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The Habits of Racism:

A Phenomenology of the Lived Experience of Racism and Racialised Embodiment.

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Helen Ngo

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation examines some of the complex questions raised by the phenomenon and experience of racism. My inquiry is twofold: First, drawing on the resources of Merleau-Ponty, I argue that the conceptual reworking of habit as bodily orientation helps us to identify the more subtle but fundamental workings of racism, to catch its insidious, gestural expressions, as well as its habitual modes of racialised perception. Racism, on this account, is equally expressed through bodily habits, and this in turn raises important ethical questions regarding the responsibility for one's racist habits; as its etymology suggests, habits are not merely passive sedimentations, but are actively *held* in the body. Second, I consider what the *lived experience* of racism and racialisation teaches us about the nature of our embodied and socially-situated being. I argue that *racialised* embodiment problematises and extends existing accounts of general embodied experience, calling into question dominant paradigms of the "self" in philosophy, as coherent, fluid, and synchronous. Drawing on thinkers such as Fanon, I argue that the racialised body is "in front of itself" and "uncanny" (in the Heideggerian senses of "strange" *and* "not-at-home"), while exploring the phenomenological and existential implications of this disorientation and displacement. Finally, I return to the visual register to take up the question of "objectification" in racism and racialisation. While I critically examine the subject-object ontology presupposed by Sartre's account of "the gaze" (*le regard*), recalling that *all* embodied being is always already relational and co-constituting, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's concept of the intertwining I argue that racialised embodiment reveals to us the ontological violence of racism – not a merely violation of one's subjectivity as commonly claimed, but also a violation of one's *inter*subjectivity.

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– INTRODUCTION –

When I was young – I don't know how young exactly, but around 8 or 9 years old – I remember having a distinctive conversation with my older sister, to whom I looked up immensely. We were talking about the jade bracelet around her wrist; a nice enough looking red Chinese jade bracelet, similar to the one my mum and her generation of friends wore. I neither particularly liked nor disliked these bracelets, but even back then they were to my mind, associated with the cumbersome and often painful experience of removal; a simple, circular, hard-stone bangle designed to fit the narrowness of a wrist, its removal would usually involve wringing it over the width of your hand with the help of soapy water and a fair amount of force. For this reason one wore the bracelet either as a semi-permanent appendage, or suffered the sore and reddened hand upon its removal. Given that, along with its weightiness, and obtrusive clunk when inadvertently struck against a table or wall, I wondered why my sister bothered with it. "I wear it to remind myself that I'm Asian," she, then aged 12 or 13, said. "When I look down at my wrist and see the jade bracelet, I remember that I'm not white." *How funny*, I remember thinking to myself. *Of course she's Asian, why would she need reminding?* And yet, at the same time, there was something in her response that I understood immediately and intuitively. I, too, would sometimes "forget" I was Asian, even growing up as we did, in a migrant suburb among other Chinese-Vietnamese refugee families. *Sometimes*, I thought with a small pang of guilt, *it was*

nicer to "forget". When I think of that conversation now, I am struck by the deep and even bittersweet insight of two young girls navigating the complex world of race, alterity, and identity. The quiet hegemony of whiteness, the tension in experiencing oneself from the "inside" as invisible but from the "outside" as visibly "raced", and the sense of "burden" that this duality brought with it (much like the clunkiness of the jade bracelet itself) – all these were, naturally, not articulated or even formulated in our exchange, but silently evoked.

This dissertation is an effort to philosophically address some of the complex questions raised by the phenomenon and experience of racism, presented both in this vignette, and in the testimonies of other "racialised bodies". I am, in particular, interested in the *lived and experiential* dimension of racism and racialisation, and for this reason, draw on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, and specifically, of phenomenological embodiment. My inquiry is guided by two main questions: First, how do phenomenological analyses help us to identify new registers or modes of racist praxis? Here I draw on the resources of French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, arguing that his conception of the habitual body opens up a way into some of the more subtle and basic workings of racism. Second, I ask: what is the bodily experience of racism and racialisation, and what does it tell us about the nature of our embodied – and concomitantly socially-situated – being? In other words, how does *racialised* embodiment problematise and extend existing accounts of embodied experience more generally? Here I draw on the analyses of critical race thinkers such as Frantz Fanon to call into question some of the dominant paradigms in philosophical and phenomenological conceptions of the self. In pursuing these two lines of inquiry, I hope to demonstrate how phenomenology and critical race theory can come together in a mutually instructive way, each enriching while also challenging the limits of the other.

Chapter 1 begins in a constructive spirit. I take up Merleau-Ponty's thought in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and in particular, his conceptual reworking of habit and the habitual body. I argue that following his account, we can begin to see how racism entails a set of practices that are embedded in bodily and habitual registers. Recast in terms of orientation and movement, his concept of habit allows us to catch the insidious, gestural expressions of racism – for example, the clutching of one's handbag upon the approach of a Black man. Drawing on examples such as George Yancy's "Elevator Effect", I argue that bodily responses and gestures such as these can be considered habitual insofar as they articulate an underlying bodily *habituation* with respect to the racialised "other". This argument pertains also to racialised perception, which I explore through Linda Martín Alcoff's work on the visibility of race, and Alia Al-Saji's extension of this in relation to the perception of veiled Muslim women. Following these analyses, I examine how the framing of racism as habitual raises questions concerning responsibility, arguing that we can hold open this important ethical concern only insofar as we conceptualise habit anew. Here, Merleau-Ponty's reimagining of habit not only as sedimentation but also as active and ongoing – habits are *held*, not merely acquired – serves to insert a new space for the question of responsibility in racist habits.

In Chapter 2 I turn from the bodily modes of racist praxis to the *bodily experience* of it. I ask: What is the lived experience of racism and racialisation for those on its "receiving end"? Here I draw on the work of Fanon among others to explore the stress and "work" entailed in living and coping with racism, as well as the sense of body schema fragmentation that arises from the experience of being "in front" or "ahead" of oneself. Together, these analyses allow us to see the ways in which the racialised body is *not* experienced as fluid, co-ordinated, or transparent, in other words, how it does *not* square with the usual phenomenological descriptions

of the body. This in turn prompts us to consider some of the limits of phenomenology (especially in its more existentialist mood), insofar as it tends to treat the body as synchronously experienced, and unthematised for itself; that is, insofar as it tends to take as its subject, a white (male, and able) body. Turning to the question of white embodiment, I draw on Shannon Sullivan's account of "ontological expansiveness" to highlight how the sense of spatial entitlement significantly contrasts with racialised embodiment.

Having provided a phenomenological reading of both the practices and experience of racism, the second part of this dissertation then moves to a more thematic register. Chapter 3 picks up the notion of *inhabiting* heard in Merleau-Ponty's account of the habitual body, to explore the sense of dwelling and being-at-home in relation to racialised embodiment. Following the account of body schema fragmentation considered earlier, this chapter proceeds from the premise that the racialised body is experienced as *uncanny*. Here I turn to Martin Heidegger, who reminds us that the uncanny (*unheimlich*) – which usually means strange or alien – also bears a literal signification as un-home-ly (*un-heim-lich*). The racialised body, as strange or "other", is also the body displaced, or "not-at-home". To draw out the significance of this claim, I work through what it means to dwell or to find oneself "at-home". In contrast, María Lugones' account of "'world'-travelling" in the case of women of colour, highlights the way in which racialised embodiment entails a perennial displacement or "unhomeliness". And yet, taking her cue with regard to the celebratory aspects of "world"-travelling and the home-and-travel tension this betrays, I call for a reconceptualisation of home in its porosity (and bodies in their intercorporeality) to usher in a more nuanced account of the uncanniness of racialised embodiment – specifically, one which gives voice to the enriching dimensions of displacement while holding onto the profound senses of suffering and disorientation.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I turn to the question of the racialising gaze and its underlying subject-object ontology. In doing so, I address a persistent tension arising from phenomenology's lingering existentialism and its attempts to move toward a more relational ontology – a tension which, in my view, plays out clearly in the analyses of racialised uncanniness. Having drawn on critical race theory throughout the dissertation, I note that this literature often invokes the concept of "objectification" in describing how the racialised "other" comes to be overdetermined from outside through the racist gaze. However as I will argue, this discourse needs to allow for more complexity in its conceptualisation of the subject-object relation; after all, the racialised body is seen, but also sees itself being seen. There is, in the experience of racialised embodiment, a concomitant being-subject-*and*-object. I begin therefore by examining the parameters of the subject-object relation through the figure of Jean-Paul Sartre, whose work on the gaze (*le regard*) in *Being and Nothingness* articulates some of the ontological presuppositions undergirding critical analyses of the racialising gaze. While in many respects useful, I nonetheless argue that he ultimately offers too reductive a paradigm in his account of being-for-itself and being-for-others. Consequently, I turn to the resources of Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible*, and in particular his efforts to dissolve the subject-object distinction through the concept of the chiasm or intertwining. I argue that this offers us a better framework through which to capture the complexity of racialised embodiment, so long as it holds open space for the necessary analyses of power and socio-historical situatedness advanced by critical race theorists. This, I argue in the closing moments of the dissertation, offers us the occasion to cast anew, the ontological violence of racism; a violence not of one's subjectivity, but a more urgent and more profound violence of *inter*subjectivity.

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Some terms

Below are a few remarks concerning some terms recurring throughout the dissertation. I offer here a cursory explanation of my usage of them.

Race. This central term is of course, complex and ambiguous enough to merit an entire dissertation, and as such, my present remarks will be necessarily inadequate. While much of the dissertation ostensibly hangs on the definition or meaning of "race" – insofar as the terms "racism" and "racialisation" appear to be derivative of it – I refrain from staking out my definition of the term for the reason that my present inquiry is concerned with the bodily registers of racism and lived experience of racialisation. The meaning of "race" itself therefore bears on my inquiry only to the extent that the phenomena of racism and racialisation, as experienced and practiced, are activated through a notion (or several *notions*) of race and racial difference. That is to say, irrespective of my own definition, the machinations of racism and racialisation will unfold according to whatever conceptions of race gain traction as the dominant paradigm(s) in a given cultural-historico-political milieu. This is no guarantee that the conceptions of race (which may variously invoke notions of ethnicity, nationality, cultural practice) or its status (as biological or socially defined) will be consistent or internally coherent. Having said that, my own thoughts track those working with a hybrid definition of race; where race is seen as neither as a pure biological fact (and determined by "nature"), nor merely a social construct (and thus not "real"). Following thinkers such as Alcoff, I am of the view that our rejection of the naturalistic fallacy of "biological race" (and correlating acknowledgement of its socio-historic contingency) does not diminish the fact that race has and continues to structure our lives, relationships, projects, and possibilities. Indeed, my dissertation is an effort in negotiating these positions by tracking some of the real, lived, and embodied dimensions of race.

Racism and Racialisation. While I sometimes use these terms interchangeably, there is an important distinction to be upheld. Of the first, I appear to take a fairly standard definition: racism designates a belief system in which certain "races" (and their members) are considered inferior by virtue of characteristics or traits pertaining to that "race". This echoes, for example, the Oxford English Dictionary definition.[1] Where my version differs however, is in carving out the scope of what it means to consider another race inferior. For example, while racism takes the most common form of discrimination and violence, it is also true that condescension and pity constitute racism insofar as they take a certain race to be inferior (and thus in need of pity). This is fairly uncontroversial. But in addition to this, I think racism's violence can also be an epistemological one, that is, an insistence on certain ways of knowing and perceiving, and the imposition of those ways onto others. This is where "racialisation" becomes relevant. Given the ambiguity of the concept of "race" noted above, the term racialisation (and racialising/racialised) becomes more pertinent. In my dissertation, it designates the process by which one is deemed to *have "race"*. And in the context of the West, this almost inevitably means the process by which people of colour are assigned a racial identity, whereas people of caucasian description are not; racialisation is about the production of a racialised "other" and a concurrent non-naming of the white "I". Where this rejoins our definition of racism is that the process of racialisation speaks to a superior-inferior complex; the imposition of a white epistemic perspective, and the corresponding exercise of power (of naming, of visibility) upon others is borne of the assumption that other ways of knowing and perceiving do not matter. *Racialisation then, is almost always a form of racism*. And yet, because the term "racism" occupies a much more limited space in the public imaginary, and because racialisation designates a very specific (and somewhat abstract)

1 The OED definition reads: "The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races."

kind of racism, I am careful to distinguish the two. Moreover, I use separate terms also to draw attention to the way racialisation – the process of assigning a racial identity to someone, with all its associated meaning and trappings – forms the basis of racism understood in its narrower sense. For example, the use of a racial slur on someone (an uncontroversial form of racism), is first predicated on the assignment to that person, a racial identity as a salient feature of their being; they are deemed to have (and be) this racial identity, and it is on that basis that they can be insulted for it. Given this definition of racialisation, we can see how the concept will become especially important for the analysis of the racist gaze in Chapter 4.

The Body. This dissertation is firmly anchored in a phenomenological account of embodiment proffered by Merleau-Ponty (and his readers), and as such, employs a usage for the term "body" that does not accord with its general meaning throughout most of the Western philosophical canon. In short, I use the term "body" or "lived body" in this dissertation to broadly designate "person", "self", or other (disembodied) terms traditionally used to refer to the human being. Without going into too much detail (for this too, could easily form the subject of another dissertation), my choice of "body" as the primary term for person reflects Merleau-Ponty's own efforts to reanimate the lived body as an important site of philosophical inquiry. Against the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, Merleau-Ponty insists on the philosophical significance of the body, not only as the medium through which we engage with the world (ourselves, and others), but also the *condition* of our having a world. Being, traditionally located in the "mind", is as Merleau-Ponty shows, thoroughly embodied, and as more recent scholars have argued[2], it is

2 See for example, Evan Thompson, "The Mindful Body: Embodiment and Cognitive Science," in ed. Michael O'Donovan-Anderson, *The Incorporated Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Embodiment* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, pp. 127-144; Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

conversely true that the (human) body is thoroughly mindful. My references to the "racialised body" throughout this dissertation then, speak metonymically to the "racialised person", but in line with the aims of this project, do so by drawing emphasis to the embodied dimension of such racialised being.

With these terminological remarks out of the way, we can now proceed to our analysis.

– 1 –

RACIST HABITS: BODILY GESTURE, PERCEPTION, AND ORIENTATION

PART 1 – HABIT AND THE HABITUAL BODY

The main claim of this chapter is that racism manifests in the register of bodily habit, that is, that racism is not simply an activity one decides to (or not to) engage in, nor merely a set of attitudes held in thoughts, but rather, more primordially embedded in our bodily habits of movement, gesture, and disposition. However to claim this is not therefore to say that racism is unthinking, since I am employing a distinctly phenomenological conception of bodily habit as developed by Merleau-Ponty. In this chapter, I begin with an examination of the various dimensions of his concept of habit, as they become relevant for the question of racism. I then engage in a brief consideration of the social dimension of habit, before moving on to consider two pertinent kinds of racist habits: bodily gesture and racialised perception. Having examined the effectiveness of habit as a prism through which to analyse the phenomenon of racism, I then raise some cursory questions on the role of responsibility in relation to racist habits.

Habit in the Body Schema

In everyday parlance we tend to associate the term “habit” with the themes of repetition, absentmindedness, and lack of control; biting one's nails or clicking one's pen are examples of

habits we engage in unthinkingly, indeed sometimes even unknowingly. We can also invoke the term "habit" to describe an activity one actively cultivates, an activity to which one becomes accustomed, such as getting *into the habit* of waking early. This latter version brings us closer to Merleau-Ponty's conception of habit as found in the *Phenomenology of Perception.* In that text, Merleau-Ponty provides us with an account of the body as it gathers habits, or ways of being in the world. For him, habit frames the way we move about in the world, or better, it is the vehicle *through* which we move about. He writes, for example:

> If I possess the habit of driving a car, then I enter into a lane and see that "I can pass" without comparing the width of the lane to that of the fender, just as I go through a door without comparing the width of the door to that of my body.[1]

For Merleau-Ponty, habit describes a mode of moving in and responding to the world that is marked with ease, familiarity, and confidence. There is an ease with which I pass through the door in the sense that the movement is smooth, and not interrupted by a need to stop, wonder, or calculate. Oftentimes I pass through the door without even giving any thought to the *fact* of my doing so, much less whether I can do so. In this sense habit shares with our earlier examples the sense of absentmindedness. And yet habit in Merleau-Ponty's rendering is much more than this. For it is not just that case that we *have* habits and accumulate them in and through our bodies, for Merleau-Ponty habit represents a fundamental and primordial feature of embodied being; it forms an integral part of what it means to exist as a lived body in a world: "Moreover, my own body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood."[2]

But what does habit, in his rendering, entail? First, while it is true that habitual

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1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 144.

2 *Ibid.*, 93.

movements take place below the level of conscious activity, this is not to designate them to a level of automaticity or reflex. Habit occupies the hazy space between conscious and non-conscious being. In his example of the woman who moves about adroitly in the world, without having to pay explicit attention to the objects that might damage the feather sticking out of her hat, the woman does not hold knowledge of the feather's precise position at all times, but rather has a "sense" of it. Her habitual movements amount to what Merleau-Ponty calls "a knowledge in [the] hands"[3]; a knowledge that is not necessarily reflective or precise, but nonetheless practical and meaningful, indeed think of how we often employ our hands to convey indications of size, distance, direction, or shape in imprecise but still meaningful ways. In Merleau-Ponty's analysis, habit works on the level of body schema, which is "the global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world."[4] The acquisition of new habits is described as the "reworking and renewal of the body schema"[5] such that it comes to move in certain ways and take on a certain stance or orientation to the world. Here we can start to reconnect Merleau-Ponty's version of habit to the earlier discussion of "becoming accustomed to something", insofar as we understand that becoming accustomed to something new involves adjusting and adapting our bodies to a new situation or behaviour. Further, this understanding of habit as an adapting or reworking of the bodily schema, is significant because of what it reveals about the future- and forward-orientation of habit, as we will consider by turning to a temporal and spatial analysis.

The Temporal and Spatial Structure of Habit

As we will see, one way that habit is often described, both by Merleau-Ponty, Merleau-

3 *Ibid.*, 145.
4 *Ibid.*, 102.
5 *Ibid.*, 143.

Pontian scholars, and scholars working in different philosophical or sociological traditions, is through the motif of sedimentation. We can think of habits thus as movements or dispositions that have sedimented or "congealed" in our bodies. And while the deployment of this metaphor is something I will critically examine later in the chapter, one reason for its pervasiveness lies in the way it captures the role of history in grounding or anchoring bodily movement. Like sediments, habits attest to the weightiness of the past in present bodily configurations. We acquire new habits by drawing on a repertoire of existing and readily available bodily movement, and in doing so we effectively look to our past: we take skills previously acquired (that is to say, previously incorporated into our body schemas) and employ them as the medium through which we try to grasp at, translate, and fold in, new movements and habits. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

> in learning the habit of a certain dance, do we not find the formula of movement through analysis and then recompose it, taking this ideal sketch as a guide and drawing upon *already acquired* movements (such as walking and running)? (my emphasis)[6]

Habits such as dance – and we can generalise this to any number of activities – rely on the accumulation of bodily motility acquired in earlier life; they build upon existing movements gathered by the body, and motor capacities which in turn serve as a ground or a foundational base. If our bodies serve as the means through which we come to acquire new habits, then it is significant that bodies come with histories. And these histories can range from the complex and general histories of cultural practices, social organisation, and power configurations (as I will examine in Part 2), to the immediate and singular histories involved in moving one's arm. To the latter, Merleau-Ponty writes: "At each moment in a movement, the preceding instant is not forgotten but rather is somehow fit into the present, and in short the present perception consists in taking up the series of previous positions that envelop each other by relying upon the current

[6] *Ibid.*, 144.

position."[7] In this sense, the sedimentation analogy is useful insofar as it allows us to tell a story of the past as it comes to ground and remain immanent in the present.

But at the same time, habit is forward looking, and embeds within it, possibilities for future acting and modes of being. I want to suggest that this is where the metaphor of sedimentation reaches the limit of its utility, for while it helps us to visualise the "settling in" of bodily habit, the relative inertia or passivity entailed in sedimentation obscures the fact that habits are also future-looking: they launch us forward. Continuing with Merleau-Ponty's dance example, the bodily habits and motor capabilities that have thus far settled into my body schema, do not just ground the habits of dance I have acquired, they also influence which new habits of dance I *can* acquire – and which for now, remain too ambitious. Further, they influence the *manner* in which they will get translated into my body schema. I might not reasonably expect to learn how to "pop and lock" given the present configuration of my body schema, but for someone more immersed in hiphop culture, with the bodily precision to effect a swift "lock", this is a more imminent possibility. Likewise, a trained ballet dancer attempting this will look different to a seasoned breakdancer – because they each have come to move to music, and inhabit their own bodies, in different ways. All of this is to say, habits are also inherently futural. They are not just descriptive histories of the sedimentations that have accumulated in our bodies over time; they also look forward, at once serving as both a medium and gateway to that which we may incorporate into our body schemas, and how. This point will become clearer as we turn to an analysis of habit on a spatial register.

But first, to mark the point as it emerges, what we have in Merleau-Ponty's version of habit, is an analysis that pulls us across the temporal horizon; habits look *at once* to the past and

[7] *Ibid.*, 141.

to the future, while being instantiated in the present. However even to say this is to envision a particular version of temporality. This is because the claim ought not be that habit serves merely as a node along a linear axis of time, or that it is some temporal link holding together a chain of past-present-future. Rather, the historical grounding and the futuricity of habit means that both the past and the future *are at each moment* enveloped in the present; we might think of it as the past and future offering themselves up as the depths of a present. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that each moment is enveloped its others. In an earlier passage of the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Each present definitively establishes a point of time that solicits the recognition of all others. The present still holds in hand the immediate past, *but without positing it as an object*, and since this immediate past likewise retains the past that immediately preceded it, time gone by is entirely taken up and grasped in the present. The same goes for the imminent future that will itself have its own horizon of imminence. But along with my immediate past, I also have the horizon of the future that surrounded it; that is, I have my actual present seen as the future of that past. Along with the imminent future, I also have the horizon of the past that will surround it; that is, I have my actual present as a past of that future. [8]

The Husserlian movement of temporal protention and retention is helpful here. Insofar as habit is an accumulation of the past, it gets repackaged and instantiated each time anew. But seen from another temporal horizon, each new (present) instantiation of habit holds at the same time, a projected future, whether the future of a past or the future of a present. Thus I want to suggest that habit is not just a matter of providing "[a] past to a distended present" as Edward S. Casey notes in his essay, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty".[9] While it is certainly true that habits give depth to the present by supplying an anchoring past, what is important not to lose sight of within this formulation is how such enlivening of the past through the present actively

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8 *Ibid.*, 71.

9 Edward S. Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty," in eds. Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson, *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 213.

modulates that which is to come. As with a conception of time that harbours in each breath, the always-already here, the ready-to-come, and even the not-ready-to-come (the futures that do not materialise), bodily habits are at each moment laden with the histories which precede them, while at the same time, beholding and foreclosing possibilities of new ones to follow. Habits have a bearing on which futures will become readily available and those which will not.

A similar analysis to the temporal structure of habit can be advanced in the spatial register since it is true that temporality can be experienced spatially, and spatiality temporally. Indeed this connection is not lost on Merleau-Ponty when he writes:

> Each moment of the movement embraces its entire expanse and, in particular, its first moment or kinetic initiation inaugurates the link between a here and a there, between a now and a future that the other moments will be limited to developing.[10]

This transposes almost directly, the temporal analysis of habit into a spatial register; as with the "now", the "here" unites the expanse of the "from whence" and the "to where" (much like the German *woher* and *wohin*), holding them all in its grasp. But what is especially helpful about the framing of habit spatially is the way this illuminates the forward-facing possibility of action harboured in habit. Recall our opening distinction between the ordinary understanding of habit and Merleau-Ponty's use of the term, in which we noted the difference between habit as repetitive gesture (pen-clicking, nail-biting) and habit as a bodily activity to which I become accustomed (the habit of dance or driving). In both cases, we have a spatial posturing, a bodily arrangement in which the body is held – but, also *poised to act* – in a certain way. But whereas in the first case the body is spatially arranged for the ritual repetition of certain familiar gestures, gestures that more truly reflect a "sedimentation" in the body (which are of course open to change – one may, slowly, work to change one's habits), in the case of dance and driving we have

[10] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 141.

a different kind of habit, one which entails bodily familiarity in equal measure, but which also entails a greater sense of bodily ability and possibility.

Habitual vs Habituating: Bodily Habit as Orientation and an Expression of Possibility

I suggest, following Casey's lead, that a helpful distinction can be made between the *habitual* and *habituated* when thinking about habit. Casey describes the difference thus:

> First of all, habit memory is repetitive: not just as steps on the way to learning something...but also as exactly re-enacting earlier performances of the same action. An example would be habitual action of staring [sic] my Honda Civic, an action which since first being learned has become routinized. On the other hand, 'habituated' refers specifically to situations of being oriented in a general situation by having become familiar with particular structure."[11]

In Merleau-Ponty's discussion of habit as the acquisition new bodily signification, what he is concerned with is not only the habitual (the repeated gestures that have sedimented in our bodies), but also the *habituated*. This is why he can speak of the habit of dance or the habit of driving – it is not that we engage in these activities with any particular frequency in our lives, but we have engaged in them enough to find ourselves habituated to them. Of course the two are related: we become habituated to something only after a certain amount of practice, experience, or repetition – in other words, after a certain amount of habitual activity. But in bringing forth the sense of habituation in Merleau-Ponty's habit, what we can start to discern more clearly are the two important dimensions embedded within his account, that of orientation and possibility.

Some examples will help illuminate. In a key passage, Merleau-Ponty considers the bodily habituation of an experienced organist, who after a relatively short period of acquaintance, can proceed to play adroitly on a new and unfamiliar instrument on which the number of keyboards may be more or less, and on which the stops may be differently arranged. The

[11] Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty", 212-213.

explanation here cannot be an unusually quick aptitude for representing correspondences to organist's habitual instrument (there is no sign of, nor time for, translation and transposition), nor is it a case of reflex or muscle memory, given the new instrument's different topography. The clue rather, lies in Merleau-Ponty's description:

> He sits on the bench, engages with the pedals, and pulls out the stops, he seizes up the instrument with his body, he incorporates its direction and dimensions, *and he settles into the organ as one settles into a house*.[12] (my emphasis)

The image of the house is surely deliberate, invoking the *inhabiting* of habit by our bodies, and their inhabiting of ours. Habit as habituation involves actively taking up residence in the spatiality of the organ, and to comport and orient oneself bodily such that one comes to relate to the organ as an open field of *possibility*. This kind of bodily orientation engenders not just a familiarity that is present in habitual activities (biting nails, clicking pens), but trades also on the twin notions of power and possibility. Merleau-Ponty's organist relates to the instrument not as a series of static “heres” and “theres” which get reproduced or reconfigured in sitting down at a differently arranged organ, but rather he settles into the spatiality of the organ as a region of power (in the sense of *pouvoir* rather than *puissance*). This coheres with the account of bodily spatiality more generally, where he writes: “Consciousness is originarily not an 'I think that,' but rather an 'I can'.”[13] Habit thus, as a spatial organisation and co-ordination of the body, opens oneself up to a range of motile possibilities, and it is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty, in speaking of the example of a blind man's cane, comes to describe it as “expresses[ing] the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments”.[14]

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12 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 146.
13 *Ibid.*, 139.
14 *Ibid.*, 145.

Of course to say that Merleau-Ponty's account of habit more closely describes the process of bodily habituation is not to discount the important dialectical relationship between the habitual and the habituating. The organist settles into the spatiality of the organ and becomes habituated to it only after a period of habitual engagement (i.e., practise) with it. This is true of the engagement with any musical instrument or sport; a parkourist for example, whose sport exemplifies this kind of bodily habituation[15], does not merely train for a series of repetitive movements, though her training will certainly *consist of* this. In parkour, as in art forms involving improvisation (jazz, acting, contact-dance), we encounter Merleau-Pontian habit at both ends: they are habitual in the first sense of repetition and familiarity (in their training), but also examples of how such training is *enabling*, in the cultivation of a bodily orientation that is future- and forward-facing, in the second sense of Merleau-Pontian habituating. This interplay between the habitual and the habituating captures the spirit of Merleau-Ponty's account, and shows us how habit when, understood in its fullness, can entail not just a "dilation" of one's spatial world as Merleau-Ponty puts it, but also a qualitatively changed relation to it.

Habit as *In*habiting

Already animated in this discussion of habit and spatiality then, is a conceptual reworking of habit such that it enlivens an important etymological connection between habit and inhabiting,

[15] Parkour is an interesting example because it exhibits many of the qualities of a Merleau-Pontian account of habit. With its origins in military obstacle-course training, parkour today is practiced in the open field of urban landscapes. It consists of "free running" through streets, rebounding and responding to whatever objects or structures insert themselves into one's path. A typical run might therefore consist of bounding off walls some metres high, leaping up stairs, sliding down ramps, jumping from the tops of buildings, and so forth. It is a dynamic sport, demanding a thrilling display of agility and responsivity. As an urban activity, people also constitute an essential element of the cityscape, and thus parkour also involves dodging bodies as they appear unannounced and unanticipated in the immediate horizon. More so than the organist, the parkourist trains to cultivate a certain bodily orientation or responsivity, such that in the course of a run they are well positioned to respond swiftly, creatively, and *spontaneously*, to what reveals itself upon the turn of a street corner.

which is present both in French (*habitude* and *habiter*) and German (*Gewohnheit* and *wohnen*). This is a connection that Merleau-Ponty himself exploits in his exploration of habit: "To habituate oneself to a hat, an automobile, or a cane is to *take up residence in them*, or inversely, to make them participate within the voluminosity of one's own body.[16] (my emphasis)" That is, we accumulate habits and it is through these habits that we live in or inhabit the world, but at the same time, so too do these habits come to inhabit us. So in the example of the automobile above, we might say that the process of habituating ourselves to it is twofold: on the one hand we draw upon our existing motor skills (steering, pressing, releasing, turning) in order to learn the motions involved in operating the automobile, but we are not fully habituated to it until these new movements take up residence in us, among the repertoire of our existing movements. Insofar as habits reflect a spatial orientation and possibility of the body (when I sit down before a keyboard to type, "a motor space stretches beneath my hands where I will play out what I have read."[17]), so too does this spatial schema settle into the body ("The subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily space"[18]). Furthermore, in becoming incorporated into bodily space, that space is changed; habits allow for a dynamic interchange between body and world, or we might say, it is the intermediary between the two. The same is true of the inverse, that is, in as much as habits come to dwell and feel "at home" in us, so too do we dwell *through them,* and make ourselves "at home" through the cultivation of habits: we come to inhabit new cities first by orienting ourselves and attending to basic needs (navigating public transport, bureaucracy, and so forth), but at the same time, we don't really feel "at home" in a city until we start to gather habits – visiting the same *boulangerie* every morning,

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16 *Ibid.*, 145.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*, 146.

figuring out one's route to the metro, or finding a local hangout spot to frequent. In this sense, habit entails more than a posturing in relation to the specific activity or movement at hand, the inhabiting through habit can also mean taking on a particular posture or stance towards one's *general* environment, in such a way that one starts to feel at ease, and at home. The significance of inhabiting in this sense, and the related questions of home-making and home-space, are questions I will take up in greater detail in Chapter 3.

We have then, illuminated some important aspects of habit in this initial analysis. First, habit in Merleau-Ponty's account moves beyond its everyday association with routinsed gesture, designating instead something closer to bodily orientation and disposition. In this version habit has both a more general and a more fundamental connection with the body, describing the way we *inhabit* our bodies and the world. Conceptualised in this way, we also see how habit becomes aligned with the body's sense of possibility or "I can" in a way that will become relevant for our discussion of racialised embodiment in Chapter 2. Finally, as we will reconsider later in this chapter, this sense of spatio-temporal bidirectionality embedded within this conception of habit draws us into more complex questions of responsibility.

PART 2 – CAN HABITS BE SOCIAL?

Before moving onto a direct consideration of habit with respect to racism, I want to first address the question of whether this conception of bodily habit also works on a social level. That is, does it make sense to speak of habits that respond to socially meaningful interactions between people? Or put differently, Merleau-Ponty's examples of habitual action and movement throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception* tend to emphasise motoricity and motility in individual bodily movement; he speaks of walking through doorways, driving cars, playing

organs, navigating with a blind man's cane – in short, activities which have become habituated and incorporated into a person's bodily schema as they move through space and engage with instruments or objects, but not people. This is not to say that the examples of interaction with "things" are devoid of any social dimension – a Heideggerian analysis of the equiprimordiality of *Mitsein* even in our use of tools, can swiftly dispel that – but what is distinct about them is that they are habits operative within a *relatively* stable and closed circuit. A doorway affords entry and exit, solicits a certain spatial orientation or intentional action, and invites a certain aesthetic punctuation or focal point in our perception of buildings. And yet, even if we grant that doorways can be more than these – acknowledging the multistability of objects, which leaves open always the possibility of new significances to coalesce and emerge – the depth and variety of possibilities for interaction with a doorway remain relatively limited *in comparison* to interactions with other beings. The bodily habit of walking through doorways is thus a habit acquired within a relatively stable environment. There is a material difference when we begin to talk about bodily habits and dispositions in the context of intersubjective encounters, because their relative open-endedness and unpredictability require or engender a kind of bodily readiness and responsivity.[19] People talk back, but doorways do not; though this is not to discount the ways in which objects figure in our lived experience as things to *inter-act with*. And yet there is an important added dimension in intersubjective interaction that bears remarking upon as we try to transpose Merleau-Ponty's analysis from the domain of individual bodies to that of inter-bodies, or the intersubjective and the social.

[19] This point partly draws from Hubert Dreyfus' argument concerning artificial intelligence (AI), and the closed-circuit nature of the simulated environments in which such machines are developed. The argument is that AI will fail (insofar as it seeks to emulate human intelligence) because human interaction is infinitely open; situations and significances are unpredictable, and our responsivity calls for more than rule-based learning. Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers (Still) Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

Pierre Bourdieu's *Habitus*

This attentiveness to the difference between Merleau-Ponty's typically motor-oriented and individual examples of bodily habit, and our concern with habit in the intersubjective and collective realm, opens up a further question: can we talk about habits that are socially acquired? Here I draw on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose work on *habitus* – a similar though not identical concept to habit – considers how social and cultural milieu profoundly shape our behaviour, actions, and attitudes. Grounding his analysis is the proposition that habits are acquired and operative in a collective or group environment. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* he writes for example:

> If the practices of the members of the same group or class are more and better harmonized than the agents know or wish, it is because, as Leibniz puts it, 'following only [his] own laws', each 'nonetheless agrees with the other'. The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for the practices of co-ordination, since the corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose their mastery of a common code...[20]

For Bourdieu, our socialisation entails acquiring and acting through collectively intelligible *habitus*, and in fact, that we do so is the *condition* upon which social life is possible at all. *Habitus* serves as an ever-present structure through which behaviours and interactions are formed, so thoroughly shaping them that one cannot step outside its influence. The idea of "pure" interactions then, or interactions that are not already informed by the *habitus*, become unthinkable:

> Thus, when we speak of class habitus, we are insisting, against all forms of the occasionalist illusion which consists in directly relating practices to properties inscribed in the situation, that 'interpersonal' relations are never, except in appearance, *individual-to-individual* relationships and that the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction. ...In fact it is their present and past

[20] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 80-81.

> positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions... [21]

In other moments Bourdieu insists more strongly that *habitus* not only influences ways of being and acting, but actually produces them. He writes for example, "In short, the habitus, the product of history, produces the individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history."[22] For Bourdieu, insofar as *habitus* propels us forward, it does so primarily through the reproductive force intrinsic to it. Thus in his field investigations on marriage practices in Kabylia, Algeria which inform much of this book, Bourdieu identifies the many ways in which rituals, negotiations, understandings of self-interests, and so forth are predetermined by the *habitus*, which are then in turn reproduced by it.[23] This is not to say that there exists no room for divergence from or evolution in the practices or behaviours engendered in any given *habitus* – that Bourdieu emphasises the *tendency* toward (and not *certainty of*) reproduction clearly indicates to us that he does not foreclose this possibility. And while this sense of pre-determination is a criticism most commonly leveraged against Bourdieu, as sociologist Nick Crossley argues, such critiques are misguided insofar as Bourdieu is more appropriately read as illuminating the organising structures and practices which supply the milieux of our interactions. Nonetheless, Crossley readily admits that Bourdieu underplays this aspect of creative possibility to his own detriment: "It is because Bourdieu ignores this generative role of agency, in my view, that he leaves himself vulnerable to the charge of determinism."[24]

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[21] *Ibid.*, 81-82.

[22] *Ibid.,* 82.

[23] "It follows that every marriage tends to reproduce the conditions which have made it possible. Matrimonial strategies...belong to the system of reproduction strategies, defined as the sum total of the strategies through which individuals or groups objectively tend to reproduce the relations of production associated with a determinate mode of production by striving to reproduce or improve their position in the social structure." *Ibid.,* 70.

[24] For example Crossley writes: "It is because Bourdieu ignores this generative role of agency, in my view, that he

Despite the importance of Bourdieu's work in introducing an explicitly social dimension to our consideration of habit, there are important reasons for remaining within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological framework in our present investigation, over that of Bourdieu's sociology (and the tradition he carries through from Durkheim to Mauss[25]). While Bourdieu's account helps us to broaden our working concept of habit by lending it a distinctly social and historical dimension, the diminution of the role of the lived body[26] and its relation to this *habitus* fails to sufficiently capture not only the way habits are alive and changing, but also how habits are *in*habited – that is to say, taken up, activated, and *held*. Bourdieu's habitus thus succumbs to a more or less passive construction of habit as sedimentation (which we will discuss further toward the end of the chapter), and as already noted, is therefore frequently criticised for presenting too determinatist a picture.[27] And despite his efforts to rescue Bourdieu from these criticisms (which interestingly, he does by way of tracing some continuity between Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu), Crossley concedes in his article, "Habit and Habitus", that it is the question of the body which stands as a key distinguishing feature separating their respective versions:

> ...in contrast to Mauss and Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty offers a dynamic account of the process in which habits are formed, reformed and, in some cases, extinguished across time... Habits, for Merleau-Ponty, are structures of behaviour, attaching the embodied actor to their world, which take shape and are reshaped (and sometimes extinguished) in the

leaves himself vulnerable to the charge of determinism." Nick Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and its Construction", *Theory and Society*, 30 (2001): 96.

25 Crossley traces Bourdieu's sociological genealogy in "Habit and Habitus", *Body & Society*, 19 (2013): 140.

26 This claim need to be qualified. Bourdieu does speak of embodiment, but when doing so he invokes the term, *hexis,* the Ancient Greek term which gets translated as habit. So Bourdieu seems to make a telling distinction, relegating *hexis* to the body and *habitus* to practices more generally: "Body *hexis* speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of patterns of postures that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meaning and values: in all societies, children are particularly attentive to the gestures and postures which, in their eyes, express everything that goes to make an accomplished adult – a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements, always associated with a tone of voice, a style of speech, and (how could it be otherwise?) a certain subjective experience." see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 87.

27 For some examples of this criticism, see Nick Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and its Construction", where he identifies sociologists such Jeffrey Alexander and Richard Jenkins, who present various criticisms against the deterministic nature of Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*.

> dynamic and always ongoing process of interaction between actor and world.[28]

Because of this, the phenomenological framework inaugurated by Merleau-Ponty, with its distinctive emphasis on the *embodied* dimensions of habit, proves most pertinent for our investigation as it will allow us to consider racism on the level of bodily gesture, posture, and disposition – that is, the socially and historically situated practice of racism as it gets taken up by the body. Moreover, situating our inquiry in the phenomenological tradition also allows an articulation of the *experiential* dimension of racism and racialisation, with its broader implication for the experience of and relation to one's self – something which is not available to us in the sociological *habitus*. What Bourdieu's habitus does offer us however, despite its methodological limitations, is a way to transition from a strictly individualistic bodily register of habit and experience characteristic of phenomenology (and of Merleau-Ponty's account), to broader considerations of social, historical, and power relations, in the accumulation of habit or *habitus*.

Iris Marion Young on Female Bodily Comportment

Indeed we find an example of such an effort in Iris Marion Young's iconic essay, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality." In that piece, Young takes up the Merleau-Pontian concerns of bodily movement, motility, and comportment, in the explicitly historical and social context of gender. She argues that the relatively impoverished motor capacities observed in young girls in various studies are attributable not to female biology, physiology, or mysterious "feminine essence" as early phenomenologist and psychologist Erwin Straus concludes, but rather to the way women and girls are socialised in patriarchal societies. Whereas boys exhibit more open postures and wider

[28] Crossley, "Habit and Habitus", 147.

walking strides, girls are more likely to walk with disproportionately smaller strides, arms held closer to bodies, and without the loose swinging motion observed in boys.[29] Even in the act of throwing a ball, girls are less likely to engage their lower leg and back muscles, or to make good use of space by taking up wide supporting stances. According to Young, these features of feminine motility and movement speak to a lived contradiction, whereby the "I can" of the phenomenal body is countered with an "I cannot", supplied by the girl's social situation.[30] As a result of this lived contradiction as object *and* subject, feminine bodily movement is characterised by three modalities, which she identifies as: ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality, and discontinuous unity.[31] She explains the relation thus:

> At the root of these modalities...is the fact that the woman lives her body as *object* as well as subject. The source of this is that patriarchal society defines woman as object...and that in sexist society women are in fact frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies. An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another's subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of an action and intention.[32]

While not framed explicitly in terms of habit or habitual expressions of sexism, Young's analysis of female bodily movement is indeed an analysis of how female bodies habitually move (in throwing a ball, in walking, etc), and how they come to *in*habit their own bodies in the context of patriarchal society. As such it offers us a clear example of the application of Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body in a socially and historically situated context, and in doing so, opens up a way for us to proceed in our phenomenological inquiry into racism, despite Merleau-Ponty's own silence on such questions. Interestingly, in a different essay intervening on the "sex

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29 Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality" in *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 32.

30 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 139.

31 Young, "Throwing Like a Girl", 38.

32 *Ibid*., 44.

versus gender" debate concerning ways to understand the category of "woman", Young too offers a brief comparison between Bourdieu and Merleau-Ponty, concluding:

> Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* offers one interpretation of how generalized social structures are produced and reproduced in the movement and interaction of bodies. Especially in his understanding of gender structures, however, Bourdieu's understanding of the relation of social structures to actors and experience conceptualizes these structures too rigidly. It may be more fruitful to draw on a theory of the lived body like that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty but connect it more explicitly than he does to how the body lives out its position in social structures...[33]

In other words, while Young recognises the contribution of Bourdieu's work insofar as it extends to habit an explicitly social and historical dimension, she too notes the limitations of any analysis of habit which is not grounded in the lived body. Given that a phenomenological inquiry into habitual racism will in many way track the trajectory of phenomenological analyses of gender and sexism, I find Young's turn to Merleau-Ponty, while retaining the social dimension introduced by Bourdieu, instructive.

PART 3 – RACISM IN HABITUAL BODILY GESTURE AND PERCEPTION

To turn now directly to the problematic of racism, how does the account of phenomenological habit as developed so far open up new analyses or insight into the bodily dimensions of racism? How is it that this account of habit provides us with a useful way to think about the phenomenon of racism, with a particular view to its experiential and embodied dimensions? I want to propose two such ways. First, there is a growing body of literature which analyses the way in which racist praxis does indeed operate on a habitual level. This is the idea that racism finds expression not only in public discourse, overt acts of racial violence, hatred, or

[33] Iris Marion Young, "Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity" in *On Female Body Experience*, 26.

discrimination, but also and perhaps more potently in the subtle bodily gestures, reactions, and behaviours – not always explicitly intended – that are enacted in response to an encounter with the racialised "other". Second, and related to this, I want to argue that this "habitual racism"[34] is not only limited to expressions of the body through gesture and movement, but also through habitual perception – that is, that the perception of "racialised others" is already operative on a bodily and habitual level. Here I draw directly on the work of scholars working in this field such as Linda Alcoff and Alia Al-Saji, deploying their analyses to briefly consider the cases of two fatal shootings of young Black people, Jonathan Ferrell and Renisha McBride, who were at the time seeking help. These analyses will position us for a further discussion in Part 4, on the question of responsibility in habit.

