhibit mass, warmth, and breath through Rosi Braidotti's sustainable nomadic ethics, monster theory, and biopolitical theories of sovereignty and community/immunity, this work offers five theses for a newer and more expansive vision of spectrality inclusive of metaphorical and non-metaphorical readings. The second essay examines the peculiarly British nature of hauntological horror scholarship, attributing it largely to the influence of Mark Fisher's white and European renderings of haunting and cultural time in the twenty-first century. This project reviews Fisherian hauntology to ultimately conclude that a fixation on British public media and shallow engagements of ghosts drives Fisher's white and English universalism. Reversing this formulation and borrowing from other areas of Fisher's work this project offers a rendering of an American hauntology attuned to racial history, landscape, and folk culture to encourage the emergence of other national hauntologies. The project concludes by applying the theses to three folktales featuring a Cap Haitian Zombie, a blood-red river in southwestern Virginia, and black devil dogs.

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Introducing "A Spectral Return: Non-Metaphorical Ghosts, Monsters, and Hauntology"

"A Spectral Return: Non-Metaphorical Ghosts, Monsters, and Hauntology," sprouts from three different moments in 2012, 2021, and 2022. The former, I remember now as only a vague memory. A decision to look up scary stories on the iPad Mini I got for Christmas. That search led me to CreepsMcPasta's narration of "The Ronald McDonald House," the creepypasta, the name for a digital story of dubious authorship repeatedly copied and pasted across the internet, that spawned my fascination with the eerie, macabre, and occult. The second is far clearer. As a part of my work with Dr. Kip Redick at the Summer Scholars program at Christopher Newport University, I got the chance to write a paper on any topic I pleased. With such a wide latitude, I chose to spend my time researching digital horror literature. It was during this research period while I prepared a paper on the cosmological implications of monster encounters on hiking trails that I encountered hauntology under the name spectrality. I felt both a fascination and frustration for how authors used the framework to dig deep into American history and culture, but always left behind the monster, using it as an analytical vessel. I carried this frustration with me throughout my remaining time at Christopher Newport University, past my graduation, and into my time at William & Mary. The third moment comes from March 2022 during a visit to Christopher Newport University following my graduation in December 2021 to catch up with friends and old professors. It was there, while talking with Dr. Patrick Gardner about a manga series I read called *The Girl From the Other*

Side: Siúil, a Rún that I mentioned my fascination with Teacher, a human transformed into a disfigured monster due to a plague, wondering about his connection to the faeries of the British Isles. With Dr. Gardner's encouragement, I made the commitment to study horror and monsters, a topic I had mulled over for years, but remained fearful of lengthy study out of a concern such research had no place in the academy. In a sense, this portfolio and its chapters represent my intellectual and personal engagement with these moments and the monsters I carry with me.

This portfolio represents two different engagements with hauntology. The first, springing from the aforementioned research I undertook at Christopher Newport University, through which I sought to chip away at metaphorical hauntological approaches' dominance in the study of horror literature and media to make room for scholarship that took monsters seriously. By serious, I mean as agents within their narratives, shaped by historical and cultural processes, but not consumed by them. The second project came after the conclusion of my first chapter "A Spectral Return: Reconsidering Ghosts and Spectrality Studies." My numerous searches on hauntology prompted YouTube to recommend a video, "Ghosts of Mark Fisher: Hauntology, Lost Futures, and Depression," by Epoch Philosophy. Enthralled by the concept of lost futures, I devoured Fisher's book *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* within a day. It changed my perspective on hauntology as a framework, as Fisher's work did not treat any specters within horror literature as a metaphor. Instead, he used ghosts as a means of talking about his personal experiences with culture,

mourning, and depression, a technique that resonated with me so deeply I knew I had to write about him when I returned to William & Mary for the Spring 2023 semester.

While these projects exist along temporal line divided by my exposure to Mark Fisher, they do not necessarily represent an evolution from one opinion of hauntology to another as I still deeply wish to engage horror media in a manner that takes ghosts seriously while also wishing to explore the idea of alternative and lost futures to which Fisher introduced me. Instead, I see these projects as two halves of my scholarship that mutually feed into one another, the horror narratives I explored when introduced to hauntology and Derrida and the historical and cultural forces shaping the experience and memory of culture highlighted by Fisher. "A Spectral Return: Reconsidering Ghosts and Spectrality Studies" and "British Ghosts on American Land: Adapting Hauntology to American Cultural Tests represent two spheres of work which I will slowly attempt to stitch together in my future work as a scholar: the digital horror stories that continue to fascinate me whether as creepypastas or audio dramas and the folk cultures that produce the monsters contained within said narratives.

I wrote the first chapter, "A Spectral Return: Reconsidering Ghosts and Spectrality Studies," for Dr. Elizabeth Losh's "Biopolitics" seminar. While we had the option to pursue a traditional essay, I chose to struggle with *Scalar* as it is conducive to multimedia scholarship, namely for the capacity to embed media directly into the project, providing an experience where readers could listen to *Unwell: A Midwestern-Gothic Mystery* (2018-2023) and *The Sheridan Tapes*

(2020-present). I chose to discuss these two as their characters Theodore "Wes" Wesley and Samuel Isaac Bailey troubled biopolitical theory and hauntology, in that they were material ghosts who had an uneasy relationship with their pre-death selves, the stories refusing to confirm or deny whether they were one and the same. The two proved ideal to trouble the biopolitical notions of sovereignty, community and immunity, and necropolitics, alongside the more hauntological framework used to study the incorporeal specters common to horror media. As such, prompted by Rosi Braidotti's concept of sustainable nomadic ethics and her notion of death as overrated, I used the two as case studies to explore their uneasy relationships to materiality, identity, and the podcast medium from which they emerged.[1] After providing a brief overview of the literatures on biopolitical theory, hauntology, and monster studies as a means of exploring their category-defying construction, I apply the frameworks to a series of moments throughout *Unwell* and *The Sheridan Tapes* to formulate five theses for a new spectrality that diverged from the Derridean-dominated horror studies scholarship: 1) ghosts exist as animate memory with the capacity for a form of social and political life, 2) ghosts are what the sovereign cannot kill, 3) there is no single ghost, 4) spectral and deceased subjects exist along a temporal-ontological continuum, and 5) digital media transforms the ghost from social memory to shared memory, meaning the transformation from memories capable to speech to memories constituted through collective remembrance.

My second chapter, "British Ghosts on American Land: Adapting Hauntology for American Cultural Texts" came about after a series of discussions with Dr.

Francesca Sawaya regarding my term paper for her "Literature and History"

seminar. After several conversations and emails, we eventually decided it would

be best if I pursued a more theoretical paper that analyzed Fisher's peculiarly

British take on hauntology and offered a framework that diverged from his

overwhelmingly white and European formulation of twenty-first century culture

and its relationship to temporality. Dr. Sawaya and later Dr. McGovern

encouraged me to use American folk legends as a means of analyzing and

critiquing Fisher due to their primacy regarding the cultural dynamics which

Fisher asserts. Here, I use "American" in a broad sense, not just referring to the

United States, but to the North American continent, incorporating material from

Appalachia and Haiti, the former due to my childhood spent in Virginia's

Shenandoah Valley and the latter due to its status as the zombie's birthplace, a

monster essential to American folklore and horror. To accomplish this task, I

began by reviewing Fisher's body of work for recurring hauntological ideas and

put them in conversation with Alberto Andrés Calvo and Diane A. Rodgers, both

of whom incorporate Fisher to discuss the relationships between hauntology,

British culture, and horror media. In addition to that common thread, Calvo

offered some direction of where to take an American hauntology. Reading the

three together, I concluded an American hauntology must abandon British

hauntology's obsession with public media and shallow engagements with ghosts

but would benefit from its preoccupation with folk culture and landscape.

Additionally, American hauntology must attend to racial history, a subject which

has tragically remained understudied in British traditions. Evidence for this trend

emerges in the whiteness of Fisher's hauntological formulation (2014) and minimal mentions in the works of succeeding scholars like Katy Shaw (2018). To date, I know of no extended studies of non-white racial studies and hauntology in Britain. However, I also acknowledge that such might be a gap in my literature review with the increasing pace of academic publishing.

I chose to incorporate these elements as I believed the primary difference between British and American hauntology lay in the two nations' different relationships to their pasts, where Britain sought to return to its roots and America sought to repress its past, especially its wrongs against marginalized groups. I applied these insights to three case studies: 1) the Haitian zombie, 2) the folk legend "How Bloody Branch Got Its Name" from Wise County, Virginia, and 3) black dog stories also from Wise County, Virginia to illustrate my formulation of American hauntology and its relationship to the repressed pasts and peoples in the Americas.

Endnotes

1. Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," in *Bits of Life: Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology*, edited by Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke, 177–92, (University of Washington Press, 2008), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwnqv7.16, 181.

Chapter I: The Spectral Return: Reconsidering Ghosts and Spectrality Studies

Rosi Braidotti posits in her essay "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe" in Bits of Life: Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology that death is not the end for the limits of the human. By reframing death as only another phase in an ongoing liminal process, she invites us to reconsider the notion of death as the horizon of meaning.[1] Using the ghost as an embodiment of Braidotti's ethics, I would like to further Braidotti's categorization crisis and use it to showcase how we might reconsider the spectral. I borrow the language of the categorization crisis from Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." In it, he posits that the monster is the harbinger of the categorical crisis meant to aid in the breakdown of the clash of extremes inherent in binary, "either/or thinking."[2] Braidotti participates in this categorical crisis through her nomadic ethics, which challenges not only distinctions between the human and posthuman by "becoming animal, becoming other, becoming insect-trespassing all metaphysical boundaries."[3] While certainly not a novel understanding, given the long history of animistic existence endowing biological and political life into animals and "inanimate" surroundings, Braidotti pushes the categorical crisis further. She does so seeking to move past distinctions of biological and political life, termed *zoe* and *bios*, by stressing a continual becoming and unbecoming, morphing the idea of a "subject" in an ever-changing web that views the subject as individual and collective. While not outright epistemological anarchy as Braidotti's project has anchoring ideas such as the interdependence of the subject and environment and a temporality which

considers the subject as an evolutionarily driven entity, it toes the line by

showcasing the ever-widening cracks in distinctions between *bios, zoe*, "life," and

"death."[4] It turns over numerous categories all at once, leaving the human

subject stranded in a complex web of environmental associations which are

considerably difficult to sort through given the ever shifting nature of her

epistemology. As such, while using her breakdown between life and death, "bare

life" where one possesses *zoe* but not *bios* becomes reconfigured as the ghost

loses its political life but has no zoological life either. Therefore the element of the

biological becomes decentered from biopolitics and the relationships between the

subject, sovereigns, and their communities, taking on a type of life after life. By

taking such an approach, I push Braidotti's decentering of the categories of "life"

and "death" as part of the evolving and generative realm of human subjectivity,

by showcasing how the web of entangled relationships she seeks to navigate

through her sustainable nomadic ethics is not even bound by zoological life.

Instead through examining relationships between living and dead subjects who

possess *bios* and *zoe* in differing measures the I highlight the persistence of

subjectivity after death and how one might understand in from the perspectives of

the formerly living within human communities.

In focusing upon ghosts as persisting figures that remain entangled in

relationships with the living after their death, their presence also necessitates

reconfigured notions of memory and history. Such theorizations are necessary as

ghosts who return to the living are "out of time" and not present in the temporal

location they originally inhabited. As such, I use biopolitical and monster theory to

further flesh out the relationships with the living that I aim to explore through breaking down "life" and "death" as categories by using Braidotti's sustainable nomadic ethics. This resonates with her theory as she posits the need to rethink subjective temporality in relation to biopower. While Braidoitti originally examines it from the standpoint of genealogy, individual memories, and the genetic code, such changes must be accounted for when the subject has no genetic code to be examined and no body to exist within as enfleshed memory.[5] As such, I use examples from *The Sheridan Tapes* and *Unwell* to showcase one possible reconfiguration of biopolitical frameworks that becomes necessary by the decentering of *zoe* and positioning the spectral not in opposition to living human communities, but rather as a part of them.

The living dead in the gothic podcasts *Unwell* and *The Sheridan Tapes* challenge the categories of life/death and materiality/immateriality. In *Unwell*, Theodore "Wes" Wesley dies decades before the first episode but feels warm, solid, and alive. At the story's start, he interacts with the world around him, only discovering his spectral abilities in later seasons. In *The Sheridan Tapes*, Sam Bailey drowned in Agate Shore's lake as a boy. After making a deal with an unknown entity, he came back to life as something more than human, with the ability to sense emotions, control water, and enter a spiritual state to explore parallel worlds.

Using these unusual formations of spectrality, I posit that the ghost serves as social and shared memory. I mean this both in the sense of hauntological specters, which manifest as cultural traumas that refuse to remain repressed and

continually reemerge (like the specter of communism) and ghosts recorded in our own world. In offering two methods, I hope to inspire a spectral re-turn in the academy where cultural critics begin to move away from their overreliance on understanding ghosts as metaphors and incorporate frameworks that interpret ghosts as once-human beings and agents.I wish for two methods to co-exist and not abandon Derrida's hauntology, which has enhanced American cultural studies. Both hauntological and "real" specters align with Braidotti's notion of death as one phase in a continuing generative process, making their shared operation integral to this project. Removing death as the limit for "the human," as Braidotti proposes, challenges us to consider where the post-human begins or if such a border is necessary.[6] As such, I wish to join monster and biopolitical theory to trouble broader social ideas of sovereignty and immunity/community. Ghosts trouble these concepts and are helpful in considering where to place the new boundary between the human and the post-human.

Endnotes

1. Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," in Bits of Life: Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology, edited by Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke, 177–92, (University of Washington Press, 2008), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwnqv7.16, 181.

2. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in The Monster Theory Reader, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 37-58, 40-41.

3. Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," 178, 182-83.

4. Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," 181.

5. Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe,"179, 183.

6. Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," 181.

A. Theoretical Frameworks

"The Spectral Return," confronts four theoretical bodies. I use monster and biopolitical theory to introduce new ideas on the spectral and their implications for those theoretical frameworks. I am critical of spectral theory and the framework of its origin, hauntology. Ultimately, I wish to move away from overreliance on hauntology and spectrality studies, but not abandon them due to the useful insights they have produced to date.

a. Hauntology and the Spectrality Studies

Hauntology explores how cultures and societies cyclically deal with issues they attempt to repress, but that instead surface repeatedly, never remaining dead. As such, problems "haunt" cultures, much like Marxism does in the West. Derrida renders these issues as ghosts. Focusing on how their perceived non-being is an illusion and how all ideas and speech remains spectral and indebted to earlier words, thoughts, and ideas (2011). While he treats haunting more formally in other writings, in his 1992 interview with Bernard Stiegler called "Spectrographies," which predates *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida outlines the specter, the ghostly figure that comprises hauntology. The ghost, revenant, or specter, three names for the same entity, is the repressed past that reappears repeatedly. The ghost is a spectacle, noticeable by its near visibility as well as absence. Derrida likens it to technologies like the camera recording him. The camera can reproduce his and Steigler's image in their absence. It marks them with an absence and spectrality that will come but has not necessarily arrived, as both would not die for some years following the interview. Derrida likens the

relationship between a person and a specter to that of a person before the law. A person relates to the law as they must obey it. Though, the law has no relation to the person. It watches, observes, and demands without answering, much like in an incident Derrida recalls when he watched *Ghost Dance* (1983) following Pascale Ogier's death in which he felt observed by her ghost as they starred together in the movie.[1]

Spectrality studies is a multidisciplinary field that emerged in the mid-1990s following Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1993) leading to volumes like *The Ghosts of Modernity* (1996), *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1998), and *Fantasm and Fiction* (1999). Crossing fields, literary and media theorists, anthropologists, historians, and other scholars employ hauntology in myriad ways, primarily focusing on metaphorical specters as expressions of revenant ideas and traumas in literature, media, and culture.[2] In *Ghostly Matters,* Avery Gordon showcases Sabina Spielrein's influence on psychoanalysis despite her absence from major essays by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, who repressed their communication with her, and failed to attend the Third Psychoanalytic Congress. In a later chapter Gordon discusses how Toni Morrison's *Beloved* illustrates how the traumas of slavery reemerged as specters during reconstruction by drawing on the story of Margaret Garner.[3] These chapters display how hauntology interfaces with literature and history. When used in conjunction with media studies, hauntology highlights the spectral qualities of technology and its ability to haunt offline. Line Henriksen highlights these qualities in "'Spread the Word': Creepypasta, Hauntology, and an Ethics of

the Curse," examining "The Curious Case of Smile.jpg's" relationship to hoaxes and the how the ethics of "spreading the word" ties into the ethical responsibility of creating hospitable conditions for future generations and other "arrivants."[4] In contrast to other fields, anthropology employs hauntology in various ways from exploring ghost stories to cultural traumas, as highlighted by Bruce and Martha Lincoln's theory of primary and secondary haunting in "Toward a Critical Hauntology: Bare Afterlife and the Ghosts of Ba Chúc."[5]

Spectrality studies primarily concerns itself far more with the image of the ghost. It potentially uses the name because the word specter or spectral etymologically calls back to notions of visibility and vision through specter's relationship to the word spectacle.[6] The spectacle, in this case, is the undead past manifested through the ghost and the questions it asks of the future. In short, the spectacle is the breakdown of linear time manifested through the ghost. Cultural critic Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock attributes the present abundance of spectrality in American culture to millennial anxiety that has yet to abate. Americans confronted with the millennium's opportunity to become something new, experienced anxiety about past injustices, which result in questions about the future.[7] Who are we? Who were we? Who can we become? These questions probe unresolved and revenant traumas which hauntological specters force individuals and societies to confront.

