

[Linger: Searching for Ghostly Justice in American History]

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Justine Johanna Bowe  
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# [Introduction]

## Context and Theory

Whether or not we believe in ghosts, we may nevertheless be forced to deal with them.  
Peter Buse and Andrew Scott, *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, p. 2

You know the stories: the building constructed above an Indian burial ground plagued by desecrated spirits, the historic plantation, preserved yet spiritually unrested because of the horrors it knows, soldiers haunting formerly bloodied battlefields who might never know peace. Their lingering has meaning: the ghost collapses time and history into a traversable, nearly tangible, fantastical continuum that begs exploration. The ghost is an entity capable of moving through life and death, reality and fantasy, past and present, providing a fragmented yet panoramic version of *how things happened*. Precisely because ghosts have this mobility, they should be considered an important part of American history and history making. Their sometimes-invisible though eerily tangible presence in life and literature beckons inquiry into the more repressed and obscure facets of social and historical life, which are difficult to discuss and impossible to understand without this unique flexibility. As Avery F. Gordon writes in her work *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, “The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (8). The dead appear dimly in the gloom of the long, twisting hallway of our haunted home, and the living should follow them. By following this unknown, haunted subjects will arrive at the known, or the formerly-known: a past that has already happened, a memory already lived and died, yet one which continues to reiterate itself as it echoes into a contemporary haunting. By

following the unseen one can arrive at what has been seen, and recognize it as a part of the familiar landscape.

This project is not an analysis of fiction. It is an exploration of themes in American hauntings and what these hauntings can reveal about national history and character. The lingering power of the ghost in popular culture, literature, and regional knowledge testifies to the importance of examining stories of hauntings. Whether or not ghosts, defined as the lingering spirits of the dead, are “real” is of little importance to this project; they may exist in the physical world, the spiritual world, or the mind. Of central importance to *Linger* is that the perception and possibility of their presences, even for a doubtful moment, has the power to produce change. Perhaps they render homes uncomfortable or unfamiliar, force an examination into perception and reality, unsettle the quiet conscience, or inspire fear or melancholia. As the ghost appears, an abstraction gains flesh and visibility. The ghost fills the narrative gaps between imagination and reality, objectivity and subjectivity, body and spirit, past and present, where what is seen contradicts what is generally said to be true. In a haunting, such binaries no longer seem fixed nor adequate in describing what is happening and how we, the living, relate to the occurrence. Ghosts are bridge figures beckoning for inquiry into the past, which is animated and reinvigorated by their existence and subsequent study. The liminal space they occupy between symbol and phenomenon is a deconstructive one, where thinking and feeling, seeing and believing collide. It is also a constructive place, where the living can hear the hushed truths that tether spirits to the haunted sites of conflict.

This project may seem frustratingly irrelevant to the nonbeliever. Perhaps it will seem inaccessible, too abstract or theoretical to be applied to most of our realities. But,

like in a haunting, daily life is better understood as lying somewhere between reality and imagination because the American cultural landscape is shaped by any number of social constructs. Much of what is perceived to be fixed and true in American life, such as morality, crime, race, gender, sexuality, human rights, health, and so many others, are the results of interactions between hegemonic dominant forces that attempt to define and restrict marginalized realities and those lived realities. Hegemonic dominant forces, or white male perspectives and power, combine to form the dominant or “master” narrative. Toni Morrison describes the Master Narrative as “white male life. The Master Narrative is whatever ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else: The Master Fiction [makes up] history” (Jimenez). The Dominant Narrative requires the vicious silencing of critical counternarratives in order to thrive. Because ghostly presences can inspire inquiry into suppressed or unspoken truths, hauntings contain the potential to disrupt this Master Narrative. Thus a haunted place, or a haunted mind, is one that has been scarred by its relation to or position against the Dominant Narrative: it either shouts the history of the oppressor or screams the story of the oppressed. The Dominant Narrative holds a single, linear version of history composed of an exclusive set of facts and dates, distinct winners and losers, comprising a static and finite sense of our past. In this narrative, the past remains immutable and mute, forever dead and gone. Acknowledging a ghostly presence in the home is a rupture in the Dominant Narrative of traditional historiography, possessing the potential for the living mind to recognize and recover the untold, partly erased, or repressed. Here lies the transformative power of being haunted.

That the past still pursues the living, where the dead laid to rest still linger at the corners of the frame and demand to move to its center, has the power to unsettle the fixed conscience. When the living admit that *there is something more to this place than meets the eye*, we have already started to look for things hardly seen. As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock writes in the introduction of Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination, “The ghost is that which interrupts the presentness of the present, and its haunting indicates that, beneath the surface of received history, there lurks another narrative, an untold story that calls into question the veracity of the authorized version of events” (Weinstock 5). Those who refuse to attend to the unsettling nature of a haunting likely have a great investment in the Dominant Narrative. Keeping the violent past inanimate and final certainly allows the criminal and his inheritors to escape without penalty. But in a haunting, doubt can insert itself into this reticent reality. Not only must the haunted individual ask, *Is this really happening?* But also, *Why is this happening? Why here? Why me?* These questions call into focus the lives and stories of those who came before us, giving them weight, meaning, and relevance.