Bodily Racism: (Micro-) Gestures and Bodily Responses

In thinking about racism on the level of bodily gesture, it is first important to delineate between different types or categories of gestures. One could for example, trace a rich history of racist gestures which are invoked to unambiguously degrade, mock, and threaten their racialised targets. This could include performing the Nazi salute to reference the genocide of Jewish people in the Holocaust, pulling back one's skin to make "slanty eyes" in mock of Asian people, or performing ape-like gestures to link African, Caribbean, or Australian Aboriginal people with primates. Such examples are relatively uncontroversial in their racist content, and constitute gestures in which the meaning is immediately clear to those who see themselves referenced in them.[35] In part they are so because they have crossed a threshold in public discourse; they are

[34] Given the earlier distinction between "habitual" and "habituated", I note that my reference to "habitual" in the term "habitual racism" is adjectival, that is, I do not limit "habitual racism" the cases of unthinking repetition, but include in it the broader sense of habituation and orientation.

[35] While I claim that these are "uncontroversial" examples of racist gestures, it is still the case that popular culture

highly visible and recognisable gestures which carry clearly intended and precisely executed racist messages. But in addition, these also pass the threshold of recognition because they are *performative* gestures: lifting one's hand to perform the Nazi salute means to momentarily inhabit the character of an SS soldier (or in the case of the salute with the other hand making a moustache, Hitler himself), and to invoke or recreate the racist world and worldview of the Third Reich in which Jews are sub-human. Or in the case "slanty eyes", the gesture entails inhabiting not the perpetrator but the Asian persona directly, to embody it and project to the world a caricature of an ugly, foolish, or conniving figure. It performs to the Asian person how they are seen, and how they are being mocked. As performances, these kinds of gestures are highly visible; they are enacted *in order to be seen* by their intended audiences, but also to the world at large. They are a kind of speech which carry with them a deliberate message, and in doing so they employ rhetorical and theatrical devices such as humour, mockery, metaphor, and hyperbole. We can liken these gestural forms of racism to other broader performance-based practices, such as donning "blackface" in minstrel shows[36], imitating speech (particularly where it is broken or heavily accented), and so forth. These kinds of racist gestures sit within a broader spectrum of racist speech, insofar as they seek to communicate racist messages to the people they degrade, or to solicit agreement from peers. As explicit performances, these gestures are intended to be seen, and so a certain measure of intelligibility is built into them.

This kind of embodied gestural racism however, is not what I am most interested in here.

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and discourse will often entertain questions of whether such gestures are "really racist". Some examples of this include: the public "debates" around AFL club president's public invocation of *King Kong* when talking about Aboriginal football player Adam Goodes on the radio in 2013, pop-star Miley Cyrus' slanty-eye photo poses in 2009, and Prince Harry's Nazi "fancy dress" costume in 2005.

[36] Note however, that the example of Blackface is perhaps more complex than the Nazi salute or "slanty eye" gestures, since in contrast to the latter two, the first *purports to* (at least, in some cases) be honorary. This of course does not mean that such gestures are unproblematic, even if they are "well intended". The *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete") tradition in the Netherlands is another variant – though hotly contested – of blackface.

While it is of course important to attend to the different ways this kind of performative racism persists in daily life and public discourse, and indeed takes on new forms – the debate around white rappers as a new incarnation of "blackface" is a good example of this[37] – in this section I am interested in the kinds of bodily gestures and movements which, at first glance, might not appear to constitute performance or speech, as ordinarily construed. However given our earlier reconceptualisation of habit as bodily orientation, what Merleau-Ponty's work opens up is a way to bring unassuming bodily responses and movements – glances, flinches, and the like – into the discussion of racism and racist gesture. This is important because while there exists a reasonably developed discourse around forms of racism in this explicit register of performance and speech, analyses of bodily gesture and responses as racist are much harder to ground. Thus it is blackface for example, that will solicit collective outrage and condemnation, while the clutching of a handbag in response to the approaching figure of a Black man will solicit anything from defences, denials, to accusations of "over-sensitivity" – despite the way they both structure the lived experience of Black people and in particular Black men. In what follows then, I take up the question of embodied gestures that at first glance, do not so much seek to "perform" racist messages, but rather those gestures that "express" them, although noting the tenuous distinction between them insofar as they *both* constitute forms of bodily speech.

"The Elevator Effect"

In his book *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, George Yancy traces precisely this bodily and

[37] There is for example, a lively debate around white rappers such as Eminem, and more recently, Iggy Azalea, not only on questions of cultural appropriation and exploitation, but also on what has been variously termed "vocal blackface" or "verbal blackface". See for example, "Jean Grae Talks New '#5' EP And Disdain For Iggy Azalea's 'Verbal Blackface'" (http://revolt.tv/news/jean-grae-talks-new-5-ep-and-disdain-for-iggy-azaleas-verbal-blackface/9029F87F-CA4B-4122-84AA-6A03E4611752 accessed 01 March 2015) and "Azealia Banks, Iggy Azalea and hip-hop's appropriation problem", *The Guardian,* 27 December 2014.

gestural mode of racism. Following in the footsteps of Frantz Fanon's seminal text, *Black Skin White Masks* (Yancy's title contains a direct allusion to this earlier work), Yancy draws from his own lived experience as a Black man in the United States and subjects these experiences to phenomenological analysis. For example, attending to the manifold ways in which racism can be performed in the (micro-) gestural expressions of the body, Yancy describes a phenomenon for which he coins the term, "The Elevator Effect":

> Well-dressed, I enter an elevator where a white woman waits to reach her floor. She 'sees' my Black body, though not the same one I have seen reflected back to me from the mirror on any number of occasions. Buying into the myth that one's dress says something about the person, one might think that the markers of my dress (suit and tie) should ease her tension.[38]

And later:

> I walk into the elevator and she feels apprehension. Her body shifts nervously and her heart beats more quickly as she clutches her purse more closely to her. She feels anxiety in the pit of her stomach. Her perception of time in the elevator may feel like an eternity. The space within the elevator is surrounded from all sides with my Black presence. It is as if I have become omnipresent within that space, ready to attack from all sides. Like choking black smoke, my Blackness permeates the enclosed space of the elevator. Her palms become clammy. She feels herself on the precipice of taking flight, the desperation to flee. There is panic, there is difficulty swallowing, and there is a slight trembling of her white torso, dry mouth, nausea.[39]

The example is highly controversial, and for reasons we will explore later, perhaps necessarily so. Yancy himself notes that it is one which typically draws critical questions (or defensive re-interpretations) as to its validity as a reading of the situation. I wish to leave these aside for the moment, as they raise very real and complex questions of epistemology and hermeneutics in phenomenological method, to which we will need to return. So proceeding for the moment on the basis that Yancy does indeed provide us with a coherent and compelling interpretation the

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[38] George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 4.

[39] *Ibid.*, 5.

situation, this opens up two questions: (1) does this kind of gesture fall within the realm of habit; and (2) is it an instance of racism?

To take up the second question first, one could argue that the response of the white woman – the tensing, the constricted breathing, the uneasy shifting of the body – these are all enacted responses to the confrontation with Yancy's Black male body, or more precisely, with that which is inscribed or projected onto his body, for it is not Yancy's body in its particularity that solicits the response. Rather, what she responds to is a generalised racist projection of Blackness, instantiated in the singularity of his Black male body. In a world where racism exists, racialised bodies come pre-determined or "*over*-determined" to borrow Jean-Paul Sartre's term (who in turn borrowed from Freud)[40], with coded meanings. As Yancy writes earlier,

> My darkness is a signifier of negative values grounded within a racist social and historical matrix that predates my existential emergence. The meaning of my Blackness is not intrinsic to my natural pigment, but has *become* a value-laden 'given,' an object presumed untouched and unmediated by various contingent discursive practices, history, time, and context. My Blackness functions as a stipulatory axiom from which conclusions can be drawn: "Blackness is evil, not to be trusted, and guilty as such".[41]

Insofar as these constructions form the horizon of the woman's bodily responses, we can argue that such gestures constitute racism on a bodily register, drawing upon and responding to racist representations of the Black male body, and taken up in the white woman's own bodily comportment.

One might be tempted argue that nonetheless, this is not enough to render the gestures themselves racist, that instead what we are confronted with are gestures that merely express racist modes of thinking. In other words, it is the *idea*, and not its bodily manifestation, that is

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[40] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 79.

[41] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 3.

properly racist. The problem with this argument however, is that it insists on a distinction between the idea and its expression, which in Merleau-Ponty's schema, cannot be sustained. In a section entitled "The Body as Speech and Expression", Merleau-Ponty writes, "speech does not translate a ready-made thought; rather, speech accomplishes thought."[42] Insofar as gesture is a kind of bodily speech, it becomes difficult to separate a gesture from the content of its expression; as embodied speech, gesture *accomplishes* the body's thoughts. As Merleau-Ponty claims, "The gesture does not *make me think* of anger, it is the anger itself."[43] Following this, one could argue that the racist tropes around Blackness are not only invoked at the woman's tensing of the body, they are also *enacted or accomplished* by them. That is, while the woman's response in Yancy's example, undoubtedly draws on a racist discourse in which Black bodies (and specifically Black male bodies) are constructed as dangerous, rapacious, uncontrolled and so forth, it is also the case that her response *participates* in this discourse by re-inscribing such projections onto the body. Such re-inscription happens not by way of further discursive contribution, but rather through direct bodily movement and gesture. Yancy himself remarks:

> Notice that she need not speak a word (speech-acts are not necessary) to render my Black body 'captive'. She need not scream 'Rape!' She need not call me 'Nigger!' to my face. ...Her nonverbal movements construct me, creating their own socio-ontological effects on my body.[44]

Put differently, it is not just that discursive representations tell women (and in particular white women) that Black men ought to be feared; bodily responses such as these enact the fear, and the Black man *is* feared. Of course this is not to say that the fear is thereby rendered disingenuous – as if sincerity excludes the possibility of racism, or indeed, racism the possibility of sincerity.

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42 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 183. Note however, that Merleau-Ponty does (in his footnotes) allow for distinction between "authentic or originary" speech and "secondary" speech, the former being that which he refers to in this claim.

43 *Ibid*., 190.

44 Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 16.

The point is rather, that discursive representations come into their being through their enactment and embodiment. Indeed the "idea versus enactment" problem itself underscores the very importance of looking to the body and not only to discourse or ideas, when dealing with racism. One may, as Yancy points out, take a critical stance to dominant racist practices and discourses for example, but still find a disjuncture at the level of bodily response and gesture.

> As such, the woman [in] the elevator does not really 'see' me... To begin to see me from a perspective that effectively challenges her racism, however, would involve more than a *cognitive* shift in her perspective. It would involve a continuous effort at performing her body's racialized interactions with the world differently. This additional shift resides at the somatic level as well. After all, she may come to judge her perception of the Black body as epistemologically false, but her racism may still have a hold on her lived body.[45]

By pointing out the cognitive-embodied dissonance, Yancy's analysis opens up a way for us to think more seriously about the role of bodily habit in racism.

Turning then, to the first question posed in relation to Yancy's example of the "Elevator Effect", we should ask: can the woman's response be considered properly habitual, in a Merleau-Pontian sense? Proceeding on the basis of not knowing the woman's particular bodily habits, history, and mode of being in the world – indeed not knowing anyone's – but, knowing the history of racism in its depth, character, and scope, it is possible to speak at a level of generality, about the broad class of gestures associated with those described in Yancy's "Elevator Effect". Of this class of gestures (to Yancy's example we can add: locking car doors, suspicious surveilling, shuffling in one's seat, holding onto one's handbag, pointedly crossing the street, and so forth), can we justifiably consider them habitual? Recall that in the discussion of habit in Part 1, there is an important distinction to be made between habit as repetitive or *habitual* gesture that has "sedimented" (in its narrower sense) in the body, and habit as a more general bodily orientation,

[45] *Ibid.*, 5.

or that to which we are *habituated*. It is this latter conception of habit which I suggest can be useful here. The flinches, the tensing, the moving away, the calling toward, the panic – these are examples of habits insofar as they represent a kind of response that is unthinking and nearby; they are responses that reside within the body schema, such that they become called upon readily and effortlessly in navigating encounters with the racialised "other". They represent a certain bodily *habituation*. Indeed I argue that what often gets called "casual racism" is in fact a misnomer; for while such forms of racism are casual in the sense of "relaxed" or unreflective, they are not casual in the sense of irregular, unexpected, or intermittent. In my view these are better framed as *habitual* (both in the narrower sense of repetitive and broader sense of habituation). Recall that Merleau-Ponty earlier speaks of habit in terms of "the power of responding with a certain type of solution to a certain form of situation."[46] The ease with which such gestures are enacted in response to the racialised other – that is to say, the extent to which such gestures are not anomalous or exceptional in the history of one's body schema – supports the ascription of habit. It is not only that these kinds of responses are *like* habits – they *are* habits, insofar as they reflect a comportment or mode of responding that have sedimented in and been taken up by the body, supported by deeply embedded discourses and histories of racist praxis.

Further following our discussion in Part 1, we might say that such bodily responses are neither conscious in the sense of fully deliberate and considered (indeed, they are often even denied), nor non-conscious in the sense of unmediated bodily reflex[47], but rather sit in the grey region of movement, gesture and response that reflect an acquired orientation in the world – and

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46 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 143.

47 That gestures such as grabbing one's bag are not properly "reflexes" becomes clear when we compare them to neuro-physiological reflexes such as the knee-jerk, which is not cultivated, maintained, or structuring of ancillary behaviours (in the way that racist habits structures other behaviours and actions, such as who we might sit next to on a subway, or who we would take seriously as a job candidate, etc).

in this case, an orientation which is shaped by and enacts racist stereotypes and projections. Racism, on this account, is not only or always consciously enacted, but operates equally – indeed more insidiously – below the level of consciousness. This raises some interesting and difficult questions around responsibility, which we will discuss further at the end of the chapter. To briefly flag the issues now however: given our usual understanding of racism, we come to attribute both responsibility and culpability to the person engaging in overtly racist practices (various jurisdictions for example, have laws in place to punish people engaging in racist acts or speech[48)], and we have little qualm calling a person who engages in such activity, a racist. What of those whose body schemas consist of racist habitual responses and micro-gestures? How do we think through responsibility in this case? I suggest that what the discourse of habit does is complicate how we understand racism, and indeed acts and responsibility more broadly. Further, this complication is an important one: in public discourse we too often see the diffusion of racist controversies with the unsatisfactory defence, "I did not *mean* to offend". This misplaces the meaning and significance of racism to its actor, sidelining the *experiential effect* on the offended person or community, which is endured independently of the actor's intentions, though *not* independently of the world already experienced racially. But in addition to the argument that meanings of gestures are located outside the exclusive control of their actors, habit renders blunt the notion of intention in a second way: by highlighting a register of movement and action that sits below cognitive intention, which nonetheless involves some *acquired* and *maintained* bodily orientation to the racial other. In other words, my reading of habit in its more active voice locates *some* agency to the embodied actor in relation to her habits[49], and this may become clearer as we

[48] For example,. s.18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Australia) makes it an offence "to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people" on the basis of "race, colour or national or ethnic origin".

[49] More forcefully than the discourse around implicit bias, framing this in terms of phenomenological habit goes

move to a discussion of racialised perception. This in turn may open up a space for a discussion on the cultivation of habit as an ethical endeavour, which would enrich current discussions of intention and responsibility in racism. My deployment of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of habit in the context of racism then, is equally aimed at founding a basis upon which we can begin to think about racist practices beyond the terms of active and passive, conscious and unconscious, intentional and unintentional.

Critiques and Responses: On Social Epistemology and Political Hermeneutics

Returning now to Yancy's "Elevator Effect", there remains an important question to work through: Is the ascription of the "racist" tag to the woman's gesture valid? Framed in the terms of our present discussion of habit, given Yancy (and we) cannot speak for this woman's habitual bodily movement and body schema, can he have misread the situation? Or alternatively, even if it may fall within her body schema to respond in such a way in encounters with the Black man, does it necessarily mean that *this* particular instance was therefore an absolute expression of racism? Isn't it possible that Yancy is wrong? The question – which Yancy himself identifies as the one most commonly and eagerly put to him (and this itself is instructive) – has to be yes. But he of course does not deny this. As he outlines, there are several reasons why this encounter resists definition. The first relates to the necessarily hermeneutic nature of the event. Perhaps Yancy has misread the woman's bodily movements, perhaps this is "all inside his head", the objection would go. In all non-verbal communication (and even in verbal communication), there is surely room for misreading and misinterpretation. And related to this, is it possible that Yancy

some way to show how these are modes of being in the world that are not simply nor naïvely acquired, but involve some complicity or complacency on the part of the subject. This will be discussed in the last part of the chapter.

is simply being "oversensitive" and projecting this onto the woman? Given the challenge they pose to the credibility of Yancy's phenomenological reading, these questions require some methodical working-through.

Yancy proceeds first by writing:

> One important objection that might be raised at this juncture is that I have simply misread the white woman's intentions. I have read racism into a situation where it simply does not exist. This objection raises the issue of how it is that Blacks learn to read white gestures, gazes, and other forms of apparently racially benign behaviors. I want to avoid the claim that the white woman's response to me is simply a case of 'direct' observation, as if any other person (even any other Black or white person) need only 'observe' her behavior and will ipso facto come to justifiably believe what I do about her comportment. That is, it is not as if *any* knower can 'see' this and claim, 'Yes, her gesture was racist'.[50]

By positing that the woman's response is not manifestly evident for everyone and anyone to observe, Yancy is claiming that there are specific epistemological conditions under which some things can be perceived. This is compatible with basic phenomenological analyses of the way in which our lived bodily concerns shape how and what we perceive. But if this is the case, then it follows that some groups are better placed – or epistemically privileged – in reading situations such as these. This is because what becomes relevant in such hermeneutic bodily encounters, includes personal history and experience, shared histories and experiences, experience and cognisance of the fundamental role of racism in structuring society, and Yancy will add, *the extent to which the woman's gesture coheres with these*. In his discussion of the "Elevator Effect", it is in this spirit that Yancy identifies African Americans as forming a kind of "epistemological community", whereby they stand in privileged – though this is not to say exclusive[51] – position to

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[50] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 6.

[51] In an important passage, Yancy explains that this epistemological community is not exclusively constituted *only* or *exclusively* by those in the Black community: "It is important to note that Black communities' perceptions are not in principle inaccessible to those not from them. In short, we can communicated the shared experiences, conceptual frameworks, and background assumptions to others if they are open to instruction and willing to take the time to listen. So even if all knowers are not intersubstitutable, it does not mean that non-Black knowers, once suitably instructed, cannot come to learn to cognize in ways that enable them to identify racist behavior

its interpretation. He writes for example:

> So, what is the evidence for my claim that the white woman's behavior in the elevator is racist? Her gestures cohere both with my knowledge of white racism and with past experiences I have had with whites performing racist gestures, and my experience is consistent with the shared experiences of other Blacks, who have a long history of having become adept at recognizing these gestures for purposes of resistance and survival.[52]

And further:

> Not only I but others in my epistemological community have seen white women pull their purses close to them when in our presence. I, and others in my epistemological community, later came to learn that many of those tugs turned out to be based upon racist prejudices. Whats more, the hypothesis that "pulling one's purse under such-and-such circumstances is an expression of racist prejudice' coheres with a number of other facts, for example, the racist portrayals of African Americans in the media...[53]

To take stock for a moment, we should note that there are different threads of coherences here, pulling across different directions. On the one hand we have the coherence of the same experience shared across a community of Black men. That there exist other articles, videos, and popular culture references to the elevator phenomenon partly testifies to this. When I said earlier that Yancy's example was a highly controversial one, I should have actually said that it is a highly controversial example *to some* (primarily whites) – as it is not particularly controversial for Black men, for whom the experience is common place, and what Yancy calls, "a form of commonsense knowledge."[54] I will call this a coherence of *breadth*; the same phenomenon is experienced across a range of people in independent circumstances. Secondly, the interpretation coheres with a range of *other experiences* which reflect similar habitually racist responses to the encounter with the Black man, including the locking of car doors, crossing the street, being

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readily. ...Of course, this line of reasoning also allows for the possibility that even Blacks can disagree about what constitutes a racist form of behavior." *Ibid.*, 9.

52 *Ibid.,* 7.

53 *Ibid.,* 7-8.

54 Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 7.

followed by security guards in malls (a phenomenon known as "shopping while Black"[55]), or even at the more extreme end, the immediate perception of threat by Black bodies as played out in the cases of Rodney King and Trayvon Martin. This is a coherence of *kind*; Yancy's reading of the "Elevator Effect" coheres with other personal experiences which fall into the same *kind* of phenomenon. Note that there is also breadth at play here – it is well documented that other Black men routinely experience these different bodily responses. Thirdly, as Yancy indicates above, the reading of the "Elevator Effect" coheres with the history of racist practices and representations of Black people, and in particular Black men, embedded in public life, discourse, and imagination. I will call this final one a coherence of *depth*; where responses such as the bodily tensing and handbag-grabbing cohere with the weight of historical practices and systematisation of racism.

Still, even while Yancy may have justifiable grounds for his reading, based partly on his shared epistemic privilege, is it not still possible that he is wrong, either because he is "oversensitive" to the possibility of racism, or because he has interpreted *this* woman's bodily responses incorrectly? Maybe she is of nervous constitution, maybe she has a history with sexual violence, maybe she is just having a bad day? To these again, the answer is yes – however, not without qualification. In the first instance, it may well be the case that by virtue of one's epistemic privilege as a Black man, or as a person of colour more generally, that one is inclined to read racism into situations where they don't exist. This is a frequent accusation leveraged against people of colour when they call racism where it is not perceived by others. However we can once again point to concordance with phenomenological and gestalt accounts of perception (which we consider further below), whereby one's experiences, framework, and embodied concerns play an active role in shaping one's perceptions. Thus insofar as this supports the charge

[55] *Ibid.*, 67 and "Barneys And Macy's Racial Discrimination Cases Stir Talk Of 'Shopping While Black'", *Huffington Post*, 31 October 2013.

of oversensitivity, at the same time it *also* supports the claim of epistemic privilege. This in turn prompts us to question whether the charge of oversensitivity in fact belies an epistemological ignorance on the part of the skeptic.[56] Further, as Yancy points out, the matter is complicated by a question of political exigency:

> Whiteness theorist Christine Sleeter notes that 'what white students often find it more difficult to understand is that generally people of color know that they may over-interpret race, but can't afford not to because most of the time the interpretation is correct'. I would add that it could also prove fatal for people of color to respond to each situation as if it were sui generis.[57]

That is, there exists a political exigency to the perceptual disposition of being "on guard" against racism, for those who bear the weight of it of most acutely, for those who are most at risk of being disadvantaged, discriminated, harmed, or endangered by it. The weight of this threat cannot be overstated. As Yancy writes, with reference to Rodney King, "On any given late evening, I *know* that white police officers might kill me as I reach for identifying information."[58] Note that in contrast, because of their comparatively protected positions, the consequences of white people under-interpreting racism are not as grave; at most they are proved wrong, which may occasion self-reflection. This disparity does not itself mean that all judgments of racism will always be correctly identified by people of colour, but it does dispel the notion that there is an "epistemological level playing field" in which the stakes are equally distributed among those who do and don't bear the brunt of racism. Given this reality of racism, insofar as we can speak of a "heightened sensitivity" in the perception of racism, it is a sensitivity which is politically intelligible and defensible. Or to put the point differently, the processes of hermeneutic interpretation are not only *informed by* social, historical, and political horizons, but they also

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[56] The question of epistemological ignorance and racism is richly explored in: eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

[57] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 11.

[58] *Ibid.*, 25.

participate in actively constituted social and political fields, and thus can themselves serve as tools or coping strategies within these fields. For our present purposes then, given we can never be so intimately acquainted with each person's habitual body and orientation to evidentially justify the claim of habitual racism (even if such a thing were possible), it is enough to note the epistemic privilege and political exigencies of those racialised bodies at the coalface of such encounters.

Finally, granting even despite all of this, that Yancy is wrong about the claim of racism in gesture – and this remains a distinct possibility – the case of being wrong in a particular instance does not in itself invalidate the epistemological frameworks in place supporting the judgment. As Yancy writes, "Being incorrect or highlighting exceptions to acts of racism does not unseat claims regarding racist patters and proclivities, since being incorrect or having exceptions are compatible with such racist patterns and proclivities."[59] For example the question of gender is an important one to consider here, although one that I can only address summarily here. Following Young's analysis considered earlier, we can speak of a habitual bodily comportment specific to women in patriarchal societies, which *do* cohere with some though not all of Yancy's descriptions of the white woman in the elevator. Young for example notes that women and girls tend to hold themselves closer to their bodies, in an inward direction. Moreover, it remains a real possibility that past experiences with sexual violence, or even what Susan Brison in *Aftermath* calls "prememories (of one's own future rape)"[60], can provide some explanation of the woman's comportment. These ought to be taken seriously, if we also take seriously the claim that social

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[59] *Ibid.*, 11.

[60] This is the idea that women and girls in societies rife with gendered violence are "primed" to anticipate our own rape: "Postmemories (of other women's rapes) are transmuted into prememories (of one's own future rape) through early and ongoing socialization of girls and women, and both inflect the actual experiences and moments of rape survivors." Susan J.H. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 87.

situation bears itself out on the level of bodily posture and comportment. However taking them seriously does not, on the other hand, discount Yancy's interpretive framework, but rather complicates it.

> Critical pedagogy theorist Audrey Thompson points out that if the white male student's objective in the counter-reading is to use complexity to make the problem of racism disappear, then this is an invalid use of complexity. She also notes, and I agree, that what is interesting is that whites may worry about whether someone is being obnoxious, having a bad day, and so on, but they don't worry about racism when it comes to how they are addressed.[61]

Two important points are addressed here: first, that questions of gender don't render ineffective Yancy's interpretation but rather demand more nuance. A woman with an experience (or "prememory") of sexual violence may respond *both* to the bodily presence of *a* man, *and* to the racialised presence of *this Black* man; one does not discount the other, but may even potentiate the other. Further, Thompson's second point, which is corroborated in Yancy's own anecdotal evidence concerning the reception of his work at lectures, questions the motivations behind the haste to find exceptions to explain away the possibility of racism when a more reasonable starting position, in a climate of systematic racism, would be to first assume it.

Habitual Perception of the "Racialised Other"

Having considered at some length, the way in which racist gestures and responses can become inscribed on the level of the body schema through habits and habituated bodily orientation, along with the difficulties entailed in such a claim, I propose now to turn to more specifically to embodied racism in the form of habitual perception. The question here becomes: how does racist practice manifest in the basic level of bodily (and primarily visual) perception? This question is of course, intimately bound up with the preceding analysis of bodily response

[61] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 11.

and gesture, and indeed in some sense it seems logically prior: surely it is in response *to* a racialised perception that certain bodily movements or gestures are invoked? However, as we will glean from the Merleau-Pontian accounts developed by Linda Martín Alcoff and Alia Al-Saji, the rigid insistence of a perception-then-expression logic obscures the way in which our processes of perception are *themselves* developed through embodied and lived experiences. In view of this, I present the following analysis of racialised perception *alongside* the earlier analysis of racist gesture and orientation, as a mosaic-like contribution to the broader investigation into different aspects of bodily racism.

The (Hermeneutic) Visibility of Race

Drawing in part on Merleau-Ponty, in *Visible Identities* Linda Martín Alcoff develops the argument that the perception of race is informed by our perceptual frameworks, themselves learnt and acquired through bodily habit: "Because race works through the domain of the visible, the experience of race is predicated first and foremost on the perception of race, a perception whose specific mode is *a learned ability.* (my emphasis)"[62] One of her claims then, is that contrary to what we might ordinarily assume, race "is the [perceptual] field, rather than that which stands out."[63] That is to say, whereas we usually take race to be the *characteristic* we perceive, Alcoff instead argues that race is in fact operative at the level of our perceptual framework or horizon, and is that *through and against which* we perceive. In earlier passages of the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty offers a corrective classical psychology's version of gestalt perception, arguing that "one's own body is the always implied third term of the figure-

[62] Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 187.
[63] *Ibid.*, 188.

background structure, and each figure appears perspectivally against the double horizon of external space and bodily space."[64] The statement resonates with Alcoff's claims that whereas we might usually consider race as the "figure" perceived against the ground of morphological variation in general, given the significance of racial difference in lived experience, it in fact serves as an organising "structure of contemporary perception"[65], constituting the ground against which we come to perceive particular races (and not others). In other words, the lived body, situated as it is in a racially differentiated world with meanings and signification flowing from this differentiation, supplies race as one of the horizons against which particular races emerge in our perception of others. That is to say, the lived experience of race as meaningful, is what renders it intelligible and perceptible to us in our perceptual schemas.

If this appears to invite a certain circular kind of logic – Alcoff seems to be claiming race as both ground *and* figure – then this is in part, attributable to the nature of Merleau-Ponty's account of perception. Alcoff for example, cites a passage from his preface: "Perception is not a science of the world, nor even an act or a deliberate taking of a stand; it is the background against which all acts stand out and *is thus presupposed by them*" (my emphasis).[66] This last emphasis is important, because whereas its preceding clause falls in line with classical gestalt theory (perception as the interplay between figure and ground), the latter reveals a further important variation on Merleau-Ponty's part. It is not simply that perception consists of this interplay, but in addition, it is *presupposed* by that which stands out. The perception of race is in a certain sense, logically preceded by its own presupposition.

What Alcoff rallies against with this argument is a naturalistic account which uncritically

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64 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 103.
65 Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.
66 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, lxxiv (cited by Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 187).

accepts the "self-evidence" of race and racial difference, and to which phenomenology may itself fall susceptible.[67] That is, in attending to the experience of racialisation, one risks mistaking experience for *explanation*, the result being that perceptible racial differences get chalked down to naturalistic bodily coping mechanisms in response to living among racial diversity. Alcoff writes,

> Against this, I will argue that although racial classification does operate on the basis of perceptual difference, it is also the case that, as Merleau-Ponty argues, perception represents sedimented contextual knowledges. So the process by which human bodies are differentiated and categorized by type is a process *preceded* by group oppression, rather than one that causes and thus 'explains' racism...[68]

Alcoff's phenomenological approach then, partly inherited by Merleau-Ponty but also fortified through her critical analysis of race, can be described as hermeneutic phenomenology – a phenomenology which equally considers how hermeneutic and discursive practices structure our perceptual and expressive horizons. We see also in this (through her reference to the work of Liz Grosz) a Foucaultian lineage, and thus the early indications of one point where phenomenology and Foucaultian genealogy – despite some significant differences – begin to merge into a critical phenomenology.

Despite the reservation, it becomes evident why Alcoff does choose to engage with phenomenology, albeit critically. In arguing that racialised perception is itself already structured by our bodily and lived concerns, and in drawing on Merleau-Ponty's embodied account of perception in this process, Alcoff is able to draw attention to an aspect of racist practice we might otherwise miss, since "perceptual practices involved in racializations are...tacit, almost hidden from view, and thus almost immune from critical reflection."[69] So for example,

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67 Indeed, Alcoff cites this as one reason critical race theorists may be reluctant to engage with phenomenology.
68 Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 184.
69 Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.

> A fear of African Americans or a condescension toward Latinos is seen as simple perception of the real, justified by the nature of things in themselves without the need of an interpretive intermediary of historico-cultural schemas of meaning.[70]

Further, according to Alcoff, the pertinence of phenomenological investigation to racism in particular is underscored by the specific way in which race is especially designated through the visual register more than other sensory registers, and more so than other forms of oppression (sexism, ableism, etc). Regarding the first claim, while commentators such as Eduardo Mendieta have contributed important phenomenological (or what he calls somatological) explorations of racist hatred through other bodily registers[71], I think Alcoff is right when she argues that there is a distinctly privileged relationship between racism and the visual. (I take up this theme further in Chapter 4.) Alcoff argues for example, that although race has been conceptually fluid, with shifting definitions and metrics throughout its history (a claim supported by the more recent genealogical investigations of Ladelle McWhorter[72]), these varied organising schemas have always found their translation through visual bodily markers. "The criteria thought to determine racial identity have ranged from ancestry, experience, self-understanding, to habits and practices, yet these sources are coded through visible inscriptions on the body."[73] And this visual inscription, according to Alcoff, is by no means accidental: "Locating race in the visible thus produces the experience that racial identity is immutable."[74] It also refers us back to the privileged realm of the visible – what she calls an *ocularcentrism* – long established in the

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70 *Ibid.*

71 Eduardo Mendieta, "The Somatology of Xenophobia: Towards a Biopolitical Analysis of Disgust and Hate" (publication forthcoming). See also "The Sound of Race: The Prosody of Affect" in *Radical Philosophy Review* 17(1) (2014): 109-131.

72 Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

73 Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 191.

74 *Ibid.*, 192.

western philosophical and cultural tradition.[75] Given this, phenomenology's attentiveness to the dynamics of visual experience provide some welcome philosophical tools. Alcoff's deployment of Merleau-Ponty's insight into the structure of perception, filtered through an engagement with questions of the social and political, is here put to work in opening up a space for political critique and intervention. One such example of this is the recent analysis of the perception of veiled Muslim women, as examined by Alia Al-Saji.

Racialised Perception of the Muslim Veil

In her article "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", Al-Saji engages in a phenomenological analysis of the French debate in 2009 around proposals to ban the wearing of Muslim veils in government service and spaces. Itself an iteration of earlier debates and the eventual passage of legislation banning *all* "conspicuous" religious signs in 2004, Al-Saji argues that in both cases, the prevailing discourses were grounded in various habitual modes of racialised perception. For example, she argues that one of the bases (although importantly, not the *only* basis) upon which the 2004 law was justified was through the French legal doctrine of *laïcité*, or state secularism. Justified on this ground alone, one could argue that the law applied equally and indiscriminately to signs of *all* religions, indicated by its reluctance to call out the veil in its specificity, but instead referencing any signs that were "*ostensiblement*" religious. However as Al-Saji argues, in both its application and even colloquial naming as "*la loi sur le*

[75] Alcoff herself is critical of this ocularcentrism: "A further danger of an ocularcentric epistemology follows from the fact that vision itself is all too often thought to operate as a *solitary* means to knowledge. Against claims from another, one demands to 'see for oneself,' as if sight is an individual operation that passes judgment on the claims that others make without also always relying on them. By contrast, knowledge based on the auditory sense, some have argued, is inherently dialogic, and encourages us to listen to what the other says, rather than merely confirming their claims or judging how they appear." *Ibid.*, 198. Casey discusses a similar point in a chapter on "The Hegemony of the Gaze" in Edward S. Casey, *The World at a Glance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

foulard" (the headscarf law)[76], this was manifestly untrue. This is in part due to the nature of the historico-cultural schema, to borrow Alcoff's term, operative in the political and legal context of this debate. Al-Saji writes:

> The assumption in most French discourse on *laïcité* is that all religious signs are equally foregrounded, and hence made visible, against a neutral, secular background from which religion is absent (in public schools, administration, government). This is understood to apply as much to crosses as veils. But French secularism was built on a history of Christianity; that it has had to accommodate and coexist with Catholicism has meant, as some commentators argue, that secular public space is not a generalized but a structured absence.[77]

In other words, while *laïcité* was invoked to underscore the neutrality of the law, French cultural, political, and religious history was such that the traces of Christianity and particularly Catholicism[78] remained present though not necessarily "visible", in the structuring of that so-called secular space. Invoking a gestalt-like analysis, Al-Saji therefore argues that the seemingly neutral criterion of "*ostensiblement*" in the law is in fact coded against this historical context:

> This invisible structure of secular space (and time) means that cultural-religious practices are rendered differentially visible when put into coexistence with it. Some attract attention more than others: we may imagine that some signs and practices appear compatible with this space (and hence 'discreet')...and further signs are in conflict and hence 'conspicuous'.[79]

This however, was not the full extent of the story insofar as public discourse leading up to 2004 and the renewed debates in 2009, became centred not around conspicuous religious signs generally, but on the female Muslim veil specifically. Al-Saji thus posits that there was

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[76] Note that even these choice of terms are instructive, as Al-Saji has argued. In contrast to "hijab" or even the common French word *voile* (veil), *foulard* is indicative insofar as it is a generic term referring to a scarf or covering worn around the head or shoulders, that one may take off at whim. This characterisation reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of veil in religious or spiritual practice as something which is ancillary, and which has no role to play in the formation of self-identity, community or kinship relations. Alia Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils: A Philosophical Analysis" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 36(8) (2010), 878.

[77] *Ibid.*, 881.

[78] As Al-Saji notes, some of these "traces" have been removed (though not contradicted), while others (such as shorter Wednesday school days, limited Sunday trading) continue to exist despite the banner of *laïcité*.

[79] Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", 881-882.

something *in particular* about the veil – as distinct from any or all non-Christian signs – that rendered it especially suspect to French lawmakers. The key move which allowed this transition, she contends, was the "inscription of gender oppression as an essential feature of the representation of the Muslim veil," accompanied by a complementary and concurrent assertion of "presumed gender equality of French society (conceived as continuous with and even an outcome of secularism)."[80] It is the intertwining of these two discourses which, according to Al-Saji, render the Muslim veil *immediately* conspicuous and suspect against the secular and egalitarian self-image of French society. Thus as Al-Saji writes,

> Against this complex ground, veiling was doubly adumbrated and came to appear as an over-determined figure – not merely visible in belonging to a different religion but hypervisible as the symbol of gender oppression of that religion.[81]

In this argument, Al-Saji moves beyond the gestalt analysis which reveals the "ground" or perceptual framework according to which we see, to argue that there is also a *pre-determined* seeing of the "figure" that takes place when the veiled Muslim woman is seen *as* a woman oppressed by the faith and practices of Islam. That is to say, it is not only that there is hermeneutic perceptual horizon in operation which determines what and how we see, but this mode of perception has already marked or pre-determined the veiled Muslim woman as the oppressed woman, such that she is *each time* seen in this way. She writes,

> ...the relative intransigence of colonial and contemporary western representations of Muslim women – their surprising immunity to empirical cases and counter-examples – reveals something of the mechanism at play. These representations put Muslim women in positions scripted in advance, where veiling is constituted as the equivalent of *de-subjectification* – a lack of subjectivity, a victimhood or voicelessness, that these images in turn work to enforce.[82]

Our perceptual habits can thus work on these two levels, of ground *and* figure. Following

[80] *Ibid.*, 882.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] *Ibid.,* 877.

Alcoff's analysis of race as supplying the perceptual horizon or "ground" of visual perception, in Al-Saji's analysis we have a complementary claim of particular (and pre-determined) racialised bodies appearing as "figure". As Al-Saji argues, veiled Muslim women are within this schema, seen *as* oppressed regardless of their diverse situations, self-perceptions, practices, or self-understandings. That this is the case is both confirmed by many Muslim women in their first person testimonies, as well as by Muslim women's movements criticising feminist organisations such as Femen for seeking to "liberate" them.[83]

Further, the perception of veiled Muslim women *as* oppressed, according to Al-Saji, reveals at once, both a "more" *and* "less" in habitual perception. First, the racialised seeing in the case of veiled Muslim women is "more" in the sense that her body is laden with attributes, or over-determined, to recall Fanon's term. Indeed, there is an affinity here with Al-Saji's descriptions of the habitual perception of Muslim women, and what Fanon describes as the "absolute density"[84] of black consciousness, a density which is given in the moment of perception, rather than at the moment of recognition.[85] In both cases of the Black man and veiled Muslim woman, their racialised bodies come already loaded with meaning and determination in the moment of visual perception.[86] And this is not limited to these two specific examples, but can

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[83] See for example, articles such as: "Muslim Women Against FEMEN" in *Huffington Post*, 5 April 2013; and "Put Your Shirts Back On: Why Femen Is Wrong", *The Atlantic*, 6 May 2013.

[84] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles L. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 134.

[85] What I mean by the "moment of recognition" is Fanon's distinction between the situation of the Black man and the situation of the Jew, which he argues differ insofar as the Black man is overdetermined in the moment of visual perception. I bring this up only in passing here because I consider this distinction more carefully in Chapter 4. *Ibid*, 115-6.

[86] However, there is a tricky question here: how are anti-Muslim sentiments to be understood in relation to racist sentiments more generally? Al-Saji argues for example, that they fall under the umbrella of what she calls "cultural racism", the qualification referring to the fact that Muslims do not of course, come from one "race" (difficult though it may be to pinpoint what we might mean by "race"), but rather span across racial, spiritual, cultural, familial, etc communities. But it remains a type of, or continuous with, racism insofar as Islam is most strikingly identified with Arabic peoples, defined mostly in racial terms. (That is, white converts are not the image of the Muslim man or woman in the popular imagination.) The question thus bears a complex relation to Fanon's quote: does the experience veiled Muslim woman (who might present any range of ethnic, racial, and morphological features, more closely resemble the Jew – herself religiously rather than racially constituted – or

be extended to the varied experiences of racialisation more generally; consider for example, the way Black women are habitually perceived as sexually available, Asian women submissive, Latino men uneducated labourers, and so forth.[87] Such wealth of personages, coded onto the bodies of differently racialised people, lead us to an important point: in the process of racialised perception analysed by Al-Saji (following Alcoff and Fanon), what is also revealed is a point of convergence between representation and phenomenon. That is to say, if Husserl's phenomenology returns us "*to the things themselves*", then what the analysis of racialised perception shows us is that these "things" are not simply "themselves" but are already shaped by, and participate in, discursive practices. In other words, the appearing of a thing and its perception do not occur in some phenomenologically "pure" way, but rather they are already informed by, and indeed can be put in service of, discursive representations. Thus when Fanon writes that he is "a slave not of the 'idea' that others have or me but of my own appearance" in order in draw a contrast between the Black man and the Jew (a distinction we will consider more carefully in Chapter 4), he is right to draw attention to the visual givenness of the Black body and the seemingly immutable inscription of race onto its epidermal layer. However as I would argue, it is also the case that the appearance of his Black body solicits such determination precisely *because* it is already supported by a long history of construction as inferior, savage, and so forth – in

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the Black, given the iconic visual status of the Muslim veil (whether the *hijab*, *burqa*, or *niqãb*) in post 9/11 society.

87 Indeed, in looking at racism at any level (structural, corporeal) I argue that it is important to move beyond Black/white binaries which have to a large extent (and not without good reason) dominated the way we think about racism. This is important in two reasons: (1) to give voice to the varied and equally important experiences of racism beyond the Black experience; and (2) to ask after other modes of racism that are not necessarily tied up with responses of *fear*, and thus harder still to "catch". Both speak to the fluidity of racism, in its target and in its forms, and these in themselves reflect back to us the highly complex and contextualised nature of racism. Further, I argue that we ought not assume that any and all expressions of racism move from white to "other", which a white-Black model of racism tends to inscribe. It is of course the case that racism exists *between* differently racialised peoples, although this itself is further complicated by how whiteness remains an organising schema in interracial relations (e.g. how the relation between Asians and Blacks are in part framed by hegemonic white conceptions of both, i.e., Asians as quiet/submissive, Blacks as dangerous, etc).

other words, the *idea* of the Black. I contend therefore that the distinction between the "idea" (or representation) and "appearance" which Fanon seeks to draw is somewhat overstated, insofar as his appearance is one that is *already* discursive (and representationally) constituted.

But as Al-Saji also argues, racialised perception is at the same time, marked by seeing "less", evident in this case, in the way veiled Muslim women were effectively excluded from the French public debate, and from the possibility of being taken seriously as rational interlocutors or actors.

