

Da Silva; Dahlia Li; Robinson; Hartman?

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Representation

Da Silva is deeply suspicious of language (thus the parentheses and pronoun obfuscation?). **Critique** is the subject|object of her text. (It is exactly this kind of demarcation, that she sees as racialized|gendered, that she wants to implode.)

If “patriarch-form” for da Silva refers to “the formal condition of enunciation of any juridical (political) subject, including social (racial, gender-sexual) subjects, as a thing with authority, that is, a deciding entity”; we can strip the last subclause to make up a definition of form, which I take to be a unit|lens of representation as such. (*Hacking*, p.26) Form is, as da Silva goes on to note, “an assemblage *as well* as a rule or a formula.” Form adjectivizes to formal; a term which characterizes those moments that get to figure as knowledge, as meaning, as legitimate.

At one level, one may take ‘representation’ to mean the appearance of forms associated with a racialized, gender-sexualized contingency at institutional venues constituted through juridical (political) power. The museum represents one examples of such a forum; so too the gallery, the university, the board room.

Da Silva’s project is to “hack the patriarch-form”; “the mold on which any framing of the determining entity must fit” (*Hacking*, p.27). She frames herself, as author of this essay, both as any against the Subject (who embodies the patriarch-form) here.

Objecthood

Objecthood is only partly what’s at stake when it comes to the structures and structurality of oppression. An attention to materiality is the ‘green transition’ of theoretical interventions: it may stand for desirable change; it may further costume whiteness, materializing new forms of violence in the guise of substantive reform. (Desire here is Black desire, where ‘Black’ is a qualifier meant in Cedric Robinson’s sense: the scaffolding for whiteness, not a designation on the basis of skin/visibility.)

The Art Object

Take the contestation of the object in the White box Gallery. This [struggle] is to topple the museum as the pinnacle of knowledge, with the the hegemonic visuality and epistemology which treats matter as there for the taking, there to be seen, trophy to fetishistically glitter for the viewer, the colonizer, the owner (c.f. Ariella). Black art objects displacing White art objects to hold space in the museum is important, and can hold space that has been and is otherwise suffocated/drowned/vacuumed: but representation alone will not shift power.

Representation has become, in part, a tactic that Whiteness uses to keep Black epistemology in place (in the wake). As trans artist and theorist Dahlia Li put it in a recent livestream: “One [still] has to go through life as if one is a museum watching all of these moments.” To leave politics at representation is to keep Black life and vision underwater, goggled and drowning while Whiteness boats above deck. To keep the conversation at the level of representation and to refuse to engage with objecthood as underlying epistemology makes it easy to parade identity as spectacle that whitewashes and distracts from a darker and more powerful political conversation.

Blacklight

A black feminist poethical reading deploys **blacklight** to dissolve determinacy, which grounds the Kantian rendering of aesthetic judgement, shifting the focus to the elusive, the unclear, the uncertain— the scent— thereby making it possible to dislodge sequentiality and expose the deeper (virtual) correspondences comprehended (but not extinguished) by the abstract forms of modern thought.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva, *In the Raw*.

da Silva’s critique in the essay from which the above quote is drawn is of Kantian subjectivity, and the aesthetics and ethics [aesthet(h)ics?] that emerge from its principles: matter as an anthropological object, and knowability as “the position of the appreciator of global contemporary art”.

Blacklight can decompose materiality, regrounding the figure and refiguring the ground. To blacklight art— objectified or otherwise— is to render it raw. In the case of *Majmua*’s cloves and slave beads, the substance that da Silva takes into account as poethical site in this essay, it makes possible a reading of “the colonial as a moment of the creation of capital”. (I do not quite understand this, but it surely responding in some way to Cedric Robinson’s ghost.)

Blacklight reveals matter as both **actual** and **virtual**. It is something ghastly, in a sense: Hamlet’s ghost (the onto-epistemological figure of performance; see attached) rendered more sensible as scientifically undeniable.

Blacklight - Hartman

A series of discussion points:

- History's objectifications.
- Encountering the dead.
- "the unimaginable assumes the guise of everyday practice" (p.6)
- "If it is no longer sufficient to expose the scandal, then how might it be possible to generate a different set of descriptions from the archive?" (p.7)
- Romance|the love letter as method to decomposing Hayden White's modes of history: "a romance that exceeded the fictions of history" (p.9)