Moralizing Violence:
The Righteous Breaking of the Condemned

by

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Abstract

The body exposes violence by mirroring it, stripping it of its metaphysics, ideology, and teleology. Using the colonizer/colonized, master/slave and lord/bondsman dialectics to frame our discussion, we tell the story of the annihilated body, and what is left or not left in the wake of destruction. To do so, we posit that the annihilated body is the productive effect of structural violence and structural power acting in concert. They are able to occupy the same space, in contradiction to Marx and Hegel’s theory of the power of negation, and be thoroughly damaging because of the moralizing which often accompanies the violations. The annihilated body we focus on here is restricted to Frantz Fanon’s black body, as discussed in Black Skin White Masks, The Wretched of the Earth and A Dying Colonialism and Hamid Dabashi’s brown body, as discussed in Brown Skin White Masks, Corpus Anarchum and Islamic Liberation Theology. We use these two authors and their particular entry points into examining issues of dispossession, post-humanism and redemption. To do so, we rely on a Nietzschean framework with which to interpret their discussion, while allowing Michel Foucault’s interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche’s prose to influence our analytical lens.
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Prologue

We aspire to omnipotence. We imagine we have the capacity to know, without limits, doubt or reservation. We hope to create boundaries around knowing and to breed from that truths, altogether universal and timeless. And so we do research, so that we may discover, uncover and recover what has eluded, but so much escapes us still. We see shadows of truths and hear echoes of history and it baits us into the pursuit of the absolute: the perfectly symmetrical ordered reality we see glimpses of. This pursuit constitutes us, whether we look for answers in our God, our Science, our Nature or our History. We hope to buttress our mortality with knowing. If we can somehow light the shadows and lay bare what lives there, we may very well be able to remake ourselves into less imperfect, less fallible versions. It is a noble pursuit and the roads that lead here are multiple. Whether reality exists or it does not, whether truth is found under microscopes or in narratives, whether we aim to predict or explain, knowing in all its vastness leaves room for all of it, encourages it even. Instead, we bind ourselves with verification and falsification principles, and try to order knowing in such a way that we may make it static because we aspire to omnipotence, and limiting how to know and what can be known is akin to holding a torch in the vast darkness of it all. The light aids but it should never leave us ill-equipped to traverse the dark spaces.

To approach questions about morality, power, violence and the body I undertake a kind of genealogy, which creates a “union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this
knowledge tactically today.”¹ I believe that questions about our capacity to radically alter power’s hold over us is better explored using this kind of lens. Naturalism, as useful as it can be, is most often concerned with inferring causation and predicting what is to come; it aims to peer into the recesses, unmask its monsters and offer us a respite from our unknowing. Maybe all dark spaces have the same monster and there is some comfort in that. In contrast, the constructivist philosophy of science, sees these same recesses and questions if the recess is real or imagined, if we have the capacity to see inside it and once there if we can trust what we observe. A monster here fails to prompt our expecting monsters everywhere, after all, we can never be sure if this monster or any monster exists at all. The constructivist is perpetually uncertain but where this uncertainty and unknowing might be a source of anxiety for the naturalist, the constructivist is very much at home here. Moses and Knutsen say, “constructivists embrace the particular and use their knowledge to expand our moral sympathies and political understanding. For the constructivist, truth lies in the eyes of the observer, and in the constellation of power and force that supports that truth.”² Constructivism, however, cannot be fully captured by this or any definition; because it espouses multiple ways of knowing, researching and analyzing, this methodology is riddled with contradictions and dissention within its ranks. But dissention does not necessarily translate to cacophony, it also means plurality, and this is the essence of constructivism. We make the “attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from subjection, to render

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¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, 83
² Moses and Knutsen, *Ways of Knowing*, 11
them capable of opposition and of struggle against coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse\(^3\).

This project, *Moralizing Violence*, is enormous. The questions I pose are far bigger than one graduate thesis can answer. But finding answers is not my purpose here. This project aims to explore questions of bodily regimentation and the ways in which power, violence and morality are implicated in that process using a structure of feeling, which

Methodically... is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand... specific feeling, specific rhythms. And yet to find ways of recognizing their specific kinds of sociality, thus preventing that extraction from social experience which is conceivable only when social experience itself has been categorically (and at root historically) reduced.\(^4\)

Attempting to wheedle this question down so that it may be manageable has been a daunting task for me. Focusing on a handful of authors has proven reasonably effective in grounding this research. I have worried about the scale and scope of this project but I think the questions posed throughout are important to consider.

Throughout this thesis you will find that I use the pronoun "we" to direct my prose. I use this pronoun because I believe we are all implicated in the violence we see around us. We are implicated in the social exclusion and by extension the invisibility of those bodies deemed unworthy. We reckon with our role in it all because we recognize that reckoning is about knowing what kind of effort is required to change ourselves and the conditions that make us who we are, that set limits on what is acceptable and unacceptable, on what is possible and impossible. We all have work to do as a community, whether you read that community globally or locally. Although this project is

\(^3\) Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 85.
partly about my struggle with questions around bodily annihilation and bodily legislation,
I believe our interconnectedness precludes me from making this project wholly my own.
I share this with you; we are allies in this struggle.
Introduction

Broken bodies litter our histories and their ghosts haunt us without relent. Our story is a bloody one, where entire civilizations lay dead in the retelling. Steeped in violence, destruction and implosions these calamities leave traces of themselves and refuse to dissipate with time’s passing. These traces reveal what is there and what is not there. To understand and reclaim the narratives that have conspired to birth us, we must look to the “realm of human affairs” and those intangible entities, like power, violence and morality, which are dominant forces within it. We challenge ourselves to occupy positions of duality and hybridity as we pursue this inquiry so that we may see not only the ghosts but the not there—the absences—and make sense of the entities, energies and frequencies that lie outside a temporal and linear reality ruled by logic and order.

We specifically focus on black and brown bodies to better understand how the interplay of these forces often has corrosive effects within the realm because, as Foucault writes, “we must attempt to study the myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral subjects as a result of the effects of power.” The body exposes violence by mirroring it, stripping it of its metaphysics, ideology, and teleology. Using the colonizer/colonized, master/slave and lord/bondsman dialectics to frame our discussion, we tell the story of the annihilated body, and what is left or not left in the wake of destruction. To do so, we posit that the annihilated body is the productive effect of structural violence and structural power acting in concert. They are able to occupy the

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5 Arendt, On Violence, 44.  
6 Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 98.
same space, in contradiction to Marx and Hegel’s theory of the power of negation, and be thoroughly damaging because of the moralizing which often accompanies the violations. The annihilated body we focus on here is restricted to Frantz Fanon’s black body, as discussed in Black Skin White Masks, The Wretched of the Earth and A Dying Colonialism and Hamid Dabashi’s brown body, as discussed in Brown Skin White Masks, Corpus Anarchicum and Islamic Liberation Theology. We use these two authors and their particular entry points into examining issues of dispossession, post-humanism and redemption. To do so, we rely on a Nietzschean framework with which to interpret their discussion, while allowing Michel Foucault’s interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche’s prose to influence our analytical lens.

We hold the following to be true as we begin our analysis: (i) that structural violence and structural power are capable of occupying the same space. Hannah Arendt argues, in On Violence, that such a thing is nearly impossible when she says “power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent.” When moralizing acts as a mediator though, the corrosive interplay of these forces is not only possible but amplified and the bodies within the realm come undone as a result; (II) that an annihilated body is created as a result of structural power and structural violence acting in concert, where annihilation is understood as not just the destruction of the troublesome subject but an attempt to disappear the subject, with no trace they ever were. It aims to make the subject impuissant, wholly apolitical, with no history, memory or legacy; (III) that our references to the body are not restricted to its material corporeality but it refers to the post-human body as well, which is “a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic

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7 Arendt, On Violence, 57.
between my body and the world;”⁸ (IV) that the realm in which this is all happening is a
Nietzschean one, where we have accepted that ressentiment⁹ is the categorical
imperative and even the secular body is bound by its logic; (V) that Fanon’s articulation
of black psychoaffectivity and Dabashi’s examination of the politics of dispossession
allow us to explore the concept of annihilation with some thematic specificity.

Chapter one will focus on what happens when the body that is meant to be
nothing more than an object that can easily be manipulated, shaped and trained fails to
obey and instead turns into a weapon; where weaponization takes the form of either
homicidal or suicidal violence. It is here that we explore the concept of annihilation, the
ways in which power lays claim to the body and how these violations are often framed
as moral. Aime Cesaire writes that “decolonization is not automatic… it is always the
result of a struggle, the result of strenuous effort. Even the most peaceful form of
decolonization is always the result of a rupture.”¹⁰ We consider then that black and
brown bodies remain colonized and that the rupture needed to free those bodies from
their captors is a radical one. We question whether homicidal or suicidal violence
provides such a rupture or simply creates a momentary disruption with no lasting shift.

Chapter two examines whether the transformation of the manipulated, regulated,
disposable body into a body with metamorphic potential can be found in sacrifice? Does
the human body need to be sacrificed, then, to birth freedom? Although this rhetoric is
problematic we take a moment to consider the redemptive capacity of destruction.

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⁹ Although Nietzsche examines ressentiment through a Judeo-Christian framework, what he
problematizes is the metaphysics of denying and repressing the body, especially when the body is
posited as the embodiment of evil. This discursive trend is not limited to the Judeo-Christian faith but
finds its way into numerous monotheistic religions.
¹⁰ Césaire et al., _Discourse on Colonialism: Discours Sur Le Colonialisme. English._ 125–126.
Dabashi and Fanon agree that some bodily annihilation is needed to unlock the potential of the post-human. We consider, then, how sacrifice and redemption are framed within their texts, with the understanding that the task is to: detect the thematic specificity of the annihilated bodies being discussed; locate it in the global configuration of power that it implicates; and posit a path to redemption. “The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly.”¹¹ How can the black subject repossess his body and unmake the meanings affixed? And similarly how can the Palestinian reclaim the territory that has been stolen? Dabashi says “it is as if when Palestinians lost their homeland to the Zionists they turned their own bodies into the functional equivalent—metamorphic representation, metaphoric suggestion—of their land, which by possessing they could deny their colonial settlers recognition and legitimacy.”¹² Black and brown bodies are treated as disposable but it is in this chapter that we question whether the embrace of this disposability has any redemptive potential. Can the absence that is left after death offer some recourse for our change in circumstance?

Chapter 3 takes on these questions about absence and revelation by asking, what happens when a hollowed space becomes the whole? Does it become more visible, now unmasked as an absence demanding signification? Or do we continue to see past the hollow, with the destroyed body no less disposable than it had been before? Does the absence transform the disposable body into signifier, or do we forget what was there to begin with? To explore these questions, we rely on three cases, both real and fictive, to elaborate on this idea of absence. Absence is understood in four

¹¹ Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 111.
¹² Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 20.
parts: as a ghostly presence, as the uncanny, as repression and as memory. The line between what is real—in our stories of Samira and Sandro Rosa do Nascimento—and what has been imagined is blurred here and we take the fictional story of Pecola of Bluest Eye as representing the real because, “understanding... the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as suspended above or distant from the represented”\(^{13}\) allows us greater access to our socially constructed realm.

Power turns us all into objects. We are objects needing legislation but when our subjectivity is made inert by way of moral licensing we may very well come undone. We are more than object and subject though, we are spirit, floating outside ourselves, voyeurs to our commandeering. We are bound, helpless as our bodies are remotely controlled; we are panoptic passengers in this hijacking, muted with an anesthetizing awareness of our colonizing. We are our bodies and our bodies are not our own. The terror sets in with recognition. It is the terror that unmake us, not the colonizing. We explore our bodily annihilation here and we find ways to unmake our dispossession.

**Bodies in the Realm**

The realm of human affairs belongs to us. It is in this space that we are corporeal, an embodiment of the transcendental soul, and it is also here that we build the structures that allow us to navigate our existence. We build political structures that seek to maintain order and religious structures that aspire to give our life meaning, we build social, ideological, cultural structures with lifespans that are incredibly

\(^{13}\) Taussig, *The Nervous System*, 10.
unpredictable. The realm of human affairs describes the world as we know it, with bodies, buildings and codes of conduct woven together in a marriage of codependence. The realm of human affairs is the logical, linear, temporal space where we navigate reality. We exist as bodies in this space, capable of building entire civilizations. We write history in this space, erect edifices for our distraction, we build monuments to Gods here and then strike each other down in their name. The realm of human affairs is fluent in contradictory ideologies, and overlaid in repugnant dogmas, it is our space, in perpetual motion and deeply damaged. We invite forces, like power and violence, into the realm and watch as those forces radically alter all they touch. We use the realm to understand, manifest and materialize those incorporeal energies which we frequently utilize in the structuration of our reality. The body is at the centre of the realm and power takes leave to monopolize violences trained on those bodies. As Foucault states,

It was a question not of treating the body, en masse, ‘wholesale’, as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it ‘retail’, individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself—movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body.”

The body in all its primacy within the realm is condemned to violations but we must consider whether we must continue to submit, or turn our bodies into weapons.

The body, then, is both sign and signifier of our power and our powerlessness. The amalgamation of power and violence has a way of fixing its gaze on bodies—bodies of color, bodies of the vulnerable, bodies of outsiders—unmaking them from within and without. The body is implicated in their interplay and is unavoidably broken or remade as a result: “what defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is

14 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 137.
chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship.”¹⁵ The bombing of the body, then, as a sign of political defiance is not outside the realm of what politics should expect of its tools; as those bodies act and react to the forces being trained on those bodies. When those tools become more than mere objects, mere signs, and transform into signifiers of resistance, we are reminded of their irreducibility.

The materiality of the body, then, is central to the ways in which power operates, especially when discussed in relation to the state apparatus. Much of the state’s power is derived from its monopoly on violence, and that monopoly means nothing without bodies to feel the effects of that possessorship. The bodies within the realm of human affairs give power its legitimacy and without the body, power is a construct with no way to grow itself. Power in practice requires the body. The centrality of the Faceless—those made anonymous by their condition, their position or their shrouding—or the Unseen—a seething presence which occupies no physical space—shifts the significance of the physical body as the site of political contestation by opening up the possibility that the body can also be a disposable signifier and by extension that its absence can also be the site of political defiance. Remaking the body in this way has the potential of radically altering how it is regulated within the realm. It means that power is not the only source of classifying and thus controlling the body; it means that we have a similar power in our ability to remake and define what constitutes presence.

Power is incapable of manifesting or materializing itself and is reliant on our bodies to grow itself.

¹⁵ Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 40.
According to the traditional concept of power, equated, as we saw, with violence, power is expansionist by nature. It ‘has an inner urge to grow,’ it is creative because ‘the instinct of growth is proper in it’. Just as in the realm of organic life everything either grows or declines and dies, so in the realm of human affairs power supposedly can sustain itself only through expansion; otherwise it shrinks and dies.\(^{16}\)

The realm of human affairs, then, provides the means for power and violence to operate. Whether they graft themselves on to bodies, structures or implements, they are made tangible in the realm of human affairs and become formidable in their instrumentality and reach. Suicidal violence as a strategy of political defiance problematizes the relationship between the body and power, by removing the body altogether. As Dabashi points out,

> The self-explosive body of the suicide bomber who has eradicated the final platform of political violence by a violence equal in its intensity, once and for all denying the state its sole surviving site of legitimacy… The exploded body of the suicide bomber as the excavated territory of the state where it has categorically crumbled.\(^{17}\)

Abandoning the body, then, and turning into disposal signifier as part of that struggle seemingly, theoretically, shifts power unto those who rarely have it. They are disposable signs transformed into disposable signifiers at the moment of their explosion. We deny them visibility, and they reclaim visibility at the moment of their bodily annihilation.

The lens with which we examine power, specifically political power, is through Foucault’s discussion of the dominant-repression scheme of political power which, because it does not aim to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate violence, allows us to more thoroughly examine power as exercised by non-state actors. The contract-oppression scheme, on which sovereignty is built, is grounded in the notion that individual citizens suspend their natural rights so they may be rescued from the

\(^{16}\) Arendt, *On Violence*, 74.
\(^{17}\) Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 180.
state of nature. Only one kind of legitimate violence exists here, and it belongs to the sovereign. This project abandons discussion of legitimate versus illegitimate violence, as both are a product of a narrative which negates the individual right to exercise power. Instead, we examine power through the dominant-repression scheme as the pertinent opposition here is between struggle and submission.

**Productive Interplay**

Power breaks us with violence and our response is recast as a pathology of Otherness. The posthuman body finds ways to revolt against the conspiracy between power and violence, but a part of that conspiracy is anesthetizing us to the trauma of our continuous violations and reframing that trauma as unavoidable. As Foucault states,

> But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. The 18th century invented, so to speak, a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise within the social body, rather than from above it.  