Hauntology's unique multitemporal thrust causes the haunted to consider the past's manifestation in the present and the potential futures that might result

if such traumas go unresolved. Mark Fisher discusses this multitemporality in

Ghosts of My Life. Fisher says:

> Referring back to Hägglund's distinction between the no longer and the not yet, we can provisionally distinguish two directions in hauntology. The first refers to that which is (in actuality is) no longer, but remains effective as a virtuality (the traumatic 'compulsion to repeat,' a fatal pattern). The second sense of hauntology refers to that which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behavior). The 'specter of communism' that Marx and Engels warned of in the first lines of the Communist Manifesto was just this kind of ghost: a virtuality whose threatened coming was already playing a part in undermining the present state of things.[8]

Here Fisher draws on the infamous "specter of communism" to show

hauntology's multi-temporality by explaining how communism as an anticipated

future which has not arrived plays a hand in the present. An example of the *no*

longer within the United States is the specter of slavery. While the 13th

Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, except as punishment for a

crime, the oppression of Black people continued and continues to occur with the

implementation of Jim Crow and mass incarceration in the prison-industrial

complex.[9] While not present in actuality, slavery's specter continues to influence

the United States as a virtuality. Additionally, in some manners, slavery operates

as a no longer and not yet. In her chapter on Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* Gordon

discusses how during Reconstruction the 13th Amendment's and Emancipation

Proclamation's abolitions of slavery did not truly emancipate Black people in the

United States, despite what the state proclaimed. While the Emancipation

Proclamation proclaimed all enslaved persons free, it did not offer true freedom,

which comes with taking ownership of the self. Gordon notes how this occurs in

both the novel and in history as most of the formerly enslaved escaped or had

relatives buy them out of slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation heralded a new era which claimed to arrive through altered statues, but failed to truly materialize, operating as a not yet due to new discriminatory conditions which emerged following the Proclamation. These failures also mark Reconstruction and the years following as influenced by the institution of slavery which is *no longer*. The formerly enslaved possessed an insubstantial freedom not backed by legal protections and threatened by intense racial violence and prejudiced laws; their condition not was therefore too far divorced from the previous conditions of slaves under American chattel slavery.[10] In New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander highlights how post-Emancipation laws allowed slavery to continue in effect, despite its "abolition," noting how after the retreat of federal troops from the South, Southern governments enforced vagrancy and "mischief" laws to imprison blacks and deprive them of rights, forcing them into conditions worse than previous forms of chattel slavery, which at least motivates slave owners to maintain worker health. This continuation of slavery showcases its operation as Fishers idea of the revenant *no longer* in that chattel slavery influences the present despite not existing in actuality or statute, but creating parallel systems nonetheless.[11]

Moreover, spectrality studies often addresses ghosts in literary, cultural, and media theory. These ghosts are, in effect, hauntological icons. They are not a metaphor, but a literary device that signals and embodies the repressed and unaddressed past. The haunted house perfectly embodies how ghosts serve as signs and icons for hauntological ideas. In *Unwell: A Midwestern-Gothic Mystery*,

ghosts appear across the fictional town of Mt. Absalom, Ohio, most notably in the Fenwood House, a boarding house where guests and Dorothy and Lily Harper reside. One notable spirit who inhabits the Fenwood House is Tim Anderson, the partner of Dorothy's uncle Grant Fenwood. He originally died in 1978 following lung cancer and came back as a ghost because of Grant, whom he described as "his heart." Another reason for his resurrection is that Mt. Absalom "takes care of its own." Unusually, Tim and Grant faced no judgment during Tim's lifetime for their status as a gay couple. Tim's reappearance after his death reunites him and Grant until the latter's death in 1996. In Tim's resurrection there appears the hauntological specters of homophobia and racism. Tim coming back to life due to his love for Grant and nobody batting an eye at his return or his relationship with Grant highlights how homophobia becomes spectral in *Unwell*. In "Spectrogaphies," Derrida notes how the specter is of the "invisible visible," noticeable by its absence. Additionally, he notes how specters are not always necessarily revenants which return perhaps due to a repression, which forces the specter to compulsively rise from the dead again and again, an idea that features heavily in Freudian psychoanalysis.[12] For homophobia to act as a repressed revenant in Mt. Absalom, it would need to appear, which it does not; thus it is spectral, but not a revenant. Instead, its spectrality largely emerges when compared to racism, which is fully on display when Theodore Wesley's guidance counselor refuses to meet with him to discuss Theodore's plans after high school due to his race.[13] As such, the presence of racism raises the question of if Mt. Absalom's citizens accepted Tim and Grant's status as a gay couple due to their

whiteness. Much of the story forces Mt. Absalom's citizens to confront its racist legacy such as scrubbing indigenous genocide from the town's history.[14] When read alongside Theodore Wesley's story, Tim's resurrection, and return to Grant creates a breakdown between local and national American politics, where Mt. Absalom is (un)exceptional in its acceptance of homophobia and perpetuation of systemic inequality through racist attitudes.[15] Tim disappears following Grant's death, ending his compulsion to return, until Dorothy and Mt. Absalom's safety is threatened by the ghost of Rev. Silas Lodge. In contrast, non-white ghosts like Wes remain, the desires and traumas that cause their revenance remaining unsatisfied, rendering homophobia spectral through its absence in Unwell and racism a revenant through its repetition.

Though hauntology is prominent in literary and media studies, it remains contested.. In 2002, English literary theorist Roger Luckhurst criticized literary scholars' use of hauntology in his publication, "The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn.'" He noted that scholars using spectral language only pointed out cultural cycles and could not affect actual cultural change, as ghosts are inspired by local traumas that demand local solutions. For example, one can only appease London ghosts by addressing issues in London's history that caused them to appear in the first place instead of broader issues like the failures of Marxism.[16] The nebulous ideas and discussions surrounding hauntological discussions would not put cultural ghosts to rest, only local practical action could accomplish such.

While Luckhurst features as a prominent critic in hauntological circles, he is not its first or biggest one. Mark Fisher and Avery Gordon criticize various formulations of hauntology, including Derrida's construction of the method. Fisher himself found Derrida a "frustrating thinker" and noting that it was not the "apparition of the specter of communism" that haunted the era of capitalist realism (a time when there is no conceivable alternative to capitalism) but its outright disappearance. Communism haunts in the era of capitalist realism as its disappearance is like the specter, notable by its absence and near invisibility, akin to a missing puzzle piece. Fisher ironically also falls into the universalism Luckhurst criticizes. He argues became canceled through analyses of exclusively white and mostly English music, thereby proclaiming the disappearance of the future through the downfall of British social democracy and the emergence of capitalist realism.[17] Avery Gordon departs from Derrida's formulation, doubting it to be the theory of ghosts Adorno and Horkheimer might have written had they expanded their two-page memo "On the Theory of Ghosts." While Gordon did not seek to write a unified theory of ghosts she pushed back against Marxist haunting's tendency to reduce individuals to "a mere sequence of instantaneous experiences which leave no trace.'" By focusing on the individual, Gordon resists formulating haunting as localized. Instead for her, haunting emerges from a set of possibilities meant to address the repression of the past in the present instead of a return to the past. She formulates haunting as such, because in the act of haunting ghosts leave the original time they were alive to appear in a foreign present. Therefore, the local only gets so far as the repression which summons

the ghost continues, but in a different form as it takes place in a different locality than that from which the ghost emerges.[18]

Despite Luckhurst's objections, the academic preoccupation with haunted subjects, whether in literary theory, history, or philosophy, has not ceased since the inception of spectrality studies. The field is experiencing an explosion in its use as an academic framework, with the release of numerous volumes in recent years. Books like *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (2018) and *A Hauntology of Everyday Life* (2021) showcase hauntology's increasing popularity. For example, there is a growing presence of hauntology in anthropology. The article "The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the Emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology," by anthropologists Byron Good, Andrea Chiovenda, and Sadeq Rahimi, asks whether an anthropological hauntology has emerged. They conclude that anthropologists' haunting awareness of inequality and injustice provides grounding for the emergence of hauntological anthropology in which anthropologists learn to live with ghosts of the hauntological and "real" variety in a more just manner. The ethical claim here is for scholars not to throw haunting and its impact on individuals to the wayside.[19] Whether this is just anthropology's latest attempt to remedy its historical intertwining with empire remains unclear. However, what scholars across disciplines can say for sure is that as of this academic moment, hauntology is a fertile ground. It is a moment where scholars can ask questions about its fundamental assertions and use as a method and consider new frameworks to operate alongside hauntology in spectral studies.

For more information on the history of spectrality studies, please consult the timeline that follows for a history of important works in the field.

Endnotes

1. Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, "Spectrographies," in *Echographies of Television*, edited by Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, 113-134, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002), 115-121; hiperf289, "'The Science Of Ghosts' - Derrida In 'Ghost Dance'," YouTube Video, 5:23, January 27, 2007. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQNuPhnmhU4.

1. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Introduction: The Spectral Turn," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, 61-68, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 62.

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5. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in*

Contemporary Cultural Theory, edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, 1-28, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 2.

6. Weinstock, Spectralities Reader, 63-64.

7. Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures* (Zero Books, 2014), 19.

8. U.S. Constitution, amend. 13, sec. 1.

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10. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2012), 31.

11. Derrida and Stiegler, "Spectrographies," 115; Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (Repeater Books, 2017), 9; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 50.

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13. Jim McDoniel, "3.09 - Unfinished Business," *Unwell: A Midwestern-Gothic Mystery*, podcast audio, (July 2021), https://open.spotify.com/show/5aXbLpsfLohCEB8DNsFKWj?si=a2ee3903 295644f7; McDoniel, Unwell, "Theodore."

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15. Roger Luckhurst, "The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn,'" *Textual Practice* 16, 3 (2002): 527-546, 541-42.

16. Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 9-11, 16, 19.

17. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 19-20, 210; Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (Seabury Press, 1972), 216.

18. Byron J. Good, Andrea Chiovenda, and Sadeq Rahimi, "The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the Emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 51 (October 2022): 437-453, 447-48.

Timeline of Spectrality Studies' Development

I have constructed this timeline in part from Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's Introduction to Spectral America, Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen's Introduction to The Spectralities Reader, and Colin Davis's article "Hauntology, spectres and phantoms" published in French Studies.[1]
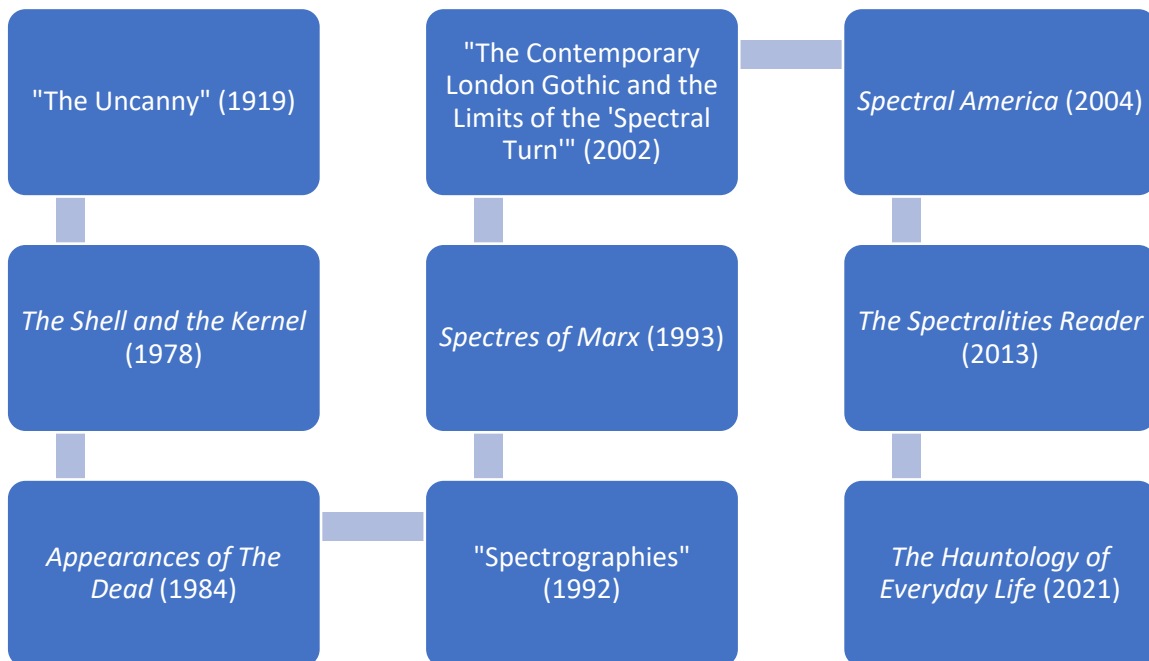
Figure 1. A Timeline of Major Spectrality Studies Texts

"The Uncanny" (1919)

In this essay, Freud puts forward the notion of the uncanny which becomes a foundation of spectral studies and monster studies. In it, he proposes we project repressed impulses onto monsters making them a scapegoat. This piece's attitude toward "real" monsters mimics that of later spectral and monster scholars seeing them as an infantile anxiety.

L'Écorce et le noyau or The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis (1978)

According to Colin Davis, this work by Maria Torok following the death of Nicholas Abraham is a chronologically antecedent work to Derrida that helped spawn hauntology.

Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts (1984)

This book comes just before a period of high interest in ghosts in the late 1980s that continues today. It is concerned with belief in the physical attributes of ghosts over time.

Spectrographies in Echographies of Television (1992; 2002)

"Spectrographies" is a 1992 interview between Jacques Derrida and Bernard Steigler. It outlines the approach Derrida uses in Spectres of Marx, which would appear several months later and is the source of spectrality studies' name.

Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International (1993)

Derrida's Spectres of Marx, published in French in 1993 and in English in 1994. This book outlined Hauntology and spawned the field known as spectrality studies.

"The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn'" (2002)

This essay by Rojer Luckhurst coined the phrase spectral turn and represents one of the early critiques of hauntological approaches to cultural studies, especially in gothic literature.

Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination (2004)

This volume edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock represents the first use of the term "spectralities studies," marking this publication as the consolidation from a

method into a proto-field. The volume is also among the first volumes that address ghosts in American identity and in the American consciousness.

The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Cricicism (2013)

This anthology edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren chronicles the development of spectral studies as a field marking the complete transformation from method to proto-field to field. It contains many important works from the history of spectralities studies and traces it in new directions beyond literature, like haunted geography.

1. The Hauntology of Everyday Life (2021)

This book by Sadeq Rahimi represents a renewed interest in hauntology that began in the late 2010s and continues today in late 2023.

Endnotes

1. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, 1-28, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Introduction: The Spectral Turn," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen, 61-68, (New

York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Colin Davis, "Hauntology, spectres, and phantoms," *French Studies* 59, 3 (July 2005): 373-79, https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/kni143.

b. Biopolitical Theory: Sovereignty, Community and Immunity, and Necropolitics

As this project focuses on employing three specific biopolitical concepts, I will not provide as extensive a view of the field as with monster theory and spectrality studies. However, I will provide a brief conceptual overview of the field but not delve into its history. Instead, I suggest readers look to the volumes I have listed below for more information. Biopolitics, a theoretical framework derived from the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, examines how state mechanisms and sovereigns regulate their citizens' lives and bodies and how the state exercises and mediates power through channels like art, media, scientific knowledge and methods, and technology.