I use the terms “we,” “us,” and “our” consciously and with some trepidation. These terms, while seemingly all-inclusive, are often exclusive of particular experiences in America as they often speak to and for Anglo America alone. By using these terms, I speak to all who occupy the space within United States borders: citizen, non-citizen, second-class citizen, and living ghost. It is indisputable that all racial, cultural, sexual, and gender positions within United States borders and beyond were and are forged with histories of violence, torture, and killing. Every individual occupying American territory is implicated within this history of violence, either by the inheritance of its privileges or

the disinheritance thereof. Therefore, we are all haunted by American history, albeit differently. *Linger* centers on the ghosts whose returns speak histories of violence. This work specifically inspects the American governmental and white dominant social forces that have historically sought to dictate, remove, marginalize, maim and kill people of color within its borders. It focuses on the agency of government and its compliance with white supremacist values that sought and seek to exploit the bodies and resources of American Natives and African Americans. This work interrogates this complicity by following narratives of hauntings, geographically and temporally, to sites of violence in the United States. *Linger* accomplishes this by investing local and national histories tied to self-proclaimed sites of extreme haunting. These appear on the internet, television, in travel guides, and as profitable facets of the tourism industry.

Consider the ghost to be the physical manifestation of a haunting. The ghost is the symptom, the haunting is the wound, and injustice is the cause. The haunted home offers up the spiritual signal of a specter and motions towards the time of the wounding: there has been a crime here, a tragedy, a task left unfinished, or a story untold. Now consider the United States as a massive estate, built upon stolen land, constructed with stolen labor. This structure witnesses all of the crimes committed within and without its walls. The house has borne up the bodies of the enslaved and their enslavers, the genocide of American Natives, the constant marginalization, degradation and social murder of those who do not occupy white, heterosexual male bodies. On the whole, it is a livable place, but barely. Some might say not at all. And at night, with gentle creaks and whimpering sighs, the house brings forth its spirits. They linger in the halls and doorways, hover on the thresholds, and bear us to the secret places and locked rooms of this mansion. The

secret rooms show us precious counter-narratives which prevent the conclusions that reality is un-enchanted, that it follows the distinct, uninspired and repressive linearity of the Dominant Narrative, and that the living have no spiritual power to linger, to tell our stories, and to resist.

The conclusion, if we allow ourselves to accept that the specter before us represents a former human life, is that those who came before us linger here. Just as the inhabitants of a haunted home will immediately desire to know who lived and died there before they did, recognizing that we are haunted as a nation demands that the living locate ourselves in the greater historical context of a land that is also possessed by the dead and the displaced. “Examining our ghosts,” writes Weinstock, “tells us quite a bit about America’s hopes and desires, fears and regrets—and the extent to which the past governs our present and opens or forecloses upon possibilities for the future” (Weinstock 8). In other words, exposing the anxieties of the haunted mind and examining its ghosts leads us to the core of American identity, acknowledging a space for what is generally “untold,” especially histories and realities that are erased and invisibilized on a daily basis. Ghosts representing all aspects of United States history and identity possess these deconstructive, informative, and potentially corrective agencies.

Simply put, haunting is a particular way of experiencing and exhuming history, and of using this ghostly lens to examine our selves and society. As Karl Marx wrote, “Circumstances [are] directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.” The living are not a-historical beings: though we have agency, our ideas and decisions are not completely our own, but are informed by the past. The haunted past forms the



landscape of the living, our context. Gordon's conception of haunting complements that of Marx: "To be haunted," she states succinctly, "is to be tied to historical and social effects" (Gordon 190). The United States is inevitably haunted place, not only because it has a history but also because this history embodies a legacy of violence. This ghostly history established through the study of hauntings utilizes a "temporal structure in which past, present, and future are inter-implicated rather than autonomous" (Buse and Scott 8). Within this collapse of temporal linearity, individuals within U.S. borders in the present are implicated as recipients of and participators in history as functioning parts of haunted systems. Gordon writes that each of us is implicated in the story: "If we listen carefully to the voices of the...past...[we will hear] how we are in this story, even now, even if we do not want to be" (Gordon 190).