Structural power, then, is that force which reaches into our very recesses of, not just conduct, but need. Structural power is that amorphous entity that not only represses our instincts but excites them at will. Power resides in the institutions we create, the laws which regulate our movement and codes of conduct which tell us who to be. We invite power into the realm and we submit. Power wears a face though; it is embodied. For Fanon that face is that of his white captor and for Dabashi, it is the imperialist. Whatever face power wears, it seeks to do one thing: grow itself. It has learned to do so on the

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backs of the already marginalized and its systemic violations have been made moral in the retelling. To detect the thematic specificity of bodily annihilation, we turn briefly to a discussion of moralizing. Although secular bodies populate the realm, they too are bound by the logic of the transvaluation and when married to structural power and structural violence, bodies come undone.

Moralizing is the force within oppressed cultures which keeps it bound to its Manichean delirium and allows this splitting to continually reproduce itself despite its destructive nature. It is the “the non-sequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity.” Moralizing makes the irrational intelligible and transcendent. It thrives on ambivalence and feeds on our unwillingness to see fissures, splittings and voids. Moralizing is separate from morality and the moral instinct. It is morality translated, with the pollutions of stereotypes, self-interest and prejudices at play. It is the sigh of the moral instinct, expelled from the body and turned to poison. It is the means to its own end, the answer to its own question, the logic to its own disquiets. Moral judgment is passed on “the passions, instincts, anomalies, infirmities, maladjustments, effects of environment or heredity”, and is not limited to judging immoral acts but seek to situate an inherent lack in the Other, made manifest in those inescapable failures. Moralizing reinforces itself without presenting itself and in the hands of violence, it is at its most dangerous.

Homi Bhabha discusses the insidiousness of moralizing in his argumentation about ambivalent colonial discourse. He says this:

Splitting constitutes an intricate strategy of defense and differentiation in the colonial discourse. Two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same

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20 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 17.
place, one takes account of reality, the other is under the influence of instincts which detach the ego from reality. The results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief.\textsuperscript{21}

It is understandable, then, that the moral imperative which is articulated within this space is similarly multiple and contradictory. The proclamation of the moral is not only meant to re-inscribe power dynamics but it is meant to pacify any individual moral objections. When Fanon describes his encounter with the child on the train and he says, “the white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness burns me to cinder,”\textsuperscript{22} his inherent and inescapable immorality is made real.

Moralizing, then, ascribes certain truths based on implicit knowledge. To “amputate” the black man—psychologically, emotionally, culturally—and to have power over his dehumanization, requires that he internalizes ambivalent ‘truths’. “These power-knowledge relations are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, [what] the subject knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded”\textsuperscript{23} Moralizing, then, is particularly affecting because it claims humanism but reproduces prejudices. The “modalities of knowledge” as far as moralizing draws on Christian and other religious arguments. They frame themselves as unquestioningly ethical and as such “the colonizer’s interrogation becomes anomalous, ‘for every term which the Christian missionary can employ to communicate divine truth is already

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 188.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Fanon, \textit{Black Skin White Masks}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 28.
\end{itemize}
appropriated as the chosen symbol of some counterpart deadly error." Moralizing, especially in the colonial and post-colonial context has to exploit this ambivalence, because two truths must exist, one for whites and one for the Other. As Bhabha makes clear, however, this kind of contradiction is self-destructive and eventually the force of the contradictory moral claim fades into the ether. "When God imposes and opposes his name he ruptures the rational transcendence but interrupts also the … linguistic imperialism." Moralizing then, is self-effacing, and eventually consumes itself. The contradictions coded into the language, which emboldens some while diminishing others, is eventually unmasked as inherently destructive.

Dabashi explores this when he says, "imperialism… take[s] the form of invented binaries that carries within them the slanted power relation." He also says, "the current—politically fabricated, ideologically sustained—assumption that suicidal bombing is the result and consequence of Islamic fanaticism is entirely false and deeply rooted in the continued influence of an Orientalist imagination." The act of crafting a narrative of moral superiority based on assumptions, stereotypes and fear is the thing that makes moralizing so destructive. We need not seek answers if perpetrators are evil; if we can claim for ourselves a moral high ground with which to disparage all who are different then we need not see how we are both violated and violators. Moralizing requires ambivalence. It is a space of contradiction which aspires to not only make universal claims but righteous ones. "There occurs, then, what we may describe as the

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24 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 192.
26 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 32.
27 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 200.
normal strategy of discursive splitting, a certain anomalous containment of cultural ambivalence.\textsuperscript{28}

Moralizing is bound up with a kind of linguistic manipulation, where morality is translated by circumscribed agents allowed to speak on its behalf. “There must be a tribe of interpreters of such metaphors—the translators of the dissemination of texts and discourses across cultures—who can perform what Said best describes as the act of secular interpretation.”\textsuperscript{29} This tribe usually finds itself in positions of power and dominance, all too willing to misremember history and reframe it as less flawed than it was.

Power, like, violence is immaterial. They exist in a space of ambivalence, constantly in flux. They live in the void, a space readily accessible but altogether separate from the order and fixity of reality. “Neither violence nor power is a natural phenomenon, that is, a manifestation of the life process.”\textsuperscript{30} They can be made manifest in the realm of human affairs and enclosed within bodies, spaces, institutions, and implements. The combination of the two can be and has been incredibly destructive and so we examine them as singular entities and energies in cooperation in order to better understand their effects inside the realm. Let us first define: “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert”\textsuperscript{31}; while

Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What can never grow from it is power… to substitute violence for power can bring victory, but the price is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is also paid by the victor in terms of his own power.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{28} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 189.
\textsuperscript{29} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 202.
\textsuperscript{30} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 82.
\textsuperscript{31} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 44.
\textsuperscript{32} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 53.
Let us imagine, then, that violence and power are frequencies that live in the void. Energies that conflict or cooperate when coupled. Arendt argues that power is the opposite of violence, the yin to a violent yang. Based on Arendt’s logic and in applying my own wording, power and violence generate the same frequency, one at the positive and one at the negative end of the spectrum. At the positive end only power exists, at the negative end only violence exists and on the linear line that connects them, the two intermix at varying concentrations. Arendt posits that the two are incapable, in their most expanded forms, of coexisting. She argues, “power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power’s disappearance.” History has taught us, however, that totalized, unchecked, unmitigated violence can find a home in the most powerful of structures. Total violence and total power can coexist, even if their cooperation is momentary, and create destroyed, even annihilated, bodies.

As energies in the void, power and violence generate separate but related frequencies. They repel and attract in a logic similar to Hegel and Marx’s “power of negation” where “opposites do not destroy but smoothly develop into each other because contradictions promote and do not paralyze development.” Although the relationship between power and violence is relational and intricately bound together, Arendt’s argument, that one is the opposite of the other, ignores the unpredictability of human behavior. We have been witness to unfolding dramas where power structures, in an effort to expand, erect violent scaffolds which successfully increase power. We have been witness to structural violence persisting through time, without revolt from those

33 Arendt, On Violence, 56.
34 Arendt, On Violence, 56.
affected. Structural power and structural violence can and have successfully co-existed, leading to the creation of annihilated bodies.

When moralizing conspires with violence and power, it is at its most destructive. The chaotic coalescing creates the splitting, fissures and time-lags which persist long after the structures themselves have been dismantled. Evils perpetuated in the name of morality have a way of leaving traces of themselves and produce breaks with time and reality which refuse to be closed. “[When] the agency implicit in this discourse is objectified [it] is not a free-floating time lack but a time-lag – a contingent moment in the signification of closure.”35 The combining of self-interest articulated as the moral imperative with spaces of dominance and objectification creates a

Locality [that] is more around temporality than about historicity: a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; more symbolic that ‘society’; more connotative than ‘country’; less patriotic than patrie; more rhetorical than the reason of the State; more mythological than ideology; less homogenous than hegemony; less centered than the citizen; more collective than ‘the subject’; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identification than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.36 This “locality” then is not only ruled by its transgressions but the deliberate exorcizing of truth. If we are ever able to mend the breaks within our own localities, we must be willing to situate those transgressions in the discourses they deserve, free from moral and righteous claims.

The Reckoning

35 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 263.
36 Bhabha, The Location of Culture 200–201.
The tag of primitiveness is affixed to the black body, the contempt for and complete destruction of our cultural legacy, our forced assimilation into the European culture at a reduced price, all have resulted in the inculcation, deep into the soul of each colonized person, of a devastating inferiority complex, which Fanon calls the Manichean delirium. He describes,

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took far off from my own presence, far indeed, made myself into an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But it did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together… I wanted to be a man, nothing but a man.37

Throughout *Black Skin White Masks*, we watch Fanon wrestle with his naked declivity and try to reclaim what has been stolen. He is continually reminded, however, that his psycho-affectivity is a product of his own inferiority. That he, and all those that look like him, are walking embodiments of darkness, incapable of inspiring God’s grace. This narrative finds its way inside Fanon and lays claim to his insides. Fanon had always occupied a space of dual identities but as the *Wretched of the Earth* begins, we quickly realize that this duality has become a space of breaking. That as his Manichean reality descends into greater violence and chaos, and as the power structures continue to moralize their violations, Fanon transforms from two halves of one whole into one man occupying only that space of breaking.

Forty years later we have Dabashi presenting us with bodies past the point of breaking. We have instead exploded bodies, escaping a condition of cancerous despair, ossified desolation and contagious melancholy. He says, “we were still born into history” and with our stories having been long written, our condition seems irredeemable.

37 Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 110.
Reclaiming our bodies for ourselves and reclaiming our futures in kind require a fundamental reimagining of our radical potential. As much as suicidal and homicidal violence reek of our collective failure to free ourselves by other means, we considerate still. Dabashi says,

I will look closely at the self-explosive body of the suicide bomber who has eradicated the final platform of political violence by a violence equal in its intensity, once and for all denying the state its sole surviving site of legitimacy. In this final reflection, I propose the exploded body of the suicide bomber as the excavated territory of the state where it has categorically crumbled.  

We question whether exploding bodies carry with them any redemptive potential. Or are we simply exploding like smart bomb, disrupting space and leaving behind rubble: with no story, no name, no memory. Are we turning ourselves into the disposable objects power had always imagined us to be? Even if we are due a reckoning should we resign ourselves to never having one; to being occupied territory, dispossessed of our bodies and hijacked by forces outside of our control?

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**A Note on the Question of Method**

Probably in the way of all critically engaged pathways to knowledge, this introduction would not be complete without something in the way of a prologue on the question of method. Particularly when what is at stake is the question of moralizing violence and, consequently, the ethical status of the suicided body. The requirement to theorize the suicided body in all its complexity has been made all the more urgent by intellectually

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38 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 180.
compelling questions raised by one of my readers, Professor Andrew Wender. Indeed, I consider methodological issues brought into visibility by his comments of such first-order significance that it would most appropriate to respond by means of a preliminary reflection on the question of (my) method. Here, then, is Professor Wender’s comment and my tentative response. Of such engagements is borne anew the truly enigmatic quality of moralizing violence.

I do think there may be significant dangers to pursuing her argument in the sometimes-elliptical way that she does, not least where it comes to the relative lack of illustrative concreteness that might otherwise help to buttress her parallel between the violent resister of colonialism theorized by Fanon, and the suicide bomber who is read semiotically by Dabashi. For example, in the latter instance, she relies on Dabashi’s Sufi-redolent sense of divine presence and absence within the Islamic tradition -- and then there is also the fact that Dabashi’s work characteristically engages, above all, with Twelver Shi’i sensibilities -- when actual contemporary instances of suicide bombing by, say, ISIS, involve literalist Sunni interpretations of theology that would just as soon annihilate Sufis and Shi’a, as the bombers themselves, or the Sykes-Picot era colonizers who are, no doubt, part of the picture, too.

To put it another way, I don’t doubt that there is a good deal of theoretical validity to what Jeanique argues, but the emphasis and tone risk occluding the virulent moralizing that suicide bombers (to say less of self-perceived anticolonial fighters from, say, Mao to Nicolas Maduro) are plenty capable of undertaking, themselves. As I was reading along, I was thinking, a bit of Talal Asad could perhaps help Jeanique to maintain the overall orientation she is seeking, while leavening things a bit with some historically-framed tangibility. Then, I was glad to see her briefly mention his 2007 book, *On Suicide Bombing*, in footnote 103; although things didn’t go much beyond there. … I do think that books like that one, as well as *Formations of the Secular* (e.g., the chapters on ‘Thinking about Agency and Pain’, as well as ‘Reflections on Cruelty and Torture’), and *Genealogies of Religion* could be useful; this, in an attempt to trace the universality, yet historical contingency, of connections between power, violence, morality, and perceptions of the sacred in a manner that unmasks modern Westerners’ pretenses towards being rational and peaceable, without simultaneously over-romanticizing anti-colonial struggle. Also in this vein, I think that a bit more Rene Girard (*Violence and the Sacred*) could be of help. Perhaps I am a bit too affected at the moment by the sight of suffering innocents from Manchester to Kabul, no less so than one would be while witnessing the direct victims of colonial violence (while remaining well aware that colonial violence is historically implicated, to be sure, in the former suffering....).
I wanted to create a space for Dabashi and Fanon’s work to talk to each other about the utility of necropolitics and the bodies that get destroyed in the process. This meant considering the efficacy of their radical theories, even though the instinct is to reject them outright. Dabashi does not go as far as advocating for violence but he treads on similar waters to Fanon in “moralizing” suicidal violence. I worry that their radical approaches are alienating and moving their theories from a level of abstraction to something far more concrete necessarily leads to our rejection of their concepts. I think their work offers an opportunity to consider the post-human body as the primary site of violence and to think about how sacrifice allows for the repossession of one’s disposable body. Their concepts are not without their flaws. For example, Talal Asad takes a far more grounded approach to analyzing suicidal violence. *On Suicide Bombing* offers the historical context and concreteness that my work may lack and I see where I can benefit from his deliberate approach to this subject.

Asad spends far more time discussing suicide bombers than Dabashi so I see the efficacy in the recommendation that I revisit his work. I read through much of his writings on the subject and although incredibly insightful and edifying I found his positivist approach to the subject matter far less appropriate for the work I was trying to do here. He does some interesting profiles of suicide bombers, specifically those from the 9/11 attacks but I had shied away from using any of it because I find that once you use specific incidents of suicide bombings and mass deaths, any philosophical considerations are lost to the reality of what has happened. How can I have any real discussion about whether there is utility in suicidal violence within the context of the
9/11 attacks or what has happened in Manchester or Kabul? And this is part of what I discussed in chapter 3: suicidal violence is understood as repugnant and this closes a loop on our willingness to consider its efficacy. And I find that connecting it with specific acts of suicide bombings only amplifies the issue. I think approaching this abstractly rather than concretely was the appropriate strategy given sensitive nature of this subject. My choice to anchor it in the examples I chose, that is Pecola and Samira (girls who have been harmed and have done no harm) and Sandro (who only sacrifices himself), rather than actual black killers and Muslim suicide bombers was deliberate. As much as you say, "but the emphasis and tone risk occluding the virulent moralizing that suicide bombers... are plenty capable of undertaking, themselves" I worry about turning them into the embodiment of evil as well, because without my help they are already that, before the bombs and before the bloodshed. I am trying to tow a line here and I do not know if there is a good way to do it.

I can well understand the legitimate concern about possibly valorizing suicide bombing, especially as it relates to responding to the violence that we see around us right now. We have a responsibility as advocates for change to be responsive to the current political climate in a way that is reasonably productive. The fact that I have chosen to focus on Muslim bodies that are rarely implicated in suicide bombings, Twelver Shi’i Muslims, and who were themselves recently targets of suicide bombers in Iran, means my work is not specifically responding to forces like ISIS who are largely responsible for the suicidal violence we are seeing now. The violence we have witnessed, in Manchester, London, Kabul, Marawi and now Iran completely confounds me and I do not know how to make sense of any of it, except for this. What I will say is
that none of the violence seen in these instances align with Dabashi’s theories. His narrative is grounded in specific religious traditions which are misaligned with the Sunni faith. The closest I reckon is that what we are seeing is more analogous to participating in euphoric bloodshed and finding thrill in the act of perpetuating war itself, which is akin to a kind of unpredictability that I am unable to deconstruct.
Chapter 1: Sacrifice

The Sacrificial Body

Bodies shatter; they come undone. The body is a fragile thing that is both sign and signifier of our power and our powerlessness. The amalgamation of power and violence has a way of fixing its gaze on bodies—bodies of color, bodies of the vulnerable, bodies of outsiders—unmaking them from within and without. This is the story of the annihilated body. This is the story of a reckoning, where the body is the site of contestation between power and violence. The body is implicated in their interplay and is unavoidably broken or remade as a result. The bombing of the body, then, as a sign of political defiance is not outside the realm of what politics should expect of its tools; “whether the target is colonial occupation or domestic oppression, the site of contestation remains the human body.” 39 When those tools become more than mere objects, mere signs, and transform into signifiers of resistance, we are reminded of their irreducibility. As Foucault points out, “the classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body—to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces.” 40 What happens though when the body that is meant to be nothing more than an object that can easily be manipulated, shaped, trained fails to obey and instead, either implodes or explodes. How do we read their stories: (a) in the moments leading up to the body’s annihilation; (2) as we watch those

39 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 29.
40 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 136.
bodies unravel; (3) and in the wake of the body’s absence? How do we make sense of this absence? How do we read erasure? The task is to detect the thematic specificity of the deadly phenomenon and then locate it in the global configuration of power that it implicates.