For more information on Foucauldian biopolitical theory, please consult Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1979) or *Society Must Be Defended* (1976). For more information on the development of biopolitical theory since Foucault, I suggest *Biopolitics: A Reader* (2013), edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell, along with *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience* (2008), edited by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip.

The concepts I outline below: sovereignty, community and immunity, and necropolitics are among the most relevant in my mission to revise spectral theory.

I invite you to consider how I employ them in my analyses of Unwell's Theodore

Wesley and The Sheridan Tapes' Sam Bailey, both of which you can find at the

bottom of this page.

Sovereignty

Two phrases capture the relationship between sovereign power and the

biopolitical: "make die and let live." and "make live and let die." While biopolitical

scholars might use variations like "take life and let live," the underlying idea is the

same. Under the principles of sovereignty, the sovereign, as head of the state,

possesses the right to enforce the law to its fullest extent by executing criminals

and political prisoners. Additionally, the sovereign could put away their sword and

let the criminal or prisoner live as an act of mercy, sending them on their way to

remind citizens that their sovereign can both take and spare life as they see fit.

As Foucault notes, this balance always tips in favor of death, as the power over

life and death is the power to kill.[1] This rendering of sovereign power is a

somewhat ancient one. However, during the 19th century the power to "make die

and let live" transformed into the power to "make live and let die."[2] These powers

coexist to a degree as sovereigns can still commute sentences. However, the

apparatuses that set up criminal executions exist largely independently of the

sovereign. In the United States political system, the sovereign's sole intervention

in the judiciary related to the right to kill is their decision on whether federal

executions can occur rather than choosing whom to execute.

Viewed from another lens, the power to spare criminals from execution

validates Foucault's notion that the right to "make die and let live" transformed

into the right to "make live and let die." Stripped of their power to execute, the sovereign can choose which criminal deserves to live and which deserves to die by exercising the right to life over the right to kill. Consider last-minute sentence commutations by governors and suicide watches. These practices work to ensure life, and not providing them lets criminals die without intervention. On a larger scale "make live and let die" would apply to legislation regulating the body, like abortion, given that Foucault focuses a lot of his argument on fertility.

The sovereign might grant a fetus the right to life but let a woman die if she miscarries or has an ectopic pregnancy by preventing any medical intervention that saves the mother's life at the cost of the fetus.[3] The power to make live and let die is essentially the sovereign's decision to regulate and intervene. Regulation might also take the form of granting resources. Consider insulin as a drug. By lowering its price, the sovereign grants more people access to a life-saving drug, but by doing nothing, the sovereign lets those who cannot afford it die. However, these actions occur within external limits on sovereign power, as in the United States' veridictional system, which unlike a jurisdictional system puts the true price largely outside sovereign authority, letting companies determine prices themselves, minus exceptions like Medicare negotiations. The last and perhaps most significant way the power to make live and let die can be applied is through eugenics and state racism. Consider the hysterectomies the United States government forced on Indigenous women and those judged mentally inferior in the twentieth century. There is also most prominent example of "making live and letting die" to date, the Holocaust, which moved beyond

concerns of "deviance" or criminality and created a complex apparatus of state racism, which exposed both the Holocaust's victims and perpetrators to the sovereign power to kill in its pursuit to establish the German race as superior. This fanaticism created a state in which the sovereign could kill anyone, even the German people.[4]

Community and Immunity

Roberto Esposito outlines the concepts of community and immunity in his book *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. He traces the etymological roots of the word community to its antecedent, the titular communitas, which he reads as a gift or shared condition. One cannot give this gift freely, nor is it one that an individual would wish to receive. The gift of communitas "weakens" those who receive it as it brings them into proximity to another person. This "weakening" is the threat of death and annihilation that accompanies closeness to another person. In a sense, this gift or common condition is one that individuals already possess but only reveals itself when in proximity to another. This "weakening" is somewhat reversible with the help of a sovereign. The sovereign takes individuals out of their shared state of nature, ensuring security through the citizens' abdication of the right to take life which they hand over to the state. This monopoly on violence echoes the Hobbesian philosophy that Esposito engages with later in the book during his discussion about *Leviathan* (1651). The state can step in and execute the offenders if people kill one another. However, by sacrificing the right to take life, individuals recognize that the state might take their life. Esposito says, "life is sacrificed for

the preservation of life." Citizens invest their right to kill in the sovereign, but at

the same time creates the possibility that ensuring the preservation of the whole

might mean sacrificing a part, namely themselves. As such, by exchanging the

right to life for the preservation of life the civilization becomes safer as a

collective while entering a more precarious position individually, should the state

choose to weaponize the right to kill deeming them undesirable due to criminality,

"deviance," or state racism.[5]

> Before I introduce the concept of immunity, I invite readers to watch this
>
> [video](). Here, former Trump Administration Attorney Kashyap Patel received
>
> immunity in exchange for his testimony in the January 6th investigations.
>
> Immunity or *immunitas* is the opposite of community or *communitas*. One
>
> who is immune does not share in the gift of communitas whereby their life
>
> is threatened, weakened, or diminished by proximity to other individuals.[6]
>
> The investigations did not threaten Patel's biological but his political life. In
>
> biopolitical theory, scholars refer to political and biological life as *bios* and
>
> *zoe*, two terms I use in the introduction. *Bios* endows a person with
>
> political life, the right to participate in political processes, and, ideally, a
>
> degree of protection from unreasonable state interference. *Zoe*, on the
>
> other hand, refers to that which makes a person breathe. It is entirely
>
> biological and completely out of their control. It is animal or zoological life,
>
> hence the name *zoe*. In this case, by offering his testimony, Patel does not
>
> need to face prosecution, which, if convicted, would strip him of the
>
> political rights that come from him possessing *bios*, like the right to vote.

Otherwise, Patel would be imprisoned, surveilled, and controlled by the state in federal prison. His *zoe* would remain intact as he would still breathe, but he would be reduced to what philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life," in which an individual possesses no *bios* and only *zoe*.[7] In different ways, immunitas and "bare life" both cast the individual out of *communitas*, the former through negating the "weakening" that comes with communitas and the latter by reducing the individual to the state of nature, rendering them *homo sacer*, the man who can be killed without consequence.[8] Each state represents a resumption of complete individual sovereignty, though to varying degrees. Regarding the former, for the specific case the individual need not fear the sovereign's power over death, but the staying of the sword compels them to speak, such as with Patel. However, this condition often applies to only a single legal case. In the case of *homo sacer*, the individual regains their sovereignty by being cast outside the law by the sovereign. At the same time, *homo sacer* no longer receives the legal protections inherent in *communitas* when cast outside the law. Those previously in *communitas* with homo sacer have their individual sovereignty restored in their power to kill *homo sacer* without consequence.

Necropolitics and Necropower

Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian historian, coined the terms necropolitics and necropower in his essay "Necropolitics." Necropolitics and necropower are inverses of biopolitics and biopower, in that they rely on the subjugation of life to

the power of death, rather than the control and regulation of life that biopolitics theorizes. Based on the work of Georges Bataille and G.W.F Hegel, necropolitics argues that to exercise sovereign power is to transgress the ultimate taboo, killing another person, moving the sovereign past death after confronting it. As postcolonial theory, necropolitics often interrogates the colony and the slave plantation. There, the sovereign exercises right to kill without limits and consequences, and the slave and the colonized, usually regarded as "savages," experience civil, social, and biological conditions that suspend them between life and death. Mbembe refers to these systematic constructions that colonialism forces upon the racially othered as "deathworlds" that turn its colonial subjects into the living dead.[9]

Sovereignty, Community, Immunity, and Necropolitics in Action and in Conversation

At the core of any biopolitical discussion lies the question of who should share in the gifts and burdens of communitas and what must become of those who do not share in it. *Communitas* determines which individuals must give up their individual right to kill for the possibility of being killed by a sovereign that those in *communitas* with one another endow with the power of death. Those not in *communitas* with others experience *immunitas* which can come in the form of exemption from the sovereign's power over death or as *homo sacer*, a man outside the law with no legal protection over his life. In the latter, the individual becomes a sovereign, capable of exercising the power over death, but so too can those in *communitas* exercise their power over death as *homo sacer* no longer

receives the protection from death that comes with investing power in a sovereign, where "life is sacrificed for the preservation of life."[10] Examining these categories side-by-side, it becomes clear that all those in a community do not participate in communitas and therefore do not receive equal protection by the sovereign. The two figures most significant to this essay are the slave and the colonized, those indigenous to a land settled by another foreign power's citizens in pursuit of extending the latter's social, political, and economic wealth. Each of these figures experienced social difference which did not entitle them to the sovereign's protection, marking them out as external and alien through intrusive or extrusive means, which Orlando Patterson defines as incorporation as a "domestic enemy" or "defeated enemy."[11] These social processes combined with external markers of difference like tribal tattoos serve to symbolize the slave or colonized as not part of the dominant social order, marking them out as not in communitas and subject to unlimited sovereign power as "savages" outside of the sovereign's protection.[12] The relationships between these concepts position biopolitics as an adaptable framework which can critique the intersections of the biological and political power in imperial or colonial settings, allowing scholars to study power structures from numerous, perspectives, especially those that aim to examine colonial and imperial societies from below, as frameworks like necropolitics, developed by colonial subjects, give voice to the complex liminality of subjects situated between social life and death.

Endnotes

1. Michel Foucault, "'Society Must Be Defended,' Lecture at the Collège de France," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell, 61-81. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 62.

2. Foucault, "'Society Must Be Defended," 61-63.

3. While currently no states with abortion bans have laws on the books that prevent abortion in the case of ectopic pregnancy as noted by an October 2022 report from the Office of Legislative Research, the research arm of the Connecticut General Assembly, a number bills proposed in 2022 prior to the overturning of Roe v, Wade did not include carveouts for ectopic pregnancies. One example includes H.B. 2810, proposed by Representative Brian Seitz during the 101st Missouri General Assembly session. It specifically makes the trafficking of abortion drugs used in ectopic pregnancies in Missouri a Class A felony, punishable by jail time of between ten and thirty years. In 2023, South Carolina's abortion "heartbeat bill" bans abortion after six-weeks to "make live" the fetus by endowing it political protections, giving it *bios* through recognizing its *zoe*. Other states have moved in opposite directions, enshrining abortion protections into law and shielding patients and providers from out-of-state legislation. For example, Minnesota codified abortion rights in January 2023 and in April 2023 signed another bill that protected abortion provides from out-of-state legal attacks. Inversely by codifying abortion protections, the states effectively negate the sovereign's authority to both "let live and make die" and "make die and let live" by shifting the decision of endowing

a fetus with *bios* and *zoe* to the mother and physicians up until the

moment of birth, whereby the fetus, now a citizen, obtains both. Office of

Legislative Research, *Ectopic Pregnancies and State Abortion Laws*,

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4. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 78-79.

5. Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*
   (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 5, 11, 13-14.

6. Giorgio Agamben, "Introduction to Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell, 134-44. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 140.

7. Esposito, *Communitas*, 50.

8. Esposito, *Communitas*, 6, 12-14; Hannah Arendt, "'Selections from The Human Condition," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell, 98-133. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 106; Agamben, "Introduction to Homo Sacer," 149, 153.

9. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell,161-92 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 163-64, 171-73, 186.

10. Esposito, *Communitas*, 14.

11. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982), 38-39.

12. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 59; Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 172.

c. Monster Theory and its Differences from Spectrality Studies

As with spectrality studies, monster theory originates in an academic text from the 1990s. Academic literature like Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's *Monster Theory Reader* dates the origins of monster theory to a 1996 essay by literary scholar Jeffery Jerome Cohen entitled "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," which he published as part of his edited collection titled *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996).[1] However, the origins of this essay very likely owes an intellectual debt to

Donna Haraway's 1985 essay "Cyborg Manifesto." While he does not cite

"Cyborg Manifesto," Cohen does draw from Haraway's 1991 essay "The

Promises of Monsters." In "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Cohen lays out

seven loosely joined theses, which together form a monstrous body, like the

corpses that make up Frankenstein's monster. He outlines this fragmented theory

of "breakable postulates" to help scholars search for cultural moments so they

might understand cultures through their monsters. Drawing on Cohen's essay, I

briefly outline his theses below:

Thesis I: The Monster's Body is a Cultural Body

A monster always results from a specific cultural moment, and its

construction signals fears, desires, and anxieties. It is a temporal and cultural

sign, and the monster requires semiotic reading as it is a metonym. The monster

embodies Derrida's difference, it is uncertain, and its meaning endlessly deferred

and never truly given to those who attempt to read it. The monster resists

resolution and definition, always partially grasped, but never fully defined or

understood as culture rebirths it again and again.[2]

Thesis II: The Monster Always Escapes

Reading a monster requires dealing with traces. They continually reappear

in cultural moments, which give them new meanings. Any logic that attempts to

define the monster will always be insufficient if it does not fail outright. Instead,

one must examine the monster in a web of cultural meanings: literary, social,

political, and historical. The monster will always return anew, demanding a new

reading which at once emerges from its previous incarnations and its current

cultural moment.[3]

Thesis III: The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis

The monster contains multitudes. Monsters are hybrids that defy

categorization, sometimes as the merger of various animals and people and

sometimes as the bridge between the living and dead. They demand thinking that

does not rely on hierarchy on binary categorization. In effect, monsters invite

their readers across an ontological border where knowledge takes on new

interconnected and monstrous structures that traditional wisdom and

interpretation often fail to comprehend through combining contradictory and

seemingly mutually exclusive elements that do not belong together. It is this

combination of elements which renders the monster, which might otherwise be a

fantasy creature or an odd folkloric footnote, truly monstrous.[4]

Thesis IV: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference

The monster is difference manifest. It takes the alterities and Others

present in our world and transforms them. Categories like sexuality, race, and

ethnicity blend together and take on new forms. As the monster bends and twists

these categories, eventually something new emerges which can claim an

independent identity that troubles cultural hegemony, which Raymond Williams

defines as "a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting"

and "a culture which also has to be seen as the lived dominance and

subordination of particular classes.[5] The monster does so by urging those who

examine it to question what hegemonic forces render it monstrous ultimately

revealing its assigned difference as arbitrary.[6]

Thesis V: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible

By defying categorization and existing as an ontologically challenging

entity, monsters stand at the limits of knowledge. They say, "abandon all hope ye

who enter here," to those that wish to explore their complete otherness and

contradiction. These borders reinforce socially enforced norms and behaviors

that try to sustain social constructs patriarchy or heteronormativity. The monster

represents that which the current social order must cast out to maintain its power.

They represent dangers and challenges to hegemonic structures.[7]

Thesis VI: Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire

Here the monster embodies another categorical contradiction: repulsion

and temptation. The monster allows these dual responses to occur

simultaneously, encouraging experimentation in a delineated and liminal space.

Take, for example, Halloween. One can dress up as a monster and frighten

others when such behavior might otherwise be frowned upon. Symbolic of

behaviors deemed culturally dangerous, monsters transform them into comedy

rendering it possible to express repressed desires like homosexuality in a space

separate from day-to-day existence. These transformations or moments where

hegemonic structures temporarily embrace the monster act as a sort of

inoculation whereby the desire remains broadly repressed through limited

exposure, much like a vaccine. The monster questions the distance between

itself and the reader, asking the reader to measure its monstrousness in relation to their taboo.[8]

Thesis VII: The Monster Stands at the Threshold of Becoming

Monsters ask us who we are and why we created them. They represent the potential of what we could be if we avoid cultural repression. Monsters represent the capability of culture and society to transform into something unrecognizable, spawned by questioning their values and categorical assumptions about race, gender, and sexuality, among others.[9]

Differences from Spectrality Studies

The figures examined by monster theory and spectrality studies differ in several ways. The first is the purpose of the ghost and the monster. The ghost exists to showcase the return of unaddressed cultural traumas and ideas. The monster highlights difference, that which is pushed beyond the boundaries of "acceptable" and becomes transgressive. The ghost then is a socio-temporal construction, whereas the monster is a socio-cultural one. The second is what the ghost and monster demand. While both demand attention and resist closure, their demands' content differs, with the ghost asking the living to address the localized traumas that perpetuate their unrest and the monster asking individuals to attempt to read and interpret them due to their fractured origins which can reside in various marginalized groups.[10] Shifting and defying categories the monster requires constant reassessment of what spawned it and what it signals. These sources are not apparent, as the monster's origin is fragmented. The

monster comes about from the various fears and desires expressed in a specific cultural moment and does not immediately signpost its origins. The third difference resides in origins. The ghost comes about through repression of the past, namely the suppression of historical misdeeds and particular ideologies. The monster comes about through fears spawned by challenges to cultural systems, like those that rely on binary thinking and categorization, which Cohen expresses in his third thesis. The fourth is their capacity for change. The ghost is often a static figure, returning to demand that which is unaddressed and remains repressed. Because the monster always escapes, it risks becoming something new. When it reappears, it is never quite the same, like Dracula in his appearance in London with a new style and outfit.[11] They invite and incite transformation. The fifth and final difference is how each method relates to its figures' mythologies. Spectrality studies often examines ghosts as metaphors or literary devices. They are functions and tools, one piece in the toolkit of a spectral scholar. As such, mythology, legends, and folk tales often minimally concern the spectral scholar. Monster theory examines the monster through a web of interconnected relationships. It relies on the monster's previous and current incarnations, ancient and contemporary legends, and the cultural texts in which the monster appears. While neither method necessarily concerns itself with "real" monsters or ghosts, monster theory is more likely to draw on the source material that inspires its central figure than spectrality studies.