> Racializing vision is *less* in that the responsivity and affectivity of vision are circumscribed – the openness of vision to other ways of being, which may destabilize or shatter its perceptual schemata, delimited. The dynamic ability of vision to change is partially closed down. Racialized bodies are not only seen as naturally inferior, they *cannot be seen as otherwise*. The veiled body is not merely seen as oppressed, but cannot be seen as a subject who takes up and constitutes itself through that oppression.[88]

The description echoes some of Yancy's own remarks on the simultaneous hypervisibility *and* invisibility of the Black body, where this invisibility stands in for the inability to see the person as they are to themselves or to others.[89] However, couched in terms of an impoverished seeing, with the "dynamic ability of vision" of the seer being "closed down", I think that Al-Saji more suggestively points us to the contours of an *ethical* question on perception. While not fully developed in this article[90], her several references to the disenfranchisement of veiled Muslim women in the context of this debate, amounting to their effective "de-subjectification", draw our attention to the way in which modes of perception – especially where the power distribution is such that this perception frames the terms of public discourse – do have important political

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88 Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", 885.

89 "Trayvon Martin, like so many black boys and men, was under surveillance (etymologically, 'to keep watch'). Little did he know that on Feb. 26, 2012, that he would enter a space of social control and bodily policing, a kind of Benthamian panoptic nightmare that would truncate his being as suspicious; *a space where he was, paradoxically, both invisible and yet hypervisible.*" (my emphasis) George Yancy, "Walking While Black in the 'White Gaze'", *The New York Times*, 1 September 2013.

90 Though I believe such questions are the subject of a present book investigation.

consequences and ethical import. It is not just that veiled Muslim women in this case are *not seen* or invisible, it is that this refusal or impoverished seeing divests them of a self-originating voice in public debate and participation in political life more generally, thus denying them political and ethical agency.[91] And as thinkers such as Levinas and Waldenfels have shown, our openness, receptivity, and responsivity to others as they are (and not as they are *for us*) offers a more meaningful basis upon which an ethical relation with the Other can unfold.[92]

Such connections in turn raise questions about ethics and normativity in relation to phenomenology more generally – something not considered explicitly by Merleau-Ponty, and often overlooked by others in the phenomenological tradition. If, as we see here, habits of perception can on a generous reading, carry harmful unintended consequences in the realm of politics, or less generously, be strategically deployed to maintain oppressive power relations, can we speak of an ethics of perception and bodily disposition? This question, which I argue is especially well illuminated when we consider the way racist practices are inscribed on the bodily register, was in fact already implicitly raised in our earlier consideration of racist habits and habitual dispositions. Given Merleau-Ponty allows that we are intersubjectively constituted in our interactions with the world and with each other, if these modes of interaction (whether through bodily expression or perception) are such that they generate or contribute to a thoroughgoing denial of self, or breakdown of body image and body schema, this opens us to the question of whether there are normatively ideal (or normatively harmful) ways of comporting one's bodily self. This question, which I raise here only in a cursory way, invites a repositioning of Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment in the milieu of Aristotlean ethics, and this I suggest,

[91] One might argue that this serves only to highlight the political and ethical *consequences* of racialised seeing, but I would argue, given that the structure of white supremacy has historically relied on this disempowerment, such a view would be at best naïve.

[92] See for example: Waldenfels, Bernhard, *The Question of the Other* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

can be more fully considered after an analysis of racialised objectification in Chapter 4, and other questions of posture and disposition to be raised in the remainder of this chapter.

Gender in Racialised Perception

Before moving on however, there are two more important points to note from Al-Saji's analysis. First, Al-Saji's account is notable in that it offers us an example of racialised perception which involves an explicitly gendered dimension. Al-Saji's argument is not just that veiled Muslim women are racialised as "other" or "conspicuous" against the purportedly neutral ground of French *laïcité*, it is additionally that veiled Muslim women are racialised specifically as oppressed and agent-less because a gendered (and heteronormative) account is mobilised in this racialised seeing. In laying out this argument, Al-Saji draws on Fanon's account of the French colonial project to "unveil" Algerian women in the 1930s. In his essay, Fanon contrasts the striking difference between the hypervisiblity of veiled women to the colonial male gaze, with her non-visibility to the Algerian man, since "their gaze is trained 'not to perceive the feminine profile'..."[93] That veiled women are assumed oppressed by virtue of their covering up, exposes certain gendered and heteronormative expectations around how much, in what way, *and to whom* one ought to be visible:

> Indeed, generalized perceptions of Muslim women as sexually 'repressed' and passive bodies, hidden behind their veils, are very much products of a western and colonial way of seeing. This phallocentric gaze – what Marilyn Frye has famously called 'arrogant vision' – institutes (western, white) 'woman' as object of male desire, defining her subject-position and the means of recognition available to her relative to that gaze. Representations of veiled women – as sites of sexual repression and gender oppression – are generated by such vision, specifically by a gaze that desires possession of women's bodies and 'wants to see'.[94]

In other words, western patriarchal perceptual schemas which posit women as visual objects for

[93] Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", 886.
[94] *Ibid.*

the male gaze, are also operative in the perception of veiled women as oppressed. Considered from a different vantage point, insofar as the seer (or gaze-holder) is usually understood to occupy a position of relative power in the relation of seer-seen (to be explored in Chapter 4), this would suggest that veiled women – and in particular women more fully veiled, such as those in *niqãb* – actually *occupy* positions of power insofar as they becomes seers but not themselves seen, and insofar as their veiling is what creates and gives meaning and texture to differential social relations. That this is not a prevalent or even a *possible* narrative in the usual discourse, where veiled women are seen as almost exclusively oppressed, suggests that the operative perceptual framework is one which is imbued with patriarchal norms around the visibility of women's body to a certain, male gaze.[95] Al-Saji thus writes,

> Women who continue to veil seem to place themselves beyond (colonial male) recognition. They have no place within this heterosocial and scopic economy. *Not even objects, their ability to return the gaze, to see and to actively make meaning, cannot be imagined within this field*. (my emphasis)[96]

We should take note that the analysis offered here is not *quite* one of intersectionality,

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[95] The argument might at first seem frivolous, but consider how in popular culture and imagination, figures such as the ninja or Australian bushranger, with their *niqãb*-like attire (revealing only the eyes) are in contrast held out as dynamic, creative, safe, and if not powerful then at least occupying some position of power by virtue their being able to see but not be seen. That both characters are most commonly imagined as male is, I would argue, no coincidence. In my view this supports Al-Saji's argument about the colonial male gaze, which demands visual access to women's bodies, but not to men's. As indeed does the Catholic nun's veiling, the habit, which is again non-contentious (even pious) given she is acceptably placed outside the male desiring gaze. This is not to say however, that the circumstances around some Muslim veiling practices – notably, where women are pressured, required, or coerced into wearing the veil, such as in Saudi Arabian society, or other communities – are an irrelevant consideration. These are surely relevant. However the point is that this model of repression – true for some women in some circumstances, but not true for others – is taken to be the case for *all* veiled women, and habitualised patriarchal and colonial modes of perception corroborate this. Thus veiled women's very diverse circumstances and reasons for veiling are not taken seriously. I would argue in addition to this that if the question of force or pressure were truly at the core of the concern around veiled women, then the differential levels of veiling – from *hijab* to *niqãb* – would have no material difference *unless* this were accompanied by a normalising male gaze, since to be partially or fully covered should make little difference if the question is primarily one of "choice" and autonomous decision-making. However given the *niqãb* solicits far more visceral responses than the *hijab* as *the* sign of oppression, this seems to confirm that a patriarchal gaze, and its desire to possess the woman's body as object, is imported into this colonial and/or racialised seeing.

[96] Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", 886-887.

which occupies lively debate in race and gender studies. As Al-Saji has elsewhere argued, intersectionality can be problematic insofar as it can operate on the assumption that there already exist relatively stable axes of race and gender (or any other social identities) which converge or "intersect" when a person falls concurrently within both categories.[97] The problem here is that unless and until this intersection occurs, these axes are otherwise undisturbed by the presence of the other – and the face of the racialised body usually becomes the *male* racialised body, as the face of the woman becomes the *white* woman. Needless to say, such a conceptual framework risks re-inscribing its own hierarchies and further oppressive practices. Perhaps unsurprisingly – given it is women of colour who are the ones traditionally caught out in this model of intersectionality or the failure to even to consider it – Al-Saji's account, which centres around Muslim women, instead advances the idea that gendered schemas are *already* intrinsic to racialised perception. That is, they are not the intersection of two distinct problems, but rather, "continuous":

> Though I argue in the rest of this article (beyond Fanon) that the process by which the veiled Muslim woman is 'othered' in western and colonial perception is double – her racialization being inseparably intertwined with gender – I also maintain that this othering is a form of racism continuous with the racialization that Fanon has described.[98]

The habitual and gendered perception of veiled Muslim women as oppressed serves to support the general racialised perception of Muslim men and Muslim culture (interpellated primarily through the actions of men), *as oppressive*, and thus is in this way continuous with racism.

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[97] Al-Saji writes for example: "Indeed, intersectional theories, in their assumption of preexistent and separate axes of identity that then cumulatively interact, perpetuate the picture of identity that McWhorter criticizes (see p. 15). What I mean to point to here is, rather, an architecture in which dimensions are inseparable because each is articulated and deployed through others (implicitly and by means of historically contingent junctures). It is in this way that I see McWhorter to be cutting across the dilemma of one or many oppressions: one oppression is already many." Alia Al-Saji, "White Normality, or Racism against the Abnormal: Comments on Ladelle McWhorter's Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America", *Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy* 6 (2010): 2.

[98] Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils", 883-884.

With this in mind, if we return to Yancy's example of the dangerous Black man, also recounted by Fanon among others, we see that so too is there already a gendered dimension to these racist perceptions. The narrative there is not simply (or only) that Black *people* are dangerous, but that Black *men* are particularly (though not exclusively) dangerous, and this is an image both constituted and sustained through a complementary construction of the "purity" of the white woman alluded to by Yancy[99], and with its own pitfalls and oppressive practices for white women. Consider for example, the "King Kong" narrative which has long animated popular imagination and periodically re-enlivened in popular culture. Can this be connected to the fact that Black men seldom speak of the purse-clutching practices from Asian, Latina, or Black women, instead calling out almost exclusively of their experiences in relation to white women in this practice? The Black man is constructed as dangerous or "rapacious" specifically in relation to the gendered *and* racialised constructions of the white woman (as opposed to the Black, Asian, or Latina woman). In a similar vein, I would extend Al-Saji's account to argue that it is not just the *same* desiring patriarchal gaze that is imposed in habitual modes of perception toward Muslim women, but rather a specific, racialised gaze which fetishises the "exoticism" of women from the Orient,[100] and which is interrupted by veiling practices. In our analyses of the habitual perceptions of racialised bodies then, there exists always and already an interlaced gendered dimension which, if sometimes under-emphasised, ought not be forgotten, to say nothing of the heteronomative framework which organises these gendered and racialised relations.

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[99] "Rarely do I face the anonymous white woman within the elevator in isolation from an informed history of the mythical purity of white female bodies and the myth of the Black male rapist." Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 8.

[100] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

PART 4 – HABITUAL RACISM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Habitual Perception and Response: Two Recent Cases of Embodied Racism

As I have tried to emphasise throughout the discussion of the different aspects of embodied racism (habitual perception and bodily gesture or orientation), these two threads are not brought together by a relationship of causality, but as interlacing and mutually reinforcing aspects of bodily racism. And while it might be argued that the examples I have discussed so far have involved relatively "benign" or "harmless" forms of racism, a position I would not accede to (they are harmful precisely because they are insidious and seemingly benign), I also argue that the structural operations at work in these analyses can have far more extreme expressions. Here I turn briefly to the recent cases of Jonathan Ferrell and Renisha McBride, which bring together the two sides of habitual perception and bodily response or orientation, while bearing out the gravity of these racialised modes of bodily habituation.

In the early hours of September 14, 2013, a young Black man by the name of Jonathan Ferrell, aged 24, was gunned down by police in a residential North Carolina street.[101] Around 2am that morning, Ferrell was driving home before getting into a serious car crash on a quiet country road; so badly damaged was his car that he had to kick through the rear window in order to escape. Having done that, he then – most likely in a considerable amount of shock, pain, disorientation, and fear – climbed through a thicket of bushes and trees in the dead of the night, to reach a residential street where he sought help at the first house he saw. Sarah McCartney, a young white woman, and mother of a young child sleeping upstairs, answered the door expecting it to be her husband. Upon seeing Ferrell however, she immediately mistook him for an intruder.

[101] This occurred on 14 September 2013. Example articles discussing the event include: Tressie McMillan Cottom, "Jonathan Ferrell Is Dead. Whistling Vivaldi Wouldn't Have Saved Him" in *Slate Magazine*, 20 September 2013.

McCartney called 911 in a state of distress, reporting that a man was banging on her door, trying to break in. Three white police officers arrived, and when Ferrell – unarmed and, it bears repeating, *injured and in need of help* – started moving toward them, one police officer shot him with a taser. Since that did not stop him, another police officer proceeded to fire 12 shots, 10 of which hit Ferrell, shooting him dead. As exceptional an event as this would appear to be, a chillingly similar scene unfolded only six weeks later on November 2 in Detroit, involving a young Black woman named Renisha McBride, aged 19. Like Ferrell, McBride got into a car accident early one morning. In a disoriented state (in her case partly due to intoxication, but also due to shock and possible brain injury), McBride was described by a first witness as having held her head in her bloodied hands, repeatedly stating that she wanted to go home.[102] After wandering off she eventually found her way to the front porch of another house, where in seeking assistance, she was mistaken for an intruder, and shot in the face at close range by a white middle-aged man, Theodore Wafer.[103]

While both cases call for more careful analysis, I raise them briefly here to offer examples of how habitual racialised perceptions – the acquired, sedimented, and *maintained* perceptions – of Blackness as dangerous, threatening, or "thuggish", accompanied by habitual responses of fear, defensiveness, or even dis-empathy, operate across a wide spectrum of racist response and action. That a Black person seeking help or refuge is instantly – though by no means randomly – perceived as violent or threatening, and responded to without hesitation[104] in

[102] This occurred on 2 November 2013. Example articles discussing the event include: "The Killing of Renisha McBride" in *The New Yorker*, 16 November 2013.

[103] "Theodore Wafer Sentenced to 17 Years in Michigan Shooting of Renisha McBride", in *The New York Times*, 3 September 2014.

[104] Indeed, this serves for a case in point for Al-Saji's argument elsewhere on hesitation as a productive interruption of racialising habits. In the chapter Al-Saji is concerned primarily with the habits of racialising vision, but the argument also works for habits of bodily movement and response. Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing" in ed. Emily S. Lee, *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 133-172.

violence, indicates that the problem of habitual racism is not merely some disinterested academic question, but one of profound and urgent import, even if that urgency that can at times become obfuscated or derailed by the slowness and precision of academic inquiry.[105] Further, while both cases resonate strongly with the more recent and heavily criticised fatal police shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and police choking of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, the cases of Ferrell and McBride show us that the problem of habitual and embodied racism lies not only with the police and authorities[106] – although institutional violence against Blacks in the United States is desperately real and chronic – but also with regular citizens in the course of their daily lives. While the Brown and Garner cases generated much heated public debate and scrutiny of practices in the policing of Black bodies (entirely justified, given public power and responsibility vested in police), what Ferrell and McBride's cases remind us is that there is a broader narrative uniting all of these tragic cases, that of the habitual perception of Blacks and bodily responses to them as dangerous, violent, and diminished beings.

While not framed in terms of habit, Judith Butler's reading of the Rodney King beating

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[105] Yancy makes a similar point in relation to philosophical/academic activity more generally, when pitted up against the urgency of racism as a political problem, with real-world and real-time consequences: "Although there are many white antiracists who do fight and will continue to fight against the operations of white power, and while it is true that the regulatory power of whiteness will invariably attempt to undermine such efforts, it is important that white antiracists realize how much is at stake. While antiracist whites take time to get their shit together, a luxury that is a species of privilege, Black bodies and bodies of color continue to suffer, their bodies cry out for the political and existential urgency for the *immediate* undoing of the oppressive operations of whiteness. Here, the very notion of the temporal gets racialized. My point here is that even as whites take the time to theorize the complexity of whiteness, revealing its various modes of resistance to radical transformation, Black bodies continue to endure tremendous pain and suffering. Doing theory in the service of undoing whiteness comes with its own snares and seductions, its own comfort zones, and reinscription of distances. Whites who deploy theory in the service of fighting against white racism must caution against the seduction of white narcissism, the recentering of whiteness, even if it is the object of critical reflection, and, hence, the process of sequestration from real world weeping, suffering, and traumatized Black bodies impacted by the operations of white power. As antiracist whites continue to make mistakes and continue to falter in the face of institutional interpellation and habituated racist reflexes, tomorrow, a Black body will be murdered as it innocently reaches for its wallet. The sheer weight of this reality mocks the patience of theory." Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 229.

[106] Though not "police", we can invoke here also Trayvon Martin's shooting by private security guard, George Zimmerman.

some twenty years ago, which of course is silently recalled in these contemporary cases, shows how pervasive and deeply embedded this hermeneutic and embodied racism is. In her chapter "Endangered/Endangering", Butler argues that such pre-determinations of Blackness are operative not only in the moment of racist violence, but are powerful enough to secure "not guilty" verdicts and editorial vindication long after the "heat" of that moment has faded. She writes:

> What struck me on the morning after the verdict was delivered were reports which reiterated the phantasmic production of 'intention,' the intention inscribed in and read off Rodney King's frozen body on the street, his intention to do harm, to endanger. The video was used as 'evidence' to support the claim that the frozen black male body on the ground receiving blows was himself producing those blows, about to produce them, was himself the imminent threat of a blow and, therefore, was himself responsible for the blows he received. That body thus received those blows in return for the ones it was about to deliver, the blows which were that body in its essential gestures, even as the one gesture that body can be seen to make is to raise its palm outward to stave off the blows against it. According to this racist episteme, he is hit in exchange for the blows he never delivered, but which he is, by virtue of his blackness, always about to deliver.[107]

Resonating with Al-Saji's analysis of the "too late", Butler here describes the way the King's Black male body appeared on the scene already fixed in its meaning, already guilty of the blows he did not deliver. The potency of racialised perception is such that it needs neither time to deliberate nor facts to corroborate. This mode of seeing is, as we noted earlier, "sedimented" in our perceptual habits. And yet as I also flagged in our earlier discussion of habit, I think there are some limits to the characterisation of habit purely in these terms. Where for example, do we locate the ethical moment of responsibility (not to mention the possibility for change) in these acquired habits? In closing out this chapter, I propose revisiting the question of sedimentation in order to see how we might think habit anew.

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[107] Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia" in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 18-19.

Rethinking Sedimentation: The *Holding* of Habits

It is of course true that Merleau-Ponty invokes the motif of sedimentation on several occasions, not only in his reference to the "double moment of sedimentation and spontaneity"[108], but also in his consideration of the practices or behaviours which become in his word (following Bergson), "deposited"[109] in our cultural world. Commentators are therefore right to run with the analogy; habits are sedimentations insofar as they express the past's grounding or anchoring effect on our present and anticipatory bodies. Further, the cases above seem to confirm this; Black bodies are perceived as violent and responded to unreflectively in defence because of the long and fraught histories of racism collected or "sedimented" in the body schema. And yet as I have suggested, the problem in invoking sedimentation is that it tends to point to the passive and inert – both of which obscure the innovative moment in Merleau-Ponty's presentation of habit, and which I argue, further obscure questions of responsibility in the cultivation and persistence of one's bodily habits. This claim however, presumes a meaning for the term which we have not yet sufficiently interrogated.

The term sedimentation is commonly employed in scientific fields such as Geology, where it designates the process in which minerals get deposited on surfaces and which in time, turn into rock. Significantly, this usage already betrays the sense of passivity and inertia we normally attribute to it: materials get *deposited* on a surface (passivity), and once sedimented the materials solidify and remain fixed in their layers and order (inertia).[110] We see similar connections if we look to other domains: the word "sedentary" in our everyday language refers

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[108] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 132.

[109] *Ibid.*, 363. Henri Bergson also uses the term in *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: Allen and Unwin, 1911).

[110] Of course, the rock itself might fracture and the form itself might change, but the particular ordering of the sediment remains always in place.

to inactivity, slowness, even stillness. Think for example, of the contemporary occupational health discourse around the problem of our increasingly *sedentary* work- and life-styles. In Zoology, the term refers to species that are non-migratory and inhabit the same place (sessile animals). If the weight of sedimentation is heavy and unmoving, how then does this square with our earlier descriptions of habit as bodily habituation and *orientation*, and the sense of "I can" embedded within Merleau-Ponty's habitual body? Further, how can we begin to articulate a notion of responsibility for one's habits if their acquisition is mostly passive and inert?

But we should press further. For example, in geological sedimentation, the depositing of materials is passive insofar as surfaces do not solicit them – but they do *receive* them. This entails a measure of material and compositional compatibility such that the new material does not simply "run off" the existing surface. In the way that catching a ball involves receptivity – we open our hands to make the shape of the ball – something similar can be said here: the surface contains a receptivity to the material, with its own edges and formations co-determining which new materials get deposited, and how. If we transpose this to realm of bodily habit, then we could say that the acquisition of new habits depends not only on one's cultural and social milieu, but also on one's own bodily receptivity and compatibility. Sedimentation on this reading, is not *wholly* passive; habits do not just get "deposited" in our bodies. In the habitual response of clutching of one's handbag upon the approach of the Black man for example, does the acquisition of this habit cohere with existing bodily habituations, or does it in fact jar with one's bodily orientation? The question of receptivity thus figures importantly in our consideration of sedimentation and habit.

In addition to this receptivity (as opposed to pure passivity), I want to suggest that habit also entails an *ongoing* activity (as opposed to pure inertia). Note that in Merleau-Ponty's

account, the acquisition and possession of habit is never fully accomplished, but rather undergoes continual reworking and instantiation. The movement is similar to his account of time and thought:

> Likewise, my acquired thoughts are not an absolute acquisition; they feed off my present thought at each moment; they offer me a sense, but this is a sense that I reflect back to them. In fact, the acquisition that is available to us expresses, at each moment, the energy of our present consciousness.[111]

Habit is constantly in play, shaping our movements and responses. The organist sitting down to the different organ does not just "apply" or put to use her habit of organ playing to the new instrument, in settling into its spatiality the habit of organ playing is at once exercised and expanded. As Casey adds,

> The process of sedimentation is ever at work: intentional threads go back and forth between body and its ever-changing phases, which are continually reanimated by current experience. If sedimentation is to be conceived as a precipitation of the past into the present, it is an active precipitation actively maintained.[112]

If sedimentation is to be reanimated in a more active voice as suggested by Casey, then we must return to the term's etymology, which provides us with important cues. Sedimentation's Latin root *sedēre* refers not only "settling" (as invoked by chemical sedimentation), but also to "sitting". This term, heard distinct from "laying" (or layering, as in geological sedimentation), allows a new and more active sense to emerge. Sitting entails an active moment; it involves a *holding* of the body. (And we should note in turn, that the Latin root for habit, *habēre*, can also mean "to hold".) To sit is to remain in one place perhaps, but it is nonetheless to hold or collect one's body in such a way so as to *maintain or keep* this position.[113] This holding is what prevents

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111 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 132.

112 Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty", 214.

113 One could go further to say that such maintaining or keeping is not just active, but intentional. The Chinese martial arts *Wushu* is helpful here: when one *holds* a stance, such as the horse-stance, this is an active endeavour (that the leg muscles begin to shake in resistance after a few short moments is testament to this). This is akin to the active voice in sedimentation. But while a horse stance can be held for the sake of training, it is also more: in

our bodies from collapsing onto the floor in a way that gives us over wholly to the downward plunge of gravity. Moreover, this sense of holding in sitting is closely related to that of posture; note that in German, the verb *haltung* means to retain or hold, while the noun *die Haltung* means posture. In both cases, we hear the resonance of the German *halten*, "to stop", which like sitting, clothes the activity or effort of holding in an appearance of inactivity and inaction.

Habitual movements and orientations, insofar as they continue to participate in the body schema, are *held* in the body in a continuous and ongoing way. This reconceptualisation of habit as being *held* – requiring ongoing maintenance and servicing – is made even clearer when we note that for Merleau-Ponty, habit has a distinctively "lived" dimension: the acquisition of a new habit never fully crosses over the threshold into the acquired, but involves a constant holding or "inhabiting". Speaking here of the body's familiar and habitual motility around the home-space, he writes:

> But this word 'sedimentation' must not trick us: this contracted knowledge is not an inert mass at the foundation of our consciousness. For me, my apartment is not a series of strongly connected images. It only remains around me as my familiar domain if it still *hold* 'in my hands' or 'in my legs' its principal distances and directions, and only if a multitude of intentional threads run out toward it from my body.[114] (my emphasis)

This reference to holding takes up the sense of sitting in sedimentation discussed here. For Merleau-Ponty, habits are *held* rather than possessed; they are both active and continually *activated*.

If this is right then we see that there is an opening within the concept of habit, for a consideration of questions of responsibility. To what extent can one be held responsible for one's

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the context of a form or routine, the stance serves as a foundation for transition, preparing and positioning the body for the next movement or strike. It is significant that in Chinese the word for stance, 步, can also be translated into English as "*step*". Holding is not only active; it enables and prepares us for action and movement.

[114] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 131-2.

habituated bodily orientations or modes of perception when these habits are not merely "sedimented" in the body, but also *held* and *activated*? And in the context of racist habits that bear negatively on the lived experience of racialised bodies (which we will explore further in the next chapter), or as we have seen in this chapter, can even prove fatal for certain bodies, what is the responsibility to continually interrogate, challenge, and rework such habits? This is different though not unrelated to the kind of responsibility Emily Lee discusses in her essay, "Body Movement and Responsibility for a Situation". Although she is there concerned with the questions of the habitual body, her argument in relation to responsibility plays out primarily in the political context of disavowing whiteness as an anti-racist strategy, which she rightly argues, allows whites to avoid responsibility for the historical benefits that continue to accrue to them, regardless of their own intentions.[115] My claim however, is that in addition to responsibility for one's *situation*, one can and ought also to be responsible for one's *bodily habits*, especially insofar as we *hold* habits in the active sense, and to the extent that such habits racially objectify, harm, and oppress others.[116] Racism is not a matter of wilful "intention", as is often claimed in contemporary public discourse, but is deeply embedded in our habitual bodies – however this does not diminish the imperative or responsibility to work on such habits. Rather, what I have tried to uncover throughout this chapter, are new sites of racism and racialisation to which anti-racist efforts must attend.

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[115] Emily S. Lee, "Body Movement and Responsibility for a Situation" in Emily Lee, *Living Alterities*, 245.

[116] This appears to echo aspects of Aristotle's ethical position on the cultivation of good habit, but differs in the sense that I am not arguing for responsibility for one's habits insofar as we are ethically obligated to cultivate virtuous characters, but rather, responsibility insofar as our habits can harm others.

– 2 –

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RACISM AND RACIALISATION

PART 1 – THE BODILY EXPERIENCE OF RACISM AND RACIALISATION

Faire les marchés, or “doing the markets”, is usually one of the weekly delights of Parisian life. Colourful fruit and vegetable stands line the morning boulevards, bursting with the season's freshest, while vendors compete animatedly to passing shoppers. *Madame! Les clementines! Très doux, très doux, très doux... Aaaaallez-y, madame, allez-y! Pas cher, pas cher, pas cher...*

Heavy bags in hand and eyes searching ahead for the stand with Moroccan mandarins (they are the sweetest of them all), when suddenly a loud, booming voice cuts across from the right. *NI HAO! (HELLO!)* My gut sinks. *Ni Hao!* I pretend not to notice, but a lump grows in my throat, my mouth goes dry. *Madame! Ni Hao! NiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoooo*. He's turned it into some screeching “Oriental”-sounding song. This is humiliating.

The voice stops – or gives up – eventually, and I continue along, visibly unaffected to the vendor (*Maybe she didn't hear? Maybe she's not Chinese?*), but my eyes become fixed ahead on nothing in particular, my lips pursed, and my cheeks betray slight signs of the internal fluster. The colour of the market returns to the scene, but this time at a distance. An internal monologue inserts itself between myself and the street. *Dammit. I should have said something. But what? Arghhh. Fuck.*

The frustration is directed toward myself as much as it is to the vendor. After all, this has become a semi-regular occurrence. *I should have been prepared! I should have said something back. I*

work *on racism for god's sake!*

I continue along. The market noise washes over. I walk, but my gait feels hollow, mechanical. *I* feel hollow. *Fuck this. Fuck it all! This guy today, those kids in Belleville, those guys on the park bench at night.* The singularity of this event recalls all the past ones. *The woman who tried to pay me for her Zen Buddhism book at the metro bookstand. The other woman who asked for the price. The man calling out from the bodega in Brooklyn. The one who muttered it under his breath in East Village.* **All those times while travelling**. The list grows longer, I grow more agitated, angry, and distracted, until I blink myself back into the present moment and place. *Enough. This will just put me in a worse mood.* I give a little shake of the head in a feeble effort to expel the nasty feeling. The rage that appeared so quickly more or less quietens down, but I am left with a residual feeling of disappointment. *This again.* I turn around, and head home.

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In Chapter 1 we focused primarily on the question of the *expression* of bodily racism – its manifestation, through habitual bodily gesture and perception. While this was important for revealing the hidden sites and forms of racist praxis, it constitutes only one side of our phenomenological inquiry into racism. In what follows, I turn to a consideration of the *experience* of racism, with a particular emphasis on how those on the "receiving end" of racism come to experience the phenomenon, and their own bodies. In this chapter I continue with a phenomenological analysis of the lived experience of racism, deferring for later chapters a more thematic consideration of racialised embodiment through the conceptual prisms of uncanniness and objectification. And while I am primarily concerned with the lived experience of the racialised body in this chapter, I follow this analysis with a brief consideration of the lived experience of whiteness, both to contrast and to round out the phenomenological account of

racialised embodiment. But first: what is it like to experience oneself as a racialised body? How do those subjected to racism anticipate and respond to it; what kind of body schemas are at play?

"Whistling Vivaldi": Bodily Adjustments and the "Work" of Managing Habitual Racism

In the opening pages of social psychologist Claude Steele's book, *Whistling Vivaldi (and Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us)*, Steele recounts the anecdote which gives rise to the book's novel title. The story comes from *New York Times* writer Brent Staples, speaking of his experience walking through the streets of Chicago's Hyde Park neighbourhood as a young Black man:

> I became an expert in the language of fear. Couples locked arms or reached for each other's hand when they saw me. Some crossed to the other side of the street. People who were carrying on conversations went mute and stared straight ahead, as though avoiding my eyes would save them...
> I'd been a fool. I'd been walking the streets grinning good evening at people who were frightened to death of me. I did violence to them by just being. How had I missed this...
> I tried to be innocuous, but didn't know how... Out of nervousness I began to whistle and discovered I was good at it. My whistle was pure and sweet – and also in tune. On the street at night I whistled popular tunes from the Beatles and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. The tension drained from people's bodies when they heard me. A few even smiled as they passed me in the dark.[1]

Staples' story tracks a common narrative: the way that racialised people manage the experience of bodily racism, or even its anticipation, through the adoption of various gestural, postural, and behavioural strategies. As Steele goes on to write in relation to Staples: "In a single stroke, he made the stereotype about violence-prone African American males less applicable to him personally. He displayed knowledge of white culture, even 'high white culture'."[2] Columnist Tressie McMillan Cottom, who in reporting on Jonathan Ferrell's shooting references Steele's

[1] Claude Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi (and Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us)* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 6.
[2] *Ibid.*, 7.

work, herself testifies to the prevalence of such "whistling Vivaldi" strategies.

> I do not know many black people who do not have some kind of similar coping mechanism. I have been known to wear university-branded clothing when I am shopping for real estate, hopefully drawing on the cultural value of colleges and students to counter any assumptions of me as buyer. A friend straightens her hair when she is job-seeking. Another friend, a Hispanic male, told me that he shaves all his facial hair when entertaining white clients to signal that he is respectable.[3]

Other examples abound: A Bangladeshi Australian friend speaks of his conscious efforts to smile more and speak in a higher, brighter tone of voice in his dealings with white women in bureaucracy; I myself, a Chinese Australian woman, often avert my eyes or effect a brisk and bold stride when walking alone in my Parisian neighbourhood at night, to stave off leering stares or the frequent "Ni Hao!" from groups of young North African men[4]. In the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting and non-indictment of police officer Darren Wilson, comedian Kamau Bell wrote of his predicament as a "B.B.M.", a "big black male":

> Being a B.B.M. is why I smile quickly. It's why I don't usually stand to my full height. I slouch and bend. When acquaintances haven't seen me for awhile, I often hear, "I forgot how tall you are!" I know you did. It's because I'm trying to make you forget. This is what being black in America has done to me, to others like me, and in some sense, even to you.[5]

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3 Tressie McMillan Cottom, "Whistling Vivaldi Won't Save You", *Slate*, 20 September 2013.

4 Such are the complex workings of inter-racial racism: my personal example here is problematic insofar as it *prima facie* appears to enact *precisely* what Yancy is critical of, namely, (white) women's gestural avoidance and suspicion of Black (American) men. While this is troubling to myself as both a person of colour and a race scholar, it also reflects my lived reality of being frequently accosted by North African men (and not white men, at least not in this manner) in this particular neighbourhood *as an Asian woman* (that is, these encounters harbour both sexual and racialised dimensions insofar as they respond to projections onto my body of the "timid Asian woman" stereotype). This tension highlights the complexity of inter-racial relations; for example, how men of colour too, as with any other non-white group, can participate in the racialisation and sexualisation of other women of colour. (And conversely, how non-white groups such as Asians can also harbour racist habits toward Black men.) Note however, that the hegemonic organising schema of white racism is still operative here, even while not involving white people directly, since it is through white hegemonic conceptions of Asian femininity and Black masculinity, and positions of relative disempowerment, that such encounters are filtered. What I mean by the reference to disempowerment is the way in which such inter-racial interactions are partly played out in response to the white racial hierarchy; I observe for example that white French women would not be called out as frequently or in the situations where Asian women were invariably approached by North African men. Further, none of this is to say that white (French) men don't engage in equally or more harmful modes of racialised sexualisation of Asian women; it simply takes a different form.

5 Kamau Bell, "On Being a Black Male, Six Feet Four Inches Tall, in America in 2014", *Vanity Fair*, 26 November 2014.

To some extent, we might say that such strategies reflect the broadly adaptable nature of bodily comportment to social situations, and that we all engage in them from time to time; in order to inspire a certain impression of ourselves, we dress more formally at conferences and job interviews, speak more politely in the course of business or bureaucratic transactions, and so forth. In other words, some of this may be attributed to the unavoidable work of self-presentation in a social economy which trades on image and appearance[6], although this is not to say that there are no racialised dimensions even here. However the examples above point to a different level of bodily adjustment, which extend far beyond what ordinary (read: white) people must attend to when they engage in such activities by virtue of the currency that whiteness brings (respectability, reliability, and so forth). They differ from the general "work" of self-presentation in the way that they respond to and work against existing, invariably negatively valanced determinations of the racialised person, in order to avoid or interrupt habitual, racialised perceptions. This "work" (as I am naming it) is entirely negatively constituted, but in addition, it is also entirely mundane. Whereas we all might comport ourselves differently for a job or bank interview – in other words, for *events* or *occasions* – in the case of Staples' example and my own, this kind of work is operative even during the *non-events* of strolling through a park, walking the streets, or doing the weekly shopping. There are here, two points to consider: first, there exists a certain amount of work which pervades the movement and comportment of racialised bodies in such environments, which ought to be given some further thought. Second, this work can be called upon at almost any time and place, during *non-events*, piercing through the seemingly innocuous moments of daily living and challenging, as I will argue, the Merleau-Pontian version of the habitual body schema.

[6] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

Turning first to the question of work: think of how a body loaded as it is with the work of anticipation and adjustment, ceases to resemble a body at ease with itself, or a body focused and fluid in the execution of its projects, however banal or mundane. Instead, such a body is laden with the work of managing others' racialised anxieties and expectations, a burden that is both one-sided and counter productive.[7] This work is in a sense, reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir's assessment of how women's bodies are tied down and kept busy through societal norms of appearance:

> The woman, on the other hand, knows that when people look at her, they do not distinguish her from her appearance: she is judged, respected, or desired in relation to how she looks. Her clothes were originally meant to doom her to impotence, and they still remain fragile: stockings run; heels wear down; light-colored blouses and dresses get dirty, pleats unpleat... Whether she is a secretary or a student, when she goes home at night, there is always a stocking to mend, a blouse to wash, a skirt to iron.[8]

But whereas the work described by Beauvoir in this passage refers mostly to the ornamentation of the female body,[9] in the examples cited above, we can see how for racialised bodies, this work can operate at a more immediate and intimate level of gesture, timbre and tonality of voice, posture, gait – in other words, on the materiality of the body itself. It is the thickness of the body's medium, with all its expressivity and hermeneutic meaning, that gets worked upon directly; smiles get softened, hair is tamed, postures are closed down. And while these might seem relatively benign points of bodily adjustment, Beauvoir's point is precisely that activities as

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7 This work is one-sided since the responsibility falls on the shoulders of racialised people to anticipate, respond to, and counter the racialised anxieties projected onto them. On the other hand, those from whom the anxieties emerge are not called to "work upon" themselves unless and until their behaviour is pointed out. Thus it is frequently *from* the labour of racialised people that these habitualised forms of racism get called into question and eventually changed; this point is worth noting.

8 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 724.

9 This is not to say that one could not also do a phenomenology of women's bodily comportment with a view to considerations such as tone of voice, posture, movement through space – for indeed some of this has been done to great effect by Young. The point rather is that in Beauvoir's account, there is a level of ornamentation that is distinct from the kind of work that I signal here.

banal as ironing skirts and mending stockings count in our tallying up of the invisible labour undertaken by women in their adherence to, or performance of (Butler's word), societal gender roles. While the performance in relation to racism is less an *adherence* to societal expectations (as is the case with women) and more a *managing* of racist perception and bodily responses, the basic point remains the same; this requires labour. Moreover, a powerful picture emerges when we situate this level of bodily adjustment and work among the broader, more explicit, levels of work involved when encountering (and countering) racism in daily life: the work of calling it out (and when doing so, having to "prove" it), defending oneself and others from it, taking care of oneself and others in the face of it, and combatting it more generally. Once we add to these, the micro level bodily adjustments I have been considering, we begin to make sense of why terms such as "fatigue", "exhaustion", and "stress" are so frequently invoked by people of colour in describing their experience of anti-racist work and living. Indeed, this language of fatigue and exhaustion is instructive insofar as it leads us into another consideration. After all, it is not just the mere facticity of this work which we ought to register – in addition to the overloading of one's system in purely functional terms, we should consider also the *affective* dimension of this labour and stress.

Bodily and Existential Stress in the Experience of Racialisation

More than the bodily "work" gets taken on in the anticipation and management of habitual racism directed to oneself; there is also a correlating experience of stress that often colours such encounters. It is a stress which cuts across several registers, and indeed is not even limited to phenomenological or existential registers. In recent years, researchers in sociology and public health have conducted studies confirming the increased levels of physiological stress

experienced among people of colour experiencing or anticipating racism. Such results have been tracked across cardiovascular indicators (high blood pressure, heart rates)[10] as well as expressions of emotional and psychological stress.[11] In the following section however, we will focus on some of the phenomenological and existential aspects of such stress.

> '*Man, I almost blew you away!*'
> Those were the terrifying words of a white police officer – one of those who policed black bodies in low income areas in North Philadelphia in the late 1970s – who caught sight of me carrying the new telescope my mother had just purchased for me.
> 'I thought you had a weapon,' he said.
> The words made me tremble and pause; I felt the sort of bodily stress and deep existential anguish that no teenager should have to endure.[12]

> *...tiens, un nègre, il fait froid, le nègre tremble, le nègre tremble parce qu'il a froid, le petit garcon tremble parce qu'il a peur du nègre, le nègre tremble de froid, ce froid qui vous tord les os, le beau petit garçon tremble parce qu'il croit que le nègre tremble de rage, le petit garçon blanc se jette dans les bras de sa mère: maman, le nègre va me manger.*[13]
> ...look, a negro, it's cold, the negro trembles, the negro trembles

[10] In an experiment conducted in 2012 in which young Latina subjects were asked to deliver a small speech to a white female peer purportedly holding racial prejudices, it was found that: "Latinas led to believe that their partner was prejudiced against ethnic minorities showed greater blood pressure increases and sympathetic nervous system activation during speech anticipation, and reported more threat-related cognitions and emotions before and after the interaction than did those led to believe their partner was not prejudiced. These findings support the role of vigilance as a stressor in that situational cues can lead to a stress response characterized by heightened physiological arousal and greater self-reported concern." Pamela J. Sawyer et al., "Discrimination and the Stress Response: Psychological and Physiological Consequences of Anticipating Prejudice in Interethnic Interactions", *American Journal of Public Health* 102 (2012): 1024.

[11] In another study involving 32,585 participants, questionnaire responses revealed: "Compared to whites, all racial and ethnic minorities experience greater incidence of both emotional and physical stress from perceived racism. Blacks have the highest rates, with 18.2% experiencing emotional stress symptoms and 9.8% experiencing physical stress symptoms (compared to 3.5% and 1.6% respectively for whites). Also, racial and ethnic minorities experience significantly more days of poor mental and physical health (except Hispanics for physical health). Blacks and those in the ''other race'' category have a notably high number of poor health days compared to whites." Further, Anderson concludes from her data analysis: "Examining the results from the first two binary logic models, we can see that race is related to experiencing emotional and physical stress from racist encounters. First, looking at emotional stress from racism, on which the current literature places more focus, all three race categories when compared to whites have substantial results even when controlling for socioeconomic status, general health status, and mental preoccupation with race. Furthermore, of these three groups, blacks were most likely to experience mental or emotional symptoms from experiences of perceived racism when compared to whites." Kathryn Freeman Anderson, "Diagnosing Discrimination: Stress from Perceived Racism and the Mental and Physical Health Effects", *Sociological Inquiry* 83 (2013): 55-81.

[12] George Yancy, "Walking While Black in the 'White Gaze'".

[13] Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire Masques Blancs* (Paris: Éditions Points, 1952), 91-92.

> because it is cold, the little boy trembles because he is afraid of the negro, the negro trembles from the cold, a cold that twists down into your bones, the handsome young boy trembles because he thinks the negro trembles from rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: mummy, the negro is going to eat me! (my translation)[14]

Yancy's anecdote, the first of the two appearing above, speaks to a kind of stress pertinent to the experience of anti-Black racism: the anguish and terrifying shock of having barely escaped being shot for "walking Black". So too, does Fanon give an account of anxiety and stress upon being publicly singled out for his blackness. The references to "trembling" in both accounts (recurring frequently in Fanon's[15]) are significant in the way that they invoke the profound kind of existential anguish that flood the emotional and psychical (or better: bodily) senses, in the course of such pedestrian encounters. It is not only scientifically quantifiable signs of physiological stress that we can identify then, but also emotional and existential expressions. The language of "tremble" is apt insofar as it lends imagery to the shakenness (and shakiness) of the self, or what had taken to be the self. The racialised body here is not the habitual one – at ease or at rest in its holding of itself – but the one disturbed, destabilised, unsettled. One is shaken, metaphorically and literally; fingers tremble, hearts beat louder, the body breaks out in sweat. These correspond to the feelings of rage and frustration which such encounters provoke. Even in relatively benign and harmless encounters such as the one I relayed at the opening of this chapter

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[14] I note that Markmann translates *nègre* here alternately as "Negro" and "nigger", although he has in other passages stayed with "Negro" (the famous "*Tiens, un nègre!*" for example, appears in his rendering as "Look, a Negro!"). The term *nègre* is a difficult one to translate for various reasons, including the fact that in contemporary French usage it is a deeply offensive and profoundly racist term, approximating "nigger" (although possibly even more offensive still, and without the history of reclamation and re-appropriation which this word has experienced in the USA). However around the time Fanon was writing, the term *nègre* had a much broader usage, although still virulent in many cases of course, and was not used exclusively as a slur (or an intended slur). I have not been able to discern the different senses in the passage, and so have remained with the standard translation of "negro", though accept Markmann's alternation as a viable translation.