We begin by reading these stories in all their complex bits and allow the voices of the erased, forgotten, invisible to speak to us. We begin by understanding that the stories being told are far from inert and that the violences suffered are purposeful attempts to destroy. We begin by recognizing that what we speak of is not domestication of the colonized, but instead it is a kind of annihilation, deliberate and wearing, long trained on bodies black and brown. Foucault said “the body of the condemned man [was] the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces”\(^\text{41}\) and for too long the condemned have been blacks and Muslims, among others. Redemption sometimes is found in unexpected places: occasionally in blood and bombs.

This politics of dispossession is totalizing and it requires our acquiescence. Its insidiousness is made all the more so because of its particular fixations. It is a logic bound to a “static system of synchronic essentialism”\(^\text{42}\) that positions the Other as the antithesis of God and goodness, all the while fixating on those bodies as representative of what is not only bad, but what is evil. Is a reclamation of the body found in the nostalgic rapture of redemption, in resurrection or in something altogether different? Can the transformation of the manipulated, regulated, disposable body into a body with

\(^{41}\) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 12.
metamorphic potential be found in sacrifice? Does the human body need to be
sacrificed, then, to birth freedom? Although this rhetoric is problematic we take a
moment to consider the redemptive capacity of destruction. Dabashi and Fanon agree
that some bodily annihilation is needed to unlock the potential of the post-human. They
argue that the transition from a human body to a post-human body, requires the
dissolve of the former. There is closure and coherence to such a position. It almost
reads as far too reductive. Much of the colonial literature calling for dehumanization of
others also follows this kind of reductive logic.

As Homi Bhabha points out, Otherness is bound up in a closure and coherence
that is derived not just from manifest and latent knowing but from the subconscious
Imaginary. The Imaginary is critical in the formulation of the self. Can a reformulation of
the self be found through a similar reductive rationale or is the escape from psycho-
affectionality found on the very same path that created it? By creating an opening to this
closure through a radical reversal, however that reversal may look, we can potentially
decolonize black and brown bodies.

And so we explore the redemptive possibilities of sacrifice. We read the
disposable body as not only the subject of annihilation but one that can find a reversal
through sacrifice, whether that sacrifice is turned inward or out. Dabashi speaks of
suicidal violence and its transformative potential, and the ways in which the destruction
of the self is a reconfiguration of power, where the body that had been dispossessed is
reclaimed in the moment of its destruction. He says,

The self-explosive body is not just denying the illegitimate state its very last
possible site of violence by a violence to end all violence; it also defies its
involuntary mutation from an anarchic sign into a law-abiding signifier. As body
is forced to become signifier of the land it represents, the exploded body of the
suicidal bomber is the site of a defiance against the forced signification- a last
desperate, attempt to restore to itself the sign of its undecidability.\textsuperscript{43}

Suicidal violence, then, is as much about reclaiming power, as it is about meting
violence with its own kind. It is a direct challenge to the structural power/violence
dynamic by positioning the individual as capable of such a challenge. This is similar to
Fanon’s argument when he says, “colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking... it
is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence.”\textsuperscript{44} Unlike
Dabashi, Fanon suggests that this violence be turned outward, to the white body, who
for him represents colonial power. The body is made metamorphic through blood,
through a baptism of sorts, rather than through self-elimination. Both nonetheless are
speaking of a kind of mythical self-annihilation, where what is becomes what is no
longer. It is this absence that creates an opening to possibilities. Avery Gordon argues
that, “[the] argument that ‘invisible things are not necessarily not-there’ encourages the
complementary gesture investigating how that which appears absent can indeed be a
seething presence.”\textsuperscript{45} The absence is presence. There, by virtue of not being there, an
empty space in an emotive universe readies itself to be filled with something else.

A hollowed space is left. A space that is at once hollowed and hallowed. The
hollowed space, both the physical lack of the human body, as well as the psychic lack of
the post-human body, signals an opportunity for closure; a closure and coherence that
is a distinct departure from that which birthed a condition of cancerous despair, ossified
desolation and contagious melancholy. The hollowed space is a both a presence and
an absence, a sign and a signifier. As the disposable body is brought to the fore, made

\textsuperscript{43}Dabashi, \textit{Corpus Anarchicum}, 29.
\textsuperscript{44}Fanon, \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, 23.
\textsuperscript{45}Gordon, \textit{Ghostly Matters}, 17.
center and destroyed, the presence is no more and all that is left is palpable absence. What happens when a hollowed space becomes the whole? Does it become more visible, now unmasked as an absence demanding signification? Or do we continue to see past the hollow, with the destroyed body no less disposable than it had been before? Does the absence transform the disposable body into signifier, or do we forget what was there to begin with?

The explosion of vacated bodies trapped between territory and non-place and the implosion of the post-human bodies, trapped between recognition and forgetfulness, remind us of our helplessness. Structural violence and structural power collude to leave us helpless. We invite them into the realm of human affairs nevertheless and unleash them onto our own bodies and onto the bodies of others. The body is not built to take the weight of them both though, and comes undone at their hand. The implosions and explosions that come, take all that is tethered to the body and pulls them into a vacuous non-place or a transcendental someplace, depending on whom you ask. All we do know is that this relationship often creates an absence and we can read from that absence the transcendental or we can see it as the bodily annihilation of the condemned. Dabashi suggests that “that corpus cavitas sounds an emptied occupation of space, a hollowed affirmation of identity, translucent and void, in the siteless space that it occupies. ”46 The response to power’s bodily annihilation with suicidal violence, then, is not an act of self-castigation but an expression of the will to power.

Fanon says that spilling blood offers rebirth. But rebirth for whom? Does the implosion unmake the delirium or does it feed it? Does it only reinscribe the breaking that has long been there or does it make new wounds? Is the sacrificing of the body,  

46 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 22.
through an implosion or an explosion capable of rescue, or is it simply loud and evocative and empty, an escape hatch that leads us nowhere?

“They were born at the instance of their death, dead at the moment of their birth, stillborn into history, denied as the world confirmed them in their loss.”

Bodily Annihilation

To tell the story of bodily annihilation we rely, primarily, on Hamid Dabashi and Frantz Fanon. Although their narratives are bound by different contexts, and Dabashi critiques Fanon throughout his own work, they both remain central to the concept of what annihilation means for the Muslim subject, as well as the black subject. The reliance on these two rhetoricians across texts, in conjunction with other postcolonial and postmodern theorists, allows us to facilitate a dialogue about the visual simulacrum of a body that denies colonial erasure, the mnemotechnics of pain and the performative response to that pain. As central as their ideas are to the logic we follow throughout this chapter, we concede that those ideas require our rigorous examination and critique where necessary. Their centrality here is not indicative of blind faith in their insights or their conclusions but instead it represents their role as inspiration. We are inspired by the *Wretched of the Earth, A Dying Colonialism, Black Skin White Masks* and *Brown Skin White Masks, Corpus Anarchicum* and *Islamic Liberation Theology*. Dabashi responds to Fanon, and here we will speak to them both. We hold the following to be true throughout this chapter, that: (i) it is possible to approach the question of bodily

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annihilation from the perspective of corpus universalis; (ii) by doing so we have not implicitly or explicitly rejected cultural particularity; (iii) there is such a thing as a collective consciousness that can be shared by those of the same faith, class, nationality, race or community, however that community is constituted.

Dabashi and Fanon speak of the body that denies colonial erasure. Dabashi says, “and as the posthuman body has revolted against the globalized state, so has its suicidal urges metastasized beyond nations and boundaries, cultures and civilizations, religions and creeds.”48 The suicidal urges, or the move to self-annihilate, is a response to this unending siege visited upon black and brown bodies. The bodily annihilation we tackle then, occurs from within and from without. Dabashi refers to a globalized state that is implicated in pursuing and destroying the Muslim subject. Similarly, Fanon refers to the colonizers who revel in the destruction of the black subject. Naming the hammer is not central to this argument. Instead we seek to capture its essence. Gordon says, “it causes dreams to live and dreams to die. We can and must call it by recognizable names, but so too we need to remember that power arrives in forms that can range from blatant white supremacy and state terror to furniture without memories.”49 The central issue is the amorphous nature of power, in collusion with violence, and the necessity of its laying claim to a tangible territory. Power is incapable of manifesting or materializing itself, it needs the structures within the realm to take form.

According to the traditional concept of power, equated, as we saw, with violence, power is expansionist by nature. It has an inner urge to grow, it is creative because the instinct of growth is proper in it. Just as in the realm of organic life everything either grows or declines and dies, so in the realm of

48 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 41.
human affairs power supposedly can sustain itself only through expansion; otherwise it shrinks and dies.\textsuperscript{50}

The realm of human affairs, then, provides the means for power and violence to operate. Whether they graft themselves onto bodies, structures or implements, they are made tangible in the realm of human affairs and become formidable in their instrumentality and reach. The defiant sign of the body and its forceful mutation into a site of political violence—for or against power—is the center of our discussion of bodily annihilation and by extension the parabolics of freedom.

Nietzsche asks, “for what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility… how is freedom measured…? By the resistance which has to be overcome, by the effort it cost to stay aloft.”\textsuperscript{51} And the effort being discussed here, is the willingness to spill blood, one's own or that of others. The resistance which has to be overcome is the greatest of them all: it is our resistance to the collaborative and cooperative relationship of structural power and structural violence. Nietzsche argues that freedom is found in our transformation into the Overman. The Overman is the transformed kind of human being who enhances his own Will to power by a kind of self-creating which involves the founding of new values and standards, a founding which can take place only through the overcoming of pity and through the ultimate confrontation with and affirmation of human finitude. Mythical self-annihilation is a call to confront human finitude to self-create, even if what is created is an absence. Foucault says, “death is power’s limit, the moment that escapes it.”\textsuperscript{52} Freedom it seems, by some measure, can be found in our departure into the beyond.

\textsuperscript{51} Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, §38.
\textsuperscript{52} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 138.
Bodily annihilation is persistently visited on the condemned. Escape from this condition is all too elusive.

The choice is not between an anti-suicidal violence interpretation and a pro-suicidal violence interpretation. No sane person can believe in any act of violence—genocidal, homicidal, or suicidal—in that (not just alphabetical) or any other order. The task is to detect the thematic specificity of the deadly phenomenon and then locate it in the global configuration of power it implicates.\(^{53}\)

The reversal of this annihilation through an embrace of human finitude is a move to deny structural power and violence their excesses. To embrace violence, whether homicidal or suicidal, as Dabashi makes clear, is a move toward sheer madness. It is not the act itself that is embraced but it instead the recognition of the incoherence of structural power and structural violence in concert, which we generally read as rational. The responses, then, are similarly confounding.

**Occupied Territory**

As the forces of power and violence, forces belonging to the void, play out their drama in the realm of human affairs, the bodies in the realm succumb, they react, they disappear, they fall away, they leave traces of themselves in the form of ghosts. The productive interplay of power and violence is felt in the realm and their presence here, even incrementally, leaves an imprint. "Neither violence nor power is a natural phenomenon, that is, a manifestation of the life process."\(^{54}\) The realm of human affairs, then, provides the means for power and violence to operate. Whether they graft themselves onto bodies, structures or implements, they are made tangible in the realm

\(^{53}\) Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 19.  
\(^{54}\) Arendt, *On Violence*, 82.
of human affairs and become formidable in their instrumentality and reach. We pull them into our spaces, dragging them from the beyond, deluding ourselves that we can somehow control their presence here; that we can plunge our hands into the depths and return unscarred. We are scarred. With bodies exploding and imploding around us, we are scarred. “The body exposes that violence by mirroring it, stripping it of its metaphysics, ideology, and teleology.”55 Our hands steeped in blood is a reminder of our hubris but we persist.

As Deleuze points out,

Every force is related to others and it either obeys or commands. What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship.56

Arendt says in On Violence the dominant force needs its opposite; it feeds off dominated forces, with the two mutually constituting each other. Using Marx and Hegel’s power of negation, two dominant forces should no more co-exist than two dominated forces. The relationship between power and violence, then, is one of immense negative unity, where the expansion of one results in the diminishing of the other: “power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power’s disappearance.”57 But we find spaces where structural power and structural violence find each other and lay claim to the same territory. Such a conspiracy can only leave in its wake one result: ruin.

55 Arendt, On Violence, 159.
56 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 40.
57 Arendt, On Violence, 56.
What happens when the body is caught between two dominant forces? When the active power meets the active violence. How does the fragile frame hold itself together in the wake of such assault? Does it collapse, fragment, perish? Or does it steel itself by becoming a dominant force of its own, a fragile frame, capable of a reckoning? Dabashi suggests that,

The reasons and circumstances for this radical mutation of the human body into an instrumental weapon of deadly destruction will have to be detected in the transformation of classical colonialism into the aggressive formation of a predatory empire and the obvious catalytic impacts it has had on global geopolitics.58

He argues that the body becomes a dominant force of its own, challenging the assaults of power and violence. We must take a moment to consider though, whether it is reasonable to read suicidal or homicidal violence, for example, as a radical mutation.

In this chapter we explore the concept of bodily annihilation as perpetuated by structural power and structural violence acting in concert. We also explore bodily annihilation as a product of—the imploding body—and a response to—the exploding body—a conspiracy between structural power and structural violence. To do so we: (i) discuss the ability of morality to act as a buffer between structural power and structural violence, allowing both to temporally co-exist, while productively energizing each other; (ii) explore the concept of bodily annihilation, where the human body, corporeal and transient, gives way to the post-human body, which is contingent and contextual; (iii) reframe annihilation as a kind of sacrificial violence that we all revel in and play a part in provoking; (iv) discuss the sacrificial body as a vessel for suicidal violence, specifically suicide bombings, where suicidal violence is the ultimate denial to the state of its singular and final site of legitimacy; (v) examine the prolonged psycho-affective trauma

58 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 18.
visited on blacks. Relying on Fanon, we tap into a dying colonialism where black bodies, both post-human and human are a site of colonial contestation and are the principal locus of violence for the state where it reinscribes its legitimacy through the mutual destruction and negation of blackness. As black and brown bodies come undone, we treat their stories as unexpected outcome of colonial conditioning. The intent is not to destroy these bodies, it is instead to make them prostrate and profitable. Foucault points out that such an end is entirely possible, as he describes the making of the docile body, but when the violence employed rises to meet the power at play, annihilation instead of domestication is the outcome.

History, as the intermediary stage of the project of the emancipation of man, turns out to be the incessant process of man’s domestication and enslavement. When the body refuses to be made docile, when it refuses or is unable to acquiesce, the body shifts from embodying metamorphic potential to being metaphorically valuable to being altogether disposable. The problem here is that it is far too easy to make such a shift when black and brown bodies are being legislated. This move largely rests with power and its carefully scaffolded mechanisms of violence, but as Nietzsche insists, maybe such power can be held individually. Maybe we can turn the disposable body back into that which has metamorphic potential. Maybe we have a unique power which allows us to turn our bodies into signs of themselves and not just signifiers of our powerlessness. Dabashi insists that, “bodies are signs, and signs are not signifiers. Suicidal violence is the final, irretrievable register of the defiant sign of the body resisting legislation into a semantics of obedience.”59 He charges that the escape of the productive interplay of violence and power, is an embrace of both: to birth the post-human in a moment of

reclamation of human finitude and by extension individual power while exploding the body in a symbolic and literal act of violence which negates any claims of ownership of the bodies in the realm.

By contrast, Fanon argues that the annihilation that must be embraced must not be the sacrifice of the self but the sacrifice of the colonizer. Fanon insists that the breaking must be turned outward; that we can somehow be made free through the spilling of the colonizer’s blood. Unlike Dabashi, who argues that “the site of the shattered body of the suicide bomber, the ground zero of his or her self-explosion [is] his or her final denial of state authority,” Fanon believes that the denial of state of authority is secured through the destruction of white bodies. He states, “colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking... it is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence.” Given that bodies black and brown have been little more than perpetually disposable, the destruction of these bodies, whether public or otherwise, may ultimately fail to hold power’s gaze. The possibility remains though that the absenting of bodies in response, may create room for real challenge to power.

Dabashi says,

As the suicidal body self-explodes and disintegrates itself, the narcissist body celebrates itself and seeks perpetual youth. Both the genetically reengineered bodies and the mystically martyred are active denials of death, one at the heart of capitalist postmodernity, the other at its peripheralized brutality.

Our conversation here needs no closure. It is instead an open exploration of possibilities. Politics of despair gives way to an aesthetics of emancipation. The question of confrontation versus self-capitulation is central where both are allowed to

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60 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 8.
61 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 23.
62 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 83.
coexist as part of the same narrative. The Manichean delirium belongs to us all and our responses are similarly contradictory, but the spirit of defiance, that Fanon, Dabashi and so many others encourage, enervates the stories to come.