Endnotes

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2. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 37-58, 38.

3. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 38-39.

4. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 40-41.

5. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford University Press, 1978), 110.

6. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 41-45.

7. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 45-48.

8. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 49-52.

9. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 52.

10. Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat,* trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 33.

11. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 39.

B. **Applying Spectral, Biopolitical, and Monster Theory: A Media Analysis**

I apply biopolitical, hauntological, and monster theories and apply them to *The Sheridan Tapes* and *Unwell: A Midwestern Gothic Mystery*. I begin by providing a biography of Samuel Bailey and Theodore "Wes" Wesley by

providing a link of significant moments from the series, including an embedded episode that strongly illustrates their spectral nature, and a brief synopsis of their history and character arc. Afterward, I proceed by using hauntological, biopolitical, and monster theory frameworks to the series of moments I highlight to analyze their ghostly constructions within their respective series, noting how they challenge traditional categories present within hauntological discourse, such as the lines between the living and the dead.

The Sheridan Tapes: Sam Bailey

Biography

Before beginning my analysis of Sam Bailey, I wish to provide a character biography which I will attach in three forms: (1) A link to Episode 25 of The Sheridan Tapes, entitled "Time's Imperious Voice," (2) A transcript of the episode for readers who are hearing impaired, (3) a short one paragraph synopsis of Sam's character arc and history.

[Episode Link](#)

[Transcript](#)

Significant Moments

Sam joins the Agate Shore Police Department

0:53-3:23 (Sam Bailey's Line: "Sorry to bother..." to "Uh, nice to...")

The Echo reveals to Sam that He is Not Alive

28:28-31:48 (Sam Bailey's Line: "For someone who..." to Anna Sheridan

(Other)'s Line: "So no: I...")

<u>Important Moments from Other Episodes</u>

Episode 26: "And the Trembling Stars Below the Waves" - <u>Audio and Transcript</u>

The Broom of Anna Sheridan (A Parody of the Ship of Theseus)

1:21- 5:34 (Anna Sheridan's Line: "So - here's a..." to "So am I...")

Sam Causes the Echo's Duplicates to Drown After Going Back Into the Lake

7:27-9:03 (Dispatch's Line: "Dispatch to greyhound" to Bill Tyler's Line: "Jesus,

Sam, what...")

Sam Wakes Up Healed in Oslow General

10:28-11:34 (Sam Bailey's Line: "Oh god my.." to Oh. Oh. Of...")

Morrison Talks to Sam and Tells Him He is Not Human

13:26-20:07 (Sam Bailey's Line: "So... Am I..." to Chief Morrison's Line: "Well...

could a...")

Morrison Breaks into Sam's House to Arrest Him

22:19-25:36 (Chief Morrison's Line: "Bailey! Bailey, open..." to "Get him out...")

Bill Tyler Hides Sam and He Becomes an Actual Fugitive

25:50- 26:38 (Maria Sol's Line: "You're sure he..." to "Yeah. Sure.")

B-Side 01: "Heart" - <u>Audio and Transcript</u>

Sam's Mother Talks to Him About Love

1:14-1:47 (Sam's Line: "When I was...")

Sam Mentions His Drowning

4:30-5:39 (Sam's Line: "I don't know..." to "I tried to...")

Sam mentions that he is Gray-Asexual

19:14-20:15 (Sam Bailey's Line: "He was all...")

Episode 67: "Auribus Teneo Lupum" - Audio and Transcript

Sam Tries to Rescue Molly Davis from the Otherworld and Describes What He Sees

6:07-28:52 (Sam Bailey's Line: "There that should..." to SFX Note: [Long Silence])

Brief Biographical Synopsis

Samuel Isaac Bailey was born sometime in the early 1990s in Agate Shore, Oslow County, Nevada. He died in the mid-1990s by drowning in Agate Shore's lake before his "resurrection," which occurred after making a deal with a voice coming from the lake. Shortly after Sam emerged from the lake, his parents died, and he went to live with his grandmother in Arrowhead, a slightly larger town in Oslow County that received the water that later dried up Agate Shore's lake. Sometime later, he left Arrowhead to attend college in Los Angeles. Two months after Sam graduated, he returned to Agate Shore to work as a homicide detective. There he met his future partner Sergeant Allen Gott. Eventually, Allen

died due to the entity Sam bargained with, and Sam joined the Oslow County

Police Department, where Chief Edgar Morrison assigned him to Anna

Sheridan's missing person case. He eventually tracks down, confronts, and

defeats an entity known as The Echo, which had hunted Anna for the better part

of a decade. The Echo later reveals to him that he died in the lake. Sam passes

out and wakes up in Oslow General, where he talks with Morrison, who also tells

Sam he is a memory of Sam Bailey and is not human. After his recovery,

Morrison tries to arrest Sam. Sam runs from Morrison and joins up with The

Institute for Stellar Propulsion, Heuristics, and Aeronautics (ISPHA) and Dr. Ren

Park, where he works as a Searcher to avert an as of yet unspecified

apocalypse. While with ISPHA, Sam tries to develop his abilities of emotion

sensing and astral projection. He notes this is a risk as by doing so he might end

up as an experiment like Anna Sheridan did years earlier.

Analysis

Sam's story revolves around a shifting role with *immunitas*. When working

as a detective, Sam possesses qualified immunity when acting as an extension

of sovereign power, as exemplified by his ability to freely execute creatures and

entities like the Echo, which posed as a human without legal recourse. This

immunity granted him limited sovereign power in the classical sense of "make die

and let live," as he did not have the freedom to let entities go but only to execute

them as necessary. According to Foucault in "Society Must Be Defended," the

balance of sovereign power always tips towards death, essentially giving Sam

sovereign power as it is the right of death or the right to kill, but not the right to

life.[1] When working as an officer for the Oslow County Police Department, he possessed immunity in two other manners. First is legal immunity. After the incident with the Echo, where Sam stole a vehicle and killed the Echo and its clones, Chief Morrison offered to sweep everything under the rug so long as Sam served as his sheepdog. He possessed the second type of immunity before his reveal as a non-human memory of Sam Bailey: immunity from community. While this may seem somewhat redundant, Sam often worked the Sheridan case alone. Though he worked closely with Bill Tyler, Sam was not assigned a partner or required to work with another officer. He had immunity from communal obligations and the shared responsibility that often comes with law enforcement cultures where officers rally around and protect one another from internal or external threats. Lastly, Edgar Morrison wielded power delegated to him by the Oslow County Commission Board, attempted to reduce Sam to the status of living dead by making his role within the Oslow County Police Department a type of death-world. By the threat of extermination or prosecution Morrison would make Sam work as his sheepdog and exterminate monsters. If Morrison had accomplished such, Sam would have undergone a social, civil, or potentially physical death. The possibility of Morrison killing Sam remains unknown, but he would certainly try. This uncertainty creates a possible third type of immunity for Sam, immunity from death, which he may or may not possess.[2]

Sam's character arc and his journey from detective to fugitive exemplify the differences between *bios* and *zoe* and Giorgio Agamben's idea of "bare life."[3] In his time in Agate Shore, he had a partner, a fruitful career, and ultimately

freedom to move about and live as he wanted as a member of the town and Oslow County. Though he seemingly had these social and political freedoms when transferring to Oslow County Police Department, Chief Edgar Morrison kept a close watch on Sam from the beginning. While Morrison did not initially deprive Sam of livelihood or use him as an experiment in the underground chamber featured in the Season 2 Finale "In A Handful of Dust." Morrison would seize Sam's rights to bodily autonomy and self-determination. However, with Bill's help, Sam escapes and becomes a fugitive and something like *homo sacer.* Others could kill Sam without legal consequences, but he remained set apart due to his monstrous status. In his time with ISPHA, he must abide by their directions and go on their missions lest he risk subjection to experiments or capture by Chief Morrison and the Oslow County Police Department. His possible modes of existence are either as a fugitive, imprisoned criminal, or as an experiment, as the potential for others to kill him remains undecided. He lives in a death-world, one concurrently created by ISPHA, which receives federal funds, and Chief Morrison, an instrument of Nevada law enforcement, gone rogue. As it stands, Sam will always possess his *zoe*, but he lost his *bios* in Season 1, rendering him the living dead of Mbembe's death-world.[4]

Sam's status as a monster is not necessarily tied to social and civil deaths, as from early on in his life, he defied categorization and experienced the status of an other. His existence as a monster preceded these events, and Morrison had a keen interest in working closely and collaboratively with Sam due to his status as a monster. However, when Sam defied Morrison's expectations, he died

necropolitical social and civil death. Sam is a monster in two senses, one of which is his sexuality. Regarding the first, as he notes in "Heart," his mother used to tell him, "Sam, just because you don't love the people you're supposed to, doesn't make that love any less real." Her voice here, which attempts to comfort Sam, reveals that, before discovering his gray-asexuality, he did not love in the proper ways. He challenged heteronormative and allonormative ideas, not only the idea that as a man, he should experience sexual attraction only towards women, but that he should experience sexual attraction, which for Sam sometimes not occurred.[5] As a result, besides Allen, who was happy to wait even if Sam never loved him back, those that fell for him often did not understand and abandoned him.

The second means of existing as a monster comes from his ontology. As an animate memory, he troubles the categories of life and death, being and non-being, and human and monster. Much like Wes, he is a physical manifestation of a deceased individual who can inhabit both corporeal and incorporeal states, with Sam existing in both simultaneously, as he reveals in "Auribus Teneo Lupum." Though The Sheridan Tapes never refers to Sam as a ghost, one can read him as a ghost and not a ghost. At once, Sam exists as a consciousness in a body and a spirit in the "Otherworld." With effort, he can join these two states and consciously perceive the "Otherworld." He is a material and spiritual simulation of a dead child, somewhat mimicking the idea of Theodore-Wes, where two separate identities emerge from a singular existence transformed by death. However, the trouble with Sam is that he does not necessarily perceive himself

as different from the Sam Bailey that drowned in Agate Shore. Instead, others thrust the category upon him. He recognizes himself as a transformed human but does not fully separate himself from the Sam Bailey that drowned, rendering his identity unstable and nearly impossible to neatly categorize.

Endnotes

1. Michel Foucault, "'Society Must Be Defended,' Lecture at the Collège de France," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 61-81, 62.

2. *Roberto Esposito, Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6, 11-13.

3. Giorgio Agamben, "Introduction to Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 134-144 , 149.

4. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 161-192, 169, 186.

5. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 37-58.

Unwell: Theodore "Wes" Wesley

Biography

Necessary for understanding Theodore "Wes" Wesley is a character biography, which I will attach in three forms: (1) A link to Season 3 Episode 1 of Unwell, entitled "Theodore," (2) A transcript of the episode for readers who are hearing impaired, (3) a short one paragraph synopsis of Wes's character arc and history.

Episode Link

Transcript

Significant Moments

Abbie Reads Wes' Grave

2:01-2:08 (Abbie's Line: "Theodore Wesley...")

Wes is Unsure of What He Wants

7:14-9:42 (Mrs. Epstien's Line: "Mr. Conners has been..." to "Nie ma zo...")

Colin Fenwood Talks to His Mother's Gravestone. A Strange Discussion with the Dead.

11:36-12:18 (Colin's Line: "Introducing the late..." to Theodore's Line: "She sounds...")

Grant Fenwood Speculates About His Father's Actions

14:20-14:48 (Grant's Line: Hey uh..." to "God I wish...")

Wes's Death and Abbie's Explanation

19:11-21:13 (Theodore's Line: "What I want..." to Lily's Line: "What does that...")

Important Moments from Other Episodes

Season 2 Episode 11: "The Gang Goes in" - Audio and Transcript

Norah Appears and Wes is Surprised to Meet a Ghost

6:35-7:28 (Rudy's Line: "Everyone, meet Norah..." to Wes's Line: "But there's a...")

Marisol Scold's Lily for Putting Wes in a Situation Where He Might Realize He is a Ghost

8:01-8:26 (Marisol's Line: "So you're putting..." to Dot's Line: "I agree. Why...")

Norah Reveals to Wes that He is a Ghost and He Vanishes

20:12-21:43 (Norah's Line: How do you..." to Dot's Line: "Where is he?"

Season 3 Episode 12: "Return" - Audio and Transcript

Wes Returns

6:13-10:54 (Dot's Line: "Wes?" to Wes's Line: "A deep breath.")

Season 4 Episode 6: "The Nerve" - Audio and Transcript

Wes Speculates He is A Memory

6:53-7:37 (Wes's Line: "I don't believe..." to "But I'm not...")

Season 4 Episode 8: "Ephemeris" - Audio and Transcript

A Theory of Ghosts, Memory, and Energy

18:26-21:41 (Abbie's Line: "All right. Let's..." to Rudy's Line: "Back and forth..."

Season 4 Episode 10: "Town Meetings" - <u>Audio</u> and <u>Transcript</u>

Wes Attends Town Meeting

There are no significant timestamps or lines as while Wes attends the meeting he does not say anything.

<u>Brief Biographical Synopsis</u>

Theodore "Wes' Wesley was born in 1937, died in 1954 due to a seizure, and reappeared in 2016 to work at the Fenwood House, two years before Lily Harper returned to Mount Absalom in Summer 2018. As part of a black family, he faced racism from town members, including from his high school guidance counselor, who refused to talk to him about his senior year. He had no direction by the time his senior year approached, only wanting to "help." Following his reappearance in 2016, he remains unaware that he is a ghost until it is revealed to him by fellow ghost Norah Tendulkar in the Mt. Absalom Observatory. Afterward he vanished, unsure of himself. After wrestling with his identity, he eventually returns to Dot and Lily Harper. He speculates that he is a memory and calls himself a separate person from Theodore Wesley. He reintegrates into town life, resuming the social life he had before he realized he was a ghost.

Analysis

Wes's status as a ghost is vague. Unwell establishes that Wes is both corporeal and incorporeal, entering each state as he chooses. He can teleport and move to various places across Mt. Absalom with ease. Compared to the traditional models of ghosts as purely spectral, with occasional tangibility, and

limited visibility, Wes seems like an outlier, his status as a ghost-like memory. He challenges the category of ghost. However, given his resemblance to Theodore, whom Wes considers a separate person, there comes the question of if he was ever alive. A being cannot attain the status of living dead if it did not possess life in the first place. Here Braidotti's displacement of death as the horizon of meaning and the reconfiguration of subjective temporality comes into play. Wes is not Theodore, so he cannot be Theodore's ghost. However, by looking at death as a part of a generative and transformative process, Wes emerges as another stage in the life of Theodore-Wes.[1] Braidotti's idea allows two separate identities to emerge from a being with the same memories as Theodore's death is not the ultimate determiner of Wes's life.

Instead, as confirmed in the Season Five finale "Wes" is a memory of "Theodore" created by the town of Mt. Absalom out of a grief to preserve him from death.[2] He is not Theodore as he existed, nor is he simply a copy that contains all his memories. He is a distinct entity with his own personality and body, yet still remains inextricably connected to Theodore, who is not necessarily a predecessor, sibling, or origin point. Rather, their complicated temporality and subjectivity emerge in the space between Theodore's death and Wes's creation. Wes has a life after life rooted in Theodore, yet not tied to his temporality through any genetic or memory-based relationship, which Braidotti discusses in as motivations for the need to shift the idea of subjective temporality as part of her rendering of sustainable nomadic ethics. As subjects, Theordore and Wes are connected yet independent, possessing an identity distinction not found in the

other ghosts, showcasing the relevance of Braidotti's framework to the task of analyzing Wes's ghostliness.