[15] Markmann translates *tremble* variously throughout the passage (alternating with "shivering" and "quivering"), opting not to convey the repetition in Fanon's original. I have retained the repeated citations of "trembling" in my translation however, both to reflect the original, but also to bring out more strikingly the connection with Yancy's own description. Fanon, *Peau Noire Masques Blancs*, 92; and trans. Markmann, 114.

(harmless in the sense of bearing no personal or immediate danger, as compared with that recounted by Yancy), there remains a distinctly affective dimension to the experience of racialisation. Racism and racialisation take an emotional toll on those who routinely experience them, and this is distinct from (though not unrelated to) Beauvoir's description of the burden of material "work" in the case of women. There exists in addition, to adopt this terminology, an affective toll and emotional work in the situations of racialised bodies.

But why *existential* stress? Why does the experience or anticipation of racism inspire an anxiety that is so deep that it touches one's existential sense of being an intact self? The threat of imminent danger, as in Yancy's anecdote, may be one reason, but not itself a sufficient one. After all, had he narrowly avoided being hit by a car, he would have felt stressed to be sure – but not in this existential way. I propose that the kind of bodily stress and anguish in question here is one connected to a profound loss of self, or sense of self – hence its existential nature. It signals a moment in the experience of oneself reduced to an object for-other, and the denial of one's experience and identity as a subject for-oneself. There is a profound undoing of the self that gets called out in moments such as these. Of course to say this seems to perhaps assume already too much in terms of a self or subject, and there are problems with this philosophical framework which will be treated in some length in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, the language of stress and anguish as deployed by Yancy and Fanon here, ushers us over to this existential territory, with which we will work for now. In doing so, we can catch a glimpse of how and where the bodily experience of racialisation runs up against some of the limits in Merleau-Ponty's own existential-oriented phenomenology in his early work.

Being One's Body vs Being in Front of (or Before) One's Body

In his examination of the synthesis of the lived body Merleau-Ponty declares, in rebuke to Descartes' mind-body dualism: "I am not in front of my body, I am in my body, or rather *I am my body*." (my emphasis)[16] While the statement is clearly aimed at the Cartesian dualism which has animated much of our western philosophical tradition, it also represents a positive statement of Merleau-Ponty's own phenomenological account of the body. Consistent with our earlier explorations, for Merleau-Ponty there a certain fluidity entailed in the habitual body and its body schema, and this fluidity is explained by the fundamental relation of *being* one's body. In earlier passages of the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty establishes the fundamentally anchoring role of the body in phenomenological experience. Not only does the body supply the perspective and perceptual horizon which forms basis of our engagement with the world, as we saw in the discussion of gestalt perception in Chapter 1, but more profoundly and more simply: the body is *permanently present* for us. This, Merleau-Ponty insists, is no mere factical claim but a metaphysical one, since it is the body's permanent presence that allows other objects (and indeed the world) to appear for us; the body is thus the *condition* of one's phenomenological experience. What distinguishes the lived body from an object then is this permanent presence. Whereas the object "is only an object if it can be moved away and ultimately disappear from my visual field,"[17] the phenomenological body cannot move away from itself, it cannot be severed from itself in such a way as to be taken away, or *put in front of*, itself. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

> To say that my body is always near to me or always there for me is to say that it is never truly in front of me, *that I cannot spread it under my*

[16] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 151. Although it is important to understand that this statements answers directly to the differentiation of body and soul (mapped onto a distinction of object and subject) in Descartes, which Merleau-Ponty there seeks to challenge: "The union of the soul and the body is not established through an arbitrary decree that unites two mutually exclusive terms, one a subject and the other an object." *Ibid.*, 91.

[17] *Ibid.*, 92.

> *gaze,* that it remains on the margins of all of my perceptions, and that it is *with* me. (my emphasis)[18]

In this account, it makes sense that the habitual body is marked with a fluidity and ease, since the body is co-extensive and co-present with itself, never wholly absent nor fully visible before itself.

However while Merleau-Ponty's account appears to provide a basis for embodied experience, the description also sits jarringly with our many descriptions of racialised embodiment. In my opening account of grocery shopping at the weekly markets in Paris, the experience of being racially called out in such a spontaneous (and public) manner serves precisely to put my body in front of itself, to spread it under my gaze and place it on display along with the other produce for sale. Heads look up from sorting through potatoes or carrots and follow the vendor's voice until their eyes settle on my Asian body. My body is not, in that moment, in the "margins of my perception" as Merleau-Ponty writes above, but visually foregrounded, both for myself and for others. This experience is corroborated by the various other accounts we have considered throughout this dissertation. Yancy's passage excerpted above, is drawn from an article where he describes the experience of "walking while Black". The phrase strikes an initial discord, since who, least of all a young boy caught up in the excitement of carrying a new telescope, would think of themselves while walking down a street, as "raced"? But in the moment of confrontation, the young Yancy comes to realise that that is precisely what he has been all along, to the police officer's normalising white gaze. His "walking while Black" incorporates this third-person perspective into his own bodily experience of walking. In the moment of having escaped being "blown away" because his Blackness ascribed to him the default position of "dangerous", Yancy's body *is* spread under his own gaze, and he is not simply

[18] *Ibid.*, 93.

his body (prompting us to hear alternate emphases of Merleau-Ponty's statement, "I am my body" / "I *am* my body" / "I am *my* body"). Merleau-Ponty's analyses start from the experience of *le corps propre* or "one's *own* body", always supposing that the body experienced is the one *proper to* the self.

A more traumatic account still of this "not being one's body" comes in the form of a vicious rape case perpetrated in the western suburbs of Melbourne in May 2013. There, two white middle-aged men, friends Matthew Brooke and Andrew Morris, smashed their way into a house at 2.45am, having decided that it "would be fun" to rape someone. The two Asian women victims – a mother and daughter, who were targeted because Brooke "hated Asians" – were forcibly bound, drugged, and then repeatedly raped by over the course of two hours.[19] In their victim impact statements to the court, the daughter (who was so traumatised it took her five days to complete her initial police statement), recounted:

> I was happy in my own skin, in my own body. After what happened all that has changed...I am no longer confident in my own body.
> When I look at myself in the mirror, I see what the men see. It is a disgusting feeling. It makes me feel dirty.[20]

In a meaningful sense she is no longer *in* her body and no longer *is* her body, because of the way it was so violently and cruelly stripped away from her. This sense of bodily dispossession is a narrative common to the experience of survivors of rape, as Susan Brison shows in *Aftermath*, and speaks to the way trauma (whether in the form of racist and sexual violence, or otherwise) can throw out this phenomenological synchronicity of the body Merleau-Ponty describes. In her statement the daughter, whose own upbringing in Australia has armed her with the coping mechanisms to fend off more pedestrian forms of racism, articulates how the attack had shaken

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[19] "Men who thought rape would be 'fun' attacked mother and daughter, court told", *The Age*, 15 September 2014; "Rapists jailed for 'vicious, callous and cowardly' attack on mother and daughter", *The Age*, 19 December 2014.

[20] *Ibid.*

her inner being, her deeper sense of self:

> during the attack on my mum and myself it had impacted on me on a more personal level... it was not just my race and culture, but my self worth as a woman and as a person was affected.[21]

The sexual violence, perpetrated against her not only as an Asian but as an Asian *woman*, struck at the core of her felt personhood. While on the extreme end of the spectrum of racial and sexual violence, these women's experiences show how such violence can profoundly disturb and shake up the seamless experience of one's own body.

We might then, in light of these varied but powerful reflections, start to question how Merleau-Ponty's account of the habitual body, while offering a useful framework from which to analyse how racist *practices* can become inscribed in bodies, at the same time fails to account for how one's body is *experienced* in the case of those who are at the receiving end of such practices. For example, in our earlier consideration of how certain racialised perceptions can become habituated in the body, there is an important counter narrative tracking what this experience entails for those who find themselves at the receiving end of such perceptual practices. In Al-Saji's and Yancy's accounts of the hypervisibility entailed in racialisation, the racialised body is that which is seen, and moreover, seen-*as* a series of pre-scripted or pre-determined possibilities. These echo Fanon's reflections on his own hypervisibility in the midst of everyday living: "I cannot go a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. The people in the theater are watching me, examining me, waiting for me."[22] But this visibility or hypervisibilty also holds a phenomenological significance: a body which goes from seeing to seen, from invisible (to itself) to hypervisible (to others), edges toward the threshold of what an early Merleau-Ponty wants to reserve exclusively for objects. The racialised body, on these various accounts, seems to cross

[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 140.

over from subject to object.

Merleau-Ponty's insistence on a subject-object distinction in this early work is in part based on the question of perspective. Unlike the body, an object is "in front of us because it is observable, which is to say, situated at our fingertips or at the end of our gaze...".[23] Read against this, his claim that we are not in front of our bodies therefore serves to ground the fundamental position that we, as living bodies [*corps vivants*] are not objects, but rather subjects. But of course this is what Fanon directly challenges, when he comes to describe his experience of himself as an object. His Black body, always seen and *seen-as*, starts to drown out his own experience as a breathing, seeing, and living body. Further, it is not just that his body comes pre-loaded with meaning, it is that this perspective is also imposed upon him: at the cinema *he waits for himself*, his "distorted and recoloured" body is given back to *him*[24]. Fanon is not just seen; he experiences himself being seen, anticipates himself being seen, and finally, *sees* himself being seen. This is what he sometimes calls, borrowing from Sartre in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (and echoing also W.E.B. Du Bois), double consciousness.[25] What then, when we find our own bodies at the end of a gaze – not only the gaze of the other (although this alone is significant), but owing to its hegemonic force, a gaze which gets incorporated into our own seeing, displacing the seeing, perceiving, and moving of the habitual self? Do we become a kind of object? Fanon thinks so:

> I came into the world imbued with the will to find a 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.[26]

The language of "object" becomes problematic for the later Merleau-Ponty, and so this is

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[23] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 92.
[24] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 113.
[25] Although Fanon sometimes calls it a "triple-consciousness".
[26] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 109.

something I give only cursory consideration here, deferring a more thorough and nuanced treatment for Chapter 4. The point at present however, is that the account of the habitual body which undergirds Merleau-Ponty's thinking does not satisfactorily account for experiences such as those recounted by Fanon. Racialised bodies frequently *do* find themselves in front of their bodies, through the specific function of visibility in racism.

Being in front of one's body has a distinct spatial sense, whether it is through the imposed distance of a subject-object relation, or through the distance imposed by a hypervisible experience of the self (captured nicely in the locutions, "to be spread *under* one's gaze" and "at the *end* of the gaze"). This spatial distance with oneself can translate to a kind of inhibited or self-conscious being and moving in the body, as explored by Young in relation to feminine bodily motility as discussed in Chapter 1. There, the lived contradiction of at once being subject *and* object, of experiencing one's bodily motility in terms of both an "I can" *and* "I cannot", corresponded to the impoverished bodily movements observed in young girls and their integration of extended space into their bodily space. Of course, there is a specificity to the case of female bodily comportment and the movement through space that does not necessarily translate here.[27] Nonetheless, the central point remains: the visibility of racialised bodies, marked always in advance through skin colour, phenotypes, "cultural or religious dress" (e.g. hijab), and so forth, means that one's own body is always experienced with a special kind of distance.

This is a distance that inserts itself not only in the relation of body image and body schema, but in the coming together of the body schema itself.[28] The body schema, as we saw in

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[27] Consider for example, Young's discussion of the gendered dimensions of "play" at work in the care/socialisation of young children, specifically, the sedentary nature of girls' play as opposed to boys'.

[28] There is a fair amount of ambiguity around the use of these two terms, stemming partly from their different use by different philosophers. Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole in their essay, "Body Image and Body Schema" present a helpful way to distinguish the two: "In contrast to the reflective intentionality of the body image, a *body schema* involves a system of motor capacities, abilities, and habits that enable movement and the

Chapter 1, functions in Merleau-Ponty's account in the manner of a "unique law" of the body, co-ordinating and constituting bodily experience[29]. It is the layer that collects together bodily habits, dispositions, and motor capacities to support bodily movement. There is then, a sense of fluidity and co-ordinated effort in the body schema, a "spatial and temporal unity"[30], that becomes fragmented in the experience of racialisation. Insofar as the body schema is that which co-ordinates and supports intentional (or conscious) bodily activity, the experience of racism and racialisation intrudes into this co-ordination, straining the fluidity of the experience of the body. Yancy for example, writes in relation to anti-Black racism:

> With white gazes everywhere waiting to put you in your place, you begin to move in this world slowly, as if dragging the weight of an unsought burden. It is a form of motility that takes effort. ...Within an anti-black world, effortless grace is precluded.[31]

In part this is because the subject-object distinction starts to break down: unlike Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body, racialisation entails the experience of oneself from "this side" *and* "that side". While for some (including Fanon at times) this has been translated into the language of "objectification", a notion which Merleau-Ponty himself revises in his later work, I argue that the situation is more complex. The sense of being "in front" of oneself does not quite

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maintenance of posture. The body schema is not a perception, a belief, or an attitude. Rather, it is a system of motor and postural functions that operate below the level of self-referential intentionality, although such functions can enter into and support intentional activity." (p.132) So, intentionality and consciousness, for them, seem to be the key distinguishing markers, although they also do admit that "the conceptual distinction should not imply that on the behavioral level the image and schema are unconnected or that they do not sometimes affect one another." Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole, "Body Image and Body Schema in a Deafferented Subject" in Donn Welton (ed.), *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 131.

29 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 101-102.

30 *Ibid.*, 102.

31 George Yancy, "Trayvon Martin: When Effortless Grace is Sacrificed on the Altar of the Image", in George Yancy and Janine Jones (eds.), *Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 239. The sense of "slowness" and "heaviness" is also captured in Fanon's reflection: "I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*." in *Black Skin White Masks*, 116.

amount to a *dis*-placement of the self in its fullest sense, but rather a spatial fragmentation, in which one is both here *and* there, and with a perspective so constituted. It is not that one is simply taken away or separated from a "real" or "genuine" self (even if we are taken away from the self that we recognise), but rather as a racialised body, one stands in multiple relations to and perspectives upon the self, in a way that disrupts the spatial cohesion of the body schema.[32] In the specific case of Black male bodies, where the hypervisibility is usually bound with associations of danger and violence, their bodily sense of spatiality can come to reflect such fragmentation. Of the elevator example, Yancy writes:

> My movements become and remain stilted. I dare not move suddenly. The apparent racial neutrality of the space within the elevator (when I am standing alone) has become an axiological plenum, one filled with white normativity. As Shannon Sullivan would say, I no longer inhabit the space of the elevator 'as a corporeal entitlement to spatiality'. I feel trapped. I no longer feel bodily expansiveness within the elevator, but corporeally constrained, limited. I now begin to calculate, paying almost neurotic attention to my body movements, making sure that this 'Black object,' what now feels like an appendage, a weight, is not too close, not too tall, not too threatening. [33]

But there exists in addition to this spatial register, an important temporal dimension to the experience of racialisation. For as much as we can speak of being "in front" (*devant*) of our bodies, we can also speak of being "before" (*avant*) our bodies. What might this mean? In Al-

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[32] This argument was explored, in some part, by Iris Marion Young in her account of inhibited feminine bodily motility in patriarchal society. There, the lived contradiction of at once being subject *and* object, of experiencing one's bodily motility in terms of both an "I can" *and* "I cannot", corresponded to the impoverished bodily movements observed in young girls and their integration of extended space into their bodily space. It is also explored more fully in her essay on pregnant embodiment.

[33] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 15. This sense of fragmentation and hyper-attentiveness to one's bodily movement registered in Yancy's quote is also reflected in Kamau Bell's descriptions of a late night visit to the convenience store: "So, as I walked in the store I had to take some precautionary action. For starters, I took the hood down. I took it down even though my afro had become a flat-fro from being squashed underneath. I didn't touch anything that I wasn't absolutely sure I was going to buy. (Just like my mom had taught me.) I kept my hands out of my pockets with palms clearly visible so the clerk behind the counter could easily see that I wasn't shoving things in—or maybe more importantly about to pull something out of—my pockets. And as soon as I decided on an It's It ice-cream sandwich, I went directly to the counter and *gingerly* placed my selection down, again keeping my palms visible and only making the movements I needed to get the money out of my wallet." While not addressing the question of spatiality directly, Bell's passage evokes powerfully this sense of bodily and gestural fragmentation. Bell, "On Being a Black Male, Six Feet Four Inches Tall, in America in 2014".

Saji's account of veiled muslim women's being determined in advanced as "oppressed" women, what she describes is the way in which these women are presumed to be known *before* they actually are. They are determined *ahead* of themselves; ahead of what any genuine encounter with them may reveal, and ahead of how they may wish to present themselves. Likewise in my account of walking down Parisian streets, I am determined ahead of myself to be Chinese (and specifically Mandarin-speaking, which I am not), with all that it suggests[34], before I even open my mouth, before my own Australian-accented French has the chance to be heard. In the existentialist terms employed by Fanon and echoed in Yancy, such encounters cohere with the latter's claim that, "From the perspective of whiteness, I am, contrary to the existentialist credo, an essence ('Blackness') that precedes my existence."[35] Here, inverting the existentialist standard, "existence precedes essence", Yancy points to the fact that as racialised people, the experience is never a synchronous coming together of temporal and spatial selves in the manner of a "synthesis" of one's own body, in Merleau-Ponty's term.

To say that the racialised body appears ahead of itself however, can under another formulation be to say that one arrives "too late". That is, depending on which "she" we refer to when we say, "*she* is determined ahead of *herself*", the racialised body is *both* too early *and* too late; she is too early in relation to the determination *in advance* of whom she might reveal herself to be, and too late in relation to that pre-determination. But as Al-Saji shows us in her article, "*Too Late:* Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past", the language of lateness as employed by Fanon, is also useful insofar as it helps us to see how racialised bodies arrive "too late" not

[34] What I mean by this is that the Belleville area of Paris (which borders my Ménilmontant neighbourhood) is a known area for Chinese women's prostitution. Police periodically break prostitution rings in that area, and in the immediate surrounds of the Belleville *métro* on any given day, there are a considerable number of older Chinese women standing around alone or in pairs, in coded dress, presumably soliciting sex work. This by no means explains the entirety of my encounters with racism and racialisation in the area, but it is relevant context.

[35] Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 1.

only in relation to the identities already carved out for them, but also in relation to the possibilities for action and creativity:

> Though Fanon may sometimes be able to take up the structured possibilities already defined, and follow through their realization according to the routes deposited by the other (to the degree that this is permitted a black body in a white world), he does not see them as allowing variation, as being able to be worked out *differently*. The structure of possibility allows repetition but not creation or variation; it is a closed map. This seems ultimately to mean that possibilities are not genuinely felt as *mine*, on Fanon's account...[36]

Being "behind" oneself (as I will alternately call it) is not only a matter of identity and self-presentation, it is also a question of what relation one can take to the world and its others. In addition, the language of lateness allows us to consider the distinct role of the past in structuring racism. As Al-Saji argues, for colonised people history is always made present in the form of a caricatured and closed past. This functions doubly to tether down their bodies to stereotypes and paternalistic justifications of colonialism, while also closing off what is for white people an open relation to the past, in which history gets continually taken up, re-animated, re-interpreted, and even re-written. Whereas white subjectivity is always open-ended and futural, colonised subjectivity is a closed and past project. According to Al-Saji, an important consequence of this, apart from the obvious problem of agency and authorship, is that despite contemporaneous living, there lacks a shared experience of temporality which may found the basis of a more genuine living- and being-with:

> Indeed, this other is always ahead of Fanon, futurally directed so that s/he cannot be caught up with. This positions Fanon as anachronistic; but more importantly it means that the encounter with the other is a missed encounter, that there is no coexistence in a lived present upon which reciprocity could be built.[37]

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[36] Alia Al-Saji, "Too Late: Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past" in *Insights* 6(5) (2013), 8.
[37] *Ibid.*, 8.

Spatio-temporal Fragmentation of the Body Schema, and the "Non-Event" Nature of Racialisation

There is then, in the lived experience of the racialised person, both a spatial and temporal fragmentation at the level of the body schema. That this fragmentation takes place on the level of the body schema is in part, supported spatio-temporal nature of these ruptures, but also by the fact that these ruptures are frequently experienced in the course of *non-events*. (I use the terms "events" and "non-events" here not in any technical or philosophical way, but in the latter case to approximate a sense of "non-occasion" or "non-happening".) In the various examples canvassed above, it is significant to note that many of the racist moments catalysing bodily and existential stress take place in the midst of mundane goings-about, where race is not otherwise at issue: while riding the train (Fanon), walking along a street (Yancy), weekly grocery shopping (myself), and so forth. (Of course racialisation occurs in the course of "events" too: for example, when veiled women enter political debates on the hijab, they are necessarily bound to an identity *as* veiled women, even though the inverse is not true of non-Muslim commentators, who can assume a measure of "impartiality".) Nonetheless, I highlight here the non-event nature of the many other encounters with racism, in order to underscore the way the racialising schema is already present – and indeed *already operative* – on a pre-conscious, pre-reflective level, in situations where race is not already explicitly thematised. As Fanon himself declares, "Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema."[38] That racism and racialisation very often occur in this non-event way means not only that they are enacted on the level of bodily habit and perception, but also that they are experienced on the level of the body schema, whereby each unannounced interruption to daily living once again throws into question, the otherwise

[38] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 111.

unthematised and uncontested sense of one's own body.

What then is the significance of this non-event-ness on the body schema? While I might not experience my body and myself *as* "Asian", or indeed as "anything", when I walk out to buy a baguette in the morning, because of the insidiousness of racialisation, I *do* experience my body as susceptible to such racialisation at any time; personal and collective experience have prepared me for the possibility that my non-white racial identity can be made into an issue (however big or small) at any unexpected, given moment. Such a possibility permanently marks the body schema of a racialised person in several ways. First, the racialised body schema is such that it lacks a stable formulation, or stable *enough* formulation (for this is not to posit the unchanging body schema as the ideal one). Called into question as it is on a regular basis, even in the course of the most banal activities, the racialised body teeters constantly on the brink of dissolution and undoing. *Wait, is* this *what I am? Is this* all *I am? Even in crossing a road am I first "Asian" before all else?* The racialised body schema is permanently and forcibly held open, in view of the regular but unpredictable moments of racialisation. There is no telling, when walking down a street, when someone may yell out "Hey China!", but there is a certainty that this will occur at some point; for one is never *altogether* shocked when it does. Fanon describes this interplay between certainty and uncertainty thus:

> The real world challenged all my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.[39]

What is certain in this equation is racism's reality; the way centuries-deep legacies of racism and colonialism continue to shape and structure even our most cosmopolitan living arrangements.

[39] *Ibid.*, 110-111.

The uncertainty then, pertains to the when, where, and how, i.e., matters of specific occasions – that is, what expression it will take and when. In the face of this, the racialised body schema is one comprised of an inherent instability. As one's claims to oneself are constantly challenged, interrogated, or denied, the body schema is plunged into a state of "certain uncertainty".

This brings us back to earlier questions of existential stress and anguish, as invoked by Fanon but also by Yancy; but to this I would also add, also a kind of perceptual paranoia. In experiencing one's body schema as inherently unsettled or at any moment "unsettleable", the racialised body not only becomes accustomed to, but indeed *anticipates*, these moments of unravelling. When a stranger's eyes widen with curiosity, one might anticipate the opening to "that conversation" ("*Ah oui? Vous venez d'Australie? Mais à l'*origine*?*") Or in the case of a Black man, the gentle ruffle of the shoulder bag at the periphery of one's vision might well recall "that movement again". This is to say, racialised body schemas, by virtue of the common experience of fragmentation, learn to anticipate and be "on guard" for such occurrences. This tracks our earlier discussion of Yancy's "Elevator Effect", where I argued that to the extent that racialised people "over"-identify[40] incidences of racism, this is politically intelligible and defensible. To this I now add: it also makes logical sense if one's experience is knitted together with such encounters. The experience of being constantly marked by others' racialised perceptions and responses becomes incorporated into the body schema such that one comes to anticipate, based on frequent experience, that this identity will once more get called into question. Stripped of a deeper understanding of the experience of racism and racialisation, and its

[40] I say here "over"-identify, because that depends on perspective. It's not at all over-identification if it is logical and defensible. Also, to say that one over-identifies racism implies that we can arrive at a definitive reading of an encounter. Finally, to say one over-identifies racism is always a relative claim, and risks re-inscribing the white perspective as the norm from which to evaluate incidences of racism (which itself re-inscribes racist practices).

influence on the body schema, the so called "over"-identification of racism is often cast as something pathological ("*everything* is always about race for you"), but viewed in light of the realities of racialised embodiment, we can start to better understand why racialised bodies are not only better placed to identify racism, but also more concerned with calling it out. Further, the question of anticipation also draws us back into the discussion of temporality, where in the moment of anticipation and defence, one never quite lives in the present.

In addition to underlining the racialised body schema of fragmentation and instability, there is also the question of bodily adjustment and comportment. If it is the case as discussed earlier, that racialised bodies bear the burden of adjusting bodily gestures, postures, expressions both to anticipate and to fend off, or even to respond to, racialised projections and racist gestures, then this too takes place on the level of the bodily schema in the form of preparation, e.g., in terms of modes of flexibility. Given the often banal nature of racialisation, people who frequently experience these kinds of racialised interventions have to learn to become adept at responding to or anticipating and adjusting bodily comportment in the course of non-events. Even in the case where there is no satisfactory response – as in my case of the weekly Parisian market – there is adjustment in the sense that the body must recollect itself and continue in the face of such interruption. Of course, if what we are talking about here is "coping", then this is the human skill *par excellence*, as thinkers such as Dreyfus (influenced by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) have argued.[41] And indeed, in this sense it is not a skill particular to racialised bodies, but open to all body schemas as an inherent mark of our creativity and spontaneity – and yet there is an important sense in which owing to social and historical practices imposed by oppressive relations (as opposed to the more general human condition of unforeseeability), certain members of

[41] Dreyfus, *What Computers (Still) Can't Do.*

certain groups (such as women, people with visible disabilities) are effectively forced to put these coping skills into practice much more than those whose bodies do not visibly mark them.

The kind of body schema fragmentation we have thus far considered, with its spatio-temporal dimensions, as well as its non-event nature, come together to give us a global sense of how deeply the experience of racialisation penetrates. In particular, they give weight to Fanon's claims about the primacy of the "historico-racial schema" in relation to the development of the "corporeal schema" (which in this instance refers to the narrower sense of body schema as it bears on motor intentionalities). It is not that racialised persons experience these body schema level deviations from an otherwise "normal" body schema, it is rather that these experiences of fragmentation are woven into the development of the whole (including a motor body schema). The larger point here is that *all* social situatedness not only leaves a mark, but also actively shapes the body schema. This point is corroborated by Young's analysis of female bodily motility, where again, it not the case that girls first past through "normal" body schemas before learning how to move like "women", but rather the very development of their body schemas are already shaped by the structuring experience of patriarchal society; the workings of patriarchy help to constitute female body schema. As to the finer question of priority in Fanon's analysis however, in place of his ordering I would propose a more reciprocal relation, echoing the analysis presented in the habitual representation section. That is, much as habitual racialised perceptions are both informed by racist representations while also re-inscribing and thus performing them, so too do the historico-racial schema and the "corporeal schema" (in its narrow sense) have this mutually re-inforcing and re-inscribing interaction. As I would argue, neither one is primordial, but they are both co-constitutive.

Resilience, and the Pathologising of Racialised Bodies

Here I wish to add some remarks on the nature of flexibility and resilience in the face of such bodily fragmentation. A question which comes to mind, given my argument about the body-schema level experience of racialisation, is this: does this mean that racialised people thus experience their bodies in an impoverished or debilitated way? How is the claim of the fragmentation (even dissolution) of the body schema in racialised people's experiences compatible with and justifiable in view of the fact that racialised people *do* live, move, laugh, and love – in other words, do not literally present as fragmented beings in everyday life? Otherwise put, does not the insistence on such fragmentation risk pathologising racialised people and their bodies? There are several responses one could give to such questions. If we follow the accounts offered by Fanon, Yancy, Ahmed, and others, we see that there is a real sense in which the racialised fragmentation and alienation from one's own body is an experience marked by anxiety, stress, and anguish. Fanon's work in particular, explores neuroses induced by the racist colonial experience. We could also cite disproportionate rates of incarceration, mental illness, physical health problems, or general unhappiness to support such claims. In other words, there is a real and non-trivial way in which this body schema fragmentation I have been considering embitters and traumatises the lives of people of colour, and it is important not to wash over or diminish this reality.

On the other hand (keeping in mind the dangers of pathologising such experiences), this is not to say that racialised people do not manage. The claim of body schema fragmentation does not have to mean some kind of utter dissolution of the self. As noted earlier with reference to Dreyfus, the ability to cope in the face of incoherent, unexpected, and even unpleasant experience, is an important quality that gets underplayed in such objections. In particular, if we

look at the history of slavery, colonisation, and other forms of systematic racist practices, such historical narratives are accompanied by stories of resilience, resistance, and creativity. Such stories find their venue in spaces afforded by the arts, political organising, and so forth. The expectation that body schema fragmentation leads always to visible manifestations such as impoverished movement or social interaction then, is to in a way re-inscribe via alternate means, a pathologising of racial otherness. What is important however, is that such measures of coping and resilience do not "gloss over" the nonetheless deep bodily experiences of racism and racialisation, or the effort exerted in managing and responding to them. A balance thus, does need to be struck between doing justice to the very real and justified experiences of anxiety, stress, anguish that manifest in racialised bodies in the context of racist societies, while simultaneously giving recognition to the creativity and resilience of those who find themselves in such situations. Indeed to this end, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is a performative text, both in the way that it lays bare the anxiety he lives through as a black man in colonial France (and the Francophone world), but also as the text *itself* deploys this narrative to great performative and constructive effect. In it, coupled with his insightful phenomenological and psychoanalytic analyses, we see also how racialised people are, in the face of such challenges, able to work through their experiences in order to make meaning of their lives, to make these lives theirs.

Racialised Bodies in Social Spaces and Places

To round out our analysis of the bodily experience of racism and racialisation – which has so far taken us through considerations of the bodily work of managing and responding to racism, the experience of existential stress, and the spatio-temporal fragmentation of the body schema – I propose that we turn briefly to the bodily experience in and of one's social space.

Although I have thus far been concerned with how the racialised body experiences *itself* as a result of racist and racialising practices (which of course, is a function of the racialised body's situatedness in a historico-social world), part of this bodily experience is also a question of how one takes up one's body in relation to the world. How then, does the experience of racism and racialisation bear on the way one relates to her surroundings? How does the racialised body experience not just space (in relation to the body schema), but place? In noting above the way in which racism and racialisation occur often (but not exclusively) in the course of non-events, it is important to note also that so too they most often occur in the course of movement through public places (streets, airports, train-rides, shops). That this is so is, in my opinion, significant. What is it about the racialised body in movement – in occupying and inhabiting shared places – that so offends and incites racism?[42] And what does this say about underlying claims to ownership about social spaces and places, or about the possibility of genuine social and political participation?

In the Northern Territory of Australia lies the city of Darwin, a small, tropical, and remote city, with a long and fraught history of race relations. The city, compared with other cities in Australia, is home to a higher concentration of Aboriginal peoples and, due to its proximity, of Torres Strait and Tiwi Islanders. This, combined with its political status as a federal territory (subject thus to federal jurisdiction), has historically meant that the Aboriginal inhabitants of Darwin have been subject to many controversial government policies, not to mention standard problems of over-policing, endemic poverty, and so forth. From this context comes a personal anecdote by Dawn Adams, of daily life in the "Top End":

[42] I would like here to acknowledge a conversation with David Clinton Wills, which has helped me to formulate my thoughts on this. Racism almost always happens, or at least, seems to congeal around the times when racialised bodies *move* – on the streets, in cars, on the train, etc. This is an interesting phenomenon worthy of further thought; it is when racialised bodies are *on the move* that others' racist sensibilities are most offended.

> Hi, my name is Dawn Adams, I come from Bagot community and I'm one of the strong leaders in Bagot. I'm originally from Tiwi Islands but I moved in Darwin, I've lived here all- nearly all of my life. And one day, like it was about, 10 o'clock, and my daughter wanted to go to the Nightcliff shopping centre. And me and my cousin – yeah she lives here too – were sitting on chairs at Nightcliff when the other two ladies came and I asked them, come and sit down and have a chat and tell us what's happening at home, y'know. And, all of a sudden these two policemen came and didn't even ask us what was happening, they just said "I think...What are you mob doing? I think you mob better move along". And that wasn't really nice y'know because we weren't doing anything wrong, we were just sitting and gossiping and having a chat about home. I haven't seen my relatives for, that many months and, I was just happy to see them and to ask them how was everything back at home on the Tiwi Islands. But to me it was... I find it really... offensive, y'know, the way he was saying 'lot of you'. I don't drink – never drank in my whole life. The way the policeman said- I felt like we were like in South Africa, telling us to move y'know? And all of a sudden I started...ended up being angry within myself... You know we had the right to sit there, in a shopping centre – that's what chairs are built for! ...I don't go out much, I don't like going to the shopping centre, only just go to Woolworths do my shopping and come back home, that's about it. Because I don't like to be told off y'know. And I'm scared of things like that.[43]

Dawn's account is in no way an exceptional occurrence in Darwin (nor indeed in other parts of the world), and yet it offers us a rich snapshot of many of the questions we have been considering here. In many ways, Dawn's account embodies what we have already been discussing so far. In the course of a trip to the local supermarket with her daughter one night, which turns into a casual family catch-up session, Dawn's Aboriginality is made an issue for her as she is evacuated from the pseudo-public space of the shopping centre. Not only do we have here, the habituated racialised perceptions of the police in question (their seeing Dawn and her family *as* a public nuisance and potentially a threat), but we also see Dawn seeing herself through their normative white gaze. Her explanation, "I don't drink – never drank in my whole life" tells us that she immediately understands what is really going on, and how she is being perceived; police need not speak openly or specifically about their habitual perception of

[43] "Radio Diary 4: Dawn's trip to the shopping centre" *The Darwin Radio Diaries*, https://open.abc.net.au/explore/32563 accessed 19 December 2012. Transcribed and used with permission from the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

Aboriginality and drunkenness when they ask her family to move along. In Dawn's narrative we also get a glimpse into what the affective experience is for her, the sense of frustration and anger it evokes.[44] Finally, recall our analysis of temporal fragmentation: as an Aboriginal woman in Australia's Northern Territory, Dawn is weighed down in advance by the tired tropes of Aboriginality and public drunkenness, nuisance, laziness, and her presence, no matter the form, is always too late in relation to those tropes. To recall our earlier analysis, she is both too early and too late; too early insofar as her pre-determination as "drunk/lazy/troublesome" arrives on the scene always ahead of herself, and too late in relation to that pre-determination.

All this, played out in the arena of public space, and indeed shaped by this "publicness" (the "Aboriginality as drunkenness" trope for example, is only a concern insofar as this takes place in public), translates into her bodily relation to such spaces. Racialised bodies such as Dawn's do not lay equal claim to the spaces and places that are intended for social gathering. Bodies which are read as "problematic" are given less access to such social spaces, whether that access is moderated through police (through discriminatory policing), social pressure, or economic means of exclusion (note that Dawn's story happens in a centre for commercial trade[45]). But in addition to this, Dawn's response is also significant. As discussed earlier, there is a way in which racialised people make bodily adjustments to manage racist projections and anticipations. As Yancy writes in relation to the specific case of Black bodies:

> Black bodies in America continue to be reduced to their surfaces and to stereotypes that are constricting and false, that often force those black bodies to move through social spaces in ways that put white people at ease. We fear that our black bodies incite an accusation. [46]

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[44] Dawn speaks mainly of her anger in this account, but in the audio recording (of which this is a transcript) there are clear notes of disappointment and frustration in her voice, in addition to her brief mention of fear.

[45] The point here being that there are significant racial aspects to the distribution of wealth and income too, which in turn affect how racialised bodies engage with different social-commercial spaces. For a compelling analysis of this, see: George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

[46] Yancy, "Walking While Black in the 'White Gaze'".

Staples too, echoes this when he writes "I began to avoid people. I turned out of my way into side streets to spare them the sense that they were being stalked..."[47] But what Dawn's account also brings out for us is the way in which such experiences of racialisation and racism can change one's bodily disposition on the level of *inclination and desire*. In other words, racism can also change what relation one might *want* to take up to one's surrounds, given the experiences one may encounter.

As a result of this and most likely numerous other related incidences, Dawn modifies her own behaviour: "I don't go out much, I don't like going to the shopping centre, only just go to Woolworths do my shopping and come back home, that's about it." Movement through social spaces has for Dawn, been reduced to a question of functionality, endured insofar as she needs to meet the basic requirements of living, but not beyond. Since they are not welcoming places for her, she withdraws from them. Such a response echoes Yancy's observation that in an anti-Black world, "There are places where you learn that you should not go, spaces that you should not traverse."[48] The space of the shopping centre, indeed of most other public places, is not neutral for Dawn, but rather, a valenced space. It is a space in which her body "sticks out", is more carefully *surveillé*, and consequently, a space in which the spatio-temporal fragmentations of the body are more acutely experienced. Given the affective dimension of such experiences, along with the burden and "work" of bodily adjustment, one can understand why Dawn "chooses" to withdraw (although I use the language of "choose" loosely). This is a far cry from Merleau-Ponty's claim that our bodies are not *in* space, but *inhabit it*. Dawn does not inhabit space (and here I include also, social space and place) to the extent that she does not take it up as hers, as a field for being and acting. But insofar as being, and being-with unfolds always in place and

[47] Cited in Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi*, 6.
[48] Yancy, *Pursuing Trayvon*, 239.

among others, this holds broader social, political, and ethical implications. What does this say, for example, about underlying claims to social spaces and places, and the possibility of genuine social and political participation? How does this translate in political and economic fora if racialised bodies do not feel at-ease or at-home in these supposedly shared spaces? These are some of the questions we will explore as we turn to the next chapter on the racialised body and the experience of un-home-liness.

PART 2 – THE BODILY EXPERIENCE OF WHITENESS

But before moving on to that analysis, I think it would be helpful to contrast our foregoing account of racialised embodiment with that of the bodily experience of whiteness. If as I have argued, the lived experience of racialisation is one marked by work, existential stress, and spatio-temporal fragmentation, then what is the lived bodily experience of whiteness? Is white embodiment merely the inversion of racialised embodiment (or the model against which racialised embodiment is inverted, and judged as impoverished)? Even in the field of race studies, the theme of white embodiment is not one very commonly considered. After all, what is there to say? Against the dramatic narratives presented by the likes of Fanon and Du Bois, there appears to be little that is remarkable about the way white bodies move, dwell, and experience their own bodies. But of course this is precisely the point; there is much about the bodily experience of whiteness that is unremarkable because it is not consciously experienced or problematised. And yet, these seldom noticed and remarked-upon bodily movements and sense of lived spatiality speak volumes to the workings of racism and the differential body schemas of racialised and white bodies. In the remaining pages of this chapter then, I take up this question of white embodiment with reference to Shannon Sullivan's work in *Revealing Whiteness: The*

Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege. In particular, I am interested how her description of white embodiment's "ontological expansiveness" presents a striking contrast to our earlier analyses of racialised embodiment. But first, a story.

A New York Story

> On a typically hot and sticky New York summer night, a friend and I emerge from an impromptu yoga class in the East Village. The gentle breeze and open air is a welcome relief on our skins as we meander. Activity is bustling on First Avenue; friendly chatter spills onto the streets, flashing restaurant windows light up the evening with their neon colours, and the odd ambulance whirrs by. We eventually find our way to my friend's bus stop, and I wait with her as we speculate about the kinds of aches we'll surely be waking up to tomorrow. Mid-conversation, we become mildly distracted as a taxi pulls to an unexpected halt, and the driver gets out and rushes around to the passenger's door. Their voices get louder, and the unfolding altercation starts to draw other commuters out of their conversations. The taxi driver – an older South Asian, possibly Pakistani, man – holds onto the passenger's handbag, as the passenger – a young white woman – emerges in physical struggle with him, while the two argue. But before most of us can make sense of the dispute we hear a "*whack*!", and the driver falls to the ground. He gathers himself slowly and crouches on the curbside, rocking gently. His glasses lay on the ground three metres away. The woman stumbles a little but remains standing. As if arousing from a moment's stunned pause, people around us spring into action. Some start reproaching the woman. A white man next to me calls the police. The woman walks over to the driver again – he has her handbag and holds it tight while on the floor – and starts struggling for it to no avail. A few of us intervene, the woman steps back but keeps yelling, and the man responds. It seems she refused to pay her cab fare, and was trying to leave as the driver came over to stop her. With the driver now slumped on the road, there is a temporary reprieve in the argument, but the woman's spirit is by no means dampened: in her pointy-toed stilettos she loudly threatens to walk over and kick him. She can't of course – there are

too many of us who stand ready to stop her – but she is brazen in her posture as she, who I now realise is mildly intoxicated, paces back and forth, demanding her bag. The man on the phone repeats her threat to the police, which she hears and to which replies, "I don't fucking care, *call* the cops. I'll have him [pointing to the driver] fucking deported. He can fucking go back to India." My friend tells her she is being racist, to which the woman answers, "So what? I don't care, he can fucking go home, fffucking Indian." With each expletive she spits out her disdain. The man meanwhile, remains huddled. I bring him some ice from a nearby bodega, which he places on his cheekbone. I sit down and ask him if he is ok and he shows me the light bruising, but replies that he is alright. He looks visibly shaken though, and remains on the ground, shoulders hunched and head turned downward, silent. His posture looks to me to express part defeat, part humiliation. Of course he is quiet. Metres away, the woman continues her barrage of insults and threats, seemingly unfazed by my friend and the other passers-by who try to silence her.