_O man, take care!_
_
What does the deep midnight declare?_
_
I was asleep—_

_From a deep dream I woke and swear: —_
_
The world is deep,_

_Deeper than day had been aware._
_
Deep is its woe—_

_Joy—deeper yet than agony:_
_
Woe implores: Go!_
_
But all joy wants eternity—_

_Wants deep, wants deep eternity._

A Moral Annihilation

Moralizing is a force within oppressed cultures which keeps it bound to its Manichean delirium and allows this splitting to continually reproduce itself despite its destructive nature. It is the “non-sequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity.” But subjectivity is not an allowance that all are afforded. The moral and material indignities suffered by real human beings driven to desperate measures by a predatory operation of imperial power that has left no luxurious room for religious authenticity.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s _The Genealogy of Morals_ traces this slave morality through an etymological, anthropological and physiological study which identifies the moment of “Jewish transvaluation” when aristocratic morality was made impotent. Nietzsche argues that the slaves managed their “monstrous initiative” to perfect its

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64 Bhabha, _The Location of Culture_, 202.
“most intelligent revenge” which was to reclaim the concepts, of good and bad, and turn them inside; not to destroy them but to repurpose them entirely. This transvaluation has been so successful that the narrative of the slave has become the narrative of the collective: the meek shall inherit the earth; it is the nobility who is Godless and hedonistic. The very exclusive class of goodness was made entirely inaccessible to those that created the distinctions, between good and bad, to begin with; transforming the narrative of “good versus bad” to “good versus evil” in the process. As a result of this moment, we are all suffering, maybe universally from what Nietzsche calls ressentiment or at least some secularized version. Black and brown bodies within the realm of human affairs allow themselves to be convinced that they are a walking affront to God and goodness and are embodiments of the evil they were trained to rebuke. Although Nietzsche’s discussion of ressentiment is grounded in Judeo-Christian faith, we can apply it outside those constraints. There is room to apply it to the secular contemporary world, as well as Islam, all the while remaining fully aware of the deficits for its application in those spaces. Nietzsche’s discussion of morality, of evil and of the reactive and active forces that train our bodies and our consciousness, offers us a lens with which to examine and we will allow ourselves use of that lens where necessary.

Nietzsche’s decision to explore the subject of morality through a genealogical retracing historicizes the exercise of our worldly freedom in a way that delivers no clear resolutions. We are also forced to question whether the task of genealogical investigation, and its retracing of steps once taken, effaces previous interpretations of history or whether it is itself another act of interpretive violence, made less troubling because of the newness of its claims. Nietzsche introduces us to the concept of
ressentiment and makes it discursively central to our understanding of morality; violent interpretation or not, its salience is undeniable. And so we take him at his word, with reservation, and believe ourselves to be “the herd”, willfully bound to faith and a burdensome slave morality.

Nietzsche continually problematizes ressentiment and unmasks its corrosiveness. He says,

the ‘masters’ are done away with; the morality of the common man has won. This victory might also be seen as a form of blood poisoning… The progress of this poison though the entire body of mankind seems inexorable. From now on, its pace may even be slower, finer, less audible, more considered—there is no hurry after all.  

Slave morality is in turn historicized: a contingent product of a historical struggle; and it is demystified and pathologized: transcendent values are traced back to bodily dysfunction. His recommendation is that we design our own morality; craft a sense of virtue grounded in subjectivity and perspectivism. He argues that ressentiment extinguishes the Will to power and replaces it with a Will to nothingness and it is incumbent on us, to find the Overman within. Giving ourselves the law rather than being bound by the “spirit of gravity” which keeps us bound to convention.

The Overman is the transformed kind of human being who enhances his own Will to power by a kind of self-creating which involves the founding of new values and standards, a founding which can take place only through the overcoming of pity and through the ultimate confrontation with and affirmation of human finitude. Ultimately morality is a singular pursuit and its universalization is the epitome of dysfunction. The embrace of human finitude is captured in the narrative of the suicide bomber and the homicidal colonized, without our seeing them as one dimensional and predictable.

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Nietzsche seeks to unmake our conditioning by reconnecting us to our Will to power. A will lost to time and a process of transvaluation. He says “in man creator and creature are united; but in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, form giver, hammer harness, spectator divinity and seventh day; do you understand the contrast?”

Moralizing though, aims to make that singular pursuit, not just a universal one but a kind of creed that becomes second nature to us. Moralizing makes the irrational intelligible and transcendent. It thrives on ambivalence and feeds on our unwillingness to see fissures, splittings and voids. Moralizing is separate from morality and the moral instinct. It is morality translated, with the pollutions of stereotypes, self-interest and prejudices at play. It is the sigh of the moral instinct, expelled from the body and turned to poison. It is the means to its own end, the answer to its own question, the logic to its own disquiets. Moral judgment is passed on “the passions, instincts, anomalies, infirmities, maladjustments, effects of environment or heredity,” and are not limited to judging immoral acts but seek to situate an inherent lack in the Other, made manifest in those inescapable failures. Moralizing reinforces itself without presenting itself and in the hands of violence, it is at its most dangerous.

Homi Bhabha discusses the insidiousness of moralizing in his argumentation about ambivalent colonial discourse. He says, this

Splitting constitutes an intricate strategy of defense and differentiation in the colonial discourse. Two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same place, one takes account of reality, the other is under the influence of instincts which detach the ego from reality. The results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief.

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66 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 344.
67 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 17.
68 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 188.
It is understandable, then, that the moral imperative which is articulated within this space is similarly multiple and contradictory. The proclamation of the moral is not only meant to re-inscribe power dynamics but it is meant to pacify any individual moral objections. When Fanon describes his encounter with the child on the train and she says, “the white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness burns me to cinder,” his inherent and inescapable immorality is made real.

Moralizing, then, ascribes certain truths based on implicit knowledge. To “amputate” the black man—psychologically, emotionally, culturally—and to have power over his dehumanization, requires that he internalizes ambivalent ‘truths’.

These power-knowledge relations are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, [what] the subject knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded. Moralizing, then, is particularly affecting because it claims humanism but reproduces prejudices. The "modalities of knowledge" as far as moralizing, draw on Christian and other theological arguments. They frame themselves as unquestioningly ethical and as such “the colonizer’s interrogation becomes anomalous, ‘for every term which the Christian missionary can employ to communicate divine truth is already appropriated as the chosen symbol of some counterpart deadly error.” Moralizing, especially in the colonial and post-colonial context has to exploit this ambivalence, because two truths must exist, one for whites and one for the Other. As Bhabha makes clear, however, this kind of contradiction is self-destructive and eventually the force of the contradictory

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69 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 58.
71 Bhabha, *On The Location of Culture*, 192.
moral claim fades into the ether. “When God imposes and opposes his name he ruptures the rational transcendence but interrupts also the … linguistic imperialism.” Moralizing then, is self-effacing, and eventually consumes itself. The contradictions coded into the language, which embolden some while diminishing others, is eventually unmasked as inherently destructive.

The concept of morality is central here. It is wedded to discussions of power and violence. The two play on our bodies, leaving their imprints in ways that cannot be rubbed away. We are the site of their contestation and it is morality that primes us. The language of ressentiment says that our wearing is penance and even more so that our suffering will be compensated with God’s grace. The religions have been so effective at chipping away at our defenses. We were dead at the moment of our birth, still born into history, and they helped to make it so. Moralizing, though, is a special kind of destructive because its lets us turn the story of our violations into our eager apology. We remain suspicious of the faith that convinces us that glory awaits, somewhere, and that our suffering today is a payment of sorts. We carry Nietzsche’s suspicions with us, as they inform how we read the monotheistic religions that inform so much of our secular universe. In the section to come we discuss the Judeo-Christian faith and Islam as important elements in our examination of the body as the site of political violence. They shape us as much as power and violence do, and so we make room for them and reflect.

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72 Derrida, Writing and Difference, 174.
Chapter 2: Redemption

Resurrection

Resurrection signals an end followed by a return. The end is not an end but is instead the beginning of a possibility. "The tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering ... Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction."73 Fanon says that the colonizer amputated his enthusiasm but they did much more than that: "my blackness was there, dark, unarguable. It tormented me, pushed me, disturbed me, angered me."74 He goes on, "I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare."75 They amputated his humanity. Splitting the man into disparate parts, he deliriously wills himself to be held together. Fanon called this his Manichean delirium, his psycho-affectivity; we can call this slow turning evisceration. Resurrection signals an end but it opens up the possibility of a return of something transcendent. Fanon was not asking for transcendence though, he was asking to be made whole. And he believed that through the death of the psycho-affective self, a new man would return in its stead. The death of the psycho-affective self, he argued, could only be achieved through the murder of the colonizer. Would the black man be resurrected as his amputated self or would the journey between madness and rebirth offer some salvation? The redemptive possibilities of white bloodshed are central to the Wretched of the Earth, which is grounded in a Judeo-Christian understanding of rebirth. Fanon’s use of the term “rebaptize” to describe the black body covered in the white man’s blood,

73 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 1052
74 Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”, 133.
75 Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”, 112.
is very much tied to a specific understanding of the transcendental. As much as we take the time to consider his argument about annihilation and resurrection, we recognize that his logic, especially where this is concerned, is flawed. Recasting the colonizer as the bridge to black subjectivity maintains the colonizer’s status as paragon but elevates him to that of redeemer as well. The colonizer is God himself and we are saved through his sacrifice. Arendt says, “revolutions… their true ‘effect was to give Power a new vigor and poise, and to pull down the obstacles which had long obstructed its development.’ When Fanon speaks of creative madness present in violent action, he is still thinking in this tradition.”\(^76\) This rhetoric is ultimately dangerous, if we were to believe it; instead, we read Fanon for his commentary on annihilation and that resurrection brings with it the possibility of a return of the undamaged subject, which for him is the black man free of his Manichean delirium. How that return, happens, though for the black subject is one for which we have no real answers. Hamid Dabashi suggests that suicidal violence may be one such possibility.

Dabashi tells us that an absence is a presence. He says, “the chronicle of this disappearance is thus neither chronic nor apparent. It is the contradiction of its own terms, the return of its own repressed, the evidence of its own fiction, the body of its own soul, the presence of its own absence.”\(^77\) Resurrection, then, is not the resurrection of the body here but it is instead the absence that comes to replace the presence. “The Metaphysics of Presence is an architectonic replacement for a Visual Absence and thus the necessity of faith in the Absent, in the Unseen, and in effect in the unseeable.”\(^78\) Absence is not erasure and the elimination of the body does not translate into the

\(^{76}\) Arendt, *On Violence*, 74–75.

\(^{77}\) Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 26.

\(^{78}\) Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 57.
elimination of the subject. What is left are the ghosts that haunt. The ones that occupy the vacated spaces and turn them into looping sites of political contestation that we can either take the time to visit or continue to repress. The sacrifice of the body is meant to give way to the transcendental, with the transformation of the body into a signifier and abandoning its role as mere sign. Where “the Sign stands for nothing other than itself, unless and until it is violently mutated, its autonomy transgressed, and made into a Signifier, at which point— and only at which point— it “stands for” something else “to some mind.”  

Structural power aims to make us impotent and the transformation of the sign into signifier through a violent mutation radically reverses the narrative that the body as disposable while simultaneously embracing that disposability. 

Bodily annihilation, then, is not simply about destroying the troublesome subject, instead, it aims to disappear that subject, with no trace they ever were. It aims to make the subject impuissant, wholly apolitical, with no history, memory or legacy. The suicide bomber challenges this by turning the body into a political site demanding public recognition. Our move to criminalize the act instead of reading the annihilation it seeks to unmake, continues to render the body as invisible in death, as it had been in life. Dabashi’s discussion of annihilation and the redemptive possibilities of suicidal violence, is grounded in a narrative which is distinct from Fanon’s. Although he says, “and as the posthuman body has revolted against the globalized state, so has its suicidal urges metastasized beyond nations and boundaries, cultures and civilizations, religions and creeds,”  

Dabashi’s discussion of a return and the significance of “the absence” is very much linked to an Islamic tradition. Suicidal violence, though, belongs to us all, with
martyrdom as a key theme in multiple religions. The idea that Islam breeds more violent subjects than Judaism or Christianity is the same lie as blacks are more prone to violence than whites. Power breaks us with violence and our response is recast as pathology: a pathology of blackness and of the Muslim subject. The posthuman body is revolting against the conspiracies between structural power and structural violence, but a part of that conspiracy is anesthetizing us to the trauma of our continuous violations. To detect the thematic specificity of bodily annihilation and the seemingly disparate approaches of Fanon and Dabashi, we turn briefly to religion, recognizing the role that religion plays in shaping our secular universe.

The Crucified

The Judeo-Christian faith came into itself in a moment of sacrifice. As the story goes, Jesus, the son of God, is made to pay penance for the sins of us all, and his blood redeems us from our own wretchedness. He is made to labour under the weight of the crucifix, under the watchful gaze of the noble and the wretched alike. And his suffering is made public and palpable. The conspiracy to unmask the frailty of the man and his message, turns in on itself and creates a narrative altogether unexpected. The imagery is clear: through the spilling of blood; through the public torture and murder of the Christian king we are redeemed. The history that had stretched before this day had been careful about preserving the perceived goodness of the noble classes but these stories are overtaken, and made inert in a moment of public mutilation. The “noble morality” that saw to the annihilation of the body of Christ, invited its undoing. His
pierced flesh, his starvation, his tortured frame and ultimately his physical annihilation is burned into our collective consciousness and has kept salient what Nietzsche calls the “transvaluation”, which he describes: “It has corrupted the reason, even of those strongest in spirit, by teaching men to consider the supreme values of the spirit as something sinful.”\textsuperscript{81} What makes this annihilation so significant is the resurrection of the body after death. The body had to remain whole, however, for that resurrection to be realized. There is redemption, not only in blood but in sacrifice, and we take heed of that message. The sacrifice that we see is one aimed at the ultimate good: the eventual delivery of our souls to heaven. The destruction of the body, of the right body, has that kind of redemptive potential. Does this mean, then, that only the destruction of God’s body has the potential to save? Or does the martyrization of his faithful subjects carry redemptive potential as well? And finally, how significant is it that we can speak of God incarnate and the annihilation of God’s flesh? Does it change how sacrifice is practiced, with the retention of the body as transcendental signifier?

The God-head is more than an omniscient, omnipresent, immortal being. He is also embodied. We murdered Him and his lacerated frame is evidence of our evil. His blood is spilled and it continues to be spilled unbound by time. We drink his blood, eat his flesh, in hopes of redemption but no amount of consumption of His body is capable of freeing us fully from our guilt. Much of what we take for granted as moral, as far as we understand goodness, conscience and self-abnegation, is largely a product of this moment and it was an incredibly violent one. Nietzsche says that

To devise something which could even approach the seductive, intoxicating, anesthetizing, and corrupting power of that symbol of the ‘holy cross’, that horrific

\textsuperscript{81} Nietzsche, \textit{The Genealogy of Morals}, §5.
paradox of the ‘crucified God’, that mystery of an inconceivably ultimate, most extreme cruelty and self-crucifixion undertaken for the salvation of mankind would be all but impossible. And that symbol was not simply created for us, it was by us. What does it mean that the salvation of mankind is fixed to a moment of bodily sacrifice? How do we read our redemption without considering that such a thing requires remitting our bodies as did He? Sacrifice is intoxicating; sacrifice in the face of persistent annihilative assaults is even more so; sacrifice with the possibility of a resurrection is the most powerful of them all but can sacrifice save us? Fanon and Dabashi seem to suggest that it might; that it is a possibility worth considering when so many avenues of resistance have failed us. Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* says otherwise. He argues that what we have been manifesting, as discussed in Fanon and Dabashi’s work, has nothing to do with sacrifice but it is instead vengeance and he believes that there is a place for such things. Maybe we do not need to be reborn or leave traces once we depart. Maybe it is enough to be a reckoning; a kind of Dionysus reimagined. Nietzsche says, “Dionysus versus the ‘Crucified’: there you have the antithesis. It is not a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilation.” This Will to Annihilation is something we all carry with us, as an extension of our Will to Power and our Will to Will. The Will to Annihilation, even when turned inward, should be read as just that. Positioning ourselves as the crucified, is evidence that we have embraced the faulty logic of the transvaluation. The truth, as far as Nietzsche was concerned, was that, remaking ourselves into the crucified does us a

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83 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1052.
disservice. Whether we cast ourselves as Dionysus or the Crucified, as perpetrator or martyr, the power we seek to dismantle will read us and cast us as terrorist, outlier and more than anything else, without rational purpose. We are fated for rebuke, so why do we still deny ourselves the freedom that comes with vengeance? Girard interprets Nietzsche and says,

Ressentiment flourishes in a world where real vengeance (Dionysus) has been weakened. The Bible and the gospels have diminished the violence of vengeance and turned it to ressentiment not because they originate in the latter but because their real target is vengeance in all its forms, and they have only succeeded in wounding vengeance, not in eliminating it. The gospels are indirectly responsible; we alone are directly responsible. Ressentiment is the manner in which the spirit of vengeance survives the impact of Christianity and turns the gospels to its own use. 84

The weakening of vengeance, or the Will to such things, keeps us passive; since we must require of ourselves some moral superiority to collect payment for our violations, we stay still hoping that divinity will come to our rescue. The meek shall inherit the earth after all. As Girard points out, however, not even ressentiment can successfully eliminate vengeance. “The point is that under certain circumstances violence—acting without argument or speech or without counting the consequences—is the only way to set the scales of justice right again.” 85 It stays with us, the instinct to recoup that which has been taken and to punish those who have done us wrong. We continue to deny those instincts though, in hopes that by attaching meaning we can control the outcome; create for ourselves a realm where we are free from our burdensome position. It is not a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it and so we

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85 Arendt, On Violence, 64.
make meaning as best we can, attaching redemptive potential to homicidal and suicidal violence.