Listeners must read Unwell's ghosts as monsters instead of as hauntological phantoms. Tim Anderson did not experience homophobia, but he returned due to his love for Grant. The specter of homophobia's absence remains present in his story, but racism is not the defining point of Wes's story. While a repressed past may yet emerge to explain how Wes, Nora, Tim, and the other ghosts returned from the dead and render them hauntological figures. For now, such a condition remains impossible. Instead, Wes and his fellow ghastly compatriots challenge the category of ghost. Wes is, in a sense, a meta-monster. He is a monster that challenges the category of the monster itself. As such, debates about his life or non-life are rather pointless. Wes is something that emerged from Theodore's death. Wes is endowed with *bios*, a social and political life, being a part of Mt. Absalom's community, but not *zoe*, biological life. Just as Wes displaces death with his emergence from Theodore's death, he displaces life by his possession of *bios* over *zoe*, rendering him an ambiguous figure. Theodore possessed more *zoe* than *bios* as a Black person. His guidance counselor refused to talk to him and, out of racist motives, attempted to render him an aimless subject that would produce labor in his market job but not benefit from it. Instead of resurrecting as a ghost, if Theodore had lived longer without resolving his personal crisis, he might have become a biopolitical zombie inhabiting a death-world with no way up. Racism would render him politically and socially dead, depriving him of his *bios* but keeping his *zoe* intact.

However, as the entity known as Wes, he escapes this potential fate as a biopolitical zombie, a notion I draw from Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, who wrote about the formation of zombies from the Haitian plantation.[3] In this framework Dillon explores how forms social life persists within the extractive deathworld of the plantation that otherwise attempt to negate the *bios* of the enslaved. Theodore, had he not passed out, would have faced a similar fate through figures like his high school guidance counselor who tried to limit Theodore's post-graduation opportunities. Had such occurred he would have remained in a racist town with limited opportunies, that would extract labor from him for minimal pay in an undesirable position. Wes's very construction as a ghost prevents hauntological readings of his figure. However, monster theory enables scholars to read Wes from the web on entangled meanings inside *Unwell*'s canon and American history to understand the cultural forces and moments that created him.[4]

Though a sovereign cannot reduce Wes to Agamben's notion of "bare life," where he possesses *zoe* but not *bios*, Wes still dies a biopolitical death. Mbembe's necropolitics also includes forms of death like social and civil death.[5] Lily's suspicion and Nora's revelation cause Wes to lose the status of a human subject. She does not fully trust him, and Nora extinguishes the humanity from his self-perception. While Dot Harper tries to retain his status as a human subject, claiming to Lily and Marisol that it does not matter that Wes is a ghost, her attempts ultimately fail as he shifts from being accepted as human to an othered and monstrous state. Wes eventually regains a form of social life in the

Season 3 Finale, with Dot, Lily, Marisol, and others work to accept his ghostly nature. He even participates in a town meeting towards the end of Season 4, which grants him a type of political life. However, in these settings, Wes is a resident of Mt. Absalom and a community member, even though he is not a human member. Wes loses the position of a human subject, which causes a social death. However, he emerges with a new secondary form of social and political life, which is difficult to explore with his limited engagement with the town's population after his second reappearance. However, extrapolating this figure to the ghost, we can see the ghost retains a form of social life after life.[6] Death transforms the ghost from the human to the once-human, rendering them ghosts with a capacity for visual and verbal communication, a topic I explore in the following pages.

Endnotes

1. Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe," in *Bits of Life: Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology*, edited by Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke, 177–92, (University of Washington Press, 2008), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwnqv7.16, 181.

2. Bilal Dardai, "5.12 - Remaining," *Unwell: A Midwestern-Gothic Mystery*, podcast audio, (September 2023), https://open.spotify.com/episode/6xDhADQ5oPfT4Yqin0Cihn?si=ee4fee5c9d194ee8.

3. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "Zombie Biopolitics," *American Quarterly* 71, 3 (September 2019): 625-652, 627.

4. Braidotti, 181; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 37-58, 38.

5. Giorgio Agamben, "Introduction to Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, edited by Adam Sitze and Timothy C. Campbell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 134-144, 149.

6. Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet: The Horror of Philosophy* Vol. 1 (Zero Books, 2011).

C. Towards A New Spectrality: Ghosts as Memory and Insights from Theory and Media

Having outlined biopolitical concepts and applied them to *Unwell* and *The Sheridan Tapes*, I wish to offer five theses toward developing a new spectrality. Like Cohen's theses, these insights do not compose a complete or definitive theory of spectrality. Instead, I mean to develop ideas that include hauntological, fictional, and "real" ghosts at once and encourage other scholars to develop a multidisciplinary, multinatural, and multi-optic vision of spectrality and its functions across mediums. With multidisciplinary spectrality, I hope to offer potential routes for historical, philosophical, theological, folkloric, and other explorations of ghosts that move beyond the current paradigm. I draw the notion of a multinatural spectrality from Nichole Anderson's article "Monstrous Anthropologies: Is an Ethnography of Monsters Possible?" In it, she suggests the need for an onto-

epistemological turn in anthropology, one I also see as necessary in spectrality studies. Engaging with the spectral and monstrous requires confronting how one knows and how being impacts knowledge. As such, a multinatural perspective, an onto-epistemological framework, recognizes that ghosts or monsters might see a person in a different light than we see them or ourselves, such as how humans can see animals, sometimes even the same one, as prey, nuisances, or companions.[1] Novel ideas about perspective and its relationship to being can help bridge the ontological divide between humans and monsters and allow us to view the world from different ontological vantage points in relationship to the material world.[2] Though the ontological gap I focus on bridging concerned with encounters between humans, ghosts, and monsters in the material world in which we reside, this framework also offers useful insights when applied to fictional settings such as literature and television. In addition to mutlinatural perspectives, the multi-optic view, originating from Claire Jean Kim's notion of multi-optic vision in Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age, allows scholars to see from other perspectives, and multinaturalism encourages us to develop and open complicated webs of relationships between the human, spectral, and monstrous for study.[3]

With my mission and hopes for the future set forth, I offer five theses towards a new spectrality.

Thesis I: Ghosts exist as animate memory with the capacity for a form of social and political life.

Taking a view of ghosts as animate memory, a notion not unheard of in fiction as evidenced by Theodore Wesley and Sam Bailey, allows for the incorporation of hauntological, fictional ghosts, and "real" ghosts in the academy at a time when we do not possess all the answers for the latter's ontological status the uncertainty caused by Enlightenment thinking which focuses on the empirical and material world. Sigmund Freud is a relevant example of this thinking. In his influential essay "The Uncanny," which regards ghosts in our material reality as phantoms that arise from primitive beliefs that do not affect those who discard such irrational thoughts.[4] However, what can be said by looking from the psychoanalyst's perspective or that of the contemporary hauntologist like Avery Gordon is that ghostly presences create a temporal disjuncture, whether by retaining primitive beliefs or the ghost returning to a world it never knew. While Gordon deals with ghosts of a more literary nature as Martha and Bruce Lincoln note in "Toward a Critical Hauntology: Bare Afterlife and the Ghosts of Ba Chúc," her work creates a space for the non-material and not quite gone. However, I do disagree with the Lincolns' analysis that the dead recede in her account, even if grounded on literary rather than folkloric grounds.[5] Instead, she places haunting in a social world where the ghosts make demands of the living, but find themselves stranded in a strange and unfamiliar world, no longer belonging to the past or their new present.[6] What can be said definitively is that ghosts function as an imprint of a previous era. By looking at ghosts as memory, we offer them a status in literary studies greater than a signpost for a repressed past that the living needs to resolve, which Luckhurst critiques heavily.

Instead, they gain significance as new sources of historical, social, religious, and political knowledge. What I mean when I say to examine ghosts as memory is to understand that ghosts in our world inhabit a complex nexus of individual, familiar, and cultural memories which often shape their encounters with the living as they speak and impart knowledge. Therefore, by saying a ghost is memory, I do not mean it literally, but functionally. As I will discuss more in Thesis III, ghosts manifest in various manners, with some appearing visually and others only interacting with the material world through manipulating objects. Others can speak with the living, and others appear unaware that they are dead, continuing the former routines none the wiser. The latter offer the most significance for ghosts as memory. Please listen to the two media pieces below.

"Story 7"

"Ghosts: Episode 1 – Why Ghosts Matter"

Each of these stories contains events where ghosts replicate actions they likely completed in their day-to-day lives. In the first piece, the author admits that their father died with the stereo on, and they can sometimes hear it coming through the wall at night. Additionally, the author recalls hearing footsteps in the rooms their grandfather would spend significant amounts of time in, and they hear a phantom phone in the glamor room. Though these events are all spectral in nature, they share a commonality of hinting towards the homes' previous states and its occupants' activities. While there is no note about how often their father listened to the stereo, its consistent appearance as a sourceless noise might indicate he listened to it a lot. For their grandfather, the footsteps manifest

in areas where he spent significant amounts of his day-to-day life. Concerning

the phantom phone, it is possible that the room previously contained a phone.[7]

However, these interpretations might also emerge from family members focused

on devices the ghost might use to communicate, attempting to tie them to the

grandfather's actions during life instead of recognizing a ghost attempting to

communication through the means at its disposal. In the second story, Patrick

Quinn's grandfather recalls how the spirits in his old house used the staircase to

move between floors made from old 2x6 boards. It is possible that ghosts used it

frequently in life. Patrick's grandfather also mentions that the ghosts were curious

and wondered why he lived there since he was not a member of their family.

These ghosts appeared to Patrick's grandfather visually, interacted with him, and

talked with him, much like a human agent. The spirits additionally maintained

relationships with one another. They are animate, but not necessarily living, a

memory that plays out roles and scenarios as they did in life but can interact with

the living. The ghosts are animate testimonies of the past, animate memories, or

unliving histories.[8]

The degree to which a ghost possesses political and social life is unstable.

It depends heavily upon cultural attitudes towards ghosts, the degree to which

the dead are present in the social lives of the living, and how they manifest. Take,

for example, this story told by an Algonquian resident. At the end of the story,

they talk about a spirit that results from members of their reservation misusing a

ritual known as a shaking tent ceremony. The author also mentions another event

where ancestor spirits chastised living tribe members for using the ceremony

solely to prove its effectiveness. In the ritual, the elders contact the ancestors for guidance in times of harsh struggles to seek guidance to find food when starving in the dead of winter. This advice from the ancestors impacts tribal actions and community decisions. They remain a part of the living world and play a part in tribal politics, possessing bios but not zoe.[9] In other cases, ghosts might exist purely socially, letting their relatives know they are okay after their passing.

However, by remaining a part of the living's lives ghosts possess a form of social life. Death transforms the forms of political and social life the ghost can experience, but it does not necessarily reduce their capacity for possessing bios.

Thesis II: Ghosts are what the sovereign cannot kill.

In "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe draws on French philosopher Georges Bataille's work on death. Bataille uses embodied language towards death, talking about the excess and the stench that results from it, calling it the putrefaction of life as life can only exist in exchange with death. It is the stench and source of life's decay, a physical, metaphysical, and metaphorical overflow. When life ceases, waste overflows and excretes, and the ghost emerges, there comes a question of the ghost's relationship to the body.[10] Is it a result of Bataille's stench of excretions, evidence of the wasting away of life? I do not believe so. As Wes and Sam evidence, they retain physical forms and something resembling life but cannot die, not for a lack of trying on Sam's part. The ghost is what cannot die. Yes, it is what remains, but in a biopolitical sense, it is also the part of life that the sovereign cannot kill or hold power over. It is immune from community and evades the sovereign yet can still possess political and social life.[11] As a result,

the ghost both inhabits and surpasses the biopolitical, remaining and outmaneuvering those who attempt to oppress it or silence it. While applicable to both "real" and fictional ghosts, it remains truer of the latter as in real life encounters with ghosts, individuals endowed with sovereign or comparable power can alter ghostly testimony. An example of this includes the use of "spectral evidence," or testimony offered by ghosts or entities in the shape of Salem's community members, living or dead, usually through dreams, within the Salem Witch Trails. Individuals offered such evidence during the witch trials to such a degree that Governor William Phips disbanded the Court of Oyer and Terminer, a name for the court Phips created to try cases during the Salem Witch Trials. He later formed a new court and specifically asked them to ignore spectral evidence.[12] While under English common law one needed testimony in order to convict, there remained considerable issues with the use of spectral evidence and testimony first due to the difficulty of distinguishing dreams and genuine testimony as well as the potential for fabrication by the living community members presenting such evidence.

The ghost as memory is also the ghost as testimony. It can call out and testify against the sovereign, informing the living of the sovereign's misdeeds when they might otherwise try to revise the historical record. The ghost is a radical resistance. Though ghosts who resist the oppressed past are classical hauntological revenants, hauntology does not address their capacity to surpass biopolitical oppression and confront the sovereigns who tried to oppress them in

life. The hauntological ghosts are signposts, not beings capable of political resistance.

To illustrate my language of ghosts as testimony, I would like to pull a clip from Doctor Who's 2017 Christmas Special "Twice Upon a Time." The enemy in the episode is the Testimony, a group that wishes to archive the lives and voices of the dead just before their final moments. Here the dead, like ghosts, testify and relay their life experiences, the only difference being that The Testimony does so through glass avatars. Please watch. In this clip, the Doctor talks to his now deceased companions Bill and Nardole and they try to convince the Doctor that because they are memories, they are everyone, suggesting a link between memories and alternative forms of life, like ghosts.

Bill and Nardole's notion that they are everyone and by their ghostliness ghosts are everyone and everyone is a ghost offers implications for sovereignty and haunting which I will briefly examine. At its core, the idea of ghosts as everyone hints at the social nature of haunting. Here I use haunting both in the more metaphorical and sociological sense Gordon employs in Ghostly Matters and more traditional renderings of haunting from fiction and folklore. As Gordon points out, the ghost is a social figure and haunting is a social relationship, namely a structure of feeling, which she draws from Raymond William's concept of incomplete and emergent social relationships not fully apprehended by the social consciousness or social relationships that exist as private and isolating.[13] What this formulation of haunting means for sovereignty is that everyone has the capacity to haunt as haunting encapsulates individual historical experiences like

that of Sabina Spielrein who Gordon analyzes in a chapter on psychoanalysis and moves beyond it concerning wider cultural formations, such as how slavery returns to haunt the living in the United States, often in very material ways. While the individual might disappear from the archive due to an exercise of sovereign power, traces, atomized fragments remain within the social fabric of haunting that cannot truly be erased, especially when one looks to the sources behind the sources, much like Gordon's investigation into Spielrein's absence from the Third Psychoanalytic Congress.[14] As such, in traditional and hauntological formulations of haunting, the ghost remains what the sovereign can scatter to the wind, but not truly kill.

Thesis III: There is no single ghost.

Ghost stories reveal that ghosts can manifest in multiple ways at once across time and space. In the above stories, the dead communicate through voices manifested during rituals, through sounds of their former routines and activities, through messing with electronic objects, and through appearing visually and speaking with the living. Ghosts are not static or stable ontological constructions. As such, it is imperative to understand ghosts along four separate axes: corporeality to immateriality, visibility to invisibility, no electronic interference to complete electronic shutdown, and silent to conversational. A ghost's position on these continuums can shift at a moment's notice. However, some ghosts may not shift and appear the same each time. By the nature of its construction, a ghost is multiple and continually negating itself. It exists between and inhabits numerous places at once. When speaking of ghosts and "life,"

Eugene Thacker notes two things, first, that life and essence quickly fade behind their unique manifestations and second, that ghosts' "life-after-life" is multiplicitious and continually negates itself. If a ghost manifests our idea of life, minus something or plus something, this addition or subtraction changes as the ghost manifests itself in novel ways.[15] This instability requires a reading like Braidotti's, where death is not a horizon but a transformation of life that creates new and unstable ways of being that divorce themselves from the material body and the limits of zoological life.[16]

This is all to say that we cannot fall back on a singular method of understanding and reading ghosts. Like the vampires in Cohen's "Seven Theses," ghosts require new readings each time.[17] A hauntological or literary reading can only exist as one method among many, selected when it is most appropriate, a determination that depends on the material the scholar draws upon and the project's theoretical and rhetorical goals, with literary readings being appropriate for scholars wishing to analyze narratives in texts from traditional literature to media and folklore. As such, scholars must read ghosts more like monsters as category-defying and ontologically confusing beings which emerge from particular circumstances and cultural moments.