I walk over to my friend, who is looking fiercely ahead. She is pissed off. "I'm not leaving," she says. "I'm staying here till the cops come, and until she gets arrested. She should not get away with this." She continues, "If I spent a night in jail over a subway ticket, she should go to jail for punching a man. But she won't, coz she is white, just you see." My friend, incidentally, is not white. She is a Black woman, who immigrated to the US from Ghana with her family as a child. Several years earlier, she spent a night in jail for having been caught jumping a subway turnstile when she forgot her Metcard – not usually an offence that lands one in jail, but which can if the circumstances are right, as they were for the many other young Black women in jail that night for similarly trivial offences. On this night, the flashing red and blue lights signal the arrival of the NYPD – three cars and six policeman in all. They, incidentally, are all young, male, and white. They start to go about their questioning: a short, but well-built cop looks to be in charge, and he and his partner walk over to question the woman. In the course of recalling the incident the woman starts to cry, insisting that she acted out of fear of the driver: "I'm Italian-American[49], and I come

[49] I find interesting the young woman's allusion to her own Italian-American identity in her narrative. For one, it points to some of the complexities of race, highlighting the changing nature, as well as fluid *and* relative

from a traditional family. Imagine if it was your sister...” The police ignore our loud interjections that it was in fact *she* who was being aggressive towards *him*. But there is a flicker of recognition across a few of their faces that this woman has been drinking. They approach the driver, who has now gotten up, and ask for his licence and permit. They ask to see his face too, but seem unimpressed by the lack of visible marks on his face – at least, not visible in the evening light. Eventually, some of the police start questioning witnesses: “She punched him? How hard? And what did he do?”. Of the ten or so people who have lingered, everyone is vocal and offers a more or less a similar version of events. The police isolate several witnesses to take down official statements, including the man who had placed the 911 call, who expresses his willingness to testify in court, if it comes to that. As the police return to confer with one another, my friend remarks, “She is getting away with it, look. They don't want to arrest her. They're just gonna let her off with a stupid warning.” There is quite a bit of discussion among the policemen, and with some thirty minutes having lapsed since their arrival, it becomes more and more evident that no arrest will eventuate. In fact the police seem increasingly annoyed by our ongoing presence, and try get everyone to move on. A few of the witnesses do. When my friend and I remain, Number One looks at us with a gaze so steady that its meaning is unmistakable. “Do you have a problem?” he asks. “No,” we reply, “we just want to make sure she gets charged. She punched him, threatened to kick him, and called him all sorts of racist things.” His eyes grow rounder and more determined, “We will manage it, ok? So just move along.” She is not getting arrested or charged. Soon, the police start returning to their cars. Number One exchanges some words with the woman, then the driver, before getting into his own vehicle. The driver makes his way back to his taxi with an air of resignation. He sits down, adjusts his rear-view mirror, starts the engine, and drives off to resume his night shift. The young woman gathers her things, wipes away the traces of tears from

boundaries of racism. As scholars such as David Richards have argued, Italian-American identity was formed “under circumstances of injustice based on American racism”. However the in the ever-changing racialising schema, the status of Italian-Americans has shifted significantly, not only with the passage of generational time, but also in response to the perceived threat of new foreigners and more “foreign” foreigners. I believe today most would consider Italian-Americans to be white (including Italian-Americans themselves), even if their ethnic identity remains strong. I note that the experience of Italian Australians has followed a similar, though not identical, trajectory. David A.J. Richards, *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity* (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 181.

face, and starts walking, her silhouette stumbling slightly as she presses forward, and is swallowed up by the New York City night.

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There is much that is both remarkable and unremarkable about this episode. Remarkable, first, because of the very dramatic and public way the events unfolded; in full view of commuters and passersby on a busy East Village night. And particularly remarkable to me was the brazen and confident manner of the young woman, fearing neither the opprobrium of her spectators, nor of the police. Her actions, movements, and bodily disposition were all marked with a fluidity and uncaring ease that I think warrant greater thematisation. That she was comfortable being so openly racist in front of a crowd of mostly (though not exclusively) people of colour, both struck and enraged me. But the event was in other ways, also highly unremarkable. For example, as impossible as it seemed at the time that the young woman would be let off with merely a "talking-to" by the police, it was not, all things considered, altogether surprising. It is a notoriously known phenomenon that in the US (and in many other places around the world) whites are under-policed and under-penalised for infractions that would not be tolerated if their perpetrators were Black or Latino/a. The "Criming While White" social media movement that emerged in the aftermath of the decision not to indict the officer who killed Michael Brown, in which whites populated lists of the numerous and often absurd situations where they were afforded leniency by police officers, reads like a modern-day revision of Peggy McIntosh's "invisible knapsack" of white privilege. That the young white woman suffered no legal consequences on this occasion for having publicly punched a man while mildly intoxicated, having fare evaded, and hurled racist insults, is in the age of "Criming While White", unremarkable (and literally so; there exists *no mark* of this incident recorded against her name).

Finally, the incident is also unremarkable for the machinations of structural racism at play; that an old, South-Asian migrant man found himself in the relatively disempowered position of cab driver (where the work environment – inherently more volatile, dangerous, and low paying, indeed sometimes non-paying – rendered him more vulnerable to altercations such as these) is again unremarkable, as was the relatively empowered position of the young white American citizen (privileged enough to afford drinking and socialising in Manhattan, nice clothes and pointy-toed stilettos, and private transportation). While we have not considered it at length in this dissertation, it is of course true that racism is throughly embedded in socio-economic and class relations, with the trappings of structural racism already at work in the background of incidences such as these. While there is evidently much in this story to discuss in terms of the different facets of racism, what I am particularly interested in for the purposes of this chapter, is the young woman's sense of bodily entitlement. To get this analysis under way, I propose that we turn to Sullivan's concept of "ontological expansiveness".

White Entitlement and Bodily Confidence

In her book, Sullivan identifies one of the primary unconscious habits of whiteness to be what she terms "ontological expansiveness". She writes:

> As ontologically expansive, white people tend to act and think as if all spaces – whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise – are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish.[50]

She describes in other words, an orientation to the world in which one feels entitled to move fluidly and confidently throughout a variety of spaces, uninhibited and unobstructed by one's

[50] Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 10.

own body. This entitlement includes the confidence to act in legally (and morally) questionable ways without fear or expectation of adverse consequences; and this is what we observe in the young white woman's bodily comportment in the story above. Having struck the man who as a result falls to the floor, the woman remains upright, pacing back and forth and dishing out further threats and racist abuse. Her body is spatially extended along the vertical and lateral horizons; she not only occupies space but she moves through it proprietarily and dynamically. In doing so she both claims and re-inscribes the sense of spatial entitlement of the kind Sullivan describes. She enacts her ontological expansiveness. Even her voice (which remains always loud, confident, and clear) occupies aural space in the moments of reprieve and calm that follow the man's initial collapse as well as the later struggle to retrieve her handbag. In these subdued moments her voice interjects and imposes itself in on the impasse, demanding to be heard. The man, on the other hand, remains quiet throughout, and for the most part sits unmoved on the ground; the contrast in bodily comportment and spatial extension between the two could not be more pronounced. It is as if they act out the very difference Sullivan describes:

> Black and white bodily existence differentially licenses people to inhabit space in unequal, non-reciprocal ways. White people may freely transact beyond their immediate inhabited spaces. The whiteness of their space is expansive and enables, rather than inhibits, their transactions.[51]

This difference is not limited to the two protagonists, either. Note that throughout this scene, the responses of myself, my friend, and the other witnesses are telling. Of the fairly mixed group of people who gather, it is interesting that a white man is the first to call the police. Many among us think to do the same of course, but his lightning-fast response suggests not only a measure of faith in the institution to resolve and bring justice to the situation, but also an implicit

[51] *Ibid.*, 148.

degree of being-at-ease in dealing with the police, which includes the confidence that his concerns will be answered and his testimony will be believed and received in its "impartiality". I raise this point not to cast a shadow over the man's good intentions or actions (which were both necessary and helpful), but rather to show how the racial schema is ever at work, even on the "sidelines" of the action, as it were. Insofar as bodily habits orient our bodies in a futural way, as discussed in the previous chapter, this man's own history and lived experience of whiteness position him to respond swiftly in this way. Compare this with the people of colour among the group. Several – myself and my friend included – immediately admonish the young woman for her actions and words, but we take half a step back once the police arrive. In doing so we anticipate (correctly) the frosty police responses to our attempts to remain involved, while giving expression to the often uneasy relations between the NYPD and people of colour in the community. This is not to say we give up efforts to hold the police to account in their resolution of the incident, but the relation is marked with a palpable sense of unspoken negotiation, a feeling-out of the boundaries not to cross if we do not wish trouble upon ourselves. Put otherwise, the responses available to my friend as a Black woman with racially tainted experiences with the NYPD are different to those available to me, an Asian woman and international student with my own mixed dealings with the police in other jurisdictions, and both are different again (more dramatically so) from the possibilities available to the white man who placed the initial call. The ontological expansiveness described by Sullivan is on full display in the white woman's actions toward the cab driver, but so too is a version of it enacted in the white man's response, despite our shared intentions and sense of injustice.

Although in this story the whiteness of the bodies in question in not thematised or experienced "in front of themselves" to recall an earlier turn of phrase, the example nonetheless

differs from the particular class of scenarios Sullivan has in mind in her discussion of ontological expansiveness. Drawing on Patricia William's examples in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Sullivan considers situations where Black bodies are barred from ostensibly neutral but in reality raced spaces and places. Examples such as William's own experience as a Black woman being refused entry into a "closed" clothing shop where white women shoppers were still visibly present, illustrate in a different way, the ontological expansiveness of whiteness contra the spatial containment of Black (and otherwise racialised) bodies. What these class of examples allow Sullivan to point out more directly, is the way in which the ontological expansiveness characteristic of white embodiment is often also taken as an implicit norm or ideal in phenomenological discourses of the body. That is, while we would not say in regards to my story that *all bodies* ought to take on the brazen bodily disposition of the young white woman in relation to the cab driver, we *would* more readily agree to the proposition that all bodies ought to be able to move through spaces and places the way white bodies do in William's shopping example; in other words, in unobstructed and undiscriminated ways. However, Sullivan identifies a problem with this. Taking aim at Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of the habitual body and its projective intentionality (absent in his various examinations of "abnormal" cases, such as in Patient Schneider), Sullivan argues that the implicit ideal of ontological expansiveness translates problematically in the ethical register. She writes:

> ...projective intentionality tends to suggest that it is desirable that all people live in as ontologically an expansive manner as possible. This suggestion is problematic from an antiracist and feminist perspective because it licenses white people to live their space in racist ways. It implicitly encourages them not to concern themselves with other people's lived existence, including the ways in which other people's existence is inhibited by white people and institutions. In this way, the non-transactional, unidirectionality of projective intentionality lends itself toward ethical solipsism.[52]

[52] *Ibid.*, 163.

In other words, what Sullivan identifies is phenomenology's tendency (through the avatar of Merleau-Ponty) to idealise the smoothness of transactions and the fluidity of bodily movement and motility, in a situations where constraint – or hesitation, to invoke Al-Saji's work – may well be desirable to correct and compensate for oppressive asymmetries and inequalities. Otherwise put: the phenomenologically valued characteristics of fluidity and being-at-ease are on full display in the young white woman's bodily movements in my earlier story (she acts clearly without concern for others nor obstruction of inhibited intentionality), and yet most of us would question the ethics of taking her case as an ideal for how all bodies ought to act and move in the world. While I do not entirely agree with Sullivan's characterisation of Merleau-Ponty's work here (his later work in particular answers some of the charges of ethical solipsism), I do think that she raises an important point in relation to the "at-home-ness" of white bodies, which I carry forth into my analysis of racialised uncanniness in the following chapter.

– 3 –

UNHEIMLICHKEIT: THE RACIALISED BODY NOT-AT-HOME

Of all our mortal sorrows,
the worst is
loss of place.

– Euripides, *Medea*

The experience of racism is an experience in uncanniness. By invoking this term, I draw explicitly on Heidegger's usage in *Being and Time*, where the German *Unheimlichkeit* gets exploited for its reference to strangeness and alienation, as well as its more literal sense of un-home-liness (*Un-heim-lichkeit*).[1] This basic framework constitutes the main claim of the present chapter; that racialisation renders one strange *and* not-at-home. That is, in addition to the bodily fragmentation explored in Chapter 2, itself an experience laced with strangeness and disjuncture, it is my contention here that the process of racialisation and the experience of one's own body as racialised entails the experience of displacement, and more specifically – and pressingly – of not-being-at-home. But this argument presupposes a basic claim which in turn requires investigation, namely, that the home constitutes an important, positively valenced, or even necessary place. After all, what would be the import of the claim that racialisation renders one unhomely if not

1 My occasional literal translation of *Unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness) as "unhomeliness" serves to draw out the reference to "home" which Heidegger is so keen to emphasise. In doing so however, this risks collapsing the term *unheimlich* (uncanny) into *unheimisch* (unhomely), which while very closely related for Heidegger, still remains distinct. My invocations of "unhomely" or "unhomeliness" then, are intended only to highlight this important connection, and not to subsume *unheimlich* into *unheimisch* as such. For a discussion on Heidegger's own close pairing of *unheimlich* and *unheimisch* see Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 58.

also for the argument that the home carries with it some ontological, phenomenological, affective, material or political significance? The two key questions thus that guide this chapter are: How is racialisation a kind of displacement from the home? and, What does it mean to experience one's body or one's surrounds as unhomely? In exploring these two questions, I extend the earlier analysis of the bodily experience of racism and racialisation into a more explicitly placial framework, which while continuing the analysis, may also illuminate a new dimension to the question of racialised embodiment. Further, by exploring these questions through the schematic of place and home, I advance an account of how both influence and frame our embodied experience.

PART 1 – *UNHEIMLICHKEIT* AND THE RACIALISED BODY

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces the theme of uncanniness in the course of his consideration of anxiety. After a discussion of how Dasein gets lured into – or lost in – the idle hum of "the They" (*das Man*), he contrasts this kind of Being-in-the-world, a Being in which we are fascinated by the world and absorbed in it, with the experience of prying ourselves away, an experience marked by anxiety. The experience inspires anxiety since the pull away from the unreflective everydayness of *das Man* is at once a confrontation with Dasein itself, with the thrownness and radical singularity of its own being-toward-death. In its absorption in *das Man* and the correlative mode of Being in-the-world, Dasein's involvement, according to Heidegger, amounts to a "fleeing *in the face of itself* and in the face of its authenticity".[2] Thus it is in pulling away from the comfort and everyday familiarity of *das Man* that Dasein experiences anxiety.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarie and Edward Robinson trans. (New York: Harper & Row,1962), 229.

According to Heidegger, “In anxiety one feels 'uncanny'.”[3] But whereas uncanniness usually refers to a feeling of strangeness, eeriness, or even monstrousness, Heidegger also draws out its literal signification of “'not-being-at-home' [das Nicht-zuhause-sein].”[4] In pulling away from the everyday hum of “the They”, Dasein experiences itself not only as strange, but also *estranged*:

> Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized *as* Being-in-the-world. Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the 'not-at-home'. Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness'.[5]

Dasein's experience of uncanniness however, is not necessarily or wholly negative, since the uncanniness which characterises the experience of anxiety represents an authentic mode of Dasein, who is otherwise concealed from itself while still entrapped in the mode of *das Man*. That is, there is a moment of disclosure or unconcealment heralded by this uncanniness. This last point is something that merits further reflection in view of the double consciousness entailed in racialisation, and especially in view of Heidegger's later explorations of uncanniness in *Hölderlin's Hymn: Der Ister*. Our starting point here however, is to take up the descriptive – but not yet normative – claim about how the experience of *Unheimlichkeit* harbours the twin experiences of strangeness and displacement from the home.

Strangeness and “Not-Being-at-Home”

There are several ways in which Dasein's uncanniness as invoked by Heidegger resonates with the experience of racialisation. Of course, many have described the experience of racism precisely in the terms of strangeness and alienation – in other words, as uncanny. When Fanon writes for example, “My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored,”[6] among

3 *Ibid.*, 233.
4 *Ibid.*
5 *Ibid.*
6 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 113.

other things, we can read this to mean that his body was presented back to him in a way that was strange, unfamiliar, even monstrous – in other words, in line with the ordinary meaning of *unheimlich*. Fanon's body is imbued with meanings that render him a stranger to himself. Indeed, this move is operative more generally in the act of racialised perception: in our earlier analysis we noted how racialised bodies "stick out" visually against a phenomenal field of whiteness and are assigned characteristics of dangerousness, violence, submission, exoticism, and so forth. Such bodies are indeed *rendered* strange, but following our analysis of the always already hermeneutic nature of perception, it is also the case that these bodies stand out against the normatively white visual field *because* the habits of racialised perception operate pre-reflectively. In other words, racialised bodies solicit visual attention and notice by virtue of a discord with pre-perceptual habits of perception; the visual normalisation of whiteness renders strange the racialised body in a pre-reflective way. There is thus on this basic level of perceptual racialisation, already two operations of strangeness at play – both in the visual disjuncture of racialised bodies against a white perceptual field, and in their hermeneutic distortion. In addition to these, it is also the case that the experience of racism and racialisation is frequently described in terms of an alienation from others. This may take the form of exclusion from social spaces and communities (recall Dawn's experience of the shopping centre), political membership and discourse (as per the example of veiled Muslim women in France), or even alienation in inter-personal relations (Yancy and Staples). Here we have examples of how the experience of uncanniness in racism gets expressed in the form of alienation – itself a concept that also trades on the twin meanings of strangeness and not-belonging (the Latin *alienus* means "belonging to another").[7]

7 This sense of not-belonging is further reflected in the popular racist taunts in Australia: "Go home!" and "We grew here, you flew here". In addition to the xenophobia and historical ignorance on display (Australia is after

What Heidegger's conceptualisation adds to the mix however, is how uncanniness entails an experience of strangeness – and "not-being-at-home" – in relation to oneself. In the moment of prying away Dasein is made to feel strange and estranged not only from "the They", but in its anxiety, comes to experience *itself* as uncanny. Likewise, we might say that the racialised body is not only alienated from others, it is alienated from itself; the racialised body is not-at-home in its own body.[8] This we have already seen when considering how the racialised body does not experience itself as the habitual body, but rather as a body which stands in front of and before (or behind) itself. Yancy for example, put it vividly when he writes,

> The corporeal integrity of my Black body undergoes an onslaught as the white imaginary, which centuries of white hegemony have structured and shaped, ruminates over my dark flesh and vomits me out in a form not in accordance with how I see myself. From the context of my lived experience, I feel 'external,' as it were, to my body, delivered and sealed in white lies.[9]

Here we get a fuller sense of how the experience of racism lines up with uncanniness in its multivalence: what Yancy gives us is not just an account of his body as strange, but invoking the second Heideggerian sense of the uncanny, his body is made to feel foreign to himself, and he is pushed outside of it. Racism forces upon those whose bodies are racialised, the feeling of being not-at-home in their own bodies, and consequently, not-at-home in their Being-in-the-world.

But what does it mean to be "at-home"? In order to gain a deeper sense of what this "not-being-at-home" means in the context of racialisation, I propose that we first explore what it means to be "at-home" – not only in a cultural, emotional, and psychological sense, but also in

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all, a colonised country; a fact conspicuously "forgotten" when whites sometimes direct these taunts to Aboriginal people), these taunts also speak clearly to how the sense of home and belonging figure strongly in racist conceptions of "us vs them".

8 Recall my earlier remarks in the introduction to the dissertation, regarding my use of the term "body", which I use in its broadest sense, to designate something like "self". Thus this statement is akin to saying that the racialised body is not at home in itself.

9 Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 2.

the ontological and existential registers. This will help us to better contextualise claims about the experience of racism as rendering one unhomely, and to better grasp their significance. In the following section, we therefore proceed with questions such as, What do we mean by the home? What does and doesn't count as a home? And what does it mean to "not-be-at-home" in one's own body?

Home and House

While we typically begin thinking about the home in terms of its physical cognate – the house – it is not usually the case that we confine the former to the latter. And for good reason; the two are not co-extensive. It is often said a home is more than a house: it exceeds the physical structures and materials which come together in the *con*struction of a house, while also outliving its *de*struction. And yet, as Casey points out in *Getting Back into Place*, "in a certain sense a home is also something *less* than a house, since a house has to be constructed while a home need not be built."[10] We can thus invoke tents and caves, which with their varying levels of construction and materiality, qualify for homes though not houses. Of course, this aligns with our current investigation into home (and places in which we feel at-home) in the sense that the types of home we have in mind are not limited to materially constructed or even physical places. But what then gives a place the character of a home? Following architectural historian Joseph Rykwert, Casey suggests that another way to think about the home is in relation to its second cognate, the hearth. According to Rykwert in his article "House and Home",

> Home is where one starts from. That much is obvious. ...Does a home need to be anything built at all, any fabric? I think not. Home could just be a hearth, a fire on the bare ground by any human lair. That may well

10 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009 (2nd ed.)), 299.

> be the one thing that nobody can quite do without: a fireplace, some focus. After all, if a home had no focus, you could not start from it.[11]

There is in other words, an important grounding or orienting function which the home supplies, by virtue of this "focus" (which in Latin, is the term for "hearth"[12]). Rather than in terms of pure enclosure, what Rykwert offers here is the opportunity to think of home as the starting place: "almost always," he writes, "home is at the centrifugal hearth."[13] This offers us our first characterisation.

But the home is still more than this. Iris Marion Young, in a similarly titled chapter, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme", offers a different approach. Recalling psychologist Van Lennep's example of the hotel, she asks:

> Why, then, does one not feel at home in a hotel room? Because there is nothing of one's self, one's life habits and history, that one sees displayed around the room. The arrangement is anonymous and neutral, for anyone and...no one in particular.[14]

The question, for Young, is whether a place *supports and reflects* embodied living: "The home is not simply the things...but their arrangement in space in a way that supports the body habits and routines of those who dwell there."[15] In Young's version, home spaces – and this includes places we might not ordinarily think of as "the" home such as stoops, street corners, and coffeehouses; known in urban studies as "third places"[16] – track the goings-about and embodied concerns of its

11 Joseph Rykwert,"House and Home" in *Social Research*, 58 (1991): 51.
12 I thank Ed Casey for bringing this to my attention.
13 Rykwert, "House and Home", 54.
14 Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme" in *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and Other Essays*, 139.
15 *Ibid.*
16 Both Young and Casey in particular do acknowledge that dwelling can take place outside traditional houses: "In many societies 'home' refers to the village or square, together with its houses, and dwelling takes place both in and out of doors. ...Even in modern capitalist cities some people 'live' more in their neighborhood or on their block than in their houses. They sit in squares, on stoops, in bars and coffeehouses, going to their houses mostly to sleep.." (Young, "House and Home", 131-132) and: "Parks, which are not 'buildings' in any usual sense, sometimes not offering the barest of shelter or domestic amenities, can be dwelling places. Indeed, the places where people spontaneously congregate such as street corners and stoops of apartment buildings, are genuine dwelling places..." (Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 115). I also thank Brian Irwin for the reference to "third places".

dwellers. In contrast to Rykwert's motif of the centrifugal hearth, here, lines of focus and intentionality are circulated throughout the home space, and collected through the embodied habits of the subject. Indeed, I would go further to say that not only do homes reflect and support bodily habits, they actively *allow* them. That is, continuing with her hotel example, it is not only that they do not display anything of one's self or habits, it is that they are impervious to them; personalised histories and arrangements are wiped clean with each new check-in, and with each new morning's housekeeping round. Homes on the other hand, not only reflect embodied habits, but actively allow for their cultivation. These functional differences between hotels and homes – which stem from differences in legal tenancy status, duration and purpose of stay, as well as levels of material support and familiarity – come together to create a fundamentally different relation marked by, in the case of homes, the ability to track and foster bodily habits. Homeliness thus, is not a separate thing we bring to the house, as Rykwert at times suggests,[17] but rather it is achieved in the very manner of our continued and ongoing interaction with such spaces.

This second characterisation of home as a place for embodied habit, opens up a further connection with our analysis of the uncanniness of racialisation insofar as it allows us to explicitly consider whom spaces support and are designed for.[18]

17 Part of Rykwert's goal in this essay is to remind his profession that they are in the business of building *houses*, and not homes. Architects have strayed in their thinking about this, according to him: "Architects tried to fit everything that went on in a 'typical' household into a closely packed shell. It was as if they saw their business not as the provision of houses but the enclosure of Home... They forgot the important moral which Karl Kraus once tried to instil in them, when he said that he expected of the city to provide him with water, gas, electricity, and working roads: *die Gemütlichkeit besorge ich* - I will supply the homeliness, he added." It is perhaps for this reason that the distinction between house and home can seem a little pronounced in his account. Rykwert, "House and Home", 60.

18 One obvious example of this is the issue of urban planning and disability access. The way places (homes or other) are designed can deeply shape the way certain bodies are made to feel at-home or not-at-home, welcome or unwelcome, included or excluded. Questions of body schema and bodily habit thus are intimately connected with the home. In an example more relevant to our investigation, George Lipsitz also looks at some contemporary forms of racial segregation in the context of shared urban space in his book *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

Home and Dwelling

There is I suggest, one more important way to conceptualise the home, and that is in terms of the activity it most affords – the verb of home as it were, *to dwell*. Though itself an ambiguous concept, dwelling can help us to think further about what marks home *qua* home. In his 1951 lecture, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", Heidegger distinguishes between simply being housed somewhere [*behausen*] and dwelling there [*wohnen*].

> The truck driver is at home [*zu Hause*] on the highway, but he does not have his lodgings there; the working woman is at home in the spinning mill, but does not have her dwelling place [*ihre Wohnung*] there... These buildings house [*behausen*] man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell [*wohnt*] in them...[19]

For Heidegger, there is a critical distinction between being physically housed somewhere and dwelling there, and this distinction trades on the special character of dwelling. In this lecture, given Heidegger is concerned also with the question of building and our technological relation to places, the concept of dwelling gets refracted through the practice of building, and both are found to be fundamentally attuned insofar as they participate in the same endeavour. The clue lies, somewhat predictably for Heidegger, in language: "Now, what does *bauen*, to build, mean? The Old High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies to remain, to stay in a place."[20] We pause here to register a first sense of dwelling that is opened up by its being heard together with building: *staying*. Dwelling and building (insofar as buildings entail a measure of material endurance) both consist in a staying, and this coheres with our earlier attempts to get at a definition of home; the home is where we *stay*, in some significant sense. Indeed, this position echoes Heidegger's earlier remarks in the lecture course, *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister"*, where he claims,

19 Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings,* ed. David Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 347-348.

20 *Ibid.,* 348.

> 'Dwelling' is practically and technically regarded as the possession of accommodation and housing. Such things indeed belong to dwelling, yet they do not fulfill or ground its essence. *Dwelling takes on an abode and is an abiding in such an abode*, specifically that of human beings upon this earth. *The abode is a whiling. It needs a while*. [21] (my emphasis)

We should note that this formulation of dwelling as staying or abiding is not unique to Heidegger. For example we hear traces of it in Rykwert's own etymological meditations: "And yet Latin also provides two other words for the house: as a thing built, aedes, *and as a place of rest – which home so emphatically is* – mansio, from maneo, *I remain or abide...*[22] So too, does Young invoke notions of staying and preservation in her description of home-making activity when she writes, "Home is the space where I *keep* and use the material belongings of my life"[23] and, "Traditional female domestic activity, which many women continue today, partly consists in *preserving* the objects and meanings of a home." (my emphases)[24] One curious deviation from this general picture of dwelling as staying however, appears in Casey's account. For him, dwelling is paradoxically staying *and/or wandering*, and this is curious since he too arrives by way of etymology. Explaining the assertion that his old local mall-arcade afforded a form of dwelling, Casey writes,

> Dwelling as nonresiding? What does that mean? We can find an important clue by tracing the word *dwell* back to two apparently antithetical roots: Old Norse *dvelja,* linger, delay, tarry, and old English *dwalde*, go astray, err, wander. The second root, though rarely invoked, fits my memory of the arcade rather well. There the passerby is encouraged to wander off the street into a world of film and images and

21 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 20.

22 Rykwert, "House and Home", 52.

23 Young, "House and Home", 139.

24 *Ibid.,* 142. Indeed Young argues that Heidegger does not go far *enough* in exploring preservation as one of the two meanings of building, instead falling into the well-worn trap of privileging its more ostensibly 'active' counterpart, constructing. According to Young, while 'preservation' is one of the two senses of building that Heidegger names, it regrettably ends up being overshadowed by a telling over-emphasis on the second concept, construction. Such a move, she continues, is symptomatic of a broader tendency of the Western philosophical tradition to devalue the importance and creativity of that which outwardly appears as passive, and for that which is typically associated with women's work.

> fashion. One may *dwalde* in that kind of world, drift with it, follow its lead... Dwelling is accomplished not by residing but by wandering.[25]

Acknowledging the different origins of the word, Casey's exploration of the latter not only allows him to consider much more varied styles and places of dwelling, such as street corners or apartment stoops, but also to announce almost in direct contrast to Heidegger, that, "We may even dwell in automobiles, as commuters do daily."[26] Despite this, Casey admits that some places support more "fully-fledged" modes of dwelling than others, especially those that at a minimum, allow for "repeated return", and possess a certain "felt familiarity".[27]

Dwelling as Resting

Nonetheless, the move to characterise dwelling as staying or abiding is a significant one for our purposes, since it draws us into the orbit of another important term: *resting*. Dwelling as staying and abiding, as heard in Heidegger and echoed in Rykwert and Young, imply restfulness insofar as they release one from the necessity of disorientation and adaptation that accompanies constant change, and the effort these demand. It is likely for this reason that Rykwert links the home with stability and well-being.[28] By resting in the same place, we are *afforded rest* – this bivalence is captured well by the English language.[29] Indeed in Heidegger's passage above, it is unsurprising that he follows the discussion on abiding and whiling immediately with the claim, "In such a while, human beings find rest. Rest is a grounded repose in the steadfastness of one's

25 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 114.
26 *Ibid.*, 115.
27 *Ibid.*, 115-116.
28 Rykwert, "House and Home", 54.
29 In contrast, the French language is one example where a separate verb (*reposer*) is required to designate our second sense of resting, and the verb *rester* refers purely to staying. Interestingly, note that the English bivalence seems to derive from two different etymological sources: rest in the first sense of reposing derives from the Germanic *raston* or *rasten* ("from a root meaning 'league' or 'mile' (referring to a distance after which one rests"), whereas rest in the second sense of staying derives from the Latin *restare* which gets taken up as *rester* in Old French.

own essence."[30] The home, as a place where we stay – or in Casey's case, the place to which we return – is substantially a place of rest.[31] And while Casey's dwelling can be achieved in wandering, it is also the case that, together, Rykwert's home-as-starting-place and Casey's home-as-return, bookend the work, exhaustion, even exhilaration, of worldly travel.

> 'There is nothing like staying at home' precisely because *at home* we do not usually have to confront such questions as 'Where am I?' 'Where is my next meal coming from?' or 'Do I have any friends in the world?' (original emphasis).[32]

Of course this characterisation of home as a place of rest, which we arrived at through an examination of the activity of dwelling, tugs at a further connection to be considered later in this chapter. Whereas resting harbours both senses of staying and repose, the second sense of resting as repose brings us to the notion of *retreat*, itself a productively bivalent term. In line with the characterisation of the home as a place where we are at rest, the term retreat can be employed here to describe the home when it is a place of repose. Retreats are of course, places of rest and relaxation, and typically secluded from the hustle and bustle of the world outside. In this sense the nominal use of retreat echoes our earlier acknowledgement of the lack of disorientation and anxiety in home-like places. The home can be a kind of retreat. And yet given the original meaning of retreat as withdrawal, what the term productively highlights is the way in which the home and being-at-home might operate as a kind of disengagement from the world around.

30 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, 20.

31 An important qualification here: I describe the home "substantially" but not "unequivocally" a place of rest, since there are of course, many homes in which one does not and cannot rest. Homes in which one finds domestic violence, emotional or sexual abuse, or even homes which are defined by unhappy relationships, are all too real examples of where the home is anything but a place of rest (in the sense of repose). Further, we should not romanticise this "restfulness"; what looks from the outside to be restfulness may just as easily be experienced from the inside as boredom or confinement, not to mention the amount of "invisible work" that takes place within a home. I am thinking here, of the traditional confinement of women to the home and home-making activity, and the non-recognition (even exploitation) of their labour. In these cases, the kind of home-dwelling afforded is closer to "rest" in the first sense, as a place where one stays. Such considerations also present a serious caution against the impulse to eulogise the home, and in the scheme of my exploration, they highlight the need to think home in its three senses (starting place, bodily habit, and rest) concomitantly.

32 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 121.

While this will be treated in greater detail later, I flag this issue now in order to signal some of the complexities to come.

Nonetheless, this third characterisation of home as where one dwells and rests (in the sense of staying and reposing), folds back into the second question of bodily habit raised by Young. The relationship between habit and rest is, I contend, co-dependent and co-generative. For example, on the one hand it is because home supports and reflects our bodily habits that we *do* find ourselves at rest; things are handy to us with a Heideggerian "readiness to hand", and being oriented by such habits, we need not expend additional effort or energy to navigate the home's spatiality. The familiarity of the home puts us at ease, or said differently, our habituation to it opens up the possibility of restfulness. (Such is its restfulness that Gaston Bachelard identifies the house's (his term) single most important quality is that it "shelters daydreaming".[33]) Indeed bodily habits themselves, whether in relation to the home, other places, or situations, allow us to engage in ways that don't call upon or demand our explicit attention, and so affords resting insofar as we are not therefore required to process sensory information anew or navigate bodily spaces and movements with the effort exerted for the unfamiliar. And yet at the same time, it is also the case that we *can* cultivate bodily habits in the home precisely *because* it is a place for rest. As noted above, we accumulate bodily habits in homes and not hotels because we rest (stay) there. In contrast to the hotel where we do not stay, the durational resting at the home allows for ongoing engagement with its space, which is in turn what allows us to make meaning

33 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6. Bachelard speaks primarily of "house" (*la maison*) throughout his book, but in a way that leads me to think that he is actually speaking about "home" – noting of course, that no single term in Bachelard's native French language fully equivocates the English term "home". *La maison* tends to refer to the physical structure (and thus is closer to "house"), whereas *foyer* can mean home, but also designates a hallway or meeting place, much like the English meaning of "foyer". We get closer with the expression *être chez soi* (e.g. "make yourself at home" is *faites comme chez vous*) but takes us away from the nominal form of "home", and loses the references to building and structures that "home" does carry.

and develop signification. This corner, once empty, now furnished with a desk and a chair, its cupboards repurposed to hold books, and to where I return daily to write, now becomes a study. Spaces get turned into places upon our sustained and meaningful engagement with them, and in doing so they become habitual to us. In the same way that we acquire the "habit" of driving or dancing only once we become at ease with these activities (as discussed in Chapter 1), so too do we turn the home space into a habitual place once we are at ease with it. There is in other words, a reciprocity in the way habit and rest unfold in the cultivation of the home.

This meditation on home has brought out three of its key features – the home as it offers a starting place, co-generates and supports bodily habits, and affords rest or retreat – while also signalling some of the complexities to come. Having laid these features, which will give depth to our claim about the *uncanniness* of racialised bodies, I propose that we move now to consider a particular kind of home at stake in this dissertation – that of the body.

The Body as Home

In what way is the phenomenological body invoked throughout this dissertation *itself* a kind of home, with all that that entails? Of course this body-as-home connection is already present in Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the lived body, a body which is not experienced from some objective or distanced standpoint, but which rather is directly *inhabited*. In the opening line of the essay "Eye and Mind", he declares: "Science manipulates things and gives up living in [*habiter*] them."[34] His own phenomenological project on the other hand, can be understood as an effort to rescue the inhabited or "lived" body (*le corps veçu*) as a site of philosophical inquiry

34 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" in ed. Galen A. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 121. The phrase in the original reads: "*La science manipule les choses et renonce à les habiter*".

and insight. But we can be more specific than this. Drawing on the three broadly discerned features of home as proposed above, we find a correlation to each in Merleau-Ponty's account of the body. First, whereas Rykwert identifies the home as our quintessential starting place, so too according to Merleau-Ponty, is our body ours. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the permanent presence of body – which is a permanence "on my side" – is also that which imposes the first (and lasting) perspective on our access to the world: "for my window to impose on me a perspective on the church, my body must first impose on me a perspective on the world."[35] Our body in other words, is our starting point for an engagement with the world, meaning that it not only frames this engagement, but makes it possible. The body too, is where we start. Second, insofar as the home is characterised by its reflection and affordance of bodily habit, Merleau-Ponty writes of the body that it is the "*primordial habit*, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood"[36] (my emphasis). The lived body is such that it allows for and is animated through bodily habits. Indeed, as Casey argues in his discussion of memory, habit has a privileged relationship to bodily experience for two reasons, first insofar it is "the most pervasive and subtle way in which we are in touch with the past that we bear and that bears us" and secondly, since it is so intimately bound up with the body's expressivity and style.[37] Habits animate bodies as "lived" bodies, and in turn, the permanence of one's own body is what allows for developments in habit.

Finally, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological body also converges with our discussion of dwelling and staying. As noted earlier, we stay in our bodies insofar as they are permanently present to us, and inescapable for us. Such staying interlaces with the development of habit in a

35 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 93.
36 *Ibid.*
37 Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty", 218.

way that renders the phenomenological body at ease. In our descriptions of Merleau-Ponty's habitual body, there is a distinct sense in which the habitual body is that which moves without effort or obstruction, rather, it is at-ease with itself and its surroundings – indeed this is what our analyses of racialisation begin to challenge. In the habitual body, as in the home, we are afforded a certain measure of rest. Given such convergences, we can say not only that the body is a kind of home, but that it *is a home* in an original sense, and that we are at-home in it.

Additionally or alternatively, scholars such as Kirsten Jacobson have likewise argued for the parallel understanding of body and home. In her article, "A Developed Nature: a Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home", Jacobson argues that the notions of home and dwelling, most identifiably associated with Heidegger among the phenomenologists, are in fact equally present in Merleau-Ponty's concepts of "lived body" and "level".[38] Whereas I have proceeded by arguing that the *body* in Merleau-Ponty (and in existential phenomenology more generally) is home-like or indeed *is* a home, Jacobson approaches the question inversely, arguing that the *home is body-like,* or, our "second body."[39] There is then a symmetry to the two analyses; where I noted the body's resemblance to the conception of home as starting place, Jacobson notes the inverse. She writes, "At the most basic level, home is like the body insofar as it is, as we have just been describing, a place of initial stability and a foundation for the self."[40] Further, Jacobson's main contention concerning the developed nature of dwelling and by extension the developed nature of embodied being, resonates with our earlier discussion of

38 Kirsten Jacobson, "A Developed Nature: a Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home" in *Continental Philosophy Review* 42(2009): 355-373. It is interesting to note that in this argument Jacobson attempts to read the home into the body (or put somewhat reductively, Heidegger into Merleau-Ponty), whereas a far more common path, and one which I have loosely followed here, is to read the body into the home, i.e., Merleau-Ponty into Heidegger – or to dismiss such attempts altogether, given the vexed question of the body in Heidegger.

39 Jacobson, "A Developed Nature", 361. She also writes earlier: "home is phenomenologically akin to our body." *Ibid.*, 359.

40 *Ibid.*, 361.

dwelling as an ongoing enterprise in the cultivation of habit. However despite our agreement on the convergence of home and body (or what Jacobson sometimes helpfully calls, "home-body"), as I will show later, we diverge when it comes to the qualitative characterisation of the home. Whereas for Jacobson the home is framed largely in terms of enclosure and refuge (which incidentally, works suitably for the unhyphenated term "homebody"), I will argue, drawing from the racialised experience, that home – and the body – is more constitutively porous than she allows. For the moment however, I take her efforts to link together home and body as a valuable contribution to our present analysis.

In addition to these affinities between home (as I have characterised it) and body, there exist some more concrete connections. Casey for example, in *Getting Back into Place* considers the way architectural design often reflects that of body structure, including the "upward action" of buildings, as well as their resemblance to the human bodily form. "Built places, then, are extensions of our bodies," Casey writes, "Places built for residing are rather an enlargement of our already existing embodiment into *an entire life-world of dwelling."*[41] Drew Leder in *The Absent Body*, agrees:

> ...the very house in which one dwells is both a reconstruction of the surrounding world to fit the body and an enlargement of our own physical structure. Its walls form a second protective skin, windows acting as artificial senses, entire rooms, like the bedroom or kitchen, devoted to a single bodily function.[42]

Even when not mimicking or extending bodily anatomy or physiology, buildings are often designed in such a way as to resonate with it; their verticality and groundedness speak to our bodily experience of gravity and uprightness.[43] Buildings – particularly those in which we dwell

41 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 120.

42 Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 34.

43 This point was made by Brian Irwin in a presentation, "Architecture and the Philosophical Model: Place and Time in the New York Skyline", at the *Façades: The Architecture of (In)Authenticity* conference in New York City, 28 March 2014.

– are bodily in a multiplicity of ways. Given this, we can understand why Casey concludes that the affinity between houses and bodies is indeed a very thoroughgoing one; the connection is one in which "our very identity is at stake. For we tend to identify ourselves by – and with – the places in which we reside."[44]

Indeed such notes are already present in Heidegger's meditation on dwelling in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", when he insists that more than a question of emplacement, dwelling becomes a mode of *being itself*:

> What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.[45]

In addition to the reflection of bodies in buildings (the noun) and bodies with building (the verb), consider also how the body serves as our first home – not only in Merleau-Ponty's metaphysical sense of our permanent bodily presence, but also in the sense of the mother's body as our *first* dwelling place.[46] The pregnant body is literally our first place of generation, gestation, nourishment, and development – and thus in a non-trivial sense, our first home.[47] Here it is not our own body but that of the mother's that offers us a place of rest (before our bodies develop enough to sustain themselves) and the place from which we quite literally "start". While I do not take up fully the complex questions of provenance here, and its distinctive feminist and intersubjective implications as explored by Luce Irigaray in *Speculum of the Other Woman*

44 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 120.

45 Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", 349.

46 I acknowledge here Megan Craig's invitation to consider this question in response to a paper I presented based on an earlier version of this chapter. I also use "mother" here in the sense of birth mother, while acknowledging this is not always or necessarily the only body that continues to mother or care for the child. (I am thinking here of the scenario of adoption, as well as different possibilities of "mothering" after birth. For a discussion of this, see Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

47 Although there is of course, the broader and more complex question of whether a foetus in the womb has a "world". It is also relevant in the context of our home-body analysis, to note that Bachelard himself says of the house that "It is the human being's first world." Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 7.

among others, I raise the point in order to sound a cautionary note against the eulogies of the home which fail to mention women's roles as first nurturers.[48] Nonetheless, in thinking here through some of the rich and varied affinities between home and body, we see that what is at stake in the coming analysis of racialised uncanniness is how not-being-at-home resonates both at the level of bodily experience and the emplaced experience of one's environs.

The Racialised Body Not-at-Home, and "World"-Travelling

Having given a conceptual treatment of home, we are now in a position to reconsider the question of racialised bodies, and what it means when we claim that the experience of racialisation is an experience of uncanniness, in the sense of feeling not-at-home. We saw earlier that the experience of both racism and racialisation is often likened to the experience of estrangement, from oneself and from others, and in the both senses of feeling strange and apart from others. This doubling maps onto the cluster of concepts that have been discussed here – uncanniness, alienation, and so forth. Armed with a closer analysis of the home, we can now draw out some of the phenomenological and existential implications of finding oneself not-at-home. In a sense we have already considered how the bodily experience of racialisation tracks our first two features of "home". In the discussion of bodily fragmentation and the experience of being in front of and ahead of oneself, there is an originary displacement that stands at odd with our idea of home as the starting place. After all, where is one's starting place if the self is contemporaneously experienced as being located here *and* there? In addition to bodily fragmentation, the analysis of overdetermination and predetermination in Chapter 1 also works to render blunt certain notions of genuine "starting" if one is always already "on the scene".

48 I argue that Bachelard is guilty of this in the *Poetics of Space*, as is Heidegger in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (as argued by Young).

Second, in our discussion of bodily habit, we also signalled some of the ways in which the racialised body is experienced as *inhabitual*. Recall Fanon's claim that the development of a corporeal schema is for the Black man, a solely negating activity. In what follows then, I focus on the question of dwelling and rest, which is brought out particularly by the analysis of home. In what way does racialised embodiment run contrary to our third sense of being-at-home, that of being at rest?