Vengeance fails to open up the possibility of resurrection. It closes the narrative around violence, so that violence is both means and end rather than the means to an end. As Arendt argues, the former strays from practicality and is altogether damaging, while the latter deserves consideration. She says, “violence is by nature instrumental; like all means it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues.”\textsuperscript{86} There is a certain madness to reveling in brutality and the narratives that have come before posit that such revelry necessarily leads to our unmaking. Consider the story of Joseph, as part of both the Islamic and the Judeo-Christian traditions. Further consider Julian Grenfell’s poem “Into Battle” where he says, “I adore war. It is like a big picnic without the objectlessness of a picnic. I’ve never been so well or so happy.”\textsuperscript{87} We may also consider Oscar Wilde’s \textit{Salome: A Tragedy in One Act}, where John the Baptist is beheaded. What these stories show us, from Joseph’s jealous brothers, Grenfell’s own experiences in battle and Salome’s blood lust, is that euphoric violence destroys not only the Other but the self. Brutality then must somehow translate into punishment and the euphoria of violence must read as dutiful practice. The Master/Lord/Colonizer/Imperialist, identifiable not by name but by reach, has long had the monopoly on violence. Challenges to that monopoly is understood as rebellion, criminality and irrational aggression. The violence of power is understood as punishment and punishment is of God. To transform meaning requires that homicidal and suicidal violence be understood as punishment and not vengeance. But how can

\textsuperscript{86} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 51.
\textsuperscript{87} Kendall, \textit{Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology}, 239.
such a thing be possible if the tools to make meaning—language, context, audience—continue to rest with power? How can we transform our stories, if those left to tell it reduce us to caricatures, if not something far more grotesque? Nietzsche says that the Will to Power belongs to us all and so as part of that Will, we continue to try to shape the narratives about our sacrifices. Whether those narratives become distorted should not limit the actions we take.

The narratives we try to create continue to be bound up with the language of sacrifice, showing how wedded we are to our arbiters of morality. We want to be martyrs. We want to be The Crucified: “being counted as holy enough to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering”88 for ourselves and for others. Without the possibility of redemption through violence, we remain trapped in a psycho-affective reality from which there is no escape. Resurrection becomes central, especially to Fanon’s discussion of sacrifice, because it means that it is possible for the black man to live without his delirium. Fanon is trying to configure a scenario where bodily annihilation and sacrifice leaves the black body intact, to reap the benefits of said sacrifice. He assumes that the delirium comes from black subjugation, and that an escape of that subjugation is an escape from psycho-affectivity. Is it possible, though, that this delirium is shared, between master and slave alike, where the death of one at the hand of the other, fails to undo the damage? Is it possible the delirium is grounded in this very same idea of martyrdom and goodness and this distinction between good and evil? Is it possible that what we need to break, are not the bodies in the realm, but the categorical imperative of that realm, whether it be ressentiment or something else? As Fanon calls for violent reprisal he fails to recognize that black psycho-affectivity is more that embodied, it is

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88 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1052.
more than psychological, it is a spirit corroded because of a morality that casts suffering as a pathway to nirvana. But what if our suffering, our struggle, our sacrifice means nothing and turning ourselves into objects of violence carries no absolution? Are we doomed to be trapped by our madness?

We carry our sense of goodness, righteousness, like a stone around our necks. God died for us but we have been bearing the weight of his murder. He suffered and we suffer in perpetuity. We bury ourselves in signifiers so that we are all too aware of our wickedness. Time provides no relief. Is this the slow turning evisceration that Fanon and Dabashi imagine we can deliver with the sacrifice of our own bodies or the sacrifice of the bodies that seek to destroy us? As we eat His body, drink his blood, wear a miniature representation of His method of execution, look upon his violated body within our homes and without, we bury ourselves in signifiers, which were once mere signs. The most potent signifier though is that of the body itself, or what Dabashi specifically describes as the “Face” or “Christianized metaphysicalization”. Kevin Hart says, “Christian theology is always a study of signs. If we picture God according to His attributes—an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent—we are plainly imagining Him as a plentitude of presence, both ontologically and epistemologically.”90

The Sign became not only the transcendental signifier but also the transcendental signified as “God as a presence… represents himself and is represented by signs.”90 The body, or the Face, is primary of these signs. Jesus’ death leaves as a testament a presence needing visitation. The body must be left whole so it may return. Whether Jesus is God, the Son of God, or part of the Trinity, his body remains the

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89 Hart, The Trespass of the Sign, 7.
90 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 53.
center of Christian iconography. The presence of His body, in the moment of ultimate sacrifice, has left with us a similar logic. Our bodies are necessarily tied to this world and the next. We never escape our bodies, not through its explosion or implosion; we are our bodies until Revelation. And so we find ways to become re-baptized within the body we occupy and Fanon argues that white blood is the only thing that frees us. Our annihilated body is redeemed through their blood, as we were all redeemed through His.

Faceless, de-Faced and Unseen

The Islamic tradition, as laid out by Dabashi, is bound up with a Transcendental Signified that is perpetually absent, he says “His face, presented in absentia—a vision of the Invisible.” Dabashi makes a distinction, then, between the embodied God of the Christian faith and the Unseen God of Islam. As Christ is both Transcendental Signifier and Transcendental Signified, Allah is Transcendental Signified, whose signifiers—His Book, His Name and His absence—hold their place in the collective consciousness. His absence does not detract from His power and this absence leaves its imprint on our understanding of sacrifice. We have, then, a distinction between the Face and the Absence as Presence. Dabashi explains further about the Unseen:

What is it that is Most Hidden from the eye and Most Necessary in the heart? Not just any unseen, it is the Unseen. Delegated to the heart, itself an organ unseen, the Unseen cannot be seen by the eyes in the face. Because the Unseen cannot be seen by the eyes in our face, and because It is Faceless, we

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92 Emphasis added.
The Faithful are thus those who believe in the Unseen, in that which cannot be seen. The Faithful are those who believe in the Faceless.\textsuperscript{94}

The believers are those who read into the absence redemptive potential. The believers are themselves de-Faced, as their presence is not contingent on their being seen. As the Unseen can only be detected by true believers, so are the faithful de-Faced themselves. The centrality of the Faceless or the Unseen, shifts the significance of the physical body as the site of political contestation by opening up the possibility that the body can also be a disposable signifier and by extension that the absence can also be the site of political defiance. Remaking the body in this way has the potential of radically altering how it is regulated within the realm of human affairs. It means that power is not the only source of classifying and thus controlling the body; it means that we have a similar power in our ability to remake and define what constitutes presence.

The absence is a presence. The Face is forbidden, concealed, absent, and thus absented. In the absence of the Face of the Invisible, the Unseen, the Qur’an begins in the Name. The Book is one colossal Signifier, having just successfully concealed its otherwise paralyzing anxiety of lacking a Face, pointing to a Transcendental Signified. From this Qur’anic beginning, the question of the corporeality of the body and the (im)possibility of its bodily resurrection became a matter of grave theological debate among Muslims. The destruction of the sign in the form of the destruction of the body through suicidal violence is necessarily linked to this narrative. The body is destroyed so that it too can be transformed into an absence that is a presence.

The body, though, is central to power, whether we define power as part of the state apparatus or not. Power is unrelenting in its “policy of coercions that act upon the

\textsuperscript{93} Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{94} Dabashi, \textit{Corpus Anarchicum}, 49.
body, [and its] calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” so that the body willingly submits. Dabashi says of state power,

The birth of the nation-state as the political realm of the capitalist modernity, its territorial sovereignty became tantamount to its political legitimacy, while its medieval roots in Christianity and its secularization in the body of the king were both routinized and mutated into the body of the abstracted state and thus even more emphatically into the physical bodies of its citizens.  

The materiality of the body, then, is central to the ways in which power operates, especially when discussed in relation to the state apparatus. Much of the state’s power is derived from its monopoly on legitimate violence, and that monopoly means nothing without bodies to feel the effects of that possessorship. The bodies within the realm of human affairs gives power its legitimacy and without the body, power is a construct with no way to grow itself. Power in practice requires the body; whether that be the anatomic-metaphysical register of the body or the technical-register of the body.  

However, when power is being practiced, it needs an outlet and we have become the site of that energy. By responding with our bodily sacrifice, we undermine power’s monopoly and claim our bodies for ourselves, even if such a claim is fleeting. Such a claim sparks the momentary realization that we have within us the capacity to be arbiters of power as well. “Power is that concrete power which every individual holds, and whose partial or total cessation enables political power or sovereignty to be

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96 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 185.
97 Foucault identifies two periods of the body linked by legal and medical transformations. The medicine produced an anatomical metaphysical body by physically disciplining the body through incarceration as a form of social control in the seventeenth century. The focus was on the physical breaking of the body to force it back to normality.
98 Rather than breaking the body, the aim is to rehabilitate the body/mind through regulations of institutions with modern medicine. The focus here is on moral reintegration of the individual by specialized workers and institutions. Gender, culture, class and ethnicity can socially construct this new discourse of the body.
The power we claim for ourselves does nothing to stop our annihilation, it just assigns new significance to what has been lost. The annihilation directed toward our bodies has to be reconstituted as sacrifice but both result in our undoing. This is the primary area of divergence for Dabashi and Fanon, as the former recognizes that in challenging power, the body might be lost. Fanon is so preoccupied with saving the body that he fails to consider whether such a thing is even possible. The body is continually reshaped by the active and reactive forces which act upon it. It is materially part of the world but meanings are affixed that fail to disappear because of a rebaptism. The tag of primitiveness affixed on them, the contempt for and complete destruction of their cultural legacy, their forced assimilation into the European culture at a reduced price, all have resulted in the inculcation, deep into the soul of each colonized person, of a devastating inferiority complex which is discussed at length in Fanon’s as well as Dabashi’s work. It could be argued that a semiotic determinism is at play, where the body of the colonized cannot unmake its signifiers simply by breaking the object in the sign-object-interpreter dynamic. Since the delirium is shared, between races, classes and faiths, personal transcendence only provides so much escape. Eliminating single white bodies in such a pursuit does not shift the meanings affixed to black bodies.

99 Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 88.
100 In this relationship we have three factors at play: the sign, the object and the interpreter. Considering Fanon’s work through this lens, we find that: (i) the sign is blackness (as a construction of white supremacy); (ii) the object is the body or the person; (iii) and the interpreter is the collective, which is constituted by a multiplicity of bodies with complex power dynamics. What Fanon is proposing in BSWM is that by altering one dynamic—the object—in this relationship, we radically undermine the logic. With the sign and the interpreter still in place though, we risk that a shift in object, will be insufficient to undermine the logic of white supremacy. In WoE he calls for the destruction of the object and the interpreter. The problem here though is that the interpreters do not only belong to white bodies but belongs to anybody suffering from psycho-affectivity. There is no destroying the interpreter because the interpreter is all of us. What Dabashi aims to do is to destroy the object and the sign, which theoretically, has a far greater chance of undermining power. As he states in CA, if all that is left is the paragon, who will they project their repressions onto?
Those meaning remain, unless we work toward a reimagining of what constitutes real power. Reducing power to that which is obtained through violence or force limits our ability to challenge it with any real effect. Power is that which makes language, shapes context and effectively constructs the realm. As Foucault points out,

But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. The 18th century invented, so to speak, a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise within the social body, rather than from above it.101

Power is itself amorphous and the move to make the body less fixed, is central to our repossessing of our bodies. The body is dangerous and it is the repository of the repressed. Recognizing how central the body is to the exercise of institutional power, we can then consider how belief in the Unseen and by extension, a reduced importance of the body, might challenge this monopoly on violence. As Dabashi states, "corpus amorphous is the site of all tyrannical signifiers melting into signs that signate joyously against and now beyond any legislative control, the result of which is the desedimentation of the subject on which all acts of signification are contingent."102 A combination of a territorial colonial conquest and local tyranny, has resulted in the figurative formation of an amorphous body, and that in turn has paved the way toward the shaping of an anarchic or a disposable body that defies the politics of power by denying it, its singular site of violence by a violence that ends all violence to it. Once that body is annihilated, what is left is a seething presence in an emotive universe. And it is this presence, without materiality, that occupies a space of theoretical possibilities as far as challenging power successfully. Self-sacrificial violence, whether religiously or

101 Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 39.
102 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 178.
ideologically motivated, should not prevent us from seeing that this rise is a new kind of countermetaphysics of the body and the body’s reconfiguration into disposable machinery, made disposable by our own hand, is a space of resistance. Whether that resistance necessarily translates into a redemptive return does not undermine the series of challenges Absence creates for power.

Dabashi’s exploration of the Absence is worth considering because it forces us to question our preoccupation with the body and our struggle with power for our own body, as he calls for a reexamination of our approach in attempting repossession. As much as the body can be made to be signifier of a resistance to power, so too can the absence of that body be a signifier as well and a more powerful one at that. Kevin Hart states,

A discourse is metaphysical, then, if the concept is fashioned as a moment of pure presence, and the sign as representing the concept in its absence. Within these terms, the sign fails to represent the concept purely and simply; it introduces the complicating elements of materiality and difference which serve to delay and defer the expected recovery of the concept.  

This, accordingly, is the basis of the case for valuing the concept over the sign. However, argues Derrida, “the sign’s failure is structurally determined, and this is the starting-point for his case against the metaphysics of presence.” As Hart points out, presence can carry with it complicating elements, which has a way of detracting from the message being conveyed.

The absence, though, refers to two things here: (I) the Faceless and the de-Faced; and (2) the Unseen. The two, while intimately bound, occupy separate spaces of struggle and resistance. The Faceless and the de-Faced are those made anonymous by their condition, their position or their shrouding. They live among us without capturing

\[103\] Emphasis added.
our gaze. We fail to see them in all their complexities, not because they are not there but because we are invested in repressing those faces. As Dabashi points out, “When bodies are denied visibility and their memories repressed, faces act as their archival repositories, telling their forbidden tales.” What happens though when those who are violated are de-Faced and robbed of these “archival repositories”, not because they are not there but because we refuse to look? The Faceless or de-Faced are bodies occupying space with markers we have deemed unworthy of our recognition. They are Faceless because we have de-Faced them and we continue to do so with our refusal to recognize their presence. Our Will to repress is both active and reactive. The Faceless are not invisible, we see them without acknowledgement. They leave no imprint. The de-Faced are the living. They are of our world. But we relegate them to the periphery and deny them place. As the term suggests, the Faceless or de-Faced, have had their conditions radically altered but the centrality of the body remains. “In those tensions and discrepancies, a visual form of beheading, we see aesthetically documented the serious indices of the politically mutilated bodies.” They are bodies without faces; bodies without archival repositories. They are disposable signs transformed into disposable signifiers at the moment of their explosion. We deny them visibility, and they reclaim visibility at the moment of their bodily annihilation.

Consider the Palestinian, the Arab and the Muslim bodies here, especially as discussed throughout Dabashi’s texts. Those that have been made Faceless or have

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105 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 85.
106 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 85.
107 Also see Michael Tausig’s *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* which considers questions of public defacement as an act of repression.
108 Similarly Talal Assad makes a similar case in his book *Suicide Bombing* in that he discusses the ways in which exploded bodies are treated as indistinguishable. He specifically focuses on the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks.
been de-Faced. “The Palestinian was born at the moment of his death; The Arab is the multinational denial of the very idea of the nation; and the Muslim is the supranational rejection of the nation-state, the multicultural negation of national culture.” The first step in repression comes with our inability or unwillingness to recognize difference; to see multiplicity and complexities in those dissimilar. We paint all that is Other in uniform strokes so that the nuances of humanness continually escape. The Muslim is no different from the Arab who is no different from the Palestinian. Although they all constitute corpus particularis, we treat their bodies as a deterritorialized bodies with one purpose and one message. The move to criminalize these bodies becomes that much easier; they are all one body deserving condemnation for their evil: “the sacrificial act assumes two opposing aspects, appearing at times as a sacred obligation to be neglected at grave peril, at other times as a sort of criminal activity entailing perils equal to gravity.” How can it be possible then, to interpret the significance of the defiance, struggle or resistance of suicidal violence if we fail to make each case distinguishable. These bodies are treated as one and have been stripped of nuance. They are reduced to stereotypes and singularities so we may make them manageable, controllable, without realizing that by our act of de-Facement, we are far more powerless. The charred body and the wiped out face of the suicidal bomber—of the Palestinian, the Arab, and the Muslim—is the denial to the Western Self of its supreme transcendentalize Other, where the faceless body takes for itself power robbed in that moment of de-Facing. The de-Faced are all but dismembered and by choosing to steer
into their persistent annihilation, the paragon is challenged. De-Facing transforms the bomber into the Unseen, so that at the moment of death all that is left is rubble, an absence and a lingering sense of loss. As Dabashi makes clear “the blown up body of the Muslim is the erasure of one side of this binary opposition, once and for all breaking the dialectical nexus of their own denial. By self-exploding, Muslims are wiping out the shadow of the West in the colonial mirror of their historical subjugation.  