Thesis IV: Spectral and deceased subject identity exists along a continuum, neither separate nor shared, but transformed by death.

As I mention in Thesis III, ghosts manifest in numerous ways at once, including in their identity as subjects. Sam and Wes experience themselves differently from traditional ghosts, since they emerge as characters distinct from

their pre-death selves, with Wes even stating that he is someone else from Theodore. Sam is a memory and projection of who the kid who drowned in Agate Shore might be, and Wes is an echo of a memory with a unique identity. Yet, all at once, these ghosts and their subjectivities endure. Like their ontology, their identity is also transformed by death, creating new means of elastic self-identification that can emerge, shift, change, or disappear. The ghost becomes and becomes again, always transforming, never static, and threatening to escape our grasp.[18] The relationship between their body and former identity and new unstable existence's subjectivity is like that of a Venn diagram. They emerge as two separate phases in Braidotti's idea of life as a generative process.[19] Death does not kill the subject but transforms it, revealing two phases separated by time and ways of being, which share a common origin, embodied zoological subjectivity.

Thesis V: Media Makes the Ghost: Digital Media Transforms the Ghost from Social Memory to Shared Memory

There exists a second way to read ghosts as social memory: ghosts as shared memory. For a better explanation, I would like to turn to China Medel's article in Camera Obscura, entitled "The Ghost in the Machine: The Biopolitics of Memory in Alex Rivera's Sleep Dealer." Medel traces the interactions between three characters, Memo Cruz, Luz, and Rudy Ramirez. Nodes, which workers or cybranos like Luz plug into to their flesh in stations called "sleep dealers" to sell their labor in digital environments, such as by creating copies of one's memories, bring the three together.[20] Their interactions begin when Luz uses the notes to

upload a memory of Memo. In response, Rudy seeks out Luz to provide more memories of Memo to him. As the story progresses, these memories allow them to envision new possibilities for the future, namely ending the water corporation's stranglehold on Santa Ana del Rio by blowing up a dam thereby restoring the community's access to water and ending the resource's privatization to ensure their collective future.[21] As Medel points out this action required did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather from a collective solidarity provided by Luz's memories of Memo which she uploaded as part of her work as a TruNode employee.[22] These spectral images of the past which haunted Rudy inspired him to reach out to Memo prompting them to damage the dam in an act of solidarity. These memories which became shared through Luz's act of uploading them. In a similar manner as individuals write and upload their ghost stories they too become shared memory, in some cases inspiring similar solidary to that of Luz, Memo, and Rudy.

In a sense, the story of ghosts as shared memory is this project's story. My encounters with ghost stories across the net influenced how I perceived ghosts and interacted with their stories after discovering hauntology and spectrality studies. The stories exist as memories of ghosts, essentially transforming the ghost itself into memory, beyond the functional idea of ghosts as memory which I posit at the beginning of this section. Digital ghost stories allow those who encounter them to imagine new futures for haunting or resistance through encountering ghosts on online ghost tours posted to YouTube, which remain completely free and accessible, only requiring an internet connection and not

barred behind subscription fees like with cable or streaming services. It is in

these acts where digital media transforms ghosts from social to shared memory.

Whether fictional ghosts like Sam and Wes or "real" ghosts like those above,

encountering ghosts as memory inspires imaginative futurities. Now while, I wish

to say that oppressed and minoritized groups might use supernatural powers to

imagine and act out resistance.[23] I must note the supernatural is just as often

used to reinforce hierarchies and advance political agendas. Specifically

concerning the latter, I wish to note the complex internal politics of minoritized

groups which differ from the political dynamics of dominant groups so as not to

sanitize and imply a horizontal power structure where all members act with equal

agency.[24] To illustrate this, I want to conclude with two historical employments of

the Shaking Tent Ceremony, which I interrogate above, namely their use by two

different indigenous nations. In his book, The World We Used to Live In:

Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Man, Vine Deloria Jr. Offers several

accounts of spirit lodge ceremonies, the name for the Shaking Tent Ceremony

used by some indigenous groups, being interrupted due to the presence of

outsiders or non-believers. Deloria provided an 1848 account where Paul Kane,

a white artist touring Canada, witnessed a spirit lodge ceremony uninvited. In his

account, Paul notes how the ceremony stopped when the shaman said a white

man was present, despite Kane hiding in bushes under the cover of darkness.

Another account from Regina Flannery notes how a spirit pushed two

rambunctious boys out during the ceremony.[25] These accounts display how

Algonquian nations use the Shaking Tent Ceremony to reinforce communal belief

in rituals, which Verne Dusenbery notes in his study of the Montana Cree, originally published in 1962.[26] In contrast to these intra-community practices, other indigenous nations such as the Ojibwa of Western Canada used the Shaking Tent Ceremony as a means of exerting influence over surrounding nation like the Cree and Anishinaabe when the groups gathered during the spring and summer.[27]

The accounts I outline display how rituals and spirits can be used in multilateral ways as a tool to band together in the face of oppression or to exert influence among equals. Likewise, as is the case with the Indian novels and literature, dominant groups can use the supernatural to oppress other groups, like white Americans did with indigenous peoples in North America.[28] As such, ghosts on the internet will maintain a variety of nuanced uses. However, the use of ghosts and the supernatural as a tool of oppression does not overshadow the potential for ghosts to serve as a tool of radical resistance for inspiring imaginative futures and taking control of cultural narratives through their use as sources of shared memory in digital spaces. However, it is important to note that these readings can blend much like ghosts do when examined under monster theory. While also formerly human agents, within the ghost story ghosts are also a stitched together cultural text, meaning that their words and actions are always partial. Acknowledging that partiality, especially in the realm of internal politics of minoritized groups is important, as neither a ghost, ghost story nor its rhetorical use is singular in nature. As such, much like the old adage that "writing is rewriting," reading the ghost story is rereading and hoping to glean clearer

meanings each time while maintaining the recognition the task is never completed.

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Chapter II: British Ghosts on American Land: Adapting Hauntology for American

Cultural Texts

The past is repeating itself in the present is the central claim of Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. In it, he describes how culture has become alienated from temporality and futurity. Fisher derives his assertions from a study of primarily British examples, creating a problematic cultural universalism that centers white Europeans. As such, I wish to push back against Fisher's assertions by exploring hauntological expressions outside the British Isles that display alternative temporalities and relationships to the past than those that seek to return to it. In order to do so, I shift my focus from what scholars like Alberto Andrés Calvo (2021) perceive as an overwhelmingly British tradition to explore potential formulations for an American hauntology, one I see as dominated by repression of the past and its traumas compared to the repetition and wish return to the past of its British counterpart.

I begin my pursuit of theorizing an American hauntology by exploring Mark Fisher's corpus in conjunction with Calvo and Diane A. Rodgers to determine what I deem to be the defining features of British hauntology: an obsession with dead media from the era of public broadcasting, pastoral landscapes, British folk culture, and brief engagements with ghosts in literature and media. I follow-up by noting how due to different media histories and locales an American hauntology must leave behind the fascination with public media and brief engagements with ghosts, especially the latter in an American context, as

British hauntology which explores ghosts and monsters from a metaphorical standpoint, deemphasizing their role in hauntological scholarship. Taking up the categories of landscape and folk culture and adding a racial framework, I apply these categories to a close reading of three folk legends as case studies 1) the Haitian zombie, 2) a bloody river in Southwest Virginia, and 3) black dogs and devil dogs to highlight alternate formations of spectrality and relationships with the past that diverge from the expressions of repression replete in British hauntological scholarship.

I. Theorizing an American Hauntology

Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* shifted the paradigm of hauntological scholarship from the return of specific ideological specters to modernity to a wider psychological experience inspired by the death of communism and the rise of capitalist realism. His project revolves around capitalist realism's "deflated expectations" of cultural change and innovation. The specter of popular modernism, a tendency tied closely to British social democracy, does not allow people to accept Fisher's proclaimed cultural stoppage (Fisher 2014, 21). He defines popular modernism as the reworking of modernist forms characterized by a working-class inventiveness common in the 1970s (Fisher 2014, "Nostalgia Compared to What?"). While the project focuses on the specter of popular modernism and its relationship to British social democracy, Fisher uses hauntology in shifting manners that range from "the specific sense in which it has been applied to music culture, and a more general sense where it refers to persistences, repetitions, and prefigurations" (Fisher 2014, 28). I am more

interested in Fisher's general use of hauntology. While the focus on the hauntological music genre and its adoption of old sounds like crackling tape might illuminate later discussions on the attachment to filming techniques employed in 1970s British public television, music as genre explores the senses of optimism that emerged in postwar Britain and its relationship to contemporary British culture, both of which fall outside the scope of this paper that seeks to theorize an initial framework for a general rather than musical American hauntology (21). Fisher uses this generalized hauntology focused on "persistences, repetitions and prefigurations" to mourn the institutions of British democracy in his reflections on dead British media like the BBC Radiophonic Workshop which stand in for previous social utopian hopes (22, 28).

While at first glance, one could replace hauntology with nostalgia in *Ghost of My Life* without compromising the argument, I do not take this to mean that the two are one and the same. However, the two are incredibly closely related, like a Venn diagram where the two circles nearly overlap. In fact, Fisher seems to conflate the two when he says, "It seems strange to have to *argue* that comparing the present unfavorably with the past is not nostalgic in any culpable way" (25). He notes that the claim emerges due to the dehistoricizing presses of populism and PR, which cause us to overestimate the past and present through the illusion of the equivalent distribution of innovation over time making the 1970s seem less innovative and the present seem more innovative. For Fisher, this overestimation of the 1970s even in the face of its homophobia, racism, and sexism separates hauntology from nostalgia. However, even while Fisher

recognizes this, he is nostalgic as he is acting on a remembered past not concurrent with any lived reality, like a childhood that omits parental squabbles and long wait times (Lowenthal 1985, 8). Here he reflects what Svetlana Boym theorizes as a restorative nostalgia marked by a return to origins and an emphasis on national memory derived from "shared everyday recollections" (Boym 2001, xviii, 53).

While Fisher's nostalgia is privatized and internalized, it still represents a conversation between national memory and individual memory. By contrast, I theorize the difference between hauntology and nostalgia as arising from displacement. Both revolve around displacements in time, but what changes between discussions of nostalgia and memory and hauntology is who or what becomes displaced. In memory and nostalgia, the living individual uses selective recollections to operate in the present, becoming displaced between the past and present, but not entirely residing in either (Lowenthal 1985, 210). In hauntology, a ghost, literal or metaphorical, outside of any living individual becomes displaced returning as an artifact of a past they no longer live in to a present they never inhabited (Gordon 2008, 184). As such, the temporal dynamics of displacement are nearly identical between hauntology and nostalgia, the only difference being that the former displaces the dead and the latter the living.

Under this framework, *Ghosts of My Life* becomes a nostalgic and hauntological text as it moves between Fisher's personal memories, national memories, and social memories. He becomes displaced, but so too are the alternate futures that might exist under British social democracy. There is a

haunting of the *no longer* and the *not yet* in both, which Fisher defines as "that

which is (in actuality is) no longer, but remains effective as a virtuality (the

traumatic 'compulsion to repeat,' a fatal pattern)" and " that which (in actuality)

has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual (an attractor, an

anticipation shaping current behavior)" (Fisher 2014, 19). The American Dream is

no longer, in that it is dead due to rising costs of living and stagnant wages, but

also a *not yet* when used as a messaging tool urging Americans to work harder

and longer in the possibility it might return. There is a morning of lost possibilities

and actual material circumstances that are *no longer* but *not yet* in that they

might reemerge by escaping the expectations of capitalist realism. It is not a

temporal dimension of futurity offered by haunting that separates it from nostalgia

as nostalgia too concerns what was once possible or virtual, but not actual in

existence (Lowenthal 1985, 8). Instead, the individual or nation becomes lost in

its past or an external specter returns from the past to the present. As such,

hauntology can operate in a manner almost mirroring nostalgia. Instead of

focusing on psychoanalytic repetition or return to origins much like Fisher's *not*

yet and Boym's restorative nostalgia, hauntology operates in a manner more like

Boym's conception of reflective nostalgia. Reflective nostalgia focuses on the

distance between the present and the imaged past, self-conscious of the

fragmentary illusions created by memory focusing more on a return of the

unfamiliar and repressed, which can repeat itself, but is not functionally

necessary to be hauntological in nature (Boym 2001, 50).

While hauntology does not appear in the text of Fisher's final book, *The Weird and the Eerie*, his analysis of horror media is full of hauntological language. Inspired by a symposium focused on H.P Lovecraft, *The Weird and the Eerie* examines the relationship between the titular modes common to horror and science fiction (Fisher 2017, 8-9). Fisher's words about the eerie evoke Derridean language about absences and the nature of hauntological specters. Fisher says:

> In some cases of the weird (those with which Love-craft was obsessed) the weird is marked by an exorbitant presence, a teeming which exceeds our capacity to represent it. The eerie, by contrast, is constituted by a failure of absence or by a failure of presence. The sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is something present where there should be nothing, or is there is nothing present when there should be something (Fisher 2017, 61).

Here absence and presence mirror both *Ghosts of My Life* and *Capitalist Realism*. The eerie becomes hauntological through the emptiness it signals mimicking an element of the spectral that Derrida outlines in "Spectrographies," when he says that specters appear through their noticeable absence, akin to a missing puzzle piece. Similar hauntings occur under capitalist realism whereby the ghosts of Marx and socialism haunt capitalist realism through failed promises and mourning by those who do not wish to give up the ghost of social democracy and its institutions in a system that leaves no other option to the imagination than capitalist hegemony (Fisher 2014, 22-23; Fisher 2009, Chapter 1).

Fisher's essay, "You Have Always Been the Caretaker: The Spectral Spaces of the Overlook Hotel," represents a deep explicit engagement between hauntology and folk horror, a notable trend in contemporary hauntology. Fisher

engages these topics by studying Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) and

Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film adaptation. In an essay in the *Irish Times*, Bernice M.

Murphy, an Irish academic specializing in the American gothic defines folk horror

as follows:

> Common folk horror characteristics include a rural setting, an emphasis on
> the eerie power of the natural landscape and a preoccupation with the
> sinister possibilities of the agrarian way of life. The primary narrative focus
> is often upon naïve, doomed outsiders. Ritualised human sacrifice is a
> common climactic trope, and is often connected to arcane rites intended to
> ensure the fertility of the crops (Murphy 2019).

The Shining falls within the folk horror genre according to Murphy's definition.

Jack Torrance brings his family to the isolated Overlook Hotel to serve as its

caretaker. In their residency, the Torrances face an unknowable landscape that,

as Murphy notes, "may not be sympathetic to humankind" (196). Fisher's

analysis focuses on the sinister by analyzing patriarchal violence, a common

feature of rural life, and its capacity for hauntological repetition in the Torrance

family (Fisher 2007; Murphy 2013, 101, 127-28, 146). He connects Jack's abuse

of Danny to "The White Man's Burden," cementing tones of white masculinity into

patriarchal violence passed from father to son generation after generation. This

violent specter lies within Danny and white American culture, which must

exorcize the ghost or repeat racial and patriarchal violence upon another

generation (Fisher 2007, "A child is being beaten").

Fisher's obsession with engaging hauntology through dead British media

and folk horror carries over into horror studies scholarship that draws on his

work. Alberto Andrés Calvo's essay "Ghosts of Britain: A Hauntological Approach

to the 21st-Century Folk-Horror Revival" uses the "Unholy Trinity" to study and

contextualize the late 2010s American folk horror revival. The "Unholy Trinity" consists of three British folk horror films from the late 1960s and early 1970s: *Witchfinder General* (1968), *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971), and *The Wicker Man* (1973) (Calvo 2021, 81). He uses the unifying characteristics of these films to analyze *The Witch* (2015) and *Midsommar* (2019) for hauntological tendencies. Calvo sees the former as a hauntological folk horror film and the latter as more in line with Frederic Jameson's "nostalgia mode," due to their differing willingness to engage in a dialogue with the ghosts produced by their "time-wound" nature, a term coined by Mark Fisher that discusses temporal dialogues and incongruities (85, 89-91; Jameson 1998, 7-8). Calvo sees an opening for applying hauntology to American folk horror like those above but notes that hauntology needs to divorce itself from its distinct Britishness, shaped by the artifacts it analyzes and the academics who employ the framework (Calvo 2021, 87, 91-92). Calvo suggests that the means of accomplishing this divorce lies in hauntology's concern with alternative heritages which enables hauntology to critique art's relationship with its past regardless of geographical boundaries. He applies to this to American folk horror by suggesting that that future research might generate an alternative genealogy of American folk horror film that extends beyond the current revival (92). As such, this breaks downs hauntology's current ties to nationalism within British hauntological scholarship, rendering overlooked or poorly examined media artifacts and traditions the focus of future research instead of nation and culture. Of course, Calvo's solution is only partial. There remains the question of how to uncover the heritages and put them in dialogue

with the specters within, addressing this problem involves staying with British and American ghosts to explore their different functions, as in Diane A. Rodgers' conversation with Fisher.