Racialised Bodies and "World"-Travelling

In her article, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception", María Lugones makes the observation that the experience of being an outsider to the mainstream organisation of life in the US – and she has in mind specifically women of colour, though the analysis could conceivably extend to others – entails a practice she calls, "'world'-travelling". The bivalence of this term is a very productive one, for reasons I will explore. On a first pass, the expression "world"-travelling describes the way in which women of colour who find themselves on the periphery or outside of mainstream worlds, are made to engage in this practice of travelling, in order to negotiate their participation within social and political domains, while retaining a sense of self and identity which is compromised or distorted in those domains. She writes,

> One can 'travel' between these 'worlds' and one can inhabit more than one of these 'worlds' at the very same time. I think that most of us who are outside the mainstream of, for example, the US dominant construction or organization of life are 'world travellers' as a matter of necessity and of survival. It seems to me that inhabiting more than one 'world' at the same time and 'travelling' between 'worlds' is part and parcel of our experience and our situation.[49]

The use of "travelling" as a metaphor is a very helpful one, since it allows us to reframe this practice against the terms of being-at-home. In contrast to the experience of being-at-home with

49 María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception", *Hypatia* 2 (1987), 11.

oneself and one's world, what Lugones describes here is how women of colour experience a constant and unrelenting necessity to travel to and from different "worlds", and to negotiate these worlds in which they are not entirely at-home. Indeed, it is the very experience of feeling not-at-home – or echoing our earlier analysis, not "at ease" – that brings on the necessity of travel. As Mariana Ortega writes, in her commentary of Lugones:

> Being-at-ease in the 'world', however, is not a feature of the 'world'-traveller self. It is not the feature of the individual who is considered the 'alien', the 'stranger', by the dominant group and who is no longer fully at ease in his or her own culture and is not in the midst of another culture.[50]

This phenomenon of not-being-at-home in the experience of racialisation, as discussed earlier in this chapter, and also not-being-at-ease as discussed in the previous, is now supplemented with an account of what one does upon finding oneself so situated. That is, our earlier *descriptions* of the alienating experience of racialisation help us to identify and better understand the experience, but here we move to an analysis of how such an experience is to be managed and negotiated. Lugones' concept of travelling is one such strategy for that management. When for example, Fanon writes that the Black man among his own "will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others,"[51] he implicitly describes the experience of being through others (and for-others) when he is out among the normatively white world. Being as it is however, that Fanon has to try and live and flourish in a world where he is not among "his own", and indeed in a world which is hostile to him, the task that stands before him in this experience of his world as unhomely is precisely to find ways to *make* himself at-home. We do not only find homes, we have to make them. This

50 Mariana Ortega, "'New Mestizas,' ''World'-Travelers', and '*Dasein*': Phenomenology and the Multi-Voiced, Multi-Cultural Self, *Hypatia* 16 (2001), 9.
51 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 109.

echoes Jacobson's argument that we “learn to dwell”. Being displaced and rendered not-at-home by the experience of racism, Fanon's task becomes to find a home, and to find or make a place which can give him what the home affords. This “finding” is what Lugones might call “travelling”.

The necessity of such “travelling” should not be understated. Where we saw in Chapter 2 the way in which racialised people bear the burden of managing racist fears or fetishes projected onto their bodies, of “whistling Vivaldi” to recall Staples' example, there is here a correlate in the burden of managing different and often hostile worlds. Lugones' reference to the necessity of travelling as a matter of survival, points to the way in which the burden of negotiation falls largely on the shoulders of those who do not find themselves at-home in such worlds. As in travelling, it is the traveller who displaces herself in order to visit the worlds that stand far enough apart that they require a certain amount of effort, energy, and resources to traverse. The “worlds” do not move, the traveller does. Our earlier discussion of the stress in racialisation, can thus be taken up and continued under the guise of this mandatory travelling or “forced migration” – a theme we will explore further in relation to the question of power. In addition to the effort exerted in traversing such distances, there is also the work and disorientation involved in making oneself intelligible across these worlds, while holding on to a semblance of a continuous self (even if there are a multiplicity of selves) throughout the process. There is then, an important way in which this experience described by Lugones stands in stark contrast to that of the comfort and relief of being-at-home as described by Young, Casey and others. So too, does the earlier discussion of existential stress and the pathologising of racialised people resonate in our present discussion. If being at home entails a certain measure of stability (physical and emotional) and place for rest and repose, then the experience of having to constantly travel

across and between worlds is marked by a distinct lack of those things; it entails constant upheaval. To lack such a home-place, can be, as the chorus sings in response to *Medea's* plight, cited in the epigraph to this chapter, a profoundly unsettling and traumatic experience.

But as noted earlier, the metaphor of travelling is one which is productively multivalent. Lugones' description of the activity of negotiation between worlds as "travelling" (as opposed to "managing" or "negotiating" – all of which imply work) is I think, a deliberate effort to encourage us also to think through the valuable, creative, and even joyful moments of such work. After all, travelling can be fun! Or even when it is not, it can be eye-opening. Travelling is a valuable endeavour insofar as it brings us to different places, exposing us to different ways of living and being, and to people we might not otherwise encounter. Indeed such encounters often hit us with a refreshing new perspective on our own lives and worlds, and can have a transformative effect. Sometimes it is precisely the distance from the home and world in which one is enmeshed, that give us the latitude to try, see, and experience things differently. Or put otherwise, sometimes it is through the eyes (even gazes) of others that we see ourselves afresh. Travelling can then, under certain circumstances, be a valuable endeavour for both those who travel and the worlds they visit. It is in this spirit that for Lugones, travelling can open up new ethical possibilities:

> But there are 'worlds' that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone's 'world' is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their 'world' we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*.[52]

Thus, while the home certainly holds important significations in the ways noted above – as a starting place, as a place tracking our bodily habits, as a place of rest – it is also true to say

52 Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception", 17.

on the other hand, that there are certain dangers that come with an over-attachment to or over-identification with it. It is possible, in other words, to become *too much* at-ease or too much at-home with the world, such that one stops encountering others and fails to consider what it is to be herself in the eyes of another. Lugones puts the problem thus:

> I take this maximal way of being at ease [in a 'world'] to be somewhat dangerous because it tends to produce people who have no inclination to travel across 'worlds' or have no experience of 'world' travelling.[53]

Here we can bring back into the picture, the experience of whiteness, which when lived ubiquitously and unreflectively, embodies something of this being too much at-home or too much at-ease. As described in the discussion of entitlement and white embodiment in Chapter 2, the white body is in the racialised schema, the habitual body, that which is at-home and not presented as a problem for itself. While this certainly brings many advantages and privileges (many of these cumulative and heavily obfuscated), what Lugones' analysis does is to point out the danger and relative impoverishment of such a mode of being. This adds a further dimension – one often underplayed – to those working within critical whiteness movements, where strategies of "race treason", in which one disavows the privileges of whiteness, are deployed in the name of solidarity with people of colour. While Emily Lee has called into question the political aims and efficacy of such strategies, arguing that they misplace their efforts[54], I would add that they also miss the opportunity for genuine solidarity between whites and non-whites in anti-racist struggles. Specifically, what is elided is the way in which white people's *own being* is also at stake, in the system of racist differentiation and subjugation. As Lugones' analysis shows, the

53 *Ibid.*, 12.

54 Lee, "Body Movement and Responsibility for a Situation", 246. Lee's argument is that "race treason" strategies locate the moment of critical intervention in white individuals' divestment from systems of white privilege. She is not only skeptical about the possibility of this (as we noted in Chapter 1), but also critical of the way this draws attention away from the overriding social and political structures which continue to shape racism, and which require more than just individuals turning away from their white privilege (which are conferred regardless).

kind of being too much at-home that characterises whiteness comes with its own pitfalls; the lack of a need to "world"-travel or see oneself through from the purview from another can lead to a more impoverished mode of being.[55] In the context of anti-racist work, I argue that such multivalenced analyses of home and travel can call forth fuller models of political solidarity, one whose spirit is poignantly captured by Gangulu woman and Australian Aboriginal activist Lilla Watson in her speech to the United Nations in 1985: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."[56]

Finally, Lugones' analysis should not apply only to those who partake unreflectively in the system of whiteness; it is equally relevant to those who inhabit racialised bodies. That is, while the power dynamics in play are unquestionably and critically different for racialised people, Lugones' caution against the romanticisation and reification of the home, taken up more fully by Ortega in the chapter "Hometactics: Self-Mapping, Belonging, and the Home Question", translates politically into a caution against the homogenisation of any one kind of being or perspective. In other words, the political response of finding or making oneself a home in a world where racialised bodies experience themselves ill-at-ease, ought not to erect new fortresses from which new "others" are kept out. Ortega writes:

> It cannot be denied that even for those who are border crossers and world-travelers, the home question is still a question. Perhaps it is even a more painful question precisely because that home seems harder to find. Yet, despite the determination of this will to belong that may provide a feeling of security and comfort, we cannot avoid recognizing the limits and pitfalls of such security, namely the reification of those

55 Of course, we should also note Shannon Sullivan's critique of "White World-Travelling" as an iteration of a white ontological expansiveness. Sullivan, "White World-Traveling", *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18 (2004): 300-304.

56 Lilla Watson, speech to the *United Nations Decade for Women* Conference in 1985. Note however that Watson herself insists that though she is credited for this statement, it emerged collectively from Aboriginal activist groups in Queensland in the 1970s.

who do not fit a version of authentic belonging.[57]

While the possibility of re-inscribing oppressive practices leads Ortega to maintain a level of suspicion against what she variously refers to as the "will to belong", as I will argue in Part 3 of this chapter, nor is the jettisoning of such an attachment to home necessary or ideal, once we begin to understand the home with greater nuance. That is to say, while the dialectic of home-and-travel presented here opens up important challenges for thinking about the normative analysis of racialised bodies in relation to the experience of home, in my view this is not a problem that can be sufficiently worked through on our current terms. I thus propose in the next part, a further consideration of the home and body – this time with explicit reference to its porosity – in order to introduce new terms with which we can consider more satisfactorily the significance of being-at-home for racialised bodies.

PART 2 – THE POROSITY OF HOME, THE POROSITY OF BODIES

Our discussion of the home so far has been limited largely to one characterisation, which while rich and itself multifarious, also tends invoke associations of inwardness and enclosure. This has been useful insofar as it has allowed us to underscore the question of identity and the stable sense of self that is afforded in home-places, and as missing when the experience of racialisation involves an enduring sense of feeling not-at-home. As noted earlier, the question of home and dwelling is as much a question of being and identity, with the stability and protection of the home affording a certain measure of existential and phenomenological stability and relief. But at the same time, these characterisations of the home also risk imputing a public/private distinction and overstating the home's alignment with the private sphere. Such conceptions are of

57 Ortega, "'New Mestizas,' "World'-Travelers', and '*Dasein*'", 180.

course rife in philosophy; Hannah Arendt offers one version of this in her conceptual division of the public, private, and social in *The Human Condition*, and more intimately also in the letters exchanged with her husband Heinrich Blücher documented in the aptly named collection, *Within Four Walls*,[58] and even Jacobson is explicit in her treatment of home as such. And yet, it is precisely the characterisations of home as private and inwardly-oriented that lead Lugones and Ortega to their concerns about the dangers of being too much at-home, and of being too insular in one's political and ethical orientations. We can see this at work in Jacobson's descriptions of the home when she writes:

> I am arguing that home, as a place of and for the self, is a situation of refuge for us, a place or way of being in which 'our own' is privileged and 'the alien' is not manifestly present..
> With the exception of our organic bodies, there is virtually no other place in our experience that maintains this kind of inviolable self-enclosure.[59]

For Jacobson, insofar as the home offers enclosure and refuge it also entails a turning away from – or even exclusion of – the other ("the alien"). The home-body is in her words, "inviolable". This characterisation goes beyond the sense of retreat-as-repose to emphasise retreat-as-*withdrawal*, and echoing Lugones' earlier remarks, I argue that this can be dangerous (especially in the case of white embodiment) insofar as such inwardness may foster a disinclination to "world"-travel.

But of course, there may be circumstances in which exactly this kind of withdrawal is called for; bell hooks for example, writes in "Homeplace (a site of resistance)":

> Black women resisted [racism] by making homes where black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world.[60]

58 I thank Anne O'Bryne for bringing this to my attention.
59 Jacobson, "A Developed Nature", 357.
60 bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 42.

Jacobson's rendering of home-as-withdrawal however, is more general and unlike hooks, does not describe a situation in which one's sense of being is held under continuous attack and disintegration by the "outside" world. Further, hooks' essay elegantly describes the way in which Black women cultivated "homeplaces" that were not so much a withdrawal from the racist world, but a creative *response* to it; these homeplaces were, she argues, sites of resistance. There is an important way then, that the home remains always in dialogue with the "outside" world, and indeed forms part of it. After all, if home is a place (even multiple places), then we ought not forget that places are themselves relational and embedded in ecosystems of meaning and practices. It is with this in mind that I now turn to a consideration of "porosity" as it pertains to home and body, and which I argue, is *constitutive* of them.

The Porosity of the House

In the case of the home, we can trace this porosity in several ways. Given the lingering connection of home with house, we can start with a consideration of the house, whose pores are manifold. As architectural structures, houses are punctuated with doors that afford comings and goings, and windows that let in the world when we don't, won't or can't cross that portal threshold. Both admit light, weather, and noise from the streets in exchange for that within – carrying forth the smells of a feast in preparation, or the muffled sounds of the evening news on the radio. The house's porosity affords – indeed solicits – an exchange with the world, and this affordance is *constitutive*; a house with no windows and no doors is not a house (much less a home) – it is a dungeon, a prison, or a cellar, structures we deem unfit for human habitation. Solitary confinement in 6x8ft cells is routinely described by inmates, as documented by Lisa Guenther in her book *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives*, are places for the

"living dead".[61] Even at a less extreme end, it is telling that jurisdictions such as New York City legally prohibit the use of non-windowed rooms as bedrooms. Homes, even in their most conventional instantiation of the freestanding, single-family house, are structurally porous.[62]

But we shouldn't take the motif of porosity too literally, if what we are really concerned with is the exchange they afford, for it is not just the "pores" of the house – its doors and windows – that allow it, as if exchange takes place only in the manner of osmosis. Rather, something like the notion of *bearing* could be brought into play: the house as a whole bears the presence of the world, both *carrying it* and *bringing it forth* (to invoke the term's etymology), and in turn bears itself upon the world. Consider the way immediate environs – sunlight, climate, traffic circulation – all bear on the design, composition, and construction of houses. Even laws, population density, conceptions of privacy, economic, technological, and aesthetic practices – all these are embossed into the house, and afford as much exchange as its "pores". And in the same way that porous surfaces allow movement in both directions, inasmuch as houses are constituted by their context and surrounds, so too do they constitute them. Places gain their character as clean, impoverished, uninteresting, rough, etc, through the houses that populate them. In a cursory but nonetheless significant way then, homes, insofar as they remain connected to houses, exhibit a porosity that is not compatible with the idea of complete withdrawal.

As a cognate and metaphor for the home, the house's porosity is instructive. Despite earlier characterisations of the home as insular and self-enclosed, there in fact remains an

61 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

62 I say "conventional" but this of course is qualified the fact that the single-family house (or apartment) is "most conventional" in a certain context – typically in advanced capitalist Western society. It should be acknowledged therefore that my analysis of house and home has been largely grounded in (and limited to) this model, although I make no claims that this represents the most natural or even ideal mode of living. I also acknowledge here Shannon Sullivan's discussion of the nomadic lifestyles of the Roma people, and the tendency throughout European history to impose *gaje* (non-Roma) "settled habits" upon them. Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 151-158.

important sense in which the home too is constituted by a porosity – and there is no contradiction here. There is nothing, for example, that prescribes that as a starting place (or place of return), the home must be fully-enclosed and self-contained. The nature of place, in contradistinction to space, is that it is never definitively demarcated, but rather is marked by boundaries whose precise location remain elusive because they are by their nature unfixed.[63] Second, bodily habits, while highly idiosyncratic expressions of the body and thus in this sense personal, are nonetheless thoroughly mediated by cultural and historical practices, technological affordances, and even interpersonal (and particularly intergenerational[64]) influences. That they are personal and even the fact that they develop behind the "closed door" of the home does not in itself mean that worldly practices are not involved, to the contrary. Finally, though we may ordinarily consider resting to entail retreat in the exclusive sense of removal or withdrawal, this is not strictly true. Looking to Heidegger for example, we can see how home remains in porous exchange with the world even when dwelling is conceptualised as staying and resting. In his analysis, Heidegger does not speak of a pure staying or preserving *itself*, but, through his concept of the fourfold[65], a staying *with* things, and *with* place: "To say that mortals *are* is to say that in dwelling they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and places." (my modification)[66] Staying, on Heidegger's account, is always staying *with* and *among*. And as Jeff Malpas argues, rendered as such, dwelling can never amount to a full withdrawal:

63 See Casey's discussion of border and boundaries in "Walling Racialized Bodies Out: Border versus Boundary at La Fontera" in Emily Lee, *Living Alterities*, 191-193.

64 Jane Lymer's work on "adoptee phenomenology" gives an interesting take on the development of body schema and bodily comportment/habits in gestation, without resorting to a necessarily biologistic account of bodily movement and mannerism. "Alterity and the Maternal in Adoptee Phenomenology", presented at the *Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy* conference, Melbourne, 6 December 2014.

65 This fourfold comprises of the sky, the earth, the divinities, and the mortals

66 Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", 359. Note that the German reads: "*Die Sterblichen sind, das sagt: wohnend durchstehen sie Räume auf Grund ihres Aufenthaltes bei Dingen und* ***Orten***". The word "Orten", translated as "locales", is I think better translated as "places".

> Such preserving and sparing is not, however, a matter of our withdrawing from things. This is, indeed, already evident in Heidegger's talk of 'letting be' [*Gelassenheit*] in the 1930 essay 'On the Essence of Truth'. There Heidegger says that 'to let beings be...does not refer to neglect and indifference but rather the opposite. To let be is to engage oneself with beings'.[67]

Presented in its "middle-voice" between action and inactivity, to dwell *in* place or *among* things means to dwell with an attunement to place as place and things as things. In doing so, dwelling reflects a porosity insofar as it consists of a sensitivity and receptivity to the world as it unfolds to the dweller, and the dweller to it. Even in its stillest moments, dwelling involves a coming and going. Dwelling is porous.

The Porosity of the Body, or Intercorporeality

If homes – analysed above primarily through the structures in which we dwell – are porous, then there is also a strong case to make for the lived body as porous. Indeed, the image of porosity is evoked strikingly by Jean-Luc Nancy in his concept of "ex*peau*sition"[68] – where the body's outer most layer, the skin (*le peau*) marks something of a liminal space between body and world, reminding us of the very literal bodily pores exposing each to the other; indeed, we breathe through these pores of the skin. But so too are such philosophical gestures present in our current analyses. In addition to the passage above on dwelling as staying with things and places, Heidegger's Dasein – though notoriously lacking a body[69] – is also always already a being-with, or *Mit-sein*.[70] More pertinently for our purposes, the distinctively "lived" character of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological body is already imbued with such porosity to the extent that a "lived"

67 Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 270.
68 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Paris: Éditions Métailié, 2006), 31.
69 For a discussion on this, see for example Kevin A. Aho, *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009). I am not entirely convinced by Aho's defence of Heidegger on the question of the body however, including his claim that critics have misunderstood Heidegger's analysis.
70 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 149.

body is one constituted by its responsivity to (and influence by) people, places, practices, situations, and processes. Numerous examples furnished by Merleau-Ponty show this to be the case, including the studies of bodily adjustments to spatial-level inversions[71], the use and incorporation of bodily prosthetics, and so forth. More than a general demonstration of bodily dynamism and flexibility, these examples serve to demonstrate the body's fluidity and continual experience of change, such that the definite article we use for "the" body misleadingly evokes a constant and identifiably self-same body untouched by time, place, and situation.[72] In other words, the lived body's ever-changing perception of the world (with its endless variety of situations), and its capacity to be affected by and to respond to them, is constitutive of its status as a lived body. In our earlier analysis we noted that a house without "pores" no longer serves as a home but rather more aptly as a dungeon, a cellar, or a jail – in a similar sense, a body no longer in porous exchange with its world, no longer affected by and responsive to it, has in a significant sense, become an inanimate body, or a corpse.[73] [74]

What I have provisionally called "porosity" here, Gail Weiss in her book names

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71 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 259-262.

72 This point is also made by Gail Weiss in her book *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1. Iris Marion Young's essay on pregnant embodiment similarly argues that our conception of good health in Western medicine tends to be based on the idea of an unchanging body, when in fact, with the exception of (not yet old) adult male bodies, almost everyone else experiences their own body as a continual process of change – this is true for children, elderly, menstrual and post-menstrual women. Young, "Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation" in *Throwing Like a Girl*, 57.

73 It is interesting to note that the skin condition of Scleroderma, which involves a hardening of the skin and blockage of its pores, and can in its extreme cases be fatal (as it was for artist Paul Klee: Hans Suter, *Paul Klee and his Illness: Bowed but Not Broken by Suffering and Adversity* (Karger, 2010). I thank Ed Casey for bringing this to my attention.

74 It should be clear already from the way I have been using "body" throughout this dissertation, but at the risk of misinterpretation, I do not of course mean to say that people whose "physical bodies" do not appear to move or react – such as those with severe physical disabilities or paralysis – are for our purposes "dead". This is because 1) I have been explicit in invoking the Merleau-Pontian sense of body throughout this dissertation, which is to say, using the term to designate (in the case of human bodies) living persons; and 2) because someone who may not "appear" responsive may nonetheless be responsive, depending on our attentiveness to their modes of bodily expression. This second point is powerfully illustrate in a personal vignette by Eva Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 147.

"intercorporeality". Drawing on Merleau-Ponty and psychoanalyst Paul Schilder, Weiss argues that our body images are "constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed through a series of ongoing, intercorporeal exchanges."[75] Such intercorporeality she argues, is not a deficiency in need of overcoming via the assertion of bodily autonomy – even when expressed in undesireable practices of bodily objectification (racial or gendered) – since it speaks to the fundamental sociality and situatedness of our lived bodies. In her reading of Young's essay, "Throwing Like a Girl"[76] which we discussed in Chapter 1, Weiss therefore criticises Young for blaming patriarchy's objectifying gaze or in Weiss' words the "socially referred character of bodily experience", for inhibiting bodily expression in girls and relegating female bodily experience to the realm of the immanent. While she does not deny that patriarchy has had this effect, her point is that the exclusively negative valuation of this socially referred character of female embodiment remains too tethered to a Cartesian valourisation of the transcendental subject. This is because Weiss insists on a relational ontology, one in which we are co-constituted by our relations with others and with the world, even if this sometimes means in an oppressive way. Given this she argues that we ought not be too quick to identify the other's gaze as that which stands to be overcome. For Weiss, such a charge leads us back to the suspect division between transcendence and immanence. She writes:

> I would resist viewing the socially-referred character of bodily existence as inherently negative or as leading inevitably to immanence. This is because all of our (men's as well as women's) actions have a socially referred character insofar as they arise in response to a social situation.[77]

75 Weiss, *Body Images*, 165.

76 The turn to feminist philosophy is fitting in this discussion of porosity and intercorporeality, since it was after all, the feminist movement that first insisted that "*the personal is political*", opening up a whole new domain and mode of political critique and intellectual inquiry.

77 Weiss, *Body Images,* 46. Note that Young addresses these charges and concedes that her account was too pronounced, in a follow up essay, "Throwing Like a Girl: Twenty Years Later" in Welton, *Body and Flesh*, 286-287.

I take up Weiss' argument more fully in the following chapter on the question of chiasm, but I raise the question here in order to signal that constitutive porosity should not be viewed solely in negative terms since it is precisely what gives both home and body their character. That is, I agree with Weiss that it is precisely by acknowledging the porosity of bodies and homes that we can hold on to their importance, but without falling into the trap of valourising them as coherent, self-constituting, and self-contained entities. And while there are indeed harmful modes or degrees of this porosity or "social reference" (racial and gendered objectification being but two examples), we should not confuse this with the idea that constitution by the "other" or "outside" is always, and in and of itself, harmful.[78] As Weiss argues, such a stance erases an important aspect of the phenomenologically lived body as constitutively and necessarily intercorporeal. Thus, while the slippage into an existential phenomenology is an easy one (Young and Merleau-Ponty, both make efforts to move beyond this framework, with varying success), it is also something which Weiss (and eventually even Young herself[79]) warns us against.

To return to the question of racialisation and world-travelling then, the argument regarding the constitutive porosity of the body and home helps us now to identify in more nuanced terms, the problematic framing of the question as home vs travel. Moreover, it helps us to address some of the concerns raised earlier in relation to the caution of being too much at-home. Specifically, the concern that one is too much "at-home" (whether in the case of whiteness or in the case of clinging to identity markers in response to one's homelessness) risks importing existential frameworks that remain too heavily tethered to their Cartesian commitments. If the

78 Weiss for example argues, "In addition, appealing to the particular kind of social reference that contextualizes an individual's movements, comportment, and action in a given situation, also avoids identifying social reference with either immanence or transcendence and encourages a focus on the *type* of social reference operative rather than the *fact* of social reference itself." Weiss, *Body Images,* 47.

79 See for example, Young, "Pregnant Embodiment".

home is constitutively porous, this means that even in the stillest moments of rest and withdrawal, dwelling unfolds in and alongside the presence of the world and its others. Being-at-home in a house can never amount to complete isolation or withdrawal, in the same way that being-at-home in one's body never fully dispels the presence or glance (and gaze) of the other.[80] This has implications for our analysis of the racialising gaze, as we will explore in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, this constitutive porosity of the home does not displace the value of "world"-travelling as identified by Lugones. This is because to say that the home is porous is not to say that we remain always attentive and attuned to this porosity. Travelling then, is one way we are made to thematise this more explicitly. Or put differently, as Weiss argues in relation to the body, there can be situations where it is both productive and valuable to explicitly engage in an intentional objectification of one's body – the micro attention to muscles in elite sports is one such example. But of course the athlete's objectification of their own body (or indeed a coach's objectification of the athlete's body) is distinct from the case of racial or gendered objectification insofar as their endeavours are directed towards the explicit and mutually understood (and shared) goal of athletic improvement. This meaningful context and shared understanding is naturally absent in the case of racial or gendered bodily objectification. What the example invites us to consider then, is how relations of power (understood broadly to include political, historical, economic, social, and cultural contexts) remain crucial in our normative valuations of the "ideal" levels of being-at-home.

80 This point also bears implication for how we think about other issues such as privacy in the age of camera surveillance and data collection. It becomes harder, following this analysis, to argue that we hold the "rights" to our images in public, or that we have a right not to be recorded in photos or videos while in public since to be in this space is to give a part of our image (and presence) over to others in the same place.

Power, and a Critical Revision of "Travelling"

Indeed I argue that the question of power does more than "factor" into our normative evaluations of intercorporeality and porosity. Remaining within the terms of home-and-travel allows us to see how power injects not just an evaluative metric, but more strikingly, a definitional one. This is because the question of whether an activity can be properly described as "world"-*travelling* as opposed to "forced migration", for example, turns precisely on this question of power. In Lugones' characterisation of women of colour's travelling to and between worlds, the involuntary *and* necessary nature of this activity calls into question whether it is really "travelling", or whether it is a state of forced nomadism or homelessness. In other words, to what extent does "travelling" presuppose an economy of choice or volition? The term "travel", perhaps especially so in the age of accessible and safe commercial transportation, has come to be associated if not almost exclusively with leisure, then at least minimally with a level of economic, social, and political freedom, as well as worldly curiosity.[81] Can one be said to "world"-*travel* if these minimal conditions (the freedoms) are not met? Those who cross the seas in order to seek political refuge, for example, are not usually considered travellers, although their journey (and subsequent adjustment) certainly consists of travelling in its literal and figurative senses. Instead, we understand them more properly as refugees or exiles and not travellers, because the conditions under which they displace themselves – when remaining home is not a viable option – do not make room for questions of choice or volition. In what sense then, are racialised persons *made* to travel by their relatively disempowered social, historical, political, and economic positions? Recall our discussion in Chapter 2, on the way racialised people bear the burden of adapting their bodily movements, behaviour, and comportment so as to pre-empt or

81 People do of course, travel for work but we often call this "commuting".

manage racist projections – this is one example of the differential power relations that call into question the term "travel" in such a context. The question of "choice" is not a meaningful one in the face of racist bodily habits which subject the racialised person to anything from disadvantage, discrimination, to bodily danger.[82] Many other examples abound; the adjustment of African American Vernacular English in order to appear "professional", the adherence to white beauty standards in order to forge careers in news broadcasting, and so forth. While these examples, as noted earlier, resonate with the work or effort involved in travelling, what I argue here is that they exceed the definition of travelling insofar as they constitute more or less *necessary* activities.

But if the ascription "travelling" is not entirely accurate, then it is at least intelligible insofar as it serves as a way to celebrate the agility, flexibility, and creativity of those who engage in such endeavours. (This is a particularly salient point in view of the tendency to pathologise those whose experiences are framed by their racialisation, as discussed in Chapter 2.) Lugones is explicit in her wish to pay homage to such work and skill, and as I will argue later, there are certainly productive moments that arise from the often painful experiences of displacement or alienation. In this regard Lugones' concept goes some way in drawing out the multidimensionality of displacement. Further, if the question of power jeopardises the ascription of "travelling" in the case of racialised bodies (or in the case of "new Mestizas" whom Lugones writes about), this is not to say that the experience of racialisation therefore amounts to, at the other extreme, homelessness or refuge. While the unhomely experience of racialisation shares aspects in common with these experiences, there are important ways in which they are different. As the experience of homeless people (tellingly called SDFs – *sans domicile fixe* – in French)

82 The recent events at Ferguson, Missouri inject a chilling moment of insight into this; the way Black bodies travel (in their mode of self-presentation) in order to avoid most basic harms like getting shot.

bears out, the physical dislocation from one shelter to another, or one sleeping area to another, is called homelessness precisely because there is no steady or stable home from which one departs and to which one returns. It is a kind of forced nomadism. But recalling Fanon's suggestion that the Black man *can* feel at-home among his own, it is not necessarily the case that racialised people lack any sense home. Indeed, hooks' earlier description on homeplaces speaks to the richness and importance of home in Black communities, and in addition to this we can look to the success of coalition groups to see how racialised people can and do feel very much at-home, depending on one's environs and collective projects. This is one important way that the racialised experience differs for example, from that of the transgender experience, which often entails (at least, prior to transition) a deep sense of not feeling at-home or accord with one's body.[83] In contrast to the transgender experience, racialised embodiment is predicated largely on the way in which one's body is *made* conspicuous, whether by the other, or by broader systems and practices in which we participate. It is in other words, predicated on the intersubjective transactions and milieux, whereas the transgender experience, while undoubtedly enmeshed in intersubjective transactions and cultural/social milieux, *arises* from (and also addresses) a more intimate experience of one's body. In the case of racism, the experience of not-being-at-home – and not homelessness – arises primarily from one's milieu.[84]

Being-at-ease

Given these difficulties with the concept of "world"-travelling, a more fitting

83 Of course this is not to deny that the body remains a discursive site; but even granting this, a common experience of transgender people is that they do not feel their gender identities accord with their material, bodily identities – and importantly, this relation is maintained independent of the other's gaze or oppressive practices. It is in this sense that the transgender experience, prior to transition, can involve a sense of homelessness or sense of not-being-at-home in one's body even when away from the other's gaze and social/gendered expectations.

84 Both, obviously, still are implicated in relations of power.

characterisation of the experience of racialised embodiment may come from Ortega's exploration of the concept being-at-ease, which she traces from Heidegger's existential analytic in *Being and Time*. This, I suggest, might serve to qualify our exploration of *Unheimlichkeit*, calling for a finer distinction between the uncanny (*unheimlich*), unhomely (*unheimisch*), and the not-being-at-home (*nicht-zu-Hause-sein*). In her chapter on "hometactics" and what she terms our "multiplicitous selves" (a concept loosely equivocating Weiss' "multiple body images", of Merleau-Pontian lineage), Ortega uses this Heideggerian concept of being-at-ease to describe the peripheral marginal experience of lesbian Latina women. Here, it is not so much that these women are homeless, since their multi-dimensionality makes it meaningless to speak of a *single* home. Instead, Ortega argues that it makes more sense to speak of the "multiplicitous selves".[85] Within this schema, we see how despite the change in metric (from homelessness to unhomely or to not-being-at-ease), the power question remains. Ortega writes for example, that while "there is a sense in which all of us are multiplicitous selves" (a concept here which puts in play our notion of porosity), there is a meaningful distinction between those who find themselves "mostly at ease in the world" and those who do not.[86] For Ortega, this comes down to a question of power and context, and the combination of these can mean that the question of porosity, intercorporeality, or multiplicitous selves only becomes a question for some and not others. She writes,

> For example, consider the way in which power relations and other economic, social, and cultural issues related to the north-south border affect the new mestiza self and lead her to feel the contradictory aspects

85 I note Ortega's departure from Lugones on this point; the "self" as it is envisaged in Lugones' account is problematic for Ortega. Whereas Lugones deals with the question of the travelling self through the concept of memory and a "multiplicity of selves", Ortega argues that "there has to be a perspective from which I can make a judgment about difference and thus appeals to memory as being that which offers this perspective." She continues: "Given the issues above, we will fare better if we can show that our self is complex, multiplicitous, ambiguous, and sometimes even contradictory, and that even though we are multiplicitous, there is still a togetherness to our multiplicity." Ortega, "'New Mestizas,' 'World'-Travelers', and '*Dasein*'", 16.

86 Mariana Ortega, "Hometactics: Self-Mapping, Belonging, and the Home Question" in Lee, *Living Alterities*, 176.

of herself and the sense of being at the limen.[87]

This self- or double- consciousness is thus a phenomenon unevenly experienced, and in the context of the home question, it means that while the home is itself constitutively porous, one's experience of it, given the network of relations in which we are situated, can be more porous – and unwillingly so – than another's. In other words, while the home's porosity guards against the possibility of a romanticised or idealised conception of insularity and self-reference, we should not take this to mean that we all experience this exposure (or ex*peau*sure) to the same extent or in the same way. Or, relating the analysis more directly to the question of porosity and intercorporeality, at what point does our constitutive opening to the world and its others become more like a deluge? Is it still meaningful to speak of a porosity or intercorporeality when one is effectively constituted by the other? Or when one is, to invoke the term once more, "over-determined" by the other? The experience of oneself as strange for others, and strange to oneself (to the extent that one is invited to take a distanced, if not objectifying, stance to the self) are not, in my view, effaced or to be confused with the important fact that all bodily experience is structurally embedded with these possibilities. That is, the fact that we *can* all in one way or another be called to attend explicitly to our bodies, their differences and strangeness, does not diminish the deep anguish when racialised bodies in particular, due to the imposed schema of whiteness, are systematically *required* to do so.

PART 3 – DO WE NEED THE HOME?

If the previous two sections have been successful in claiming that the experience of racialised embodiment is itself an experience in uncanniness (in the sense of strangeness *and*

87 *Ibid.*, 176-7.

unhomeliness), though qualified with the claim that being in general is always marked by some porosity, then a final analysis is required to give significance to the this claim of racialised uncanniness. That is, if racism and the process of racialisation renders one uncanny (in its different valences), we should then inquire after the value or utility of being or feeling canny (in the technical sense of feeling at-home). More bluntly: do we need the home, or do we need to feel at-home, and why? In this final part I explore two contrasting responses to this question through the work of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. Looking first to Merleau-Ponty, I examine how his account of the habitual body relies on a sense of being-homely (or being-habitual) in the execution of one's projects. In his account, the home-body is important because it orients us, providing the ground for the bodily sense of "I can". It is from and through the home-body that we can begin to act. Turning then to Heidegger, who of course supplies the initial inspiration for the "homeward" turn in this chapter, our initial response gets refined. As a pioneering thinker of place and placiality, Heidegger lays great value on the home and as we have seen, its associated activity of dwelling. And yet, by revisiting his thought we see how his own treatment of *die Unheimlichkeit* passes through different colourations during the course of his thinking. In particular, when we return to a closer reading of Heidegger's lecture course *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister"*, we see how uncanniness (in its full sense of strangeness and not-being-at-home) can be of essential importance.

Merleau-Ponty and the "I can" in the Habitual-Homely Body

In a sense the question of the value of being-at-home or being-at-ease has been already intimated in our earlier consideration of the habitual body and its associated modes of motility. Recall our examination of Young's "Throwing Like a Girl", where she tracks the way in which

the non-objectified and non-sexualised male body moves with greater fluidity and freedom, generating a greater depth of bodily space for itself and comfortably filling out that space. This body, in contrast to the lived female body in patriarchal society, is not inhibited by a consciousness or double- (or self-) consciousness[88] as a result of its sexualisation and objectification, and nor is it a body reined in by the imperatives of tidiness or caution (for bodily "fragility"). Lacking these meaningful contexts, the boy's bodily motility is a fitting example of how a sense of being-at-home or at-ease supplies the "I can" of Merleau-Ponty's habitual body. This positively valenced account of the habitual body is also echoed in our earlier account of bodily habit as enabling and forward-looking. Recall there that habit as it appears in Merleau-Ponty's rendering accounted not just for a historical sedimentation of acquired movements and bodily dispositions, but also the way in which our bodies become oriented toward certain possibilities. Merleau-Ponty's own example of the organist, along with my example of parkour, illustrated how bodies become oriented through habits, which then open us up to a field of possibility for action and creativity. On a first pass then, to our question we are supplied with the answer "yes"; we need the home because it allows us to function, to go about our daily projects unimpeded by an objectifying – and ultimately inhibiting – gaze, and indeed because habits themselves, insofar as they are understood as a bodily habituation or orientation, supply the ground or launching pad for action and creativity.[89]

Note then, the resonance with our earlier conceptions of home: the "I can" in the habitual

88 There is a point to make here however about how gender norms and expectations can harmfully impact boys as well as girls, insofar as the expectations "not to throw like a girl" place pressure on boys to live up to those (or have their membership into "malehood" questioned). So it is not strictly true to say that boys move without *any* sense of self-consciousness, although I do maintain that it is a different kind of self-consciousness involved (for example, it is more like a self-consciousness than a double-consciousness since there is no objectifying gaze, but a self-reflexive one.) My thanks to Brian Irwin for prompting me to think further on this point.

89 Recall here Bachelard's claim about the house's quintessential role in making space for "daydreaming".

body is in a sense continuous with the characterisation of home as starting place. It echoes, for example, Rykwert's notion of home as a launching place, or as the place from which we begin, and Jacobson similarly claims that the familiarity and shelter of home is such that it enables and empowers us to act. Asserting once more the parallel of body and home, Jacobson draws explicitly on Merleau-Ponty's claim that the body is generative of space, in order to make a similar argument about the home:

> It is the body, then, that lets us be spread throughout our world, bring specific things forward from the background of this world, and experience these things as having particular places and positions in the world. Thus, ‘‘… far from my body’s being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body’’ (Merleau-Ponty, PhP, p. 102). While we do not typically notice this constitutive role of the body, it pervasively shapes every possible activity in which we do take active notice. The body—and, more specifically, the body in its passivity, in its capacity as the receptive, given core in the background of all experience—is fundamentally the base of our action, and this is equally true of our home.[90]

While I have taken issue with Jacobson's characterisation of the home as noted earlier, on this point we are in agreement; there is something foundational about the home that is fundamentally productive. Insofar as we all need a “here” from where to begin, the home is not just a place among places but something more; a *particular* place imbued with the exemplary qualities of belonging and orientation, qualities that theorists attribute to place more generally. The home is in a certain sense, *a paradigmatic place*.[91]

Despite her reservations, *viz.* the tendency to romanticise the home and divest it of its intrinsically political character, Young too agrees:

> While agreeing with much of this critique, I have also argued that home carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of

90 Jacobson, “A Developed Nature”, 360.

91 The concept “belonging” has perhaps been under-thematised in this chapter so far, and yet it is one of the hallmarks of placial being; our having an orientation in and toward the world by virtue of places. Insofar as home embodies both a sense of belonging (the home belongs to us, but we also belong to it) and orientation, it is a paradigmatic place.

> agency and a shifting and fluid identity. This concept of home does not oppose the personal and the political, but instead describes conditions that make the political possible.[92]

As Young's critical intervention demonstrates, it is possible to hold home in a privileged relation to generativity and creativity, while remaining suspicious of the characterisation of home primarily in terms of insularity or enclosure. On this view, we can affirm the importance of the home while challenging our traditional conceptions of it. As I have argued, this is precisely the point at which Jacobson falters, and it is a point which I would like to further explore. In order to do so, I propose that we turn to the tension in Heidegger's own thought, working through his account of the home as it emerges in his treatment of the uncanny and dwelling.

Revisiting Heidegger's *Unheimlichkeit*

Recall that in *Being and Time*, uncanniness appears on the scene concomitantly with Dasein's experience of anxiety. At this point, having pulled itself away from its fallenness into *das Man,* Dasein can now enter into a more "authentic" mode of being. Dasein is thus fundamentally marked by an uncanniness, and it is in its participation in "the They" that this uncanniness is eluded or postponed. Dasein "flees" itself, seeking out refuge in the "tranquilizing familiarity" of *das Man*, a movement from the uncanny to the canny (in the sense of the familiar), from the not-at-home to the home.[93] It bears repeating that this absorption in *das Man* or this "Being-at-home" is explicitly characterised by Heidegger as both a *fleeing* and a mark of Dasein's *inauthentic* "potentiality-for-Being-its-Self".[94] Yet this changes in the later Heidegger. Recall the claim in the 1951 "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" that dwelling (the activity most

92 Young, "House and Home", 149.
93 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 229.
94 To be sure, the kind of being-at-home is different from the kind we have been considering earlier. For example, the canniness of Dasein's absorption in the They is "the "at-home" of publicness" *Ibid.*, 233, 229.

intimately associated with the home) *is* a kind of being. Here, as in other pieces such as "Poetically Man Dwells", home and being-at-home takes on a different valuation, held up even as the exemplary human activity: "The proper dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must *ever learn to dwell.*"[95] While it is of course true that the subjects of Heidegger's investigations across these writings are not the same (Dasein is not simply or necessarily "man" or "mortal", though I think one can argue that these terms sufficiently equivocate it), I suggest that we can make better sense of this shift by looking to some of his middle period writing, particularly the 1942 lecture course on *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister",* where questions of the uncanny figure prominently and differently.

In *Hölderlin's Hymn* Heidegger's reading and obsessive rereading of the opening choral ode in *Antigone* leads him to claim that Sophocles' *deinon* – which he translates as *Unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness) – captures that which lies at the fundamental core of what it is to be human: "The uncanniest of the uncanny is the human being"[96] In some ways resonant with *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims uncanniness as an ineluctable feature of being human. And yet a significant difference emerges when it comes to the question of how this uncanniness gets taken up; for it is not just that we are ineluctably uncanny, it is also that we *must passage through it* in order to become homely. Heidegger writes, "Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign."[97] This entails two things. First, Heidegger sets up human being as that which always, in spite of itself, veers toward the homely. As fundamentally uncanny creatures, we crave the home. But unlike in *Being and Time*, we do not "fall" or become "absorbed" into it in some idle fashion (as in Dasein's fallenness into *das Man*), rather it is that toward which we

95 Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", 363.
96 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, 68.
97 *Ibid*., 49.

explicitly orient ourselves, that toward which we reach out:

> In that case, Sophocles' word [*deinon*], which speaks of the human being as the most uncanny being, says that human beings are, in a singular sense, not homely, *and that their care is to become homely*. (my emphasis)

Being human – *authentically* human – entails a movement toward the homely, not away from it. And yet, pertinently for our purposes, Heidegger's claim also entails an important second point: that the uncanny constitutes an *essential* encounter in our passage toward the homely. That is, becoming homely does not mean overcoming the foreign, side-stepping or refusing it, but rather, journeying *through* it, and confronting it. As Heidegger writes,

> Being unhomely is no mere deviance from the homely, but rather the converse: a seeking and searching out the homely, a seeking that at times does not know itself. This seeking shies at no danger and no risk. Everywhere it ventures and is underway in all directions.[98]

Little wonder then, why Antigone is held up as the "supreme" uncanny. She is not only uncanny in her being (messy family history, relations to the state, and her overall predicament), but she strives to make sense of these by pushing ahead (some would say, bullishly[99]) with Theban burial rites in the face of situation that is from the outset poisoned. It is her effort at "becoming homely in being unhomely."[100]

This represents a deviation from the earlier accounts of Heideggerian uncanniness and homeliness under consideration, and yet I argue that it does not necessarily amount to a rupture in his thought. Rather, the differential treatment of uncanniness across these works signals the way in which the concept itself provides breadth for – perhaps even solicits – such multi-directional exploitation in drawing out certain emphases. Thus while we see Heidegger

98 *Ibid.*, 74.