The Unseen is that which escapes us. It is there but not there. The Unseen is a seething presence which occupies no space. The Unseen is not necessarily tied to the body. It is the absence of presence, and this absence evokes a kind of haunting. For instance, the space left after the World Trade Center was destroyed was a haunting absence. The recognition that what had once been there, no longer stood, was a constant reminder that our terror of the unknown was warranted. Looking into the vast emptiness where a powerful symbol of global trade and commerce once stood and seeing the New York skyline radically altered, leaves an imprint on our collective consciousness as far as memory is concerned. It is a tormented memory that keep replicating itself because we can look into the emptiness and see what was, what could have been and what came to be. In this absence we are constantly reminded of the loss. The Unseen, then, is not simply about the absence of a building, it is about looking into an empty space and reckoning with its creation and having to do so each time we come upon it.

Like missing buildings, missing bodies can create a similar kind of haunting. When the Faceless become the Unseen, all that is left are their stories. We are afforded little else when the body is exploded. Desperate humans explode like smart bombs and

\[112\] Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 195.
the spaces around them crumble. Visiting those spaces, long after the debris has been
cleared, we recognize that an Unseen presence has been created. Reckoning with what
is there and what is not there, is bound to be affecting. Whether the impression that is
left is intentional or by pure happenstance is outside the realm of control for the suicide
bomber but the act of self-annihilation creates a presence, although Unseen, that will
haunt those sharing place. As Dabashi points out, “mystical self-annihilation (fana’) is
such extreme identification with the Unseen that it makes man—a divine reflection—invisible, disintegrated into nothingness.”113 As the body departs something else
remains; whether that be tormented memories, ghosts of the disappeared or the very
real sense that the disintegrated nothingness has not disappeared but has taken up
refuge inside us.

Revelation

Moving the body “beyond [the] legislative control” of power is necessary in
dispossessing it. Since the body is necessary in the exercise of institutional power,
disposable for those it seeks to control, then power’s reach is restricted, theoretically:
“the Negro is a toy in the white man’s hands; so, in order to shatter the hellish cycle, he
explodes.”114 Is power’s ability to exercise its policy of coercions radically undermined if
the body not only explodes but decidedly does so? The body is at the center of the
realm of human affairs and we have so far failed to monopolize legislative control of our
own bodies. The state/the colonizer/the master, remits some of our bodily autonomy to
us, with the privileged being given far more concessions than others. Black and brown

113 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 83.
114 Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 125.
bodies have long been made disposable by power, as those souls scramble to repossess that which has been stolen. That move to repossess a body that has already been imperialized, has forced us into a kind of subjectification that rots the Will. Much of Fanon’s torment, is his failure to repossess his human body because it has been made into a black devil; he calls it being “sealed into that crushing objecthood.” This objecthood is persistent and debilitating and it is this state of being which creates the Manichean delirium. Objectification does not necessarily translate into psycho-affectivity but when the signifiers are that of evil and the transvaluation has been internalized, such objecthood can only be described as crushing. Power turns us all into objects. We are objects needing legislation but when our subjectivity is made inert by way of moral licensing we may very well come undone. We are more than object and subject though, we are spirit, floating outside ourselves, voyeurs to our commandeering. We are bound, helpless as our bodies are remotely controlled; we are panoptic passengers in this hijacking, muted with an anesthetizing awareness of our colonizing. We are our bodies and our bodies are not our own. The terror sets in with recognition. It is the terror that unmakes us, not the colonizing.

Dabashi states, “they were born at the instance of their death, dead at the moment of their birth, stillborn into history, denied as the world confirmed them in their loss.” As Fanon tries to recapture a humanity lost at the moment of his birth, he is met with reminders that his autonomy over that body, to make and shift its purpose, meaning and place in his world, do not in fact belong to him. He is born, not as a man but as a black man, and as such, he is born into a kind of subjectification which

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115 Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 108.
116 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 21.
continually denies him autonomy over the body he occupies. But that is all he does: he is occupying a space and space is bound up with not only subjectivity but objectivity. In his case, his objectivity acts as a corrosive force which eats away at his humanness, he says, “I came into the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.” He is of his body but he is divorced from it. He is trying to retake control of a body that was never his and his pursuit is driving him to the edge of madness. His body is as much his as power allows. If the body that is being legislated, is made into a disposable signifier by our own hand, are we rescued from that struggle?

A part of Fanon’s struggle is his failure to reverse his body from signifier of evil, into sign, where he says, “all I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together… I wanted to be a man, nothing but a man,” so that the body is just a body and not indicative of some greater lack. The move to transform the body from signifier to sign, is no small feat though as we see from Black Skin White Masks. Introspection fails to offer an escape hatch from his psycho-affectivity. He is not only trapped in a Manichean delirium but his body is under legislative control so that he is unable to unmake the meanings affixed to his body. Dabashi’s suggestion that turning the body from signifier into something altogether disposable seeks to fill the theoretical holes left by post-colonial thinkers like Fanon. The move to make the body disposable does not require that meaning be reversed. Instead it is a momentary act of defiance where an absence

117 Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 108.
118 Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 110.
is left. What we read from that absence or how we fill it with our own narratives does not make the body any less disposable. The body is radically altered, by its explosion, and it is expressed not as object but as absence. The question remains, though, does such a shift pose a real challenge to power or is the absence filled with noise so that we are wholly incapable of reading the significance of its emergence?

This is what we find in Fanon and Dabashi’s work. We can derive no perfect answers from their texts. Instead, we place ourselves at the centre of a narrative that explodes, without ever fully understanding how we are implicated in the chaos. We turn ourselves in radical experiments, in the hope that we might be free. The ability to make such a transformation, though, is a freedom most do not have. So who then is allowed to become a radical experiment and similarly transform their universe? Nietzsche would argue that only the master can do such a thing and that as long as we rid ourselves of the transvaluation we too can become the Overman. Is it dangerous to say then that the suicide bomber and the Overman are one in the same? Arendt says,

As far as human experience is concerned, death indicates an extreme loneliness and impotence. But faced collectively and in action, death changes its countenance; now nothing seems more likely to intensify our vitality than its proximity. Something we are usually hardly aware of, namely our own death, is accompanied by the potential immortality of the group we belong to and, in the final analysis, of the species, moves into the centre of our experience. It is through life itself, the sempiternal dying of its individual members, is 'surging upward,' is actualized in the practice of violence.119

Neither their demonization nor their glorification will offer any insight into the circumstances surrounding suicidal violence. When a teenager or a mother or a brother wraps deadly explosives around his or her waist and blows himself or herself up in an instantaneous and desperate act of suicidal homicide, it is incumbent on us to think

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119 Arendt, On Violence, 68.
critically about how we are implicated in that very same struggle. We are not divorced from war simply because we are unaffected geographically.

What we do know is that the body, even the secular body is marked by faith but it is still unclear what traces it leaves. Nietzsche argues that the faith of the slave has imprinted on us wounds jagged and deep. And we have poured into those wounds malice. Similarly, we have poured into the wounds of others our own repressions, scarring them further. We are both master and slave, colonized and colonizer, and we are implicated in the powerlessness of others as we stand powerless ourselves.
Chapter 3: Haunting

Spirits

The dead walk among us. Bodies buried, their spirits haunt. We are in the company of ghosts, and their stories, their presence and the imprint they leave on our bodies, radically shift how we experience the realm. The ghost is our shadow, it is our repressions, it is the darkness which creeps deep within us and lays claim to our insides. The ghost is a crucible for political meditation and historical memory, the ghost story has no other choice than to refuse the logic of the unreconstructed spectacle.

Ghosts are among us and as Gordon mentions, “the willingness to follow ghosts, neither to memorialize nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time. To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghosts to help you imagine what was lost that never even existed, really.” To write stories, then, concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories. To write stories about peripheral bodies is to write ghost stories. To write stories about the Faceless, de-Faced and the Unseen is to write ghost stories. To write stories about suicide bombers, niggers and desperation is to write ghost stories. To write ghost stories implies ghosts are real and that these ghosts produce material effects. To impute a kind of objectivity to ghosts implies that, from certain standpoints, the dialectics of visibility and invisibility involve a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows. We cast a light on those shadows; not to banish them but to make them real. As Williams writes, haunting is the “experience to which the fixed norms do not speak at all… they [are] not recognized… [haunting] is always more that

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120 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 57.
handling of fixed norms and units.” And so we put aside what we know about the realm and leave ourselves open to that which haunts. In this chapter we give our ghosts license to speak to us. We recognize their place in the realm. We look into the beyond and find lessons there. The dead have stories to tell us and although we rarely listen, we do so for a moment here.

We take the time to listen to Samira from Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s documentary *Afghan Alphabet*. Her body shrouded, we see her slight frame under layers of fabric. She holds the filmmaker’s gaze and insists that she remain anonymous. She refuses to show her face, but instead offers the name Samira to stand in representation. She is the de-Faced which Dabashi describes in *Corpus Anarchicum*, but she finds her facelessness as a kind of protection against the world. When Makhmalbaf asks her to unveil she refuses and after his insistence she offers her reasoning: “because you will show me on television”. Her story, as captured in *Afghan Alphabet*, explores questions around veiling and bodily autonomy. Although we never see Samira, we hear the name she gives us and we explore the importance of the name when the body is shrouded. We question though, whether Samira is her real name, or whether she has given this name to Makhmalbaf to appease him. She is unwilling to share any part of herself and by the end of the film, it is unclear whether she has. Samira offers the name as a signifier for her role as veiled young girl and we are never certain if one of the many faces we see before the end of the film is hers or if she disappeared shortly after her refusal. The name Samira stands as signifier for the face she refuses to reveal but that refusal creates an opening where she is everyone and no one at once. The lasting impression she leaves on us is as a result of that refusal and by only leaving us with a

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121 Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, 130.
name we continue to look for her as the film continues. Samira represents the utility of disposable signifiers. The name we are given, whether that name is real or not, comes to represent the girl and all the unnamed and Faceless girls like her in Makhmalbaf’s film. We see her multiply in that moment she refuses to unveil and we see ourselves in her solely because she has no face. “We are implicated in a collective act of amnesia because the absence of the Face of the Unseen is replicated in our own ability to see our own faces—mirrors notwithstanding.”¹²² She is our mirror and we can imprint ourselves onto her body and make meanings out of it. Samira is a ghostly presence because she occupies a space of our not knowing. She is unknowable and all we are left with is her name and a story of a girl’s refusal.

Pecola Breedlove, protagonist in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, is irretrievably broken. Her condition is one of cancerous despair and a palpable self-loathing and Pecola yearns for blue eyes which she imagines can save her from her misery and peripheral existence. As Pecola navigates a fictionalized Lorain, Ohio, she is met with annihilative assaults at every turn and in the end, Pecola, wanders the streets, flailing her arms like a grotesque and wounded bird unable to fly, having “stepped over into madness, a madness which protected her from us simply because it bored us in the end.”¹²³ Pecola is finally free when the Manichean delirium is replaced with a different kind of insanity and she is no longer aware of her own wretched condition. Fanon says of himself, “then assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being

¹²² Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 52.
aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person.”¹²⁴ Pecola reverses this experience and as madness overtakes her, her racial epidermal schema is replaced by her corporeal schema. She is completely unaware of her body and she no longer sees herself in triple. She is finally unified but it takes insanity for that to happen. Pecola rails against her annihilation, but while doing so she internalizes the colonizer’s narratives: she is the contaminated, she is ugly and she is hyper visible and invisible all at once. Pecola’s madness is a kind of haunting; that of the black female body reduced to breaking under the weight of its gendered and racialized mutations. Morrison’s critique of discursive constructions of the black female body and of the primacy of vision as a tool for subjugation is metonymically presented through Pecola’s desire for blue eyes. Pecola’s body is the site of an unending siege and her only escape is whiteness, but not just white skin but blue eyes. She pinpoints her route of escape and she fixates on floating irises; Pecola was over invested in the face and those blue eyes drove her to breaking.

Sandro Rosa do Nascimento was a ghost. He lived on the periphery; he had no name, no face, no markers that made him distinct. He was one of the boys who survived the Candelaria Church Massacre and the brutality of that day stayed with him. Death pursued him from the moment he witnessed his mother’s murder at the age of six years old to the police firing on him while we slept; he was a condemned man and his body was so inscribed. Foucault says of the condemned, “the body of the condemned man [is] the place where the vengeance of the sovereign [is] applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of

¹²⁴ Fanon, “Fact of Blackness”, 110.
forces” and it was clear, from the trajectory of his life that Sandro was entirely powerless. He sought to change this on June 12, 2000 when he took the passengers of Bus 174 hostage and demanded to be seen. Sandro was preoccupied with his visibility. He believed himself to be of this world but had the sense that no one saw him. He believed that by brandishing a gun he was able to step out of the shadows and become real. He understood that his visibility might lead to his annihilation but he wanted, for a moment, to leave the ghostly plane and join the living. Dabashi’s statement that “the nightmare of the body that for the fear of being thus buried alive opts to blow itself up” is captured by Sandro’s story. He had long been buried and his specter quieted. He was allowed to speak though, on June 12, and brought into visibility. He was taken into custody after he stepped off the bus, shielded by a hostage whose body could not protect his. On his way to the police station, in the back of wagon, he was asphyxiated. He died quietly, in the dark confines of a police van. What is remarkable about this story is that the memory of his spectacle, moments before his death, continues to torment the local and global imaginary.

Sandro’s hijacking reeked of suicide; the boy without a face or a name transformed his disposable body into one that signified all the lost souls like his own. Foucault says,

There are the characteristic features attributed to repression, which serve to distinguish it from the prohibitions maintained by penal law; repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know.  

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125 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 12.
126 Dabashi, *Corpus Anarchicum*, 180.
Sandro decidedly made himself known and turned his body and his name into signifiers of his struggle. He is Sandro Rosa do Nascimento and we see his face.

Art often prevails where politics fails and so in our exploration of ghostly matters, we look for stories which haunt, whether those stories belong to real people or fictional ones.

But fictions are what stand on the other side of the facts in our lingering Manichean scheme, and so they have helped to highlight the problems with the ‘logical and chronological frameworks’ and ‘the simplicity of casual chains’; they have helped to show what ‘breaks through precisely where the [researcher/sociologist] assembles and joins.’

Samira, Pecola and Sandro are all peripheral bodies deserving of a platform to speak to us. We look for the places where shadows and actions converge so that ghosts might reveal their stories. As we go where our ghosts lead, we remember, presence is the tangled exchange of noisy and seething absences. Presence, then, is both invisible and visible, repression and recognition, metonymy and metaphor, active and reactive. The absence is a presence and we are in the company of ghosts.

Could it be that analyzing hauntings might lead to a more complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism? Perhaps. If so, the result will not be a more tidy world, but one that might be less damaging.

Pecola

*She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition—the glazed separateness. She does not know what keeps his glance suspended. Perhaps because he is grown, or a man, and she is a little girl. But she has seen interest, disgust, even anger in grown male eyes. Yet this vacuum is not new to her. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. All things in her are in flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and*

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dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with
distaste in white eyes. —Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye

Toni Morrison gives us a heroine we know is doomed to be sacrificed. Her body is not her own, and as she comes closer to this realization, she descends further into the abyss. The story of Pecola Breedlove is one of such profound loss, pain and violations, that in the end, as we watch her rifle through garbage, mind undone and spirit finally free, we understand she is better off here. The Bluest Eye is a story about suffering; about the black female body subject to power’s legislation and under this weight it breaks and keeps breaking with each assault. We are confronted with ghosts throughout this story, which reveal themselves in: (I) the uncanniness of the repetitions found throughout the book; (II) the repressions of self and other, which distort reality and create a kind of abjection130 within Pecola where “something familiar and old [or] established in the mind and which has become alienated from it… through the process of repression has transmuted into an unsettling specter,”131 (III) the construction of memory, where dismembering the body and remembering it often shift in and out of each other; (IV) the absences which haunt, like the absent blue eyes which ground the text.