Like Calvo, Rodgers uses Fisher to write on the hauntological implications of British folk horror, primarily 1970s British television programs. In her essay "Something 'Wyrd' This Way Comes: Folklore and British Television" and book chapter "Et in Arcadia Ego: British Folk Horror Film and Television," Rodgers teases out latent connections of Fisher's work, folk horror, and 1970s British television through what she calls the "wyrd," combining the hauntological, folk and gothic horror (Rodgers 2019, 135). She examines sources like *Ghost Stories for Christmas* (originally 1971-1978, revived in 2000) and *Arcadia* (2018) to explore how the television adopts a deep British past, namely artificial constructions of pagan rituals through the "folkloresque" narratives that employ folklore to create a sense of authentic traditions where there are none (Rodgers 2021, 205). She connects this to an era where British television producers and audiences took ghostly matters seriously, made possible through publicly funded broadcasting that did not need to pursue ratings, which Fisher himself highlights in his article "What is Hauntology" (Rodgers 2019, 138; Fisher 2012, 18).

The fascination with ghosts emerges later as haunting in redeploying film techniques of the 1970s supernatural dramas to create ghostly presences on screen. For example, in the episode "The Devil of Christmas," the creators of *Inside No. 9* (2016) used vintage cathode-ray tube cameras to mimic the ghostly trails of light present when ghosts moved across the screen in 1970s television

(Rodgers 2019, 139). Mimicking the cathode-ray tube effects imbues these shows with a degree of revenance. They literally recall the state of publicly funded television in the 1970s. As such, not only hauntology but folk horror, too, takes on decidedly British dimensions through these callbacks, even while growing increasingly international (Rodgers 2021, 205).

Calvo's and Rodgers' essays demonstrate Fisher's influence on the deep connection between horror and contemporary hauntology. Fisher's contributions emerge within three trends visible in the works above. The first is a fascination with the institutions and technologies of British public broadcasting. While Fisher engages American horror media - *The Shining*, and H.P. Lovecraft, Phillip K. Dick in *The Weird and the Eeri*e – the crux of his hauntological analysis focuses on British media produced in an era of public broadcasting. He begins *Ghosts of My Life* with a description of *Sapphire and Steel* (1979-1982), noting how the show's creator Peter J. Hammond became an auteur due to a visionary public that would disperse in the 1980s under neoliberalism. As part of a public broadcasting structure, the show did not need to chase ratings. However, the BBC did not remain entirely isolated from the public conscience in the 1970s under public pressure to do something about the lack of women on screen the BBC conducted a report which revealed that many male managers discriminated in recruiting female reporters due to public opinions which saw women as less credible and unbiased reporters (Franks 2017, 127-28). *Sapphire and Steel* treated the Victorian ghost stories it transposed as cryptic texts, never completely solved or answered and always partial, nor did the program need to give its

audiences a satisfying ending (Rodgers 2019, 138; Fisher 2014, 3-6). Rodgers

explores a similar pattern in British television, noting how *Ghost Stories for

Christmas* (1971-1978, original run) created ghosts not easily managed, that

appear in brief moments of horror but always escape definition (Rodgers 2019,

142, 147). The series employed technologies and techniques like cathode-ray

cameras, which created ghostly trails as the spirit moved across the screen and

used brief cuts to make it appear as if the ghost on the screen appeared out of

the corner of the viewer's eye (139, 141). British hauntological work takes on this

trend, focusing on ghosts in brief snapshots, rarely staying with the specter long.

The other traits that reveal Fisher's influence on contemporary

hauntological work within horror studies are a fascination with the British

landscape and the folk. British hauntology is deeply entangled with the

surrounding landscape and its folklore. Fisher discusses the non-places of

capitalism and how the past attaches itself to open places in its pre-capitalist

forms. He also discusses the agency of landscape within Jonathan Miller's

adaptation of M.R. James' "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You My Lad" and Brian

Eno's *On Land*, noting how the two mediate on the eerie as specific to East

Anglia. The two contrast urban worlds and enlightenment knowledge with the

solitary ancient lore of East Anglia's pastoral land creating a haunting and out-of-

joint temporality that imbues the landscape with an agency that instills visitors

and listeners with intoxicating nostalgia for a dead Britain (Fisher 2017, 78, 80-

81). The fascination with landscapes also produces fascination with the folk

marked by the abundance of programs like *Sky* (1975) and *Children of the*

Stones (1977) used ritual spaces like stone circles or uncanny villages to imbue the British landscape with a sense of a storied past, eerieeness and deep power (Rodgers 2019, 135).

Katy Shaw (2018) explores similar ties between haunting and landscape in English literature, such as the ley lines in *Jerusalem* (1808) (46). These linkages also manifest through music, such as when *A Field in England* (2013) uses "Baloo My Boy" to reflect the landscape's influence on the protagonists as they succumb to mushroom-induced hallucinations. The song becomes increasingly distorted as the film goes on, reflecting their altered states of mind as they become "imprisoned" in the field, like people caught in fairy rings (Calvo 2021, 88; Rodgers 2021, 209). These entanglements between land, media, and culture, which Mark Fisher contemplates, persist among a new generation of hauntologists, evidenced in the work of Calvo, Rodgers, Shaw, and others.

If we are to Americanize hauntology, we must decide what to take from previous work and what to leave behind. The functional differences between American and British cultural texts motivate my choices. As I mention above in my exploration of *Ghosts of My Life,* British texts focus heavily on repetition and a return to origins compared to their American counterparts which often deal with the return of repressed traumas and silenced spirits. This is not to say each mode is unique as Roger Luckhurst details the function of repression in his article on the London Gothic (542). Repetition and repression are not exclusive to British and American cultural texts, they just appear more frequently.

For example, in British folk horror texts, a common source of hauntological scholarship as evidenced by Rodger's essays, Fisher's dealings with landscape in *The Weird and the Eerie*, and as sources in Calvo's essay on American folk horror, texts like *The Wicker Man* (1975) and "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad" (1925) feature a return to and repetition of the past by reasserting the influence of British paganism in contemporary Britain (Rodgers 2021, 211; Fisher 2017, 78). While still maintaining a degree of repression, which Rodgers notes, the return of British paganism functions as a repetition of a previous *status quo* and cultural origin point (Rodgers 2021, 209). In comparison in American texts like *Beloved* (1987) or *Unwell: A Midwestern-Gothic Mystery* (2018-2023) ghosts return to the present to right the wrongs they experienced in life (Gordon 2008, 181). While other ghosts like *Unwell*'s Rev. Silas Lodge might try to institute a return to origin points, these actions are less common, making the return of the repressed the most common expression of haunting in American cultural texts. As such, a different expression of haunting demands a different theorization of hauntology, not wholly reliant on, but still informed by British hauntology.

American hauntological scholarship must forget the British obsession with public media.[1] The United States currently has no national public broadcasting services that compare to the British Broadcasting Corporation in robustness or reliance on government funding, as most donations come from businesses, non-governmental organizations, individual subscribers or businesses compared to the BBC which is funded by television licenses, making the idea that they are "public" broadcasting networks somewhat of a misnomer (NPR 2023; PBS

Foundation n.d.; BBC n.d.). Saying this of course does not mean that such a system never existed. As Josh Shepperd explains in *Shadow of the New Deal: The Victory of Public Broadcasting* before the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 a series of university broadcasters formed a public broadcasting network that would go on to influence federal policy during a period that heavily favored commercial broadcasting (2023, "Approaching Public Media as a Noncommercial Media Industry).

An American hauntology must also leave behind the tendency to engage ghosts in brief manners. While in her essays, Rodgers wonderfully discusses the various ghosts in 1970s British Television, she does not stay with them long but jumps between them. For example, in her study of *Ghost Stories for Christmas*, she moves between "The Treasure of Abbot Thomas" (1974) and "The Tractate Middoth" (2013), never closely reading either text. An American hauntology must leave this tendency behind because, as Roger Luckhurst notes, to analyze ghosts, including literary ones, "we have to risk the violence of reading the ghost, of cracking open its absent presence to answer the demand of its specific symptomatology and its specific locale (542)." One cannot read ghosts if one cannot stay with them.

What an American hauntology might more profitably take from contemporary British hauntology is its fascination with landscape and the folk. Fisher's essay on the Overlook Hotel provides some inadvertent direction. In the essay, he briefly talks about race and land, citing the image of the Indian Burial Ground and calling American culture "a culture founded upon (the repression of)

the genocide of the native peoples" (Fisher 2007, "The Overlook and the Real").

Here Fisher invokes the powerful connection between race, landscape, and

haunting in American culture, which emerges in locations like reservations, stolen

tribal lands, Indian burial grounds, and haunted plantations.

As illustrated by Fisher's connections in the above paragraph an American

hauntology should attend to the intersections of race, land, and haunted

temporalities. It must examine the persistence of systems of racial oppression

that mark the land through death, such as in the form of the Indian burial ground,

where the victims of Indigenous genocide remain out of sight, and their spirits

linger to testify to a violent racial past. At the same time, because these systems

operate nationally and locally, an American hauntology stays with these ghosts

or monsters that linger to analyze their particular circumstances and functions

and listen to their demands. As this project's purpose attempts to attend to

readings that include such spirits, whether "real" or "fictional" as highlighting their

functions within literature, religion, and folklore are I key reason I seek to depart

from the shallow tendencies of British hauntology. Herein lies both the method

and ethical imperative. By staying with ghosts and monsters, American

hauntology engages marginalized voices and bodies through the intersections of

race, land, and folk culture, among other categories that I do not outline here,

and explores how folklore, past and present, serves to communicate embodied

realities, experiences, and epistemologies.

II.   Applied Hauntology: Race, Landscape, and Folk Culture

I wish to dedicate the remaining space to fleshing out and applying this American hauntological ethic and method. To do so, I will analyze three case studies to embody the categories of race, landscape, and folk culture: 1) Zora Neale Hurston's accounts of zombies in *Tell My Horse*, 2) Folk Legend #96 "How Bloody Branch Got its Name" from *Virginia Folk Legends*, and 3) black dog folk legends compiled by Thomas E. Barden in *Virginia Folk Legends*. I choose these stories as Hurston offers accounts of zombies that showcase how plantation-style dynamics persist long after the Haitian Revolution, the Bloody Branch legend offers an alternate formation of spectrality where the landscape acts as a spectral agent to attest to Dan Wampler's "unsolved" murder, and Barden's accounts which showcase devil dog as enacting revenge on wicked men show marginalized communities use heterodoxic folk belief as a means of generating futurity in the face of oppression. While I generally align each of these with the singular categories above, each account takes on elements of the other two creating an entangled haunting which I will explore in conjunction with the primary categories.

Before digging into Hurston's ethnographic accounts of zombies, I would like to briefly explore their origins and relationship to plantations and labor. To be clear, the zombie I am speaking about here is the reanimated body without a soul or agency. I make this distinction as scholarship like Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier's "The Ways and Nature of the Zombi" makes a distinction between a body without a soul and a soul without a body (1991, 467). The zombie I talk about here emerged in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. While

the origins of the word "zombi(e)" remain contested, namely its origin in Central and West African languages like Bantu, Yoruba, or Conga, or borrowed from Jean Zombi, a Haitian man renowned for his slaughter of white colonists during the Haitian Revolution, what remains certain is its ties to slave labor, imperialism, and the plantation (467-69; Dayan 1995, 36-37). In the introduction to the *Encyclopedia of the Zombie: The Walking Dead in Popular Culture and Myth*, June Michelle Pulliam and Anthony J. Fonseca describe how zombie folklore arose amid Haitian fears of recolonization and exploitation by corporate interests (2014, xv). These fears became central to later depictions of the Zombie, especially in films like *White Zombie* (1932) where Bela Lugosi's character Murder Legendre, a white sugar plantation owner creates zombie slave labor to run the plantation as they are ideal workers not concerned with long hours (Merleaux 2015, 174; Fonseca 2014, 297). These workers without agency are indicative of "the Plantationocene" at work in Haiti and the wider Caribbean. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon defines the Plantationocene as a system wrought by the establishment of the plantation that disentangles individuals, flora, and fauna from their lifeworlds, rendering them socially, civically, and politically dead. While still breathing, plantation workers become zombified through social death, existing to plantation owners and corporations as cogs in the machine of imperialism in the Caribbean (Dillon 2019, 85).

Haitians' fears of becoming slave laborers without agency and tools of imperialism lasted throughout the 19th and well into the 20th Century as illustrated by Haitian's relationship to the zombie. In contemporary Haiti, Haitians transpose

the memory of servitude upon the zombie, rendering the fear of becoming one very real to many Haitians who view it as a fate worse than death (Dayan 1995, 37). These fears occur across class lines with the upper classes possessing a similar fear, even if not they do not speak of it as openly as lower classes. They fear becoming a worker set upon the fields, kept from being rescued by family and friends who believe their body still lays at rest (Hurston 1938, 190). The reasons one might become a zombie vary, from spells done as revenge against an individual, to involvement with Vodun spirits in which individuals sacrifice family members to become zombies for the promise of wealth (191, 193-94). Regardless of the circumstance, the fear of social death after death remains very real to many Haitians.

Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse* (1938) bring these fears to life. While Hurston describes numerous cases in her chapter on zombies, one in particular stands out to me as ripe for hauntological inquiry, the 1898 case of a young boy resurrected to work for a foreman at Cap Haitian. While Hurston includes the story of Marie M. which she says is "the most famous Zombie case of all Haiti," the story does not readily give way to hauntological analysis with the types of labor Marie performed after her death remaining obscure as well as the racial status of Marie and the family that enslaved her. Her smuggling to France by church officials provides minimal commentary on her Zombie status. There is not much rich textual evidence available for hauntological analysis. We do not see the power, racial, or class dynamics present within the narrative. Only the role of the church in transporting a vaguely described girl named Marie overseas.

Instead, in the case of the Cap Haitian boy, we can see the dynamics of class

and labor explicitly at play, giving life to the fear of zombies Hurston and other

scholars repeatedly note. Hurston describes the case as follows:

> In the year 1898 at Cap Haitian a woman had one son who was well educated but rather petted and spoiled. There was some trouble about a girl. He refused to accept responsibility and when his mother was approached by a member of the girl's family she refused to give any sort of satisfaction. Two weeks later the boy died rather suddenly and was buried. Several Sundays later the mother went to church and after she went wandering around the town—just walking aimlessly in her grief, she found herself walking along the Bord Mer. She saw some laborers loading ox carts with bags of coffee and was astonished to see her son among these silents workers who were being driven to work with ever increasing speed by the foreman. She saw her son see her without any sign of recognition. She rushed up to him screaming out his name. He regarded her without recognition and without sound. By this time the foreman tore her loose from the boy and drove her away. She went to get help, but it was a long time and when she returned she could not find him. The foreman denied that there had ever been anyone of that description around. She never saw him again, though she haunted the water front and coffee warehouses till she died (202-3).

In this account, the unnamed boy suffers the fate feared by every Haitian at the

time, put to work as a drone working in a coffee warehouse, unable to recognize

or reach out to his loved ones even when they meet face to face. He cannot

respond to his mother's calls or his name. His agency is deferred to the foreman,

who takes him away and denies the boy ever worked there. He is put to work

again in a manner reminiscent of the Plantationocene, extracting value from the

nature world, alienated from the landscape and his loved ones. There remains a

fear of the plantation long after the Haitian Revolution, which reveals itself in the

zombie. The traumas of colonization remained decades after Haitians threw off

the yoke of colonialism as a hauntological *no longer* and *not yet*. While the fear of

the plantation and slave labor is virtual in that it has ceased it remains through

supplantating by corporate powers over colonial ones. At the same time, there remains a fear of recolonization that shapes the aversion to the zombies, a future expectation that shapes present attitudes and reality, much like Fisher describes (2014, 19). The racial trauma inflicted by European and American colonists and corporations is virtual and actual, lingering, but not in the same form as it originally appeared, taking on a spectral dimension that shapes relationships with European and American powers, other Haitians, and the landscape, marking the zombie as a hauntological.