99 Mary C. Rawlinson makes this critique in her paper "Antigone, agent of fraternity: how feminism misreads Hegel's misreading of Antigone, or let the other sister speak," (publication forthcoming).

100 "What is worthy of poetizing in this poetic work is nothing other than becoming homely in being unhomely. Antigone herself *is* the poem of becoming homely in being unhomely. Antigone *is* the poem of being unhomely in the proper and supreme sense." Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, 121.

embracing the strange and uncanny in *Hölderlin's Hymn* (and more reluctantly so in *Being and Time*), this stands in no contradiction to his insistence on the centrality and importance of home and place throughout his work, and particularly in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking". Instead we see an instructive forking out of the twin senses of uncanniness, of the strange and unhomely, despite the fact that it is he who first alerted us to their entanglement. On the one hand, the affirmation of dwelling in Heidegger's writing reinforces the importance not only of place in general, but of *home* as a particular and exemplary place of staying, resting, and belonging. However when we read together his various claims on uncanniness, it is impressed upon us that this homeliness *cannot and does not* seal us off into a bubble of ownness or familiarity. Since strangeness is experienced and refracted through our encounter with others, *milieux*, places, or practices, there is a relationality that preserved at the heart of the homely. The interplay between these two analyses is fittingly gathered together in Heidegger's singular imperative, to become "homely in the unhomely". In contrast to Jacobson then, who insists on the importance of the home and yet goes on to characterise the home in terms of enclosure, in Heidegger we have a way to *simultaneously* think the power of home (or dwelling) while holding onto our fundamental exposure and interrelationality of the not-at-home.

Racialised Uncanniness, Redux.

We have travelled some way from the question of racialised embodiment. But the enquiry undertaken here into the normative value of home lends political and ethical import and urgency to our claim that racialisation entails the experience of uncanniness. To begin with, Merleau-Ponty in his account of the habitual body, allows us to grasp the necessity of home and a homely orientation as the basis of our participation in the world. Having explored the intimate

connection between the habitual and the homely (insinuated as we noted earlier through the pair *wohnen* and *Gewohnheit*), we saw how the characterisation of the racialised body as not-at-home provided an additional dimension to the description of its uncanniness. In particular, our analysis of bodily fragmentation and alienation in Chapter 2 are now refracted through an analysis of not-being-at-home. Racialised embodiment entails not only a spatial fragmentation but also a displacement from the home, the consequences of which we see drawn out by thinkers such as Young. Passing this through a Heideggerian analysis, the account yields further nuance. As I have argued, there is room in Heidegger for a deeper and more meaningful encounter with the uncanny, not only as that which inhibits or impedes our embodied being. While it is true that in his broader oeuvre Heidegger gives priority to space and place in the constitution and experience of our being, subordinating (even disregarding) the body and bodily orientation to the power and solicitation of place, and while it is also true that home and dwelling become important cornerstones in his conception of being through both its ontological and poetic figurations, at the same time, he holds onto the uncanny as a quintessentially inexpungeable part of what it means to be or become homely. This significantly reframes our current examination of racialised embodiment, in which the experience of uncanniness (as strange and/or unhomely) has almost exclusively been cast in negative or obstructive terms.

For example, I think that Heidegger's multivalenced reading of the concept prevents us from declaring too swiftly that one's racialisation is experienced *exclusively* in this way. By this I refer not only to the deep camaraderie or rich communities that emerge in response to shared experiences of racism, but more pointedly, to the way one's direct experience of racialised uncanniness throws a naked light on the mechanisms of power, and the role of history, discourse, and intersubjectivity in the formation of one's sense of self. This is a fact that becomes largely

obfuscated (deliberately or not) for those whose whiteness renders their racial identity "invisible".[101] Put differently, for all its fragmentary and interruptive effect (and these are many and real), a racialised double-consciousness is still, quite literally, the acquisition of an *additional* consciousness, a new epistemological standpoint from which to reflect upon one's place in, and relations with, the world. I suggest that something of the sentiment lies behind prominent Black architect Max Bond's reflections "I always felt I was fortunate to be black and thus have a broader frame of reference on the world", in spite of having lived in a deeply racist society, and having forged his career in an exclusive profession.[102] The descriptor "fortunate", which might first strike us as jarring, speaks to the richness and even generative dimension of experiencing oneself as uncanny. Following Heidegger, I think we can maintain, while not wavering in our critique of the disastrous consequences of racism[103], that there *can be* something deeply productive or insightful about the experience of one's own uncanniness (as strangeness *and* unhomeliness), even when this is brought upon by racist habits, actions, and histories.

Of course all this needs to be qualified – heavily and profoundly – with the question of power, and the way it interposes in our analysis of the productive moment of racialised uncanniness. Indeed, as in our analysis of "world"-travelling, the question of power does not so

101 I maintain that it is no coincidence, for example, that many of those working in critical race philosophy (as well as feminist or queer philosophy) seem all to argue for a more relational and historically situated understanding of selfhood. Theoretical work borne of marginal experiences share this philosophical disposition because of the way the experience of exclusion and marginalisation can at the same time better position one for critique and illumination of the problems with dominant conceptual schemas. (Indeed a general but similar point is made by Nietzsche in Gay Science?) I qualify this by saying that such "epistemological privilege" is not limited to those subject to racialisation (as noted in earlier reference to feminist and queer philosophy), and nor is it an epistemological position that is confined to those with marginal experiences. Echoing Yancy's point on epistemological privilege in Chapter 2, it is something that members of dominant groups can of course work on (evidenced for example, by the many white scholars who offer important contributions to anti-racist philosophy and theory).

102 "Blueprint of a Life: Architect J. Max Bond Jr. Has Had to Build Bridges to Reach Ground Zero" in *The Washington Post* 1 July 2004.

103 I have been in this dissertation, looking at racism in a fairly limited, though I would argue foundational, way. If we take a broader view of it however, including the way in which racism has underwritten the colonial project in global history, we can say without exaggeration that racism has been disastrous for humankind.

much interject as it frames the analysis, since it more than matters that those who experience themselves as uncanny rarely do so by their own volition. So herein lies a critical point of distinction with Heidegger's more sympathetic reading of *die Unheimlichkeit*: For while he is right to identify an ontological uncanniness that is essential and fundamental to all being, what we have in the case of racialisation is an additional kind of uncanniness that is *particular* to racialised being. More than the general disorientation (and natal condition) we all experience having been thrown into the world and charged with the task of making sense of it[104], racialised uncanniness *arises from a socially and historically constructed system of racist oppression and domination*, a system which imposes upon the racialised body an uncanniness that is not indigenous to it, and moreover, an uncanniness that *benefits* its white oppressors. As we saw in Chapter 1, the habitual perception of racialised bodies (e.g. in the case of veiled Muslim women) serves partly to reinforce the normalised invisibility of white bodies, in the same way that our discussion in Chapter 2 revealed the ways in which the spatio-temporal fragmentation in racialised bodies works to ensure the smoothness and spatial extension of white embodiment. Our analysis of Heideggerian uncanniness thus, needs to be distinguished from racialised uncanniness on that score.[105] But what his more subtle reading does contribute to our account of racialised uncanniness however, is the way in which this uncanniness can be taken up productively and generatively. It gives us a way for example, to articulate the richness of racialised being, even where that is a richness borne of pain and injustice. At the same time, it also offers us some political insight, with the call to the uncanny prompting us to take up a systematic interrogation of the invisible privilege (and "canniness") of whiteness.

104 For a discussion of thrownness and natality, see: Anne O'Byrne, *Natality and Finitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 23-26.

105 I thank Ed Casey for pressing me to make this point more forcefully.

Finally, in my concluding remarks to the chapter, I note that despite the way I have in this last part pitted Heidegger against Merleau-Ponty (concentrating here on the latter's analysis of habitual body), I admit that positioning the latter in this way does not do justice to the full thrust of his work. There is an opening in Merleau-Ponty's thought, if not for the uncanny directly, then at the least for a fundamental encounter with the other and others, that is, a conceptual schema which equally dislodges us from the egoistic centre of existential phenomenology. Indeed we can easily locate points of rejoinder between Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, moments when Merleau-Ponty's thought echoes centrality of uncanniness in Heidegger's when the latter writes:

> All this is true only on the presupposition that initially human beings are not and indeed never 'of themselves,' or through any self-making, in that which is their own. In that case, however, to dwell in what is one's own is what comes last and is seldom successful and always remains what is most difficult. Yet if the river determines the locality of the homely, then it is of essential assistance in becoming homely in what is one's own.[106]

As I will argue in the following chapter, there is also an important and pregnant account of this not being "of-oneself" to be found in Merleau-Ponty. But whereas for Heidegger during this period, the source of this "not-ownness" can be found in the uncanny, for Merleau-Ponty this is developed more saliently through the relation with others, and with the world – in short, through what I argue is a constitutional porosity or relationality of the chiasm.

106 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, 21.

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RACISM'S GAZE: BETWEEN SARTRE'S BEING-OBJECT AND MERLEAU-PONTY'S INTERTWINING

> *Déjà les regards blancs, les seuls vrais, me dissèquent. Je suis* fixé.
>
> Already the white gazes, the only true gazes, dissect me. I am *fixed*.
>
> – *Fanon, Black Skin White Masks* (my translation)

"Look, a Negro!" The disarmingly simple interjection speaks volumes to the workings and lived experience of racism. "Look, a Negro!" In its most basic structure, racism entails a pointing[1]; one which takes place predominantly in the visual register. *Look*.[2] In this final chapter, I turn to what I argue is one of the most salient features of racism and the experience of racialised embodiment, that of being looked-at, or better, gazed-at. Whatever its form, whether violence, speech, discrimination, or even its more insidious instantiations I have been considering throughout this dissertation (clicking car doors, clutching handbags, etc), racism most commonly[3] starts with a certain kind of looking I call the racialising, racialised, or racist gaze. In this chapter I take up once again questions of this racialising gaze, having briefly encountered

1 This is nicely invoked by the front cover to George Yancy's book, *Look, a White!*, which bears an oversized graphic of a pointing hand.

2 Note that the original is, "*Tiens, un nègre !*". The verb, *tenir*, means literally "to hold". And yet, in its imperative form, *tiens!* does translate well to "look!". It can also mean variously: "wait!", "hold on!", "here (you go)". The temporal dimension of the verb *tenir* indicates the sense of pause or waiting, and thus it functions to inject a moment of interruption, soliciting one's attention. I think for these reasons that the translation into the visual language of "look" does capture the spirit of the word, although it is important not to lose its other senses of holding, waiting, even hesitating (to invoke Al-Saji's work on racialised habits and hesitation).

3 I say "commonly" and not "exclusively" because I *do* think there are some expressions of racism which do not directly or explicitly invoke the racist gaze. The biggest example is white entitlement, as explored in Chapter 2; this does not function on the basis on a gaze of the other – in fact it functions via a non-gaze of the self.

them in Chapter 2, with a view to fleshing out the ontological bases and presuppositions of the phenomenon and its attendant analyses. As I will argue, much of the discourse around the racialising gaze is grounded in something like a Sartrean account of "The Look", which itself is mapped out across broadly Cartesian divisions of subject and object, looking and looked-at. However, following our treatment of porosity and intercorporeality in Chapter 3, I argue that such an ontological framework is limited in ways that subsequently confine our analyses of the racialising gaze to the Manichean terms of subject or object, immanence or transcendence, self or other. Here I turn to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the intertwining, and in particular to his account of flesh ontology, to open up a richer and more nuanced way to think about racialised embodiment. I argue that such an account can help us to further sharpen our analyses of the racist gaze, and contributing to a viable alternative model to this analysis.

PART 1 – SARTRE AND THE RACIALISED GAZE

Racialised Bodies: From Problem to Object

Australian Aboriginal leader and activist, Michael Dodson, once noted during a speech delivered in his capacity as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner:

> Since their first intrusive gaze, colonising cultures have had a pre-occupation with observing, analysing, studying, classifying and labelling "Aborigines" and Aboriginality. Under that gaze Aboriginality changed from being a daily practice to being "a problem to be solved".[4]

The racist gaze, both a key instrument and justification of the colonial project, served to transform those who were gazed-at, in this case the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, into a

4 Michael Dodson, "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality", delivered as the Wentworth Lecture to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994. Transcript available here: https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/end-beginning-redefinding-aboriginality-dodson-1994 (accessed 11 January 2015).

"problem". Dodson's speech goes on to give a sample of the long history of the different gazes cast upon Australia's "Aborigines"[5] since first colonial contact, including the juridical, pedagogical, ethnological, religious, and artistic gaze. "Yes," he remarks, "They have had a lot to say about us."[6] Dodson's reflections of course closely recall those of W.E.B. DuBois who, a century earlier and thousands of miles away, drew a very similar connection. Speaking of whites, he wrote that, "They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, *eye me curiously or compassionately*" (my emphasis), internally fighting their urge to ask, "How does it feel to be a problem?"[7] The vast differences of time, place, and political history are cut across by the gesture of the same racialising gaze.

We can of course, give other examples of this gaze. Edward Said's account of *Orientalism* in his seminal text traces the Occident's fascination with and gaze toward the Orient. Far from benign, such gazes of curiosity and fascination can quickly turn into, as Sara Ahmed argues, a kind of "stranger fetishism".[8] The polite smiles and curious, searching looks I encounter at antique markets displaying Buddha-head statues in Paris, are no less an expression of the racialised gaze than the obtuse shouts of "Hey China!" hurled at me on the streets of country town Victoria. What these different instantiations of the gaze share in common with the earlier examples however, is the way in which they entail a process of "thingification" in Aimé Césaire's words, or "objectification" in Fanon's. Recall that for the latter, the experience of being gazed-at

5 I put quotation marks around this word, following Dodson, to mark its pejorative tone. Though grammatically correct in its nominal form, in the contemporary Australian context the term is avoided at all levels of society– in government, the community sector, news broadcasting – precisely because of its connotations of a specimen under investigation. The preferred terms are "Aboriginal Australians" or "Indigenous Australians", though there remain some controversy over these.

6 Dodson, "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality".

7 W.E.B. DuBois, *Strivings of the Negro People*, p.194

8 I also argue that the different examples of the gaze can bring out more clearly the distinction between "racism" and "racialisation" as I have been employing the terms throughout the dissertation. In particular, the fetishising gaze serves as an example of what we can readily count as racialisation, though not so readily as racism (even though I maintain that it is still *racist*).

is that which turns him into an object. Following the fateful interjection opening his chapter on the Lived Experience of the Black[9], Fanon writes:

> I came into the world imbued with the will to find a 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.[10]

This objecthood is variously described by Fanon as a "nonbeing", or alternately, a being "through others"[11] (specifically, white others). But there is more to this. In earlier passages, Fanon suggests that it is not only the access to or experience of one's Blackness that is filtered through whites, but indeed that Black identity *as such* is created by them. Translated by Markmann as "a white man's artifact", the black soul as described by Fanon, is more than an artifact; it is a "construction" of the white ("*une construction du Blanc*").[12]

In such moments (note also that Said's *Orientalism* is in French subtitled, "*L'Orient* créé *par l'Occident*"), we hear the unmistakable resonance of Sartre's famous proclamation in 1946 that "it is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew".[13] As we also noted in Chapter 2, Fanon's description of Black embodiment as "overdetermined" also borrows directly from Sartre (who himself borrowed the term – problematically, according to Weiss – from Freud). Such references are interesting not only for reasons of philosophical genealogy, but also because they reveal something of the ontological presuppositions to Fanon's work, and to much critical race and post-colonial scholarship more generally.[14] It is my claim that analyses of the racialising gaze

9 This chapter is entitled, *l'Experience veçue du Noir*, has been poorly translated as "The Fact of Blackness" in Markmann's translation.

10 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 109.

11 *Ibid* This is likely a deliberate variation of Sartre's "being-for-others".

12 Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, 11; *Black Skin White Masks*, 14.

13 Sartre, *Anti-Semite & Jew*, 69.

14 I focus primarily on Fanon in this section, given his importance in the field of critical race scholarship, but also because of the relative convenience of being able to draw a clear lineage from Sartre to him. There are many other important critical race and post-colonial scholars however (such as W.E.B. DuBois, Edward Said, bell hooks, Sara Ahmed), for whom Sartre is not an influence (Sartre comes chronologically *after* in some cases, but in others he simply does not figure in their intellectual radars), but for whom I argue Sartre's account might still provide a compatible theoretical foundation. My specific treatment of Fanon and Sartre then, functions also

frequently rely on an ontological framework whose conceptual pillars are cast in terms of a Sartrean subject-object relation. For this reason, and given the profound contribution these analyses make to fields of critical race and post-colonial theory, in the following section I propose a close and critical examination of Sartre's ontological position with respect to the gaze. In particular, I ask whether there are limits to Sartre's account which in turn delimit our analyses of the racialising gaze. And inversely, are there aspects of the racialising gaze which extend or challenge Sartre's account? Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* was of course, substantially influenced by Sartre's writing on a very proximate subject in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. And while the legacy of that text in Fanon's own writing is something I will consider, in order to excavate the ontological underpinnings of these works, I will first turn to Sartre's work in his seminal text, *Being and Nothingness*.

The Subject-Object Relation in Sartre's Gaze

In a section entitled "*Le Regard*" – often translated into English as "The Look" but which in the context of his analysis, I argue, is more appropriately rendered "The Gaze"[15] – Sartre opens by drawing a clear correlation between the gaze and one's object-status:

> This woman whom I see coming toward me, this man who is passing by in the street, this beggar whom I hear calling before my window, all are for me *objects* – of that there is no doubt. Thus it is true that at least one of the modalities of the Other's presence to me is *object*-ness.[16]

metonymically, to invoke other common discourses of racism which are proceed around the touchstones of racism – gaze – object.

15 I think "the Gaze" works as a translation for *Le Regard* here, since it soon becomes clear that the kind of look Sartre has in mind most closely equivocates the gaze in English, however this is not to say that his treatment is *always* one of "the gaze" over the "look". Indeed one of the advantages of the French term is that it allows greater movement or slippage between the two senses of "gaze" and "look". It is also relevant to note in this context that Lacan's and Foucault's separate works on *le regard* are often translated as "the gaze" (although a fuller examination of their respective treatments of *le regard* would be required before making the case for the translation of "the gaze" on this basis alone).

16 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E, Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 340.

Having already considered the body's first ontological dimension, the *being-for-itself*, in this section Sartre now turns to a second: my body's *being-for-other*, or correlatively (though not unproblematically[17]), the Other's being-for-me. Just as the Other appears for-me as an object in this second ontological dimension the body, so too can I appear for it in the manner of being-object. As Martin C. Dillon has helpfully surmised in his chapter, "Sartre on the Phenomenal Body and Merleau-Ponty's Critique":

> When – through the phenomenon of "the look" – I become aware of my body as the object of another's consciousness, when I feel his objectifying gaze upon my body, my experience is one of being objectified.[18]

These first two modes or "ontological dimensions" of the body, *being-for-itself* and *being-for-others*, map roughly onto the Cartesian dualism of subject and object, and as Dillon has argued, do so by importing a version of the Cartesian distinction between immanence and transcendence, despite Sartre's own stated efforts to overcome this. The look (or the gaze) then, plays a defining role in the determination of one's experience either as subject-self or object-Other, and this we see reflected in Fanon's own analyses of the Black body as the object gazed-at or pointed to.

That the gaze turns the approaching woman or the street beggar into objects, is in part, according to Sartre, a function of the spatial dimension of vision. For Sartre the spatial relation of distances undergoes transformation through the gaze. In his words, the Other's gaze "*holds me at a distance"*[19], or conversely, my gaze holds the Other-as-object at a distance. Note here the resonance with Yancy's analysis of the locking car door, a gesture which seals in the white body, securing it from the passing Black (male) body-object, a body which is now held at a safe felt or

17 Dillon argues that Sartre errs in equating the two (the Other's being-for-me and my being-for-Other), which are not in fact entirely reciprocal. Martin C. Dillon, "Sartre on the Phenomenal Body and Merleau-Ponty's Critique" in ed. Jon Stewart, *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 127.

18 *Ibid*., 129.

19 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 347.

lived distance (even as the physical, measurable distances remain unchanged). And as the object held "out there", such distances foreclose possibilities of near-dwelling; the object is she who dwells (stays) far from us, with whom there is minimal chance of porous exchange. This removal is significant for Sartre, given that he earlier describes subjectivity precisely in such spatial terms; to be a subject is to have space organised and oriented around oneself, it is to have distances run – or in Sartre's word, "unfold" – from you. (This echoes both early Heideggerian and Merleau-Pontian treatments of spatial experience). But as Sartre elaborates, to be object is thus to be stripped of such spatial privilege, it is to be spatially emptied:

> In particular the Other's look, which is a look-looking and not a look-looked-at, denies my distances from objects and unfolds its own distances. This look of the Other is given immediately as that by which distance comes to the world at the heart of a presence without distance. I withdraw; I am stripped of my distanceless presence to my world, and I am provided with a distance from the Other.[20]

The situation becomes more complicated, granted, as Sartre goes on to consider how the Other can appear for us differently and distinct from other objects, since she too has a gravitas which can pull the world to her distances.

> Thus suddenly an object has appeared which has stolen the world from me. Everything is in place; everything still exists for me; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object.[21]

This is the beginning of the slippage between the Other's status (for-me) as object and subject, through the phenomenon of reversibility. And while as we will see later, it is possible in Sartre's ontology that we switch between the two modes of subject and object, we cannot experience them concurrently. Thus Sartre returns frequently to the phrase, as if in refrain, "But the *Other* is still an object *for me*. He belongs to *my distances*..."[22] Distances may start to emerge in relation

20 *Ibid*., 360.
21 *Ibid.,* 343.
22 *Ibid*.

to the Other, and but ultimately the space of the Other is still, according to Sartre, "made *with my space.*"[23]

A second important operation in the gaze's transformation of the Other-into-object, intimately tied up with the function of distance, is the synthesising concept of power. In holding out the Other at a distance, the gaze effects an objectification by way of an asymmetrical power relation. The seer *imposes* her distances, her spatial orientation, onto the Other-as-object, or subsumes the Other into them. The distancing entailed in vision becomes a matter of force and imposition; one is pulled into the seer's spatial field. Moreover, in Sartre's analysis of shame there is a distinct sense in which the gaze leaves the Other-as-object both revealed and exposed. In his example of the person who peers through a keyhole but then is then caught (*seen*) doing this, the moment incites a feeling of shame because the *voyeur (voyeuse)* is revealed in their naked being; she in turn becomes exposed and seen in her seeing. Sartre writes of shame, that

> ...it is the *recognition* of the fact that I *am* indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging. I can be ashamed only as my freedom escapes me in order to become a *given* object. (original emphasis)[24]

This "vision-power-object" triad is perhaps most compellingly treated by Michel Foucault in works such as *Discipline and Punish.* (And it is interesting to note that in the original French title, what gets translated into English as "Discipline" is the verb "*Surveiller*", a term which already invokes the visual register). In an incisive chapter on panopticism, Foucault demonstrates how the economics of visibility can be leveraged to effect and sustain disciplinary power, a mode of power which trades on the in principle omnivisibility of prison inmates within the structure of the panopticon, set against the centralised watchtower whose guards remain, for the inmates, invisible. This unidirectional system of optics leads inmates to internalise their own policing,

23 *Ibid.*
24 *Ibid*., 350.

such that it becomes

> …at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much because he has no need in fact of being so.[25]

As Foucault's analysis shows, extending what is intimated in Sartre's account, questions of power[26] are deeply implicated in the relations of visibility.

Racism's Gaze and the Racialised Object

There are then, some undoubtedly powerful resonances between Sartre's ontology of the gaze (and Foucault's extension of it), with the experience of racialised embodiment. Indeed, the precipitous cry, "Look, a Negro!" in many ways exemplifies the Sartrean gaze. Fanon is spotted in and as his Black body, and in the moment of the look ("Look!") his being is crystallised into a *being-for-others*; he has become the white boy's object to call out, point out, and fear. From the mode of *being-for-itself* while travelling along uneventfully in the train, merely "existing his body" to borrow Sartre's locution, he has in the instant of the gaze, been swept up and transformed into the object of the Other's gaze. And insofar as the Sartrean gaze entails a distancing, so too can we easily identify moments of distancing in the case of the racialising gaze. The intransigence of Western representations of veiled Muslim women can be put down to not only the habitualised modes of perception as discussed in Chapter 1, but also to the way these women are held at a distance. As Al-Saji has argued in a later piece: "Living with Muslim women who wear the hijab, and forming attachments with them" offers possibilities for

25 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 201.

26 It is important to note that Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish* speaks of *institutional power* insofar as his analyses pertain to institutional contexts such as prison, schools (and in other works, the medical and scientific contexts). However, I speak here of power in its generality, since I believe that his account of institutional power and its entanglement with the visual register is also generalisable to power in non-institutional contexts.

redrawing our "affective maps" in ways that arguments and cognitive shifts cannot.[27] In other words, the intimacy of "living with" and *near* veiled Muslim women (and this can take the form of dwelling, socialising, organising, or working with) renders difficult the objectification of them, as these distances become harder to sustain. Moreover, as we saw in our investigations of the home in Chapter 3, racialised embodiment can be characterised as a kind of not-at-home, which among other things entails a displacement from centres of being, dwelling, and subjectivity. To feel not-at-home is precisely to be pushed out, to be *at a distance* from wherever one feels to be "home", and to be pushed out of what Heidegger calls "Being-in", or *In-sein*.[28] This recurrent sense of being-at-a-distance is thus concordant with the sense of objecthood experienced by the racialised body.

Finally, the Sartrean description of the gaze and its ontological framework dovetails with our account insofar as power constitutes an essential element of the racialising gaze. That power is thoroughly implicated in the dynamics of looking/being-looked-at are borne out compellingly in a story recounted by Lewis Gordon in his book, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*, which, it should be noted, is set explicitly within a Sartrean framework:

> The white body is expected not to be looked at by black bodies. This is because the black body's situation of being-without-a-perspective cannot be maintained if blacks are able to unleash the Look.
> There was a period in the American South when, for blacks, looking a white in the eye carried the risk of being lynched. Calvin Hernton reports, for example, an infamous case of rape by 'reckless eyeballing' that occurred in Mississippi in the 1950s: 'The Negro was on one side of the street and the [white] woman was on the other side. She screamed. What happened? 'That "nigger" tried to attack me.' 'But he's way over there across the street going in the opposite direction!' 'Why

27 Although note that this is not some naive claim that all racism would dissipate if we all just live together. Rather the argument is that forms of racist perception are thoroughly embedded in our "affective maps", not always accessible or changeable by our cognitive efforts. Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation", 160. Note also that Lewis Gordon agrees on the point of affectivity: "It is difficult to imagine a racist who is without some form of emotional or affective response in the presence of the people whom he regards as his racial inferiors." Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 78.

28 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79. My thanks to Ed Casey for the reference.

> h e *looked* at me as if he were going to attack me.' The Negro was arrested, tried, and sentenced!' As absurd as this case may be, the white woman in the example exemplifies a point: The Look is sadistic. Thus the Negro had, indeed, attacked her, apparently, simply by looking at her.[29]

While I do not agree with Gordon that the look is necessarily sadistic (think, for example, of the curious or fetishising gaze in the case of Orientalism, which is a problematic gaze to be sure, but not always a sadistic one; or the loving gaze, which I discuss further below), I do agree that power is always a constitutive dimension of the racialising gaze. It expresses either an underlying sense of epistemic and perspectival entitlement in the case of whites, and so in the case of this Black man, we see why the so-called attempt to assert or exercise that power by him proves so offensive and violent for the white woman. We see iterations of this story in contemporary society when white people respond to reversals of the racialised gaze – whether through film, blogs, comedy, or even academic work – with anger, contempt, and even in more extreme cases, or threats of personal violence. That Bangledeshi Australian stand-up comedian Aamer Rahman for example, has received numerous death threats in response to his parodies and satirical critiques of white privilege, speaks to the ferocity and intensity of feeling evoked when this gaze is reversed.[30] (And there exists an important parallel with this in feminist critics of male dominated fields such as online gaming, as the "gamergate" controversy in 2014 demonstrated.) This is despite the fact that such generalisations and caricatures of non-white people saturate the everyday cultural imaginary. As Sullivan notes in her article "White World-Traveling", citing bell hooks:

> Given the history of white control of the Black gaze, white people generally do not think of themselves as the object of Black vision and judgment. White people tend to 'think they are seen by black folks only

29 Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism,* 103.
30 Personal conversation with Rahman.

> as they want to appear' (hooks, 1992).[31]

Insofar as the dynamics of the gaze in Sartre's account bear direct relation to the poles of power, we can see why the gaze's reversal can solicit such strong responses. Recalling that in his analysis of shame, to find oneself suddenly looked-at, when voyeuristically bent over a keyhole, is to find oneself naked and exposed. The moment of vulnerability is thus experienced as a disempowerment, or in Sartre's term, a deflowering: "What is seen is possessed, to see is to *deflower*."[32]

The Reversibility of the Gaze

This last point – the reversal of the white gaze – speaks to what is known in Sartre as the reversibility of the gaze. While it is the case for Sartre that we apprehend the Other-as-object, it is also true that in the relation of the gaze, we can be *looked-at*, that is, we can be objects *for* the Other. There is a reversibility of the gaze in Sartre's account, where it becomes possible for the Other and I to trade places in the gaze-relation, thereby marking the possibility of one's moving between the poles of subject and object:

> ...if the Other-as-object is defined in connection with the world as object which sees what I see, then my fundamental connection with the Other-as-subject must be able to be referred back to my permanent possibility of *being seen* by the Other. It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject.[33]

In fact not only is this switch possible, but as indicated above, it is the sole means through which I can come to understand the Other as something more than object, the Other-as-subject. That is, my ability to move beyond my initial apprehension of the Other-as-object to Other-as-subject

31 Shannon Sullivan, "White World-Traveling", 303.
32 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 738.
33 *Ibid*., 344-5.

hinges on the "revelation" of this reversibility, on the revelation that *I too* can appear as object for her. And yet, as we saw above, this reversibility does not take place easily in the case of the racialising gaze. Though in principle reversible, the hegemonic power of whiteness is such that the racialising gaze remains stuck in its unidirectionality. Fanon makes note of this point when he writes:

> For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.[34]

Here, Sartre's account does not adequately envisage schemas in which the hegemonic relations of power – as in racism – undermine the in-principle reversibility of the gaze. The lived experience of racism, in which the white gaze serves as a normative gaze, points to this shortcoming in Sartre's account.

PART 2 – CRITIQUES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SARTREAN GAZE-OBJECT ONTOLOGY

While we have considered some of the important ways Sartre's account of the gaze ontologically grounds and complements our analyses of the racialising gaze, there remain some important limitations to his account which we should examine. I consider three broad limitations here.

Ways of Looking

Between the Gaze and the Glance

It is worth pausing for a moment to question whether what I have been calling the gaze,

34 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks,* 110.

taking my cue both from Sartre and postcolonial thinkers such as Fanon, is indeed appropriately thematised as such, or whether it would benefit from further conceptual precision. Through the course of his phenomenological investigations into looking, in *The World at a Glance*, Edward Casey carefully delineates different modes of looking, arguing that the glance and the gaze "represent the two ends of an entire axis that extends from steady, continuous looking to darting and discontinuous seeing."[35] Whereas the gaze is most often associated with the characteristics of slow, patient, and contemplative looking, "plumbing the depths" of its visual object, as Casey argues, the glance represents a flightier mode, prone to distraction and "alighting on surfaces". He writes: "The glance is a literally superficial activity, and that is its very strength."[36] And yet, this does not square with our own descriptions of the racialising gaze. While it may be true that the racialising gaze, in line with Casey's description, "lingers" on the racialised body – the white boy's gaze, when calling out Fanon, is not easily drawn away, despite his mother's increasing embarrassment – is it not also the case that this gaze transacts primarily with surfaces? After all, it is the *surface* of Fanon's skin which draws the boy's gaze, a gaze which never attempts to plumb deeply enough to discover Fanon's "refined manners, knowledge of literature, or understanding of the quantum theory."[37] What Casey's analysis prompts us to consider then, beyond Sartre's topography of the gaze-relation, is the *quality* of looking. For example, in what way does the racialising gaze entail a *non-seeing*? Such a characterisation would help to explain the phenomenon of racialised *invisibility*, described powerfully by African American author, Ralph Ellison: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."[38] Likewise, the legal doctrine of *terra nullius*, activated by the British to justify colonisation in Australia (and

35 Casey, *World at a Glance*, 132.
36 *Ibid*., 140.
37 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks,* 117.
38 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 1.

legally overturned only in 1992), entailed a comparable *non-seeing* of Aboriginal peoples and their highly sophisticated cultural and social practices. Such examples, which may intuitively appear to run counter to our analyses of the racialising gaze, in fact are continuous with it insofar as we understand the latter as a distorted kind of gazing. As Yancy writes of Ellison, "To be 'seen' in this way is not to be seen at all."[39]

The "Loving Regard"

Following this, we might then ask, are there other modes of seeing which are foreclosed by Sartre's account, and which may be pertinent for our purposes? In fact, how can the gaze in Casey's broader sense of the term (as well as the glance, in his project) be used to leverage more ethical modes of seeing? In our analysis of Sartre we note that the visibility of the body is cast almost exclusively in negative terms (which in itself is interesting given "the Look" is supposed to lay the foundation for Sartre's analysis of love). But aren't there other kinds of looking – even at racialised bodies – that are not framed in this way? The "Black is Beautiful" movement of the 1960s, with its reclaiming of the Black body as a site of beauty and pride, is one such example.[40] Precipitating a gestalt shift, movements such as these disrupt existing taxonomies of the gaze and institute new ways of seeing. Sartre's viewer-viewed (subject-object) ontology however, insofar as it remains tethered to the idea of visibility as disempowerment or vulnerable exposure, does not appear to accommodate such shifts. As commentators such as Glen A. Mazis have argued, this represents a failure on the part of Sartre to seriously consider other kinds of gazes (or in

39 Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 76.

40 Sartre himself was of course, famously (though ambivalently) connected to the Negritude movement of the francophone world in the 1930s and 40s (involving figures such as Césaire and Fanon), having penned *Orphée Noir* for the preface to Senghor's key anthology of Black poetry. This involvement however did not seem to bear on his own thinking about the gaze. For discussion of his involvement see: ed. John C. Hawley, *Encyclopaedia of Postcolonial Studies* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2001), 323.

Mazis' term, regards[41]). Whereas Sartre's gaze "turned to the power of vision to deflower, to strip away, to violate, and to possess"[42], Mazis argues that a vision more attuned to the sense of touch (and in particular to the caress) may open up different possibilities of seeing:

> In the loving regard, one is seen within the web of one's actions and possibilities. Therefore, one can be comfortable or even pleased by this nudity, because it does not strip away one's identity and reduce one to pure object. Sight borrows a lesson from tactile experience as here one uses vision not to register the other at a distance or deflower or violate or even unmask the other, but rather one *touches* the other with the regard of one's glance, and allows the other's visual appearance to *touch* one with the atmosphere of their entire being.[43]

This criticism, which might at first appear merely to exhort Sartre to broaden his range of seeing in the treatment of the gaze, in fact holds a deeper criticism insofar as it throws into question the alignment of seer-subject and seen-object. Specifically, it challenges the characterisation of seen always *as object*, given there are ways in which, as Mazis points out above, visual appearances can also speak out to or "touch" us. This is the case not only for art-objects such as the dancer (in Mazis' example), but also in everyday situations when we are, as the phrase goes, "struck by the sight of something". Agreeing with Mazis, I contend that Sartre's treatment gives too much power to the (objectifying) gaze, allowing its taxonomy to dominate, perhaps even direct, his ontological imagination. For his part, Mazis is interested in how the structure of touch – and specifically a Merleau-Pontian account, which we will explore later in the chapter – offers possibilities for a more sophisticated and nuanced ontology. And while Mazis is not alone in calling for a more central treatment of touch in our thinking – Liz Grosz makes a similar call in *Volatile Bodies* – it should be noted that the power of visual-thinking is not easily

41 Mazis opts for the language of "the regard" even though this transliteration of *le regard* does not work well in contemporary English. But we can understand his decision insofar as it does allow him to refrain from committing to either look or gaze (see footnote 14 for a discussion of the translation of *le regard* as "the look" or "the gaze"). Glen A. Mazis, "Touch and Vision: Rethinking with Merleau-Ponty Sartre on the Caress" in Stewart, *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, 144.

42 *Ibid.*, 150.

43 *Ibid.*, 151.

shaken off. It is interesting to note for example, that whereas Mazis relies on Merleau-Ponty in order to usher in a new ontology grounded in touch, for Grosz (following Irigaray) Merleau-Ponty does not sufficiently disentangle the touch from vision. In fact whereas Mazis turns to Merleau-Ponty over Sartre for a more haptically grounded ontology, Grosz argues that Merleau-Ponty remains nonetheless too beholden to visual analyses in his consideration of the tangible; that he does not shake off the visual register *enough*.[44] While Grosz goes on to consider some of the important feminist implications from this failure[45], I mention this here to signal some of the difficulties encountered in attempts to move away from sedimented conceptual schemas. And while we defer our consideration of Merleau-Ponty's account of touch for the next section, it is worth registering now that some of the criticisms raised by Mazis in relation to Sartre were already anticipated in our discussion of visibility and the racialised body in Chapter 2.

Seeing Oneself Being Seen, and the Subject-Object Distinction

We noted in Chapter 2 that the visibility or hyper-visibility of the racialised body extends beyond being seen, to also *seeing oneself being seen*. Fanon captures this powerfully in the retelling of his experience, that is, in the performativity of his own writing. The young boy's increasingly desperate cries at “the Negro” are interspersed with Fanon's own internal reflections and responses to his being so publicly singled out and gazed-at. That he documents the inner turmoil, exasperation, amusement, and angst he experiences by being called out, demonstrates to

44 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 105-6.

45 Grosz (following Irigaray) argues for example that the visual register as the register in which phallocentric “lack” can be most effectively thematised: “...the visual is the domain in which lack is to be located; it is the order of plenitude, gestalt, and absence: the order which designates female genitals as missing, an order which is incompatible with the plenitude, enfolding and infinite complexity of the tactile and the tangible.” *Ibid.*, 106. I disagree however that the visual register is bound to an economy of “lack”; in the case of racialised bodies, it is not “lack” that is thematised, but “excess”. The racialised body is that which has an excess, of pigment, of meaning. Notably here, the white body is not conceived as a “lack”, but as the neutral, or a non-lacking nothing.

us a seemingly benign yet highly significant point; he sees himself being seen. Du Bois makes a similar point when he says,

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.[46]

Of course this "looking at one's self through the eyes of others" also has a correlate in gendered analyses of body-objectification, and in the case of women of colour, this very often entails a *doubling* of the double-consciousness. That is, for women of colour the experience of double-consciousness that arises from one's racialisation in white society, is itself doubled or compounded in a patriarchal climate where women's bodies are sexually objectified, and in the case of women of colour, sexually objectified in a particular way (as exotic, submissive, sexually available, and so forth). This imposes a *further* double-consciousness.

We should note that Sartre does treat this question to some extent, in his exploration of the "third ontological dimension of the body", when he writes:

> With the appearance of the Other's look I experience the revelation of my being-as-object; that is, of my transcendence as transcended. A me-as-object is revealed to me as an unknowable being, as the flight into an Other which I am with full responsibility.[47]

At first glance this seems to capture the problematic we have identified; the experiencing of oneself as-object for another, or to see oneself being seen. An important difference however is that in Sartre's account, I can become aware of myself as object-for-the-Other, yet this does not make me privy to *how* I appear to them. I am merely aware of this structure of the appearance but not its content: "But while I can not know or even conceive of this 'Me' in its reality, at least I am not without apprehending certain of its formal structures."[48] In other words, I can never be

46 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: Dover, 1994), 2.
47 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 461.
48 *Ibid.*

reflectively aware of the substance or meaning of my "objecthood" for the Other, only that I appear as Other for them. However this is not the case in the racialising gaze; as we saw at the end of Chapter 2 with Dawn's encounter while shopping in Darwin, the particulars of a gaze need not be spelled out in order for her to grasp their meaning. Racist histories, political discourses, social practices come together in supplying the horizon from which the meaning of a gaze (and one's being gazed-at) becomes eminently graspable, even on a pre-reflective level.

Additionally, while it is possible in Sartre's account, to be aware of one's being-object for the Other, to *be* that object for oneself is to exist in bad faith. This is why Dillon has called this mode, "the Body-for-Itself-for-Others".[49] Thus, far from offering a mediating position between the first and second ontological dimensions of the body, this third dimension, as Dillon has argued, actually serves to remind us of the "impossibility of any rapprochement" between the first two modes of being-for-itself and being-for-Others.[50] That is, we are on Sartre's account, either beings for-ourselves or for-others, but never both. This in turn tugs at a deeper underlying problem of his position. Recalling our analysis of being-at-home in Chapter 3, and in particular the discussion of porosity in relation to the home, we note how modes of being are very often doubled up; in the case of dwelling, it is not just that we can shift *between* different modes of being-at-home and not-being-at-home, but rather, how each is already permeated by the experience of the other. We can find ourselves *simultaneously* at-home *and* not-at-home. Of course it is true that one mode might strike us as more salient than others at any given time, but it is structurally the case that we can experience both concurrently; this is what the double-consciousness of racialised experience expresses. However this is what Sartre's account expressly forbids. In the earlier analysis of the gaze's reversibility, we did not yet mark the fact

49 Dillon, "Sartre on the Phenomenal Body and Merleau-Ponty's Critique", 126.
50 *Ibid.*, 133.

that while reversibility allows the possibility of the Other's movement beyond their object-status (for me), it comes at the price of my assuming that object position (for her). And accordingly, to find myself at the end of the Other's gaze is to concurrently find myself divested of my subjectivity. In the relation of self and Other, one of us must always remain the object. We see here how this aspect of Sartre's ontology remains firmly rooted in the Cartesian terms of subject-object, immanence and transcendence, and being such, his framework does not permit the kind of double lining which marks the experience of racialised embodiment. As Dillon has argued, this position carries over to Sartre's analysis on touch. In response to what classical psychology terms "double sensation" – the notion of simultaneously touching and being touched, therefore a suitable correlate of this visual reversibility – Dillion argues that Sartre's rejection stems from his Cartesian positioning of subject and object:

> The body is either subject (being-for-itself) who is touching or object (being-for-others) that is touched; to be both at once is impossible: there can be no such thing as a double sensation.[51]

As Dillon goes on to argue however, not only is clear separation of the two "incommunicable levels" of being-subject and being-object rendered suspect on the basis of the lived experience of ambiguity (to be discussed later), but it also reveals an internal inconsistency within Sartre's own schema. This is because in his discussion of shame, Dillon argues that this affective response makes sense only if the object-seen holds at the time of their being seen, an expectation of subjecthood. That is, the affective response of shame arises only because one has certain expectations of subjectivity and invisibility. As Dillon explains in this passage, employing here the term "alienation" in lieu of shame:

> 'Alienation' connotes more than mere difference, mere otherness. It conveys the idea of estrangement and exclusion, and has overtones of

51 *Ibid.*, 134.

> *disappointed expectations.* To be different is not necessarily to be alien. Alienation arises when hopes and anticipations of inclusion and familiarity are thwarted and frustrated by exclusion and estrangement. ...In the present context, then, to find a difference between the body one lives (and experiences nonthetically) and the body one knows (by thematic reflection) is to experience alienation *only if that otherness appears where one had anticipated solidarity*.[52] (my emphasis)

This analysis, though proceeding in terms of shame and affectivity, calls to mind Heidegger's later treatment of uncanniness, which as we saw in Chapter 3, called for the move to *become homely in the unhomely*. Recall that, for him, Antigone stood out as the supreme figure of uncanniness precisely because she held fast to her alien (and tragic) fate, demanding its recognition within the homely realm of the city. We can also certainly relate Dillon's analysis to the case of the racialising gaze; in an earlier quote we noted how Fanon himself was explicit about his coming into the world with hopes and desires, only to have the racialising, Medusa-like gaze freeze him in place as object. What these reflections push us to question then, is the tenability of such clean subject-object distinctions, which wash over the moments of ambiguity and bivalence in the gaze relation.