Pecola’s story is this: she is born to Cholly and Pauline Breedlove who are constantly at odds. Their arguments turn violent and their children, unable to escape, watch on. Cholly is a drunk and in one of his stupors rapes Pecola. She begins breaking. He repeats the rape and impregnates his daughter. Pecola breaks further. He

130 According to Julia Kristeva in Powers of Horror, the abject refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other.
131 Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 51.
leaves Lorain to escape his evil and to find the father who abandoned him. As Pecola grapples with her hopeless condition, she yearns for blue eyes, believing they can somehow rescue her. Pecola has been made to believe she is both ugly and damaged and, because of her dark skin, she is also irredeemable. In trying to remedy her shortcomings, Pecola approaches Soaphead, a misanthrope who claims to have God’s ear. She asks him to give her blue eyes, which she believes will radically alter how the people of Lorain see her and more importantly, how she sees herself. In exchange for her trust and deference, Soaphead tricks Pecola into killing his neighbour’s dog. Pecola is broken. Pecola’s baby dies. Pecola cannot be put back together.

Morrison uses repetition as a tool to invoke the uncanny. Words are repeated until they have no meaning. We say them again and again until they run into each other without breaking apart

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\[
\text{THEBLEUSTEYE}\]

The Bluest Eye is replete with repetition and these narrative reminders of what came before produces the effect of the uncanny. Bhabha writes, “repetition that is initiatory, instating a differential history that will not return to the power of the Same... by 'repeating' these ideas, makes them uncanny by displacing them in a number of culturally contradictory and discursively estranged locations.”

As the words are repeated, so are the stories of its characters and the repetitiveness creates the uncanny effect. Morrison makes the familiar, unrecognizable and we are forced to look at them more closely because of it. For example, throughout the novel, the nursery rhyme Dick

\[\text{132} \quad \text{Morrison, } \text{The Bluest Eye, 204.}\]

\[\text{133} \quad \text{Bhabha, } \text{The Location of Culture, 237.}\]
and Jane is continually repeated but its words seem out of place. Pecola’s story is one of abject despair and the sunny disposition of this rhyme seems rather eerie. When its words are strung together and made unintelligible, the innocence and sweetness of the rhyme is lost.

As the rhyme is repeated, so too are the stories of its characters. For example, Pecola’s rape is repeated, Cholly and Pauline repeat the same fight again and again. Reality, in *The Bluest Eye*, seems to be in a kind of loop, where what came before, will come again and it is not until Pecola breaks out of this reality, taps into this uncanny space by embracing madness, that she radically changes her condition. As Bhabha says,

> It is the uncanny space and time between those two moments of being, their incommensurable differences—if such a place can be imagined—signified in the process of repetition, that give the evil eye or the missing person their meaning. Meaningless in/as themselves, these figures initiate the rhetorical excess of social reality and the psychic reality of social fantasy.\(^{134}\)

And where does Cholly find his meaning? He seems to situate himself in a space of duality where he is unable or unwilling to distinguish between his paternalistic love for Pecola and his fetishizing of her. “It is the uncanny space and time between those two moments of being” that Cholly attacks his child. Pecola is an extension of him; she is his repressions embodied. He somehow convinces himself in his confusion and impairment that the annihilation of her body is the bridge to his redemption. But there is a kind of desperation to his actions because Cholly is incapable of recognizing redemptive possibilities, and so the sacrifice of her body, destroys them both further. She is black and broken. So is he. She is the living embodiment of his lack. Lacan says that lack is what causes desire to arise. Cholly hopes that his aggression will reach deep enough to

\(^{134}\) Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 53.
touch her blue eyed soul; to have that soul cure him of his ills. His lack haunts him, as it
haunts her and his violence stills them both. She is destroyed in the moment he is
destroyed and what is left is the sense that a presence hangs between them. The
Unseen is palpable and the weight of the absence tells him that he has failed. She is not
his redemption, her destruction fails to mend his breaking. Paul Abbot says, “repression
banishes its object into the unconscious, forgets and attempts to forget the forgetting”\(^{135}\) but Cholly cannot forget and his annexations haunt.

Pecola grapples with her own repression and the image she creates, the blue
eyes, is tied to that struggle. Morrison says, “a little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of
a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil
of fulfillment.”\(^{136}\) This “imaginary” is critical in the formulation of the self, but for Pecola
the imaginary is preferable to the real. We see a reversal, then, where the self is seen
as damaged and the repressed—blue eyes—is the ideal. This is a problem. Fanon talks
about the black man living in a psychoaffective state and at the centre of the reality
which produces this psychoaffectivity is the white paragon. The black body is the white
body repressed. The white center posits a peripheral body which is diametrically
opposed; a body which stands in stark opposition. Those evils, having been exorcised
from the white body by way of evolution, modernity and Christ himself, projects those
evils, those primitive urges, onto the Other. The black body has long been in receipt of
these kinds of repressions because of the paragon’s unwillingness to recognize their
own Lack. What happens when this repression is not turned outward? Pecola has so
internalized society’s distaste for her that she starts to believe that the imaginary can be

\(^{135}\) Abbott, “Authority”, 15.
\(^{136}\) Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 204.
made real somehow; that she can somehow disappear her real self and return newly formed. The blue eyed soul is real but the black body is imaginary. She is her own repression embodied—where the black body is the repressed, while she pursues and recognizes the blue eyes. It is her body that she means to “forget and [then] attempts to forget the forgetting”. She does so because she is already treated as invisible:

He urges his eyes out of his thoughts to encounter her. Blue eyes. Blear-dropped. Slowly, like Indian summer moving imperceptibly toward fall, he looks toward her. Somewhere between retina and object, between vision and view, his eyes draw back, hesitate, and hover. At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see.\textsuperscript{137}

She does not become real as a result of her rape. The rape is further evidence that her body is not real but her blue eyed soul is, and the rape was an attempt to use her body as a bridge to her real self. Pecola is the signifier of repression then, for herself, as well as for others. Her condition can invariably only deteriorate having been cast as a psychic dumping ground of the people of Lorain. Whether it is the taunts, the abuse, even the planted marigolds, Pecola’s body is never real; she is the embodiment of a collective annexation of blackness and her presence in the realm evokes derision.

Claudia says of her:

All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her… And she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our own strength.\textsuperscript{138}

The emergence of subjectivity is a slow and laborious process of Othering that is mediated by (among others) our kinfolk. The Othering necessary for the articulation of the subject is inseparable from repression. Repression is the exclusive act through

\textsuperscript{137} Morrison, \textit{The Bluest Eye}, 48.
\textsuperscript{138} Morrison, \textit{The Bluest Eye}, 206.
which the subject proper separates him or herself from the abject,\textsuperscript{139} where “the abject might then appear as the most fragile, the most archaic sublimation of an object still inseparable from the drives.”\textsuperscript{140} When Pecola is unable to separate her subjectivity from her object of repression (the blue eyes), she begins to suffer from abjection. As Kristeva says, “essentially different from ‘uncanniness,’ more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory.”\textsuperscript{141} Once Pecola is totally incapable of separating the real from the imaginary, her mind comes undone; this is when she fully turns herself over to madness.

We learn that an uncanny effect is often an easily produced when the distinction between imaginary and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing having an uncanny experience.\textsuperscript{142}

But we see that the two—subject and object—had long been bleeding into each other. Those blue eyes were a haunting presence and once they came to claim possession of Pecola’s body, her mind is no match.

The eyes are a haunting presence is \textit{The Bluest Eye}. Although we never see them, although they never come into our reality, they dominate it with their absence.

She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away\[\ldots]\]. Her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now. Yes, that was good. The legs all at once. It was hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, too, went away. Then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done, almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left. Try as she might, she could never get her eyes to disappear. So what was the point? They were everything. Everything was there, in them. All of those pictures.\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The abject is a pseudo-object, which is constituted before, but appears only within the gaps of secondary repression. 
\item Kristeva, \textit{Powers of Horror}, 12.
\item Kristeva, \textit{Powers of Horror}, 5.
\item Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 51.
\item Morrison, \textit{The Bluest Eye}, 39.
\end{enumerate}
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While the domination of sight amounts to a dismembering of the body, the novel also outlines possibilities for remembering the body. It presents an oppositional narrative that stresses pleasure in the body and that re-integrates its fragmented and forgotten parts, such as the senses of hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling which have fallen victim to the domination of sight. Significantly, the site of this remembering is the pre-, or extra-symbolic order; it takes place on the fringes of society, through children, Cholly Breedlove’s aunt Jimmy and her friends, and the prostitutes China, Poland, and Marie.

*The Bluest Eye* is replete with ghosts; Cholly enters as a ghosts and leaves as one as well. But the ghost that haunts the book itself is the ghost of enslavement. Its haunting presence is everywhere. There is trauma in the recognition of this ghost and as Pecola sits silently staring into her mirror, trying to understand what makes her so ugly, this is the past that she must contend with. See “the line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant”¹⁴⁴ but there is no doubt that Pecola, and all her kinfolk are niggers and she is placed on the periphery for it. She is made to be an outcast; made to sit alone in classroom desks built for two, so she creates a ghost of her own and hangs all her yearnings onto it. Claudia says, “she seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing. Her pain antagonized me. I wanted to open her up, crisp her edges, ram a stick down that hunched and curving spine, force her to stand erect and spit the misery out on the streets. But she held it in where it could lap up into her eyes.”¹⁴⁵

The ghost which conjures up psychic injuries around blackness remain. We are haunted by this past we refuse to let speak, “not in order to chase away the ghosts, but

this time to grant them to right… to… a hospitable memory… out of a concern for justice." We silence it out of fear of its words. In our moments of reckoning, we stand in recognition of our ghosts. We see it blue-eyed, fair-skinned, thin-lipped: those things which made us distinctly separate. We hear the ghost speak to us, in a tongue both ours and theirs and we silence it. We quiet the repressed. We disavow it entirely because to admit the ghost is there is to admit that we are not yet healed. And we are whole, right?

**Samira**

“If I tell you my name, everyone will see me. And if everyone sees me, that is a sin.” - *Afghan Alphabet*

Samira, an Afghan girl, is one of the children captured in Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s documentary “The Afghan Alphabet”, which explores questions around access to education for Afghan refugee children living in camps in Iran. The Afghan Alphabet was commissioned by UNESCO with the specific purpose of raising both the global consciousness and the necessary funds to attend to the immediate needs of millions of Afghan children. Makhmalbahf shot at a couple of Afghan refugee camps and began a sustained project of raising funds to educate the Afghan children in and outside their country.

Samira stands out in this documentary. Although she is one of many children captured, she stands as emblematic of a specific kind of haunting presence. Her significance is readily apparent upon Makhmalbaf’s initial meeting with her because of her refusal to be on film, say her name and show her face. Her voice is assured as she

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says, “it is a sin to show my face” and “if I say my name, my mother will be angry”. Upon relenting and telling Makhmalbaf that her name is Samira but refusing to unveil and wash her face, the girl is dismissed by her teacher from class. She goes out followed by her friend Marziyeh, and the two of them start a dialogue—Marziyeh insisting and Samira resisting to unveil and wash her face in front of the camera. The identification of the name and the named, the signifier and the signified, the person and the personified, radically compromises the body and implicates its shadows. Samira is both name and named, signifier and signified and as she asserts herself as a bodily presence, that presence is radically mutated because of her shrouding and through her story “we are reminded that what lies between society and psyche is hardly an inert empty space.”147 Samira lives within a shadow and so does she become a shadow, yet again acting as signified and signifier.

The first instance of this metaphoric doubling occurs between the name and the named, between the signifier and the signified: “I won’t tell you my name,” objects Samira, “because you will show me on television”. As the story continues though, Samira, who initially reads as confident and self-assured transforms into a young girl broken by powers that have convinced her that her body is evil. Her facade crumbles and we are left with a girl whose body has been so legislated, that her body comes to be a burden she must carry. This rejection has turned her into a ghostly presence. Samira is no sign, she is a signifier and a faceless and bodiless one at that.

Nowhere is the corrosiveness of repression more apparent than here. Nowhere is the damage more obvious. Male sexual repression has transcribed lasciviousness onto the female form, turning them, all of them, into signifiers of temptation. The male

gaze has turned this young girl into a specter and as she reiterates that her unveiled face is sinful, we ache for her. As Dabashi writes,

Censorship is the denial of the body and the negation of the danger it poses to any republic, Islamic or otherwise. The body is dangerous. The body is the repository of the repressed. Its feeling intellect is subversive. Corpus amorphous is the site of all tyrannical signifiers melting into signs that signate joyously against and now beyond any legislative control, the result of which is the desedimentation of the subject on which all acts of signification are Contingent.148

This is Samira’s story as captured in The Afghan Alphabet.

This is not a story about veiling generally. Bodily legislation is not unique to Islam or in this case Afghans. In one way or another, all our bodies are being legislated, controlled, made docile. But Samira’s story is worth exploring as far as our discussion of haunting because of the way she tells her own story. Makhmalbaf’s role as director cannot be reduced here. He takes issue with the kind of veiling we see in the film and so the harsh light under which it has been cast influences how it is presented and by extension, how we receive it. Her story is worth telling and she helps to problematize Fanon’s rhetoric about the transformative potential of the veil. As much as her story is not generalizable, we take the lessons it teaches. Samira is a ghost and her shrouded frame haunts.

Samira is possessed. She continually repeats her dead father’s words, without fully understanding the rationale of her choices.

Marziyeh: Why won’t you show your face?
Samira: Because it is a sin.
Marziyeh: For me as your friend?
Samira: No.
Marziyeh: Why is it a sin?
Samira: Women would rather die than uncover their faces.
Marziyeh: What would happen if you uncovered your face?

148 Dabashi, Corpus Anarchicum, 178.
Samira: Mullah Omar said it is a sin. He is my father and he is dead. I don’t want to be a traitor to my dad. If I uncover I have been unfaithful to him.\textsuperscript{149}

Samira cannot seem to articulate, let alone understand, the intentionality of remaining veiled; she only knows what she has been told. And so she keeps repeating the words, “because it is a sin”, like it is a chant which can somehow protect her from her own body’s evil.

The word sin is so powerful in this context. It is as if the word itself has some magical capability. Sin as a concept is not fully articulated though. What happens to Samira if a sin is committed? Marziyeh says that when you commit a sin, you should repent, say ten rakat and you will be forgiven but Samira cannot believe such things. She has projected signifiers onto the word so that its power stretches past redemption. For Samira, the sinful cannot be redeemed. For her, sin seemed to be the end, with no recourse once it was committed. Sin is death. How could such a belief not result in a radical mutation of the body, where hiding it from the possibilities of the world is the single most important task. In doing so her body is completely made to disappear, not even her eyes are left, and in place of that body, a ghost is created.

Samira is ghost, not only because of de-Facement but because of the way she moves through her world. She has already accepted that her body is primed for elimination and that it is under constant attack by some imperialist force that is outside of her control. She turns her body into the anarchic body so that she may withstand the pressure to succumb to these forces. Dabashi argues, however, that at the outset, it is her veil that creates the ghost and to resist her annihilation requires that she resist, not embrace her veiling.

\textsuperscript{149} Makhmalbaf, \textit{Afghan alphabet}. 
When the young Afghan girl refuses to reveal her real name and gives Makhmalbaf the name Samira, his daughter’s name, we can never be sure that she has offered any part of herself. Her body in effect refuses to be signified and thus retrieves the inarticulate defiance of its sign while concealing it under the veil of anonymity. For all we know the final face that unveils and washes for the camera to see and marvel may or may not be that of the young Afghan girl who refused to give her name or reveal her face and thus declined to put a name to her body, sustaining not the anonymity of her character but the unanimity of her name and body. We notice a critical occasion when the body starts doubling itself, splitting and replicating itself into a substantive body and a substitutional body, transmuting irrevocably from a metamorphic into a metaphoric state—there always to mean something beyond its flesh, bone, and blood. The first instance of the metaphoric doubling occurs between the name and the named, between the signifier and the signified: “I won’t tell you my name,” objects the young Afghan girl, “because you will show me on television.” This shadow talk, this whispy echo from within, will have had to be forced out by a violent revelation of a fictive name in order to make the factual evidence of that freedom real.

It could be argued that Samira’s defiance is a sign that she is powerful in her own right; that her veil fails to negate her strength. She holds firm to her convictions despite pressure from Makhmalbaf, her school teacher and her friend Marziyeh. I see a girl possessed; who repeats the same chant over and over again. Samira describes where she imagines women belong, she says, “Mullah Omar said our prophet had a box, which he didn’t go in himself, but he put his wife in it and if he liked he would open the box, smell her and then leave. He wouldn’t let his wife come out at all… Yes, I would
go in a box.” Her father Mullah Omar, speaks through her and his ghostly apparition and his memory follow her with persistence. As Foucault points out,

Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way. If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realize, it produces effects at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge.  

Samira reproduces that which seeks to deny her bodily autonomy with assuredness and we sense in those moments of her brave assertions that Samira is as haunted as she is a haunting presence. The Faceless who become the Unseen, who as ghosts remain dispossessed. All they are is a name. What are the repositories that are left for the Unseen and the de-Faced? What holds their memory and their stories. All that is left is a name and with that name, the possibility to leave behind a legacy. So we say her name, whether it is her real name or reel name: Samira.