"How Bloody Branch Got Its Name," displays the power of place and placenames to hauntological inquiry, namely when it concerns discrepancies between folk culture and history. In his introduction to the section "Place Names," Barden says "a name's connection to a story which is meaningful to the group that lives with it is its reality, no matter what the historical records say (1991, 213). This theme emerges in the various explanations the storyteller, Ortha Samantha Moore, described and evaluates in her tale. Moore tells "How Bloody Branch Got Its Name," as follows:

> I recollect Aunt Sue Phillips tellin' me this when I'd first moved into this house with my Pap an' we wuz gettin' quainted with thuh folks around bout. They's uh branch run down past thuh house, an' I recollect[ed] its red color when she wuz settin' there with us on thuh porch an' I ask her if she knowed what made it thet way. "I shore do," she said, as she smoked her old clay pipe, settin' there in thuh straight chere. "Dan Wampler used tuh be uh reg lar roustabout round here, an he d alluz go into a patch uh laurel thar 'hove this place yuh see." An' she pointed from here on the porch an' showed us a patch way up on the hill. 'He drunk a lot and [wasn't] no good fer any thing attal," said Aunt Sue. An' he done nuthin' but go git thuh cow fer 'iz dad, an' that'us all." I listened as she unwound thuh tale an' she never once quavered or stopped a time.

"He'd been drinkin' with some boys thet lived in this very house here, an' they'd fell out bout sumpin', an' they'uz settin' on this very porch hyer when they seed him go atter thuh cow, one day late in thuh evenin' lak. An' they went up thuh branch too. They come on back soon, though, later an' went to bed. Dan never showed up at home that night, though, an' next mornin' thuh ole man, er his pap yuh know, went lookin fer thuh cow, thinkin Dand got drunk with some uh thuh boys an let thuh cow go hang. Well, when he rech [reached] thuh place whar thuh cow alluz hung round, he foun' Dan with'iz throat slit an' dead. He d fell sorta down torrds [towards] thuh little branch an' his head wuz jest uh little above it, an' blood'd run in thuh branch. When they carried him down they could see blood in thuh little branch all along it too.

Well, nobody could ever pin anything on thuh boys, but they thought a lot, though. Nearly ever time thuh boys wuz settin' out on this here porch, they c'd look out thar an see red in thuh creek. An' they finally moved on thet count. They got scared, they did. Well, soon after we moved here my dad went up an' looked at the place, an he says they's a place there in the laurel where poke berries grow, but they ain't close to thuh branch. Some folks, you know, said they'd fell in the branch an' caused it tuh turn red. But dad said no, said they's too far away to get in thuh water. Anyway, they call it the bloody branch, and all thuh people round here say it wuz to make thuh boys thet kilt him repent, er make them remember poor ole Dan Wampler they'd kilt. Thet tale's old as itself, an' every school child can tell you thuh whole story too, as they's alluz told it by their folks. An' I know most uh them believe it is Dan's blood cornin' down to scare them fer their crime [Language and brackets present in the original text] (217-18).

In the tale Moore provides two competing explanations for the name "Bloody Branch," one where poke berries near the river fell in and turned it red and another where Dan Wampler's blood turns the river red to scare the boys for their unprosecuted crime. That Moore backs the more "mysterious and exotic" explanation reveals information about the community and the lifeworld the citizens of Big Stone Gap, Virginia inhabits, one rich with haunting and agentive landscapes capable of warning its occupants against crime which emerges through folkloric expressions like the folk legend above. That Moore also sets her tale as told to her by an old-timer who saw Big Stone Gap in its lawless days also

instills the land with the capacity for memory. While Barden notes it as a promise that Big Stone Gap would never return to its old ways, the fact that Moore notes individuals considered the manifestation of Dan Wampler's blood as a message meant to instill fear into the boys undermines Barden's explanation and creates a more sinister tone whereby the individuals are warned not to return to the old ways instead of a promise not to return (212). Here then, the landscape becoming spectral and a potential specter, haunting because of an unresolved murder and warning against the return to old ways, lest something more than Dan Wampler's blood emerge from Bloody Branch.

The warning also mimics larger literary traditions found in the Southern Gothic where the land recognizes and responds to the traumas enacted upon it and against it, making landscape "more than just a setting" as Matthew Sivils notes in his chapter in *The Palgrave Companion to the Southern Gothic* (2016, 84). These parallel illustrations of agentive landscape in literature and folk culture reinforce the potency of landscape as a framework and object of study in hauntological inquiries. In both the literary and folk accounts, individuals live in a landscape that can respond to traumas inflicted on it, in the sense of location, and against it, in the sense of ecological destruction. As such, an agentive landscape represents a rich ground of hauntological inquiry, especially when considering the folk beliefs of its inhabitants, which can attest to and highlight community traumas and epistemologies. Even when not directly in line with the historical record, these beliefs and epistemologies highlight unique entanglements between humans and the surrounding environment.

The black dog is a creature from European and American folklore that go by name names such as the Black Shuck and inhabit a wide variety of literary roles. The variety in the tale below is what Theo Brown calls the Barguest, another legend from North English folklore. He describes it as follows, "All these creatures are ominous. Some are belligerent and many are associated with burial sites and churchyards. The most striking characteristic of the Barguest type is its way to show the beholder it is no normal dog, from another world, having no one definite form - though it favors the black dog - and malevolent in character" (Brown 1958, 178). Its enormous size and fiery eyes mark the creature in the story as a Barguest. Despite their considerable variety, the black dog's various manifestations have something to offer hauntology, namely in that they offer hopes of futurity for oppressed groups such as women and the enslaved as seen in the story Mary Carter tells *Virginia Folk Legends*:

> One time there was an old man. He was a rich old man and owned a whole passel of slaves. I think he lived in Kentucky. Maybe it was North Carolina, I don't remember. He was awful wicked. They'd said he'd been married four or five times an' all his wives took sudden sick an' died, or was found dead. All of his wives had a lot of money an' when they died he got it.
>
> Well I've heard Pa say that when this ol' man's slaves died he wouldn't let nobody come help an' bury 'em. It was thought he killed his slaves. Well, when he come to die a passel of his neighbors gathered in to set up with him. It was about midnight an' he 'uz awful low. Expectin' him to die at any minute. All at once they heard a noise at the door. Somebody opened the door an' there stood a big black dog. It had eyes as big as saucers, an' they looked like balls of fire. The dog jes walked right in an' reared up on the foot of the bed an' looked al the ol' man. He screamed an' tried to get out of bed. He said it was the devil come after him. He jes fell back an' was dead in a minute. The dog then jus turned and walked out an' nobody ever seed hit again [Language present in the original text] (243).

As the Devil in dog form, the dog in "A Devil Dog Comes for a Slave Owner" the dog exists as the ultimate evil, yet it comes to punish an unrepentant man in his final hour. Thomas E. Barden gives insight into how its complicated and categorically elusive nature gives it its function within the legend. Barden states in that in James Taylor Adams' notes, the Virginia Writers' Project folklore collector who collected the story, Adams writes, "I have heard my parents, grand-parents, and other people tell of the devil visiting people in the form of a dog. Devil dogs usually paid these visits to dying men who had lived notorious wicked lives (Barden 1991, 240). Barden develops Adams' idea and notes how the dog's visit reassures neighbors that the murderous man would not escape damnation and reassures the audience that the wicked get what they deserve (240). The tale is meant to comfort those who suffer and witness injustice but are powerless to stop it.

Barden's analysis misses a potential reading of the tale which our Americanized hauntology can address. In his notes, Barden focuses on the slave owners' white neighbors but does not address the enslaved men and women the man hurt and killed. Reading the tale from another angle, the devil dog's visit reassures the man's slaves that enslavers will answer for their misdeeds and face the death, harm, and fear they visited upon enslaved Black men and women. The tale offers the enslaved men and women a hopeful future that enslavers and those who held up the system of chattel slavery will answer for their sins. The devil dog offers hope for a future beyond the plantation in the moment of fear and pain it inflicts upon the enslaver. It does so through an

entangled temporality as a being that promises and delivers torment to address ongoing and past misdeeds. It reassures the powerless, reminds everyone not to live wickedly, and revisits the sin upon the sinner. The moment that the dog locks eyes with the enslaver, the past, present, and future all collapse into one another in a temporal cascade where past, present, and future become entangled or "time wound," to use Fisher's phrase as each moment blends with the one that precedes it and the one that follows (Fisher 2018, "Memory Disorders").

The devil dog's role as an agent of good runs counter to most understandings of the Devil where he exists to tempt the righteous. Yet, this is a feature seen across Appalachian folklore. In her article, "Witchcraft and the Devil in West Virginia," Ruth Ann Musick describes how the devil is sometimes a messenger of good, appearing as a warning for people to give up their wicked ways (274). While Musick nor Barden offer explanations for why the Devil, and in conjunction, devil dogs, act as agents of good in various folk accounts, when read alongside the slave narratives Barden discusses in *Virginia Folk Legends*, it appears this larger tradition operates as an extension of the hope the devil dogs offer in "A Devil Dog Comes for A Slave Owner," that the wicked will get what comes to them. Of course, in these narratives it is not necessarily an explicit hope for the oppressed. Instead, from another angle, the devil dog might serve as a warning to those afforded a degree of privilege whether through gender or race to act righteously, lest similar consequences befall them in the future. Here the devil dogs still offer a futurity, but a far bleaker one. To flesh out this idea, I

would like to turn to another tale compiled by Barden and told by Findlay Adams,

Folk Legend #113 "A Devil Dog in the Path:"

> One time, oh its been forty years ago I guess, Buck Gibson down there on Smoot [Mountain]. Si Adams and Rob Holcomb got together and made up [their minds] to go an' get some liquor an' go down to Buck an' get him drunk an' have a big time. So they kotch their nags an' pulled out right up the head of Smoot, goin' through by Sandlick Gap. Si told me all about it. He said they was goin' ridin' along, the path jus wide enough for one hoss. Rob was in front an' they got right up there above Pole Cat Hollow when all at once Si' seed Rob's hoss rare up on its hind feet. An' he heard Rob holler out sumpin'. He looked an' just ahead of 'em, there right in the middle of the path was the awfullest lookin' thing he's ever seed. Hit looked like a dog, but hit was bigger than any cow he ever seed. Big as a hoss. Hit was sittin' back on hits hind parts in the road, an' hits eyes was as big as plates an' shone jes like fire. His hoss seed it too and an' began to rare an' pitch. Rob's hoss wouldn't go another step. So there they was; they tried to go round hit. but the hosses wouldn't go. The thing opened hits mouth an' Si said he could see right down hits throat. An' it looked like a roaring furnace of fire. They decided hit was the devil an' hit was there to turn 'em back from goin' after liquor. So they jes turned round an' went back home an' left hit sitting' there in the road. [The accented language and brackets are present in the original text] (249).

Here the storyteller notes that Adams and Holcomb believed that the Devil

was there to discourage their attempt to get liquor and have a "big time" with

Buck Gibson prompting the question of why the Devil might want to discourage

drinking. While difficult, but not impossible to read as hauntological through a

racial lens, gender might prove an optimal frame through which to interrogate this

tale as it takes place at the turn of the 20th Century when the American

Temperance movement experienced a boom in support as by 1900 more than

40% of United States counties voted to ban the sale of alcohol (Kee et al. 1998,

477), The temperance movement positioned itself as a supporter of women's

causes like suffrage, property rights, and most notably spousal abuse, a concern

expressed by mainline Protestant denominations and Americanist Catholics who

marked it as a source of moral and social degeneration (477-78). As such, there emerges the possibility of reading "A Dog in the Path" as a reflection of temperance attitudes within the American Christianity in the early 20th Century which contained a strong element of protecting women, the home, and the family from abusive men. Thus, despite the Adams, Holcomb, or Gibson not being confirmed as married, reading the tale as an expression of Temperance sentiments creates room for a reading where men in power are warned against abusing their wives and children, lest they suffer a future fate similar to the slave owner in "A Devil Dog Comes for A Slave Owner."

The devil dog in "A Devil Dog Comes for A Slave Owner," also has a connection to landscape which it establishes by visiting the man on the plantation, the site of his violence against his slaves, embodying the claims and grievances of the enslaved. The dog visits the slave owner and isolates him, disregarding everyone else and making him the dog's sole object of focus. In that exchange of eye contact, the devil dog isolates the slave owner alienating him from his land, neighbors, and life world. The neighbors who visit him do not help the man as he falls and dies. They perform no action to connect with him as he dies rendering him as socially dead as the enslaved. The visitors make no action worthy of inclusion in the story. This isolation, even among others, mimics the plantation technologies, which as Dillon notes, aims to alienate and disentangle individuals from their communities and homes by displacing Indigenous populations and trafficking African slaves (2019, 635). While the plantation, like the zombie, cannot help but engender social life and new forms of entanglement

amidst death and disentanglement, the devil dog offers no life and only repays debts. Not only does it enact the violent alienation of the plantation, but southern gothic traditions often theorize the landscape as a moral agent capable of enacting judgment on those who abuse it and use it to abuse others. Examining Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Matthew Sivils notes how the landscape revels in the destruction of human effort, which is nothing in the face of mother nature or the devil (2016, 92).

III.   Conclusion

A functional difference in ghosts separates British and American hauntology, that one expresses a repeated and the other a repressed past. Due to their very nature, American ghosts and monsters can at times remain hidden and difficult to interpret due to their silence. However, the inability of ghosts or monsters such as the Zombie or Black Dog to utter intelligent speech does not mean that one should not try to speak with them or about them when their demands remain too faint to hear, because as Luckhurst notes we must risk the violence of reading the ghosts (2002, 542). Such a task is worth the violence, as otherwise historical and cultural traumas might remain unanswered. Therefore, the ethical task is to stay with the ghost and attempt to read it, even when it refuses to speak. Derrida gives some direction in this matter when he describes how one can stay with ghosts, "in the upkeep, the conversations, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghosts (Derrida 1994, xviii). However, this of course does not mean we are entirely without direction.

By taking cues from Fisher, Calvo, and Rodgers in the passages above, I highlight three particularly potent avenues of inquiry to uncover the demands of American ghosts and monsters who do not speak and how they differ from their British counterparts' relationship to the past by an unwillingness to repeat it or avoid it like in the case of "How Bloody Branch Got its Name" and the reception of zombies in Haiti, These avenues are race, landscape, and folk culture, which while separate avenues often intermingle with one another, such as in the example of the Haitian zombie, where Haitians at the turn of the 20th Century feared zombification, a process marked with ritual and spiritual power, as Bocor, sorcerers who create zombies, might put them to work on sugar and coffee plantations in a manner reminiscent of the slave labor conditions that preceded the Haitian revolution (Hurston 1938, 192). While the zombie, a silent body without agency or a soul, cannot express these fears, Haiti's racial history and entanglements with Western colonialism and capitalism, reveals a fear of a condition that is *no longer* that could return but has *not yet* done so.

While I have provided some direction, it is important to state this project's limits, namely the lack of grounding in a specific locale and the recognition that hauntological work is incomplete by nature. Regarding the former, I used the United States as a site of various demographic encounters, whether racial, religious, or otherwise to develop a general hauntological theory. However, the specific specters and categories of examination will inevitably change across the incredibly varied American landscape. As such, it is imperative that future research clings closely to the locales from which particular ghosts and monsters

emerge. In these endeavors, regionalism, the environmental, humanities, and microhistory could prove potentially useful frameworks to examine the entanglements between race, landscape, and folk culture in the United States. Additionally, though this work derives itself from and positions itself against British culture other cultures might prove more useful, such as exploring the persistence of German specters in Appalachia. Lastly, though hauntological work attempts to uncover the words of silent ghosts, those engaging in it must recognize the possibility we might never quite grasp the demands of a specter that cannot speak. Arguments might get ever closer, but without confirmation from the ghost or monster, such works amounts to guesses and hopes. However, as stated above, such a fact does not mean that the work is impossible or that scholars should not engage in it. To appease them or put them to rest we must not let their demands go wholly unanswered.

Endnotes

1. While the United States has NPR and PBS, their public funding makes up 14% and 15% of their annual budgets, with 7% of NPR's fiscal year 2021 funding coming from a mixture of federal, state, and local grants and other 7% from Corporation for Public Broadcasting grants (NPR 2023; PBS Foundation n.d.).

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