Visual Ambiguity in (Racialised) Bodies

In this final section we turn to Gail Weiss, who takes up precisely the question of ambiguity in relation to Sartre (and Fanon) in her essay, "Pride and Prejudice: Ambiguous Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Identities of Jewish Bodies". Importantly for our purposes, her critique addresses Sartre's work with explicit regard to questions of race, and is built around the

52 *Ibid.*, 137-8. I think Dillon's term "disappointed expectations" resonates powerfully with my own earlier reflections in Chapter 2 of "doing the markets" in Paris, where the racially objectifying interjection registered in me as an overriding feeling of disappointment (in addition to anger and humiliation). Dillon's analysis here gives a rich analysis of why that was the case, noting the underlying expectations of selfhood and solidarity which get thwarted.

very closely related question of Jewish identity. In this piece Weiss challenges what she claims to be the overly simplistic picture of Jewish identity presented in Sartre and inadequately remedied by Fanon. In particular, she is concerned that Sartre overstates the account of objectification and the constitution by the other. The analysis is two fold: First, Weiss argues that the term "overdetermination" as employed by Sartre (and Fanon, following him) is a misappropriation of Freud's term, leading to too-hasty a conclusion on the nature of bodily identity. That is, in famously claiming that "it is the anti-Semite who *creates* the Jew," Sartre moves Freud's term from its original domain of experiences and objects, to people. That *people* (such as Jews) and not experiences (such as Dora's dream) are described as "overdetermined" gives too much power, she argues, to the Other in the constitution of one's self-identity, indeed in the objectification of one's self – something Freud himself never claimed, and something which fails to fully account for the role of Jews in the experience of their own bodily identities.

This criticism warrants a closer look. As we have seen in Chapter 2 and again in this chapter, the influence of *Anti-Semite and Jew* on Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* is evident. And yet it is also true that Fanon draws some important distinctions between the situation of the Jew and the situation of the Black:

> The Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am a slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance.[53]

Thus while Fanon does appropriate Sartre's version of "overdetermination" in looking at the constitution of the Black body by the Other, his distinction is such that it reintroduces some ambiguity (though for Weiss, ultimately not enough) into the case of Jewish identity.[54] In this

53 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 115-6.

54 Weiss also notes that another key difference is that Sartre speaks of overdetermination from within, whereas for Fanon it is primarily overdetermination from without. Gail Weiss, "Pride and Prejudice: Ambiguous Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Identities of Jewish Bodies" in Lee, *Living Alterities*, 221.

passage Fanon reserves this experience of visual overdetermination for Blacks (though perhaps not exclusively), implying that Jewish identity is not as visually fixed or given, since it is possible for the Jew to "pass". The identification of a Jew then, takes place not in the seamless perception of their skin colour or morphological features, the argument would go, but through other physical features such as religious garments, hair, or even the yellow star. However despite this reintroduction of ambiguity in the case of Jewish identity, Weiss contests the implication that because Jewishness is not inscribed (exclusively[55]) in skin colour, that it is any less embedded visually and bodily. She thus challenges the too-hasty ascription of "voluntary" vs "involuntary" bodily appearance which Fanon's distinction seems to invite, arguing that it is both dangerous and divisive to fall into the trap of comparing prejudices.[56]

For Weiss then, although Fanon adds nuance to Sartre's (mis)appropriation of the term "overdetermination", he does not do this in ways she finds productive. In part we might say this is because Fanon is too narrowly focussed on a certain economy of visibility, privileging the visibility of the epidermal layer as prior and more significant than other visible aspects of the body. Such a line would place us back in the earlier criticism pertaining to rigid modes of seeing. And yet, recall that Weiss' criticism is not directed exclusively at Fanon, but rather primarily Sartre (who after all, initiates the appropriation). Weiss' primary criticism thus, is that *both* Sartre and Fanon, in describing the Jewish and Black experiences respectively in the language of

55 Of course, as Weiss notes there are Black Jews and other Jews of colour. *Ibid.*, 220.

56 That is, Weiss argues that Fanon's sharp distinction between the Jew and the Black seems to suggest that Jewishness is visible on the visual register primarily through "voluntary" modes of presentation (clothing, hair, style). While I think she is right to demand a more nuanced treatment of the relation of racial identity to the epidermal layer (especially *viz.* the phenomenon of racial "passing", which we will consider later), I wonder if she is perhaps too critical of Fanon here. For one, he does acknowledge the way in which bodily physiognomy is one salient aspect "exposing" Jews to a level of visibility. But second, I think his claim concerns the immediacy of the flesh, and the way in which racist structures of perception *do* hone in on certain aspects of bodily presentation before others as a primary indicator of race (which is different from saying that they ought to). *Ibid.,* 227.

overdetermination, misapply Freud's original concept. But moving to the second part of Weiss' critique, more than a textual misstep, she argues that the characterisation of these identities as overdetermined fundamentally misunderstands the intercorporeal nature of bodily identity. She writes:

> Crediting the other with the ability to define one's identity...not only eviscerates the agency of those who are oppressed by the other's essentializing descriptions, but also forecloses some of the inherent ambiguity that, I am claiming, always attends each of these identities...[57]

In other words, Weiss argues that in their misappropriation of the concept, Sartre and Fanon do a disservice to Jewish and Black identities by washing over the critical space of ambiguity and indeterminacy. Recast in the language of the gazed-at-object, Weiss' argument is that it is too much to say that the object of the gaze becomes, merely and wholly, an object.

It is not the case however, that Weiss grounds the argument of ambiguity solely in the nature of Jewish identity and its complexity. While it is true that Jewish identity comes together through a complex mosaic of race, ethnicity, religiosity, culture, history, and nationality, this is something which Sartre does, to some extent, acknowledge. He asks for example, "Failing to determine the Jew by his race, shall we define him by his religion or by the existence of a strictly Israelite national community?"[58] Indeed Sartre's thesis that the Jew *is* his situation speaks to the idea that there is nothing else which intrinsically defines the Jew as Jew. But this is where, for Weiss, Sartre goes wrong. For in saying that the Jew *is* his situation, Sartre denies the way in which the Jew's corporeality plays a significant role in his identity, indeed, in the formation of his situation. For Weiss, the Jew is *not* his situation insofar as Sartre seems suggest that one's situation can be exclusively external (remember that for him it is the anti-Semite who *creates* the

57 *Ibid*., 216.
58 Sartre, *Anti-Semite & Jew*, 64.

Jew). Instead, she argues that one's situation derives equally from the one's corporeal engagement with the world and with others. To cast it in Fanonian terms, the racialised body does have *some* ontological resistance. But even to speak in terms of resistance may be to suggest too heavily that we are in a zero-sum relation of subject and object. As in her argument on intercorporeality as explored in Chapter 3, it is Weiss' contention, following Merleau-Ponty, that one's identity is arrived at *through* the embodied navigation of situations, that is, one is *constituted* through the intercorporeal transactions with institutions, practices, and other bodies. For as Weiss argues, *no* body is overdetermined, at least, never *wholly* constituted by the other – even those embedded in oppressive relations with the other, such as racialised bodies. She argues in other words, for an account of racialised embodiment that adequately takes into account the constitutive intercorporeality of bodies, which does not dissipate in the face of oppressive racist relations.

We encounter yet again, this time through Weiss' argument, a critique of the sharp dualism grounding Sartre's analysis – a theme which has emerged consistently throughout our consideration of the limits of his ontological position. Given this recurrent theme, and its potential to recast or further nuance our account of racialised embodiment, let us now turn now to a direct engagement with Merleau-Ponty's account of the chiasm.

PART 3 – MERLEAU-PONTY'S INTERTWINING AND THE SUBJECT-OBJECT DISSOLUTION

Merleau-Ponty's final but incomplete work, *The Visible and Invisible*, cut short by his untimely death, sketches out the beginnings of a phenomenology which seeks to shed its existentialist hangover along with the Cartesian dualism that it imports. In particular, it is his

reflections on the intertwining or chiasm, sometimes also known as his "flesh ontology", that marks a key turn away from the ontological commitments of existentialism as we have seen in Sartre (with its attachment to Western philosophy's deeply rooted subject-object distinction), to one where subject and object and/or world are more fully and fluidly integrated. In this following section, I examine how the turn in Merleau-Ponty's thought can be productively leveraged for the analysis of racialised embodiment, in ways that offer insight into the nature of the racialising gaze in lived experience.

The Chiasm

Touch and Vision: a Doubling

In a widely celebrated chapter of *The Visible and Invisible* called "The Intertwining – The Chiasm", Merleau-Ponty develops what later becomes known as his "flesh ontology". Two leitmotifs invoked in his account help us to set the analysis in motion: first, that of the two hands touching (which we will recognise as "double sensation" from our earlier passing mention of classical psychology), and second, the seeing eye which is itself visible. Together, they help him to develop an account of the intertwining.

What is central to both cases, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the essential doubling and folding back of each upon the other. In the first case of the two hands – my right hand touching my left – if we are attentive to this phenomenon we realise that it is difficult to truly distinguish the touching from the touched. In a very real sense, each hand is *touching* the other, while at the same time being *touched by* the other. Moreover, we see that the status of touching and touched designate positions that are easily unsettled,

> ...when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the

> things, where the "touching subject" passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things.[59]

It is better to say then, that both hands participate in the touch, and that this participation is not one of fixed positionality, but of fluidity and interchangeability. Think of the handshake, a variant of the above example, but of which Merleau-Ponty says, "I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching..."[60] There is a doubling here as noted in his remark, but in addition to this doubling, there is also an interchangeability. What happens when the handshake lingers on for too long; when my hand is not released from the shake despite my readiness to be done with it? Or if my hand gets caught in too vigorous an encounter, finding itself squeezed to the bones or shaken all about? Such fumblings may cause my hand – once an active participant in the handshake, as both touching and touched – to "pass over to the rank of the touched". And now what if, perhaps expended from the vigour of the handshake, the other hand turns limp? Then my hand, left prolonging the doomed shake, returns to the rank of touching. My participation in the transaction is thus a dynamic one, susceptible to reversal and permutation. These different modes of the handshake illustrate the rich experience of touch invoked by Merleau-Ponty. Not only is there a prescient doubling that takes place in the synchronous experience of touching and being touched, but as we see here, also an interchangeability, or what Merleau-Ponty terms "reversibility".[61]

A similar analysis can be unfurled in the visual register. Vision, according to Merleau-Ponty is also doubled:

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59 Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 133-134.

60 *Ibid.*, 142.

61 Note that the handshake differs importantly from Merleau-Ponty's earlier example of the right hand touching the left, and therefore the interchangeability and reversibility described in the former has the added dimension transacting with an other. However given Merleau-Ponty himself supplies the two examples, I take them to both demonstrate, albeit in different ways, the principle of fluidity and variability within the flesh's reversibility.

> As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision (as is so well indicated by the double meaning of the word) be doubled with a complementary vision or with another vision: myself seen from without such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible, occupied in considering it from a certain spot.[62]

The term whose doubled meaning Merleau-Ponty calls our attention to, *la vision*, bears this out well. While rendered in English simply as "vision", *la vision* entails not only a nominal sense of that which is seen ("a vision of something") or a sensory faculty ("her vision was clouded"), but in French can also designate an active *viewing* of something (e.g. *la vision de ce film est interdite*). In its gerund form it reminds us that each vision is itself an event, a happening, and therefore as Merleau-Ponty claims, "installed" in a world, a horizon, or in "the midst of the visible". Unfolding as it does within the visible, each seeing is thus itself capable of and vulnerable to being seen; a point well understood by those who are trained to attend to their seeing, such as the painter who is said to "feel myself looked at by the things".[63] This "narcissism" of the seer consists not only in her seeing the outside world according to and from the contours of her body, but also the experience that her body too is seen from this world. However this is more than the Sartrean moment of recognition that one can exist "for-others". In Merleau-Ponty's account, one's being-seen "by the outside" (in a way that extends beyond the superficial seeing of one's body-contours), is equally something we participate in. To be seen in such a way, he continues, is to

> ...exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.[64]

In contrast to Sartre then, here we find notes of activity within the passivity of being-seen, traces of agency or manoeuvre within the possession of the look.

62 Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, 134.
63 *Ibid.*, 139.
64 *Ibid.*

It is true that this represents a departure from Merleau-Ponty's earlier account in *Phenomenology of Perception*, where for example his exploration of perception was considered most saliently from the vantage point of one's own body (*le corps propre*), identified there as our frame and anchor in perceptual experience. (And such emphasis has of course, led to claims about the existential hangover in this early period.[65]) But these shifts in his thinking are not discontinuous with his earlier work. Dillon for example, builds extensively on Merleau-Ponty's work in the *Phenomenology* in considering how the latter's position stands distinct from Sartre's. Citing Merleau-Ponty's references to the body as a "subject-object" and "its unequivocal status as touching and touched",[66] Dillon shows how the traces of the intertwining are already anticipated in Merleau-Ponty's earlier thought. But even if, on the whole, one argues that the *Phenomenology* remains too tethered to the body's perspectival starting point, as many have, one can still find continuities in motion. For example, in the present work, it is not so much that this egoistic phenomenological starting point is repudiated (*my* vision starts still and always from the perspective imposed upon me by my body), it is rather, that there is a paradigmatic shift, since now my vision *is not all that exists*, nor all that matters; there exist many other visions emanating from many other vantage points, and indeed, I find myself at the end of some of those. Thus it is not merely a case of bifurcating vision, but rather, situating one's vision in the broader network of vision and visibility in their generality and anonymity. In this schema, it becomes less important *who* sees, as we shift emphasis away from the subject and its perceptual horizon, to the phenomenon of vision itself:

> There is here no problem of the *alter ego* because it is not *I* who sees, not *he* who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a

65 See Young and Weiss
66 Dillon, "Sartre on the Phenomenal Body and Merleau-Ponty's Critique", 134.

vision in general...[67]

Reversibility and Flesh Ontology

The insights drawn from the reversibility of touch and vision allow Merleau-Ponty to develop what is often referred to as his "flesh ontology". For him, the fact that the eye, as the seeing organ, has itself a visible existence is no mere factical truth, it also bears ontological significance. The same can be said of touch; the sensitive and receptive nature of the body's skin – the outermost layer of the flesh – points us to something about the structure of embodied being. Taking up these cues, Merleau-Ponty claims that in the case of vision, in order to see one must already be installed in the world as a participant, and installed in the schema and economy of visibility itself. In fact, this is the very *condition* of seeing. Weiss, speaking here in the register of touch, puts it this way:

> It is because I touch that I can be touched, and if I am not touched, then I will not be able to touch; neither experience is reducible to the other, and yet each makes the other possible.[68]

Of course such a position pits Merleau-Ponty in stark contrast to Sartre. Whereas for Sartre the ability to be seen by the other served as a distinct *possibility*, in Merleau-Ponty it is a *condition* of our seeing. For Merleau-Ponty, we are receptive to and of the world only insofar as we are already embedded in it, or in his words, only if we are *of it* ("*s'il en est*"). Liz Grosz describes this as a "belongingness".[69] And yet, in being so installed, we too are rendered visible; we participate not just as seers but also as entities seen. The two sides come together thus:

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67 Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, 142.

68 Gail Weiss, "Ambiguity, Absurdity, and Reversibility: Indeterminacy in de Beauvoir, Camus, and Merleau-Ponty", *Journal Of French And Francophone Philosophy,* 5 (2010): 81.

69 Perception "entails a reversibility based on the belongingness of the material subject to its material world" Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 102. This is a nice way of putting it, since it also evokes our earlier discussion of home and belongingness.

> It suffices for us for the moment to note that he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he *is of it*, unless, by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visibles, capable, by a singular reversal, of seeing them – he who is one of them.[70]

And as commentators such as Grosz have argued, this ontological claim pertaining to the reversibility of the flesh is not one that always bears out factically, since the claim is "not an actual but only an in-principle reversibility of seer and seen or toucher and touched."[71]

The difference between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre on the question of reversibility is a significant one. As we have already intimated, whereas the reversibility of the look is possible for Sartre, in Merleau-Ponty's account we have something more than mere possibility, but closer to an interdependence; we can see *only because* we participate in the visible, and this participation mandates that we are, in principle, ourselves visible. In Merleau-Ponty, as in Husserl before him, it is not just a case of reversi*bility* then, which in its suffix misleadingly intones ability or possibility; there is something more. Recall that for him, what is in question is the reversibility of the *flesh.* But what does the flesh designate? On one level, the flesh is simply the "in-between", the space mediating the distances of seer and seen. It is thus often described (whether by Merleau-Ponty himself or by commentators) variously as a thickness, a lining, or a tissue. Merleau-Ponty writes for example:

> Between the alleged colors and visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things.[72]

Such descriptions borrow from our *actual flesh*, the skin which lines the outer epidermal boundaries of our body and interfaces with the world and its objects, serving thus as a *limnus*

70 Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, 134-135.
71 Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 101. Although it is perhaps misleading to describe it as *only* in-principle since this in-principle-ness means that reversibility is always *accorded in advance*, even it does not factually eventuate.
72 Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, 132.

between the body and world. In Grosz's reading, Merleau-Ponty's "flesh" at times sounds a like a precursor to Irigaray's concept of the "interval", although of course, significant differences separate the two thinkers. Whereas the interval in Irigaray serves as the space of sexuate difference, or the space between the (at least) two originary beings, Merleau-Ponty does not ground his analysis in any real distinction between differently embodied beings (which opens him to criticism), and nor indeed is it the case that his concept of the flesh functions only as an in-between.

In Merleau-Ponty's case, it is more helpful to think of the flesh through the motif of "folding back" or what he sometimes also calls, "invagination", although his use of this term can also be problematic from a feminist perspective.[73] We can think of the flesh as this folding back on itself, in the way that the seer's vision folds back on itself by being herself visible. As in biological and morphogenetic invagination, such folding renders ambiguous the outer and inner boundaries of its organs or organisms, and as Derrida's later deployment of the concept shows, in doing so the stability of these identities become compromised; we can speak of an "inner" or "outer" only insofar as we understand them to represent transient modes or moments of being, and not fixed entities. Indeed, on this reading, the flesh is neither simply inner or outer, but both. This being-both-at-once, which we saw earlier in the case of touch and the simultaneously

73 In an article on Irigaray's critique of Merleau-Ponty, Grosz opens by asking: "Is Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh – "fold back, invagination, or padding" simply another masculine appropriation of the metaphors of femininity to ground an ontology, epistemology or theoretical system? Is it simply another way of asserting the sexual neutrality (i.e., the implicit masculinity) or theoretical paradigms and systems which, as Irigaray so astutely observes, has characterized Western philosophy since its inception? ... Is he participating in that centuries-old practice of recuperation and unacknowledged reliance on femininity and its conceptual and linguistic representations which is the defining characteristic of phallocentric thought?" Elizabeth Grosz, "Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray in the Flesh", *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993): 37. Relatedly, Grosz's line of questioning here prompts me to wonder, inversely, whether philosophical projects which are grounded in non-masculinist paradigms – for example Tanja Staehler's work on "liquid thinking" – ought to be read as feminist projects, even when authors do not view them as such. This opens up a broader conversation about non-masculinist sources and modes of theorising, and their relation to the feminist project, however broadly that is defined. I acknowledge a fruitful conversation with Jane Jones on this question.

possibility of both touching and being touched, is alternately invoked by Merleau-Ponty in the following description:

> If one wants metaphors, it would be better to say that the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse, or again, as two segments of one sole circular course which goes above from the left to right and below from right to left, but which is but one sole movement in its two phases.[74]

This image helps us to understand and better situate his references to the doubling of vision and touch. Contrary to Sartre's presentation of the being-for-itself and being-for-others as *oppositional* and mutually exclusive modes, according to Merleau-Ponty when my body passes through the different modes of "seeing" and "being seen" it expresses the same movement, that of my body's participation in the visible.

Ambiguity, and the Generativity of the Flesh

A final point before returning to the racialised body. We should note that for the late Merleau-Ponty, the ambiguity of this reversibility, of the flesh proper, is not presented as an impediment to sense making, but is rather *generative* of it. As various commentators have pointed out, his distinct affirmation of ambiguity sets him apart from his peers – even Husserl, from whom he borrows the notion of obscurity (although as Weiss has argued, in Husserl's work such obscurity is framed in the negative terms of obstruction[75]). Merleau-Ponty on the other hand, insists on the ambiguity of the flesh as ultimately productive:

> It is that the thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication."[76]

74 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, 138.
75 Weiss, "Ambiguity, Absurdity, and Reversibility", 72-74.
76 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, 135.

In other words, it is the ambiguity of being able to pass through subject- and object-modes of being, *as well as* the bivalence of experiencing both modes concurrently, that gives meaning to our encounters.

Merleau-Ponty's Chiasm and Racialised Embodiment

How does this account, in which we have noted significant departures from Sartre's ontology, challenge or extend our existing account of racialised embodiment, the racialising gaze, and the lived experience of being-object or objectified? In what follows, I argue that there are three main ways our account becomes further nuanced by a Merleau-Pontian flesh ontology.

Seeing Onself Being Seen, and the Dissolution of the Subject-Object

The first point is relatively straightforward. Earlier we encountered some of the limitations of the Sartrean model insofar as it failed to account for the more complex dimensions of racialised embodiment. As I have argued, the lived experience of racism and racialisation entails not just being seen, but also seeing oneself being seen. To borrow Yancy's words, it becomes a matter of "political and existential survival" to learn how one's body appears within the racialised schema, in order to navigate one's way through social, political, cultural, and even professional worlds. Alternatively, we can point to the way white standards of beauty can have a crushing effect on the way young women of colour see and related to their own bodies, with many documented stories of girls and women engaging in skin bleaching or even cosmetic procedures to emulate certain "prized" white features. So hegemonic is the white gaze that racialised bodies can quickly learn to see themselves according to it, that is, to see oneself according to another's gaze. But whereas Sartre's fidelity to Cartesian dualism prevented us from

moving beyond the mutually exclusive terms of subject and object, in Merleau-Ponty's schema we find a way to articulate the complexity of racialised embodiment in relation to the gaze. In particular, his account of the reversibility of the flesh and the intertwining of the traditional poles of being, allow us to see how we are, in Shannon Sullivan's words, "ambiguously subject and object at the same time, reversing [our] positions as subject-touching and object-touched."[77] Racialised embodiment, I argue, *is this intertwining*; as much as we are gazed-at, stereotyped, discriminated against, abused, refused, imitated, alienated, and so forth, we respond. We anticipate, we "world"-travel. The *lived* experience of racialisation is one of multiple-consciousness and of perennial negotiation. Racialised embodiment is, as Lugones and others have argued, to be constantly embroiled in a sophisticated existential gymnastics. We move between the modes of being-subject and being-object, and very often, we are synchronously being-subject-*and*-object – that is to say, the distinction between subject and object ceases to be meaningful in our navigating what Cornel West calls, "the *funk* of life".[78] While this is of course true for all human beings, I argue that racialised embodiment in the context of a racist world, engenders a certain kind of "schizophrenic" being[79]; neither for-oneself nor fully for-others,

77 Sullivan, *Living Across and Through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism, and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 83.

78 Cornel West, "Afterword: Philosophy and the Funk of Life" in ed. George Yancy, *Cornel West: A Critical Reader* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2001), 346. West's discussion of the mess or "funk" of life calls to mind Merleau-Ponty's own emphasis on the meaningfulness of the everyday aspects of one's life, no matter how banal. "So that's what he does with his time? So that's the ugly house he lives in? And these are his friends, the woman with whom he shares his life. These, his mediocre concerns? ...One admires as one should only after having understood that there are not any supermen, that there is no one who does not have a human's life to live, and that the secret of the woman loved, of the writer, or of the painter, does not lie in some realm beyond his empirical life, but is so mixed in with his mediocre experiences, so modestly confused with his perception of the world, that there can be no question of meeting it separately, face to face." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" in Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, 95. The shared resonance is I think, not coincidental insofar as West's pragmatism and Merleau-Ponty's interest in embodiment, bring them both to engage with the materiality of life.

79 I use this term loosely, in order to track the neuroses of Black embodiment explored by Fanon, and those who follow him, for example: William Miles, "Schizophrenic Island, fifty years after Fanon: Martinique, the pent-up 'paradise'", *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 15 (2012). But while Fanon's own work crosses into the psychoanalytic register, my own reference to "schizophrenic" being seeks to reference the more general and

neither at-home nor fully homeless – in short, neither subject nor object, but always both and somewhere in-between.

And yet, this is not to obscure or wash over the very real ways in which racialised bodies get "trapped in" the mode of being-object or being-for-others. Nor is it to trivialise the weight of that defining and traumatic experience. As we noted earlier the Sartrean paradigm of the gazing-subject / gazed-at-object resonates powerfully with race theorists precisely because it describes an enduring dimension of what it means to be racialised and to live one's body in and through a racist world. Recall that Fanon experiences himself as "object in the midst of other objects". Others too, have deployed this paradigm to explain the deep disempowerment of those bodies who are routinely subject to racist acts, comments, gestures, and the like. It is my view however, that these express only one aspect – though surely a salient and profoundly important one – of the lived experience of racialised embodiment. More importantly, I think they serve to show us how the hegemonic gaze in oppressive systems can get us "stuck" in a certain mode being-object, foreclosing the breadth of chiasmic being, the implications of which I explore more fully in the concluding remarks of the dissertation. It is as if the compelling directional force of the racialising gaze, from white subject to racialised object, is itself a crystalisation of that which *ought to* remain ambiguous and fluid. Through the racialising gaze we become stuck in a model of subject and object, missing out on the productive ambiguity and ambi-valence of the in-between.

The Hegemony of the Racialising Gaze and the Impossibility of Reversal

In fact this question the hegemonic gaze is conceptually anticipated in Merleau-Ponty's

chronic disorientation, displacement, and fragmentation explored throughout this dissertation, and not psychical or clinical senses of the term.

comments qualifying his account of reversibility. Despite his highly integrated and intertwined account of flesh ontology, it bears noting that the reversibility Merleau-Ponty describes is never fully realised nor realisable. Rather, it is a reversibility that is only ever *almost* attained, eluding us always in the final moment. I quote at length:

> To begin with, we spoke summarily of a reversibility of the seeing and the visible, of the touching and the touched. It is time to emphasize that it is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it* – my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its outer covering. Likewise, I do not hear myself as I hear others, the sonorous existence of my voice is for me as it were poorly exhibited; I have rather an echo of its articulated existence, it vibrates through my head rather than outside. I am always on the same side of my body; it presents itself to me in one invariable perspective.[80]

In other words, it is never the case that we *fully* reach both modes of touching and touched in the same moment, although we may come very close. This, I think, leaves an important space in which we can insist on the centrality of one's historical and political milieux, and the way that certain norms or racialised paradigms have a gravitas which are not easily transcended. That is, it is important that the notion of reversibility does not downplay the power of habituated modes of perception or comportment that derive from these norms. When Weiss writes that, "just as in the famous duck/rabbit Gestalt, we cannot experience both at once",[81] we are reminded of how certain habits of seeing can "stick"; thwarting attempts to move fluidly between different (or better: to move *from* dominant) paradigms.

80 Merleau-Ponty*, The Visible and Invisible*, 147-8.
81 Weiss, "Ambiguity, Absurdity, and Reversibility", 81.

Racialised "Passing", and the Persistence of the Visual Register

Finally, much has been made of the move from an ontology informed by the taxonomy of vision to one informed by the touch. As already noted, for Mazis this is what makes Merleau-Ponty's ontology more viable than Sartre's[82], whereas for Grosz, Merleau-Ponty still does not make enough of a transition from the visual to the haptic. Despite their different readings, what is shared across both commentators is the affirmation of touch as a productive paradigm through which to develop a more nuanced ontology. (And on this count, the work of thinkers such as Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy speak powerfully to this potential.[83]) I contend that this shift can also be an instructive one for us, insofar as our own analyses of racism and racialisation have predominantly unfolded within the visual register (unsurprisingly, given the stated focus of this chapter on the gaze). In a way, the push from the visual to the haptic register in Merleau-Ponty prompts us to question whether we too have overstated or over-relied on the visual register in our own analyses of race, succumbing to Western philosophy's "ocularcentrism", to use Linda Alcoff's term. Surely there exist a multitude of registers through which racism and racialisation operate. Does this emphasis on the visual serve to obfuscate certain other aspects of the lived experience of racism and racialisation? To answer this, I turn briefly to a consideration of the phenomenon of "passing".

In fact we have already encountered this phenomenon in our earlier engagement with Weiss' writing on the ambiguity of Jewish identity. While her argument extended the notion of

82 As Mazis argues, even though Sartre does consider the touch, imposes this structure of the gaze in his analysis of touching, and in particular, the caress. In doing so, Mazis argues that Sartre not only fundamentally mischaracterises touching, overlooking its distinctive features, but in doing so, he thereby misses the opportunity to think different possible modes of interaction or being-with. What Sartre misses, according to Mazis, is how "In touch, the distinction between touching subject and touched object blurs: in other words, the distinction between activity and passivity dissolves. Rather than a confrontation and appropriation, there is a permeability of boundaries and an opening up of interpenetration, of communion." Mazis, "Touch and Vision", 148.

83 See for example: Nancy, *Corpus* and Derrida *On Touching*.

ambiguity to the category of racialised bodies more generally, the *visual* ambiguity of the Jew in particular (especially in the 21st century[84]), calls to mind the question of passing. Sartre raises the point in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, when recounting the story of a Jewish friend who according to him, was easily recognisable among the French, but not (since he was "blond, lean, and phlegmatic") among the Germans. Sartre recalls of this friend:

> He occasionally amused himself by going out with SS men, who did not suspect his race. One of them said to him one day: "I can tell a Jew a hundred yards off."[85]

While this example, along with others (including Alcoff's own reflections on her experiences as compared with her more phenotypically Latina sister's[86]), document some of the advantages of "passing" within a racist world, there exist also narratives which explore its more painful side. For example Allyson Hobbs explores some of the personal struggles of those who "pass" in her recent book, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*, and it is striking the way her reflections recall some of our earlier discussion on homelessness:

> This book is about loss. Racial passing is an exile, sometimes chosen, sometimes not. ...Between the late eighteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, countless African Americans passed as white, leaving behind families, friends, and communities without any available avenue for return.[87]

While eliding the visual experience of the racialising gaze, those who pass may nonetheless share in the lived experiences of bodily fragmentation or uncanniness in ways that directly reference the racialised schema. The emphasis on the metric of visibility thus, may "blind us" as it were, to other equally harmful lived experiences of racism.

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84 That is to say, many Jews would not have "passed" as easily in the last century, especially around the period of WWII, might "pass" quite easily today. This in turn demonstrates how "passing" (and indeed the visual identification of "obviously racialised bodies"), is thoroughly embedded its social, cultural, and historical contexts.

85 Sartre, *Anti-Semite & Jew*, 61-62.

86 Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 266.

87 Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 4.

And yet, this need not undermine the centrality of the visual register in our analysis of racism; rather, it serves to draw attention to the *racialised schema's own reliance* on the visual field, such that "passing" becomes the anomaly it is. An example may help to illustrate. In what has since come to be known as the Stolen Generations affair, thousands of Aboriginal Australian children – especially those with lighter skin – were systematically and in many cases forcibly removed from their families and communities throughout the 20th century by government agencies. This was a practice that spanned decades and the policy justifications were many and various, including the idea that these children would fare better in life in "mainstream Australia" (in many cases "passing" as whites), and for some, the hope that this would conveniently resolve Australia's "Aboriginal problem".[88] The harrow and distress of this affair have been well documented; families and communities were not only torn apart, but longstanding cultural and linguistic practices also dissipated along with them. Stories recount the atmosphere of fear and terror that engulfed the lives of such children and their families:

> Every morning our people would crush charcoal and mix that with animal fat and smother that all over us, so that when the police came they could only see black children in the distance. We were told always to be on the alert and, if white people came, to run into the bush or run and stand behind the trees as stiff as a poker, or else hide behind logs or run into culverts and hide...
> There was a disruption of our cycle of life because we were continually scared to be ourselves. During the raids on the camps it was not unusual for people to be shot – shot in the arm or the leg. You can understand the terror that we lived in, the fright – not knowing when someone will come unawares and do whatever they were doing – either disrupting our family life, camp life, or shooting at us. [89]

In many ways this example appears to runs contrary to dominant analyses of race and visibility, since it documents an example of racist harm *reserved specifically* for those whose bodies could

88 *Bringing them home: report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).
89 *Ibid.*, 21.

"pass" for normatively ideal white bodies.[90] In other words, it was the ambiguity of these children's bodies that rendered them more vulnerable. And yet as I would argue, far from bypassing it, this harm was effected *through* the visual register (bodies blackened so as not to draw attention), in the context of a broader racist schema that deemed the black bodies of Aboriginal peoples unworthy of family, culture, community, and the basic right to steer one's life path.

The visual register then, remains a powerful – though not exclusive – site for the machinations of racism and racialisation. This is a position shared by leading race scholars such as Alcoff and Al-Saji, and clearly implicit in the writings of Fanon and Yancy. Moreover, I would argue that to the extent that other bodily and sensory registers are also sites of racism, they often take their cue from the visual register. It once took several friendly encounters before an artist neighbour in Brooklyn – and fellow Australian – realised that I too shared his Antipodean roots. Puzzled by his attempts, in the course of a discussion of his painting, to explain to me Tasmania's location ("a little island off mainland Australia"), I mention that I grew up close by in Melbourne. He was flabbergasted. "But, your accent – *ohhhh, I hear it now...*" Somehow in all our conversations prior, my Australian accent – his selfsame – did not register for his ear; the very accent which at the time amused my two American housemates and gave much trouble to my third Korean-becoming-American housemate. The visual presentation of my Asian body served to structure and ultimately muffle his hearing, to pass over the cues of my broad vowels and tonal shifts, in short, to pass over the mimicry of our speech in a place where ours was the one that stood out. In a contrasting example, it was not an uncommon occurrence for my white partner to be mistaken for German while in Berlin, despite his (Australian) accented speech. The

90 In other words, it is not a case of mere reversal where whites are targeted in a majority black society

visual encounter of a body can, I argue, serve to frame our perceptions across other sensory registers of the body. No real need then, for the Martinique man in Fanon's story, to have worked so diligently on rolling his French *R*s ("*Garrrçon!*"[91]); his body remained Black, his voice heard as Black, despite the effort. While Fanon is of course right that language and speech serve as important gateways for the colonial subject, they by no means dislodge vision as the structuring force of our bodily encounters.

As I have argued here, there is something about the racialised schema that compels us to the visual register, and its persistence is tracked in the discussions above. However this is not to say that the visual register is without its own complexity, as I have tried to argue in the case of "passing". Thus following our earlier analysis on the different ways of looking, and Merleau-Ponty's own dynamic presentation of the doubling of vision, I suggest that we can be more attentive to the nuances of the racialising gaze.

CODA – THE ONTOLOGICAL VIOLENCE OF RACISM

In moving between Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's different accounts of vision and visibility and their pertinence for our analyses of the racialising gaze, we have in turn moved through different ontological frameworks and the alternate accounts of racialised embodiment they make possible. In this coda to the final chapter of my dissertation, I would like to pick up again this question of ontology, this time in order to ask, what in fact, is the ontological violence of racism?

In the earlier parts of this chapter we considered how the experience of racialised embodiment is most saliently described as a kind of being-object. Certainly as we have seen in

91 Fanon, *Peau Noire Masques Blancs*, 16.

Fanon, it is an enduring aspect in the lived experience of his Black body in world organised according to the white imaginary. This however, was revised as we went on to consider how the necessarily ambiguous modes of being subject-*and*-object allow for a more complex articulation of racialised embodiment. Emerging from this latter account, I argue, is a framework which gives us a glimpse into that which is violated by the practice of racism. The ontological violence of racism is not a violence against our subjectivity, as traditional accounts of racism would have it, but rather – and more urgently – a violence against our *intersubjectivity*. It is a violence against our embodied being-with. If, as we move closer to a Merleau-Pontian account of flesh ontology, the meaning of one's being is not given nor willed, but rather *forged* through the embodied interaction with others, places, situations, and practices, then what is cut short by the overhanging and overpowering force of racism is the possibility to do precisely that, to make meaning of one's world through embodied engagement with it. Indeed racism pushes us into a model of subject-object ontology insofar as it attempts to devise a world split into (white) subjects and their (racialised) objects. In doing so it threatens to efface the fluidity and ambiguity of embodied being, creating instead a world of dualisms, a world of literal and figurative blacks and whites.

In casting the ontological violence of racism in these terms, as a violence of our embodied *inter*subjectivity rather than atomistic subjectivity, we can draw attention to the important dimensions of movement and motility. For example, it is not only that racism "ontologically truncates" its racialised subjects – to cite Yancy[92]– but that it also ontologically *paralyses*. Fanon writes, in the epigraph to this chapter, *Je suis fixé*, "I am fixed". We can take this to mean both that he is substantively pre-determined in the content of his being, but also, that

92 George Yancy, "Forms of Spatial and Textual Alienation: The Lived Experience of Philosophy as Occlusion", *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35 (2014): 2.

he is *frozen* in the movement of his being; cornered and left no room to move. Set against the thrownness that Heidegger famously attributes to reflective being, to *Dasein*, the paralysed being cannot take up the dynamic temporality proper to it. And as we noted in Chapter 2, racism leaves its racialised subjects no "shared temporality" to borrow Al-Saji's point, in which to live with its others. The removal of the possibility for meaningful encounters with others in the world, as Guenther argues, amounts to an ontological violence. While Guenther's work considers how the extreme cases of prisoner isolation in solitary confinement violates the "structure of open relationality" that lies at the foundation of our being[93], we can draw parallels with the theme of isolation (even if only figuratively) or alienation in the case of racialised bodies. This denial of the fundamental being-with (whether *Mitsein* in Heidegger, intercorporeality in Merleau-Ponty, or *être avec* in Nancy), and the motility to actively participate in the world while navigating one's way through the weight of its historicity, is what I identify as the ontological violence of racism.

93 Guenther, *Solitary Confinement*, 156.

– CONCLUSION –

During a 2014 panel discussion on the narratives of hope, progress, and despair in the context of the race discourse in America, guest panelist and Latino studies/political theory scholar Cristina Beltrán commented:

> ...what a lot of African-American intellectuals and race scholars in general ask people to do is to *sit with the tragedy* of white racism, or to sit with the tragedy of racial violence, and *really sit with it*, and think about it and engage it, and not always shift to the happy ending, to the language of innocence... so to really do that is difficult.[1]

Beltrán identifies here a tension frequently encountered in critical race work, especially when undertaken by people of colour; namely, how to present analyses and critiques of longstanding and far-reaching systems of white oppression without having these all washed over by claims of "progress" in racial justice, even where that progress may be real and measurable. Or conversely, how to, when charting the markers of this progress, *hold open* the space for the brutality, pain, and violence of racism to be aired, and equally, to be heard.

In a book on her experience of a traumatic rape and its aftermath, Susan Brison explores the importance of two activities for survivors of rape and trauma: remembering and listening. And yet in spite of their importance, she argues that our culture fails chronically on both counts.

1 This discussion was instigated by the public debate between race commentators Jonathan Chait and Ta-Nehisi Coates in 2014 across *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times.* MSNBC's *Melissa Harris-Perry* hosted a panel of guests to discuss aspects of this debate on 6 April 2014. http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/watch/breaking-down-narratives-of-racial-discourse-218234435944 (accessed 8 April 2014).

Of the former, she writes:

> As a society, we live with the unbearable by pressuring those who have been traumatized to forget, and by rejecting the testimonies of those who are forced by fate to remember. As individuals and as cultures, we impose arbitrary term limits on memory and on recovery from trauma: a century, say, for slavery, fifty years, perhaps, for the Holocaust, a decade or two for Vietnam, several months for mass rape or serial murder. Even a public memorialization can be a forgetting, a way of saying to survivors what someone said after I published my first article on sexual violence: 'Now you can put this behind you.'[2]

Brison goes on to explore the importance of "empathetic listening" in the recovery of survivors of rape and trauma; a listening that does not seek to close over the depth of the traumatic experience nor rush to move on from it. According to Brison, such modes of "bearing witness" are essential to the "remaking of the self" after trauma.[3] While different in several important respects to the case of racism and even racial trauma, Brison's reflections help underscore the ethical importance of attending to the experiences of those who suffer.

But there is something more to this "sitting with" that Beltrán speaks of, than the acts of remembering and listening, though these are surely important. In the case of racism, given that the system of white power and privilege is founded upon and actively sustained by the suffering of racialised bodies, we can say that this "sitting with" involves something more. In George Yancy's words, it involves the need for whites to engage in a "tarrying". Recounting an experience with audience members after having delivered a guest talk, Yancy describes an exchange with an older white male professor who remarks irritably, "You leave us with *no* hope."[4] This comment, which we are told is not an uncommon response to his talks on the phenomenological experience of being an "essence" *vis-à-vis* the white gaze, reveals something

2 Brison, *Aftermath*, 57-58.
3 *Ibid.,* 59.
4 George Yancy, *Look, A White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 154.

else about the status and expectations of critical race scholarship. As Yancy argues,

> ...[The criticism on the absence of hope] functioned to elide the gravitas of the immediacy of black pain and suffering and the virulent ways in which white racism continues to function with such frequency in our contemporary moment. In my analysis, both men failed to *tarry* with the reality of racism and the profound ways in which people of color must endure it.[5]

This failure to "tarry" (to delay, to linger), and its correlated groping for glimmers of hope and progress, recall Beltrán's earlier comments about the impatience to "shift to the happy ending", a move which spares whites and those unaffected by the harms of racism, the discomfort and dis-ease of confronting its reality and their entanglement in it. Yancy writes,

> The unfinished present is where I want whites to tarry (though not permanently remain), to listen, to recognize the complexity and weight of the current existence of white racism, to attempt to understand the ways in which they perpetuate racism, and to begin to think about the incredible difficulty involved in undoing it.[6]

This dissertation has been an effort to "sit with" the tragedy of racism, and to give air to the many and varied experiences of it; to the breadth of its reach, and to the depth of its weight. In this project I have been concerned with mapping the different expressions and dimensions of racism, from the banal annoyances to the profound ruptures, and to register its bodily and lived experience. This has taken me through an exploration of the subtle yet habitual modes of racist perception and bodily orientation, the fragmentation of the racialised body schema, the affective work and stress entailed in the experience of living with racism, and the chronic disorientation of finding oneself not-at-home in one's own body and lived environment. Along the way, I have also tracked some of the correlating experiences of whiteness as being-at-home, being-at-ease, and being invisible, in order to draw contrast with my explorations of racialised embodiment, and in some cases, to show how these aspects of white embodiment rely on the dispossession of

5 *Ibid.*
6 *Ibid.*, 158.

racialised bodies.

In doing so however, I have also sought throughout the dissertation to draw important philosophical insight from the lived experiences of racism. I have argued for example, that traditional conceptions of the lived body in phenomenology and the subject in existentialist philosophy fail to adequately account for the experience of racialised embodiment, highlighting the way in which their frameworks proceed on the basis of a fluidity and cohesion of experience that is strained in the case of racialised bodies. I have also considered how the complexity of this experience pushes us toward more relational philosophical models that dispose with neat subject-object (viewer-viewed) distinctions, even where their deployment may be tempting and useful for race theorists in describing the sense of objectification and dispossession. Merleau-Ponty's thought has served as an anchor throughout much of this work, even as my own position in relation to the different dimensions of his thought have at times been constructive, and at other times critical. Nonetheless, in engaging with his thought, along with that of Heidegger, Fanon, Sartre, and many other contemporary thinkers, I hope to have carved a space at the intersection of phenomenology and critical race philosophy – a space in which we can engage with the important and urgent questions of racism and embodiment, and invite others to sit and tarry with them.

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