**Sandro**

“You think this is a movie?…this is no fucking movie.”- Bus 174

He was dead at the moment of his birth. Still born into history. His story was written long before he was birthed and he lived not only as a peripheral body but as an invisible one. He was born without a face, without a name, without any signifier of his subjectivity. He was a body occupying space and when that space was forcefully reclaimed, that body was set for elimination. He walked among us, Unseen and without presence. He was a living ghost, with no name, no face and no way to attract our gaze. He came into visibility with the hijacking of Bus 174; he forced us to look and by finally

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150 Makhmalbaf, *Afghan alphabet.*  
doing so, we become self-consciously aware of ourselves. The world may want to forget Sandro but is destined, violently, to keep in mind his story.

Sandro Rosa do Nascimento watched the murder of his mother when he was six years old. She was not simply killed, she was slaughtered. He was alone in the world once she was gone and found himself desperately trying to survive. He joined a group of street kids who told him food was easy to come by in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro. He heard the tourists were kind there. He lost his innocence then, or more aptly, it was taken from him. On July 23, 1993, while Sandro slept in front of the Candelaria Church, a group of policemen opened fire. The boys had stopped them from beating a friend earlier, and the officers had promised to return to exact vengeance. Eight boys were killed that night but Sandro lived. That moment, along with the murder of his mother, haunted young Sandro and he went on to a life of dejection and uncertainty. These moments converged on bus 174 and as we watched Sandro on surveillance cameras we all knew his end had come.

Sandro initially covered his face; hoping to mask his identity. But as the hijacking lingered on, we see a shift in his willingness to be identified. He seemingly decides that since he will die anyway, he will use this platform to tell his story. And he does so. He speaks of the Candelaria massacre and the murder of his mother. He keeps repeating “you cannot terrorize me now”, “I will turn the heat on”.

Sandro transformed himself from invisible to hypervisible in a moment of self-sacrifice. We watch as Sandro was slowly brought into visibility: first we saw his body but he had no name (they initially called him Sergio); then his name was shared and he became more than an anonymous attacker; finally, his story, that of Candelaria and the
story of his mother, was shared. It was at this moment that Sandro became fully visible, transforming himself from apparition to bodily presence. Sandro’s actions made us think about how we were all implicated in the de-Facement of the vulnerable and the ways in which this made their place in the realm that much more precarious. Dabashi says, “the primary target of suicidal violence is the body… [and] the destruction of that site points to a whole different set of issues and demands a radical readjustment of the dominant moral prerogatives”\textsuperscript{152}. And so, none of us were excluded in this readjustment. We were implicated in the social exclusion and by extension the invisibility of those we deemed unworthy and Sandro’s story showed us what the reckoning might look like, if we fail to radical shift how we treat bodies, of the Other, in the realm.

He choreographed the murder of Janaina, one of his hostages. He shot next to her body and pretended that he had killed her. He performed for the many cameras. His actions were bound up with representation and theatricality. He was placing his body at the centre and willing us to look at him. He says, “Brazil check this out, I was at Candelaria. My little friends were murder I’ve got nothing to lose bro… I want you to film me, I like that”. Sandro made no demands though, so negotiators assumed he did not want anything. But his kindness toward one of the hostages paints a different picture. Williams Moura, undergraduate student who was taken hostage says he had this conversation with Sandro:

Sandro: What about you?
Williams: (I was carrying a rucksack).
Sandro: You’re a student, aren’t you?
Williams: Yes
Sandro: Then you’d better get going because you’re probably late.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{152} Dabashi, \textit{Corpus Anarchicum}, 190.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Bus 174}.
The idea that Sandro was thinking about how he was represented and the message he was trying to send, did not occur to the negotiators. They dismissed his actions to that of a violent street kid, with no purpose or rationality for his actions. The fact that Sandro found the one student on the bus and released him, says something different. It says he was a man with purpose and part of that purpose was bring himself into visibility while constructing a narrative around the body we could now see.

We produce social invisibility in two ways: by neglecting bodies because for one reason or another we are unable or incapable of recognizing their presence; and by willfully casting a stigma over bodies so that we collectively shy away from looking at them. The former describes being Faceless and the latter describes being de-Faced. Sandro is an example of the Faceless and the de-Faced. He, like many of the street kids he grew up with, suffer from a persistent social repression which denies them place as bodies worthy of occupying space within the realm. He eventually emerged to confront us with his violence. As Morrison says, “angrier is better. There is sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth. It is a lovely surging” (50). He found his anger and became violence because we failed to deal with his social exclusion, his repression. We are nothing if someone does not look at us and Sandro was hungry for recognition. Foucault says,

> There are the characteristic features attributed to repression, which serve to distinguish it from the prohibitions maintained by penal law; repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know.\(^{154}\)

Sandro demanded that we recognize him; that our repression of his body be replaced by our willingness to look at him for the first time. He commandeered our gaze and willed us to listen.

He imposed his visibility on us. He was the main character in a new narrative. He seemingly recognized the theatricality of his behavior and paused to remind his audience that what we are seeing is not a movie but real life. He refined and redefined the social narrative that had long been attached to his body: one of invisibility and powerlessness. The story that had placed him in a subordinate position was suddenly converted into a tale where he had a leading role. He said, “I want you to film me. I like that”. Sandro’s double invisibility: that of being born faceless and then being actively de-Faced as well was radically mutated through an act of suicidal violence.

A boy with a gun can make us feel something. He can make us feel fear. It is a negative feeling but it is the most Sandro had ever been able to evoke. He was able to recover his visibility and affirm his social and human existence. It was a process of self-constitution and one of self-invention mediated through violence. Sandro is the annihilated body personified. His body, having been continually legislated, he fought to recover some semblance of agency. With moments like Candelaria though, such recovery eluded him. He decidedly turned his annihilated body into a sacrificial one, radically mutating that body and turning into corpus anarchicum. He believed that redemption could be found by regaining visibility; stepping out of the ghostly shadows and into the world of the living. Sandro exchanged his future, his life, his soul, for an ephemeral and fiery moment of visibility. He is a ghostly presence now and we see him still.
Ghosts

The ghosts have long walked this earth. They are part of the soil which bred us and in the water which sustains, they are buried with the bones of our ancestors. Our ghosts are our histories and as much as we may like to, we never escape that which birthed us. Our history has had its hand in making us and our ghosts are a product of that past. We acknowledge them as deference while recognizing that they will be here long after we have departed. Gordon says, “from a certain vantage point the ghost also simultaneously represents a future possibility, a hope. Finally, I have suggested that the ghost is alive, so to speak. We are in relation to it and it has designs on us such that we must reckon with it graciously, attempting to offer it a hospitable memory out of concern for justice. Out of concern for justice would be the only reason one would bother.”\(^{155}\) And we take the time in this chapter to offer hospitable memory to Pecola, Samira and Sandro, who haunt us still. We give them leave to speak to us and we listen. Our ghosts are many. We are haunted by apparitions too many to name. The ones found here are my own ghosts and I share them with you.

\(^{155}\) Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 64
Conclusion

Broken bodies litter our histories and breaking ones surround us now. Annihilated bodies continue to come undone and we stand witness. The truth is that nothing to redeem them has worked thus far and in the best of circumstances, all we have been left with are specters ready to tell their stories. Sandro, now gone, has left a legacy, a memory, an imprint but we cannot help but wonder about the boy who now lay dead. Sandro exchanged his future, his life, his soul, for an ephemeral and fiery moment of visibility but is such a thing ever worth the sacrifice?

In chapter two we explored the notion of sacrifice by questioning whether resurrection signals an end but opens up the possibility of a return of something transcendent. We asked the question because there is seemingly no end to any of it: not the bodily legislation, not the psychoaffectivity and not the dispossession. The bodies of the Other, bodies like our own, beaten into submission and prostrating for survival, is one that haunts us, all of us. Not simply because of the violences perpetuated but because of the moralizing which cast it as altruistic, unavoidable, inevitable. And maybe there is no recovering the annihilated body or transforming the meaning of its demise but when Dabashi says,

Suicidal violence is an aesthetic act of resistance against the political incrimination of the body in a politics of dispossession that posits it as a metaphor for something that can no longer exist. The exploded body is a metaphor with no referent, excavated and vacated of the very significance it ascribes to itself at the exact moment of its self-evacuation.\textsuperscript{156}

we take a moment to consider as much. We recognize though that the reality of suicidal and homicidal violence is bloody and ugly and the bodies caught between bombs and

\textsuperscript{156} Dabashi, \textit{Corpus Anarchicum}, 39.
concrete are not metaphors. There is no winning, there is no recovery, there is no redemption, all we have is speculation and metaphors and signifiers, so we make do, understanding that it not nearly transformative enough. Foucault writes,

Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors etc.¹⁵⁷

This suggests that our on-going subjugation radically mutates our actions and reactions. Our willingness to turn our bodies into disposable signifiers may be a product of that radical mutation rather than us transcending our dispossession. Seemingly by embracing suicidal and homicidal violence burdened bodies become that much more alienated so where is the redemption?

Fanon never finds any. The specter of the self, repressed and disavowed, plagues him. He sees his own ghost, freer than he, unburdened by psychoaffective chains and he beckons for it. Fanon is not only keenly aware of his own condition but the collective condition as well and throughout Black Skin White Masks, he is preoccupied with a shift of circumstance. He insists that talking to the wolf, the repressed, the ghost, is enough to bring it forth. But is it? As Gordon argues, “the willingness to follow ghosts, neither to memorialize nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time. To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghosts to help you imagine what was lost that never even existed, really.”¹⁵⁸ It is not enough to see the ghost, we must give voice to it. We must allow it lead us. When the ghost spoke back to Fanon it asked him

¹⁵⁷ Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 97.
¹⁵⁸ Gordon, Ghostly Matters, 57.
for the blood of his colonizer. But was this madness or clarity? He argues that this specter can be made real with the sacrificing of the white oppressor, that the spilling of blood redeems. The Manichean delirium he describes is a haunting of sorts where the reality of black suffering is made more acute by the specter of freedom which eludes. But can freedom only be found in destruction; and if we get into the business of destroying others, are we worth saving ourselves?

Dabashi’s work invites the same questions. His argument that as the body explodes, to steal itself from the state and thus deny the state its last site of legitimacy, it equally steals itself from the brutal game of political inscription between the colonizer and the colonized. He argues that as the body explodes in the face of the predatory empire, it denies power its last possible territorial legitimacy and emancipates the physical sign of the body from its incarceration between power and resistance, between the empire and the revolutions that resist it, between politics and the polities it inadvertently implicates. His assertions, though, presume that by reclaiming the body from power’s grasp we can somehow claim it for ourselves. He does not consider that by exploding the body we steal it from colonized and colonizer alike. It assumes a clean dialectic distinction between the two but no such clear distinction exists and instead we are both at once, master and slave. Nowhere was this more potent that in our examination of Samira. As we watch this young girl’s story unfold we find ourselves questioning who is dispossessing her small frame: imperialist forces draped in the American flag or patriarchal ones wearing her father’s face. Our dispossession is multiple and continuous and it is this reason, the ambiguous root of our powerlessness, that makes violent responses so dangerous.
Fanon argues that violence is also capable of delivering the colonized from their Manichean declivity, he says “at the very moment [the colonized come to] discover their humanity”, where they must “begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory.”

Violence, then, according to Fanon, provides “the means and the end” of decolonization. But as Arendt continually points out, violence consumes and destroys itself. It may be more useful to replace Fanon’s use of the word violence, with the word praxis and consider that “the colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through praxis.”

Given the sharp edges of violent instruments, it might be prudent to take care before use. Their ability to leave marks on our incorporeal self is altogether frightening and we should be wary of turning to it when power escapes us.

Violence cannot and should not be made to exist as an end in itself. It should never continue in perpetuity, lingering and languishing, long after its instrumental ineffectiveness is proven. And we have seen where homicidal and suicidal violence have proven themselves ineffective in our attempts to repossess our bodies. Arendt says, “violence, being instrumental by nature, is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it.” Violence is only ever rational in the short term, when there exists a possibility of reform.

The danger of violence, even if it moves consciously within a non-extremist framework of short term goals, will always be that the means overwhelm the end. If the goals are not achieved rapidly, the result will be not merely defeat but the introduction of the practice of violence into the whole body politic... the practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world.

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159 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 8.
160 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 44.
162 Arendt, On Violence, 79.
163 Arendt, On Violence, 80.
And that is something we do not need. Fanon writes, “colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking... it is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence,”\textsuperscript{164} but violence continues to leave us all broken, dejected even. And so, we try to piece ourselves together and escape our delirium by other means, by: understanding the corrosiveness of moralizing, especially to the condemned; recognizing that violence and praxis are not one in the same; and giving our ghosts license to speak to us and through us. From a certain vantage point the ghost also simultaneously represents a future possibility, a hope. We are in relation to it and it has designs on us such that we must “reckon with it graciously, attempting to offer it “a hospitable memory out of concern for justice.”\textsuperscript{165} Out of concern for justice would be the only reason we would bother.

If we are to wrestle with these ghosts we must reclaim the narratives that continue to fail them; we must tell the \textit{in-between} stories, the accounts that lie in the shadows. We must allow “a closure that is not conclusion but a liminal interrogation outside the sentence”\textsuperscript{166} and begin to mend the \textit{time-lags} that we have created. Closing the spaces of splitting, and mending the resultant time lags, requires our return to the broken narrative. The ambivalence inherent in postcolonial and postmodern discourses that continually produce ghosts. It is our willingness to misremember our own histories and divest history of truth, which translate into our haunting. Colonial discourse then, is a “complex articulation of both the tropes of fetishism—[metaphor and metonymy]—and the forms of identification—[narcissistic and aggressive identification].”\textsuperscript{167} To

\textsuperscript{164} Fanon, \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, 23.  
\textsuperscript{165} Gordon, \textit{Ghostly Matters}, 64.  
\textsuperscript{166} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 274.  
\textsuperscript{167} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, 109.
understand colonial discourse a strategy must be undertaken where metaphoric/masking/narcissism is considered alongside metonymy/disavowal/aggressiveness. The insidiousness of colonial discourse, then, is that it is not simply a series of lies told about the Other, a creation of the Other based on traits wholly imagined; its insidiousness rests in the “masking and splitting of official and phantasmatic knowledges” that are increasingly difficult to detach. As Taiaiake Alfred has argued, under these “post-modern” imperial conditions “[o]pression has become increasingly invisible; [it is] no longer constituted in conventional terms of military occupation, onerous taxation burdens, blatant land thefts, etc.,”¹⁶⁸ but rather through a “fluid confluence of politics, economics, psychology and culture.”¹⁶⁹ Power is vested in discourse; in their linguistic manipulations.

Moralizing, then, is bound up with this kind of linguistic manipulation, where morality is translated by circumscribed agents allowed to speak on its behalf. “There must be a tribe of interpreters of such metaphors—the translators of the dissemination of texts and discourses across cultures—who can perform what Said best describes as the act of secular interpretation.”¹⁷⁰ This tribe usually finds itself in positions of power and dominance, all too willing to misremember history and reframe it as less flawed than it was. Moralizing requires ambivalence, morality does not. It is a space of contradiction which aspires to not only make universal claims but righteous ones. “There occurs, then, what we may describe as the normal strategy of discursive splitting, a certain anomalous containment of cultural ambivalence.”¹⁷¹ Our memory can

¹⁶⁸ Alfred, Wasase, 58.
¹⁶⁹ Alfred, Wasase, 30.
¹⁷⁰ Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 202
¹⁷¹ Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 189
only be reclaimed by looking at the past without its euphemisms. Upon recognition, the oppressed past will shock us into recognizing its animating force. Indeed, to fight for an oppressed past is to make this past come alive as the lever for the work of the present: obliterating the sources and conditions that link violence of what seems finished with the present, ending this history and setting in place a different future. Without restorative justice, without returning to the moment of splitting and putting back, as best as we can, what was stolen, we will be doomed to be haunted, reliving the same stories, trapped in a loop of our own making, condemned bodies without escape.

I would argue that praxis in conjunction with recognition is the first step in mending the wounds of the past. After all, the psycho-affectivity of the condemned needs healing before looking outwards. Self-empowerment in cooperation with collectivity is an important step in mending the breaks. What is required next is unfiltered truth, without the moralizing and contextualizing of past evils. Our memory can only be reclaimed by looking at the past without its euphemisms. Finally, I would argue that without restorative justice, without returning to the moment of splitting and putting back, as best as we can, what was stolen, we will be doomed to be haunted, reliving the same stories, trapped in a loop of our own making, condemned bodies without escape.

This is what we find in Fanon and Dabashi’s work: an attempt at theorizing how we might escape our condemned bodies. We can derive no perfect answers from their texts. Instead, we place ourselves at the centre of narratives that explode, while understanding that we are fully implicated in the chaos. We turn ourselves in radical experiments and we consider their words.
Bibliography


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