Ghost stories open the darkest doors of history, revealing the skeletons in the American closet. They "ask us to what extent we can move forward...when we are still shackled to a past that haunts us and that we have yet to face and mourn fully" (Weinstock 6). Each ghost, as it is a symbol of a life that has fled, is a paradoxically physical representation of an absence: "The ghost is primarily a symptom of what is missing. It gives notice not only to itself, but also what it represents...the principle form by which something lost or invisible makes itself known or apparent to us" (Gordon 63). Therefore, investigating a history of haunting requires tracing a history of loss. By granting the stories ghosts speak more space among the pages of history, this study can also become a legacy of recovery and correction. The narrative form this history creates adheres to a bottom-up methodology, a "guide to alternative stories we ought to and can write about" that describe "the relationship among power, knowledge, and experience"

(Gordon 18). Here we can “start with the marginal,” or “what we normally exclude or banish, or more commonly, with what we never even notice” (Gordon 25).

*Linger* reveals Anglo American and governmental complicity in and demand for the acts of torturous, murderous, and genocidal interactions with African Americans and American Natives. Here, I follow the advice of Avery Gordon: “If you let it, the ghost can lead you toward what is missing” (Gordon 58). I accomplish this by examining haunted Gettysburg as a misconstrued site of the salvation of the enslaved, by problematizing Lincoln’s popular memory as the “great emancipator,” and by interrogating the realities of Lynch Law in the post-emancipation, Reconstruction-era South. I then follow spectral Natives to histories of displacement and murder by the United States government, arriving finally at the positive potential for self-identification with the Spectral Native through the Ghost Dance movement and its stance of resistance and revolution. Through creative writing, I conclude with an exploration of Louisiana’s most haunted plantation, The Myrtles, by black, Native, and white spirits. This story privileges the legend of Chloe, the specter of an enslaved woman, who violently reverses the slave/master paradigm by poisoning her enslaver’s children and wife in retribution for her rape and torture. In this narrative, I attempt to follow the history of the ghost in her haunted historical context and break the seemingly beautiful façade of The Myrtles, which now serves as a bed and breakfast.

*Linger* is an appeal to the reader to approach with a high degree of suspicion any historicism that holds a resolved relationship to trauma. While focusing on the melancholic and troubling subject of trauma, *Linger* is a hopeful project that endeavors to correct and broaden the Anglo American Dominant Narrative. The dead continue to

return in social reality and provide a constructive opportunity to understand our collective positions as inheritors of histories of loss, violence, and murder. Our diverse identities shape the positions as tenants of the haunted American home; some of us are benefitted, some defiled and/or violated by the legacy of crime and haunting. The living must not quit this haunted house. Weinstock writes, “We value our ghosts....If ghosts do not return to correct history, then privileged narratives of history are not open to contestation...If ghosts do not reveal crimes that have gone unpunished, then evil acts may in fact go unredressed” (Weinstock 6). But the difficulties of according ghosts their proper value are obvious: we must live in this house that has been home to murder, we must live with and listen to the ghosts while creating a “hospitable memory for them out of a concern for justice” (Derrida via Gordon 58). The living must accept the whispered, nearly invisible, and almost forgotten truths that manifest themselves, while we try and fall asleep, as glowing forms in the dark. And these forms look like us.

## [A New Birth of Freedom: Lost Histories and Histories of Loss]

“Have not the country and our very lives been perfumed by their sacrifice? Is that sacrifice not as sweet and proper as any in the long, speckled history of humankind? But what is wrong with this picture? These brave boys killed each other...they perpetrated the dirtiest horrors and coldest brutalities of their age, on a scale yet unknown on this continent.” – Kent Gramm, “A Ghost Story” via *Somebody’s Darling*, p 32.

“Why do we not see them, these horrified prophets? Why do we not see ourselves?”-Kent Gramm, “A Ghost Story” via *Somebody’s Darling*, p. 32.

Kent Gramm’s *Somebody’s Darling*, a collection of essays on the Civil War, lies open across my lap. I feel suddenly compelled to identify a location he describes in his piece *The Ghosts of Gettysburg*, which examines the tales, terrors, and ensuing tourism surrounding the haunting of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. I am searching Google maps via satellite view for Steinwehr Avenue, scanning the patchwork of green and yellow fields, grey pavement swatches glittering with cars, and crisscrossed with snaking silver streets. The satellite pictures appear to be taken sometime in November or possibly in early spring: the grass is yellowing, the patchwork seems threadbare, the trees are leafless. I have spotted Steinwehr Avenue, and perhaps even the house Gramm describes where two women, out for an evening walk one night, once noticed figures in the window of an old house then serving as a craft shop (Gramm 21). The two women approached the window. The figures were silent. But, as the women were soon to learn, their presences spoke the history of the house, of the town of Gettysburg, and of the nation. The man lay on a cot in the corner, still as in death. The woman, dressed in all black, sat in a rocking chair, silently watching over the body. The motionless people took no notice of the two women as they passed, and so the walkers thought the man and woman to be wax figures as in

another museum of the area. When the women returned the next day to the shop on Steinwehr Avenue, not only were the wax figures missing, but the entire layout of the room had also changed. It was now fitted for a craft shop instead of a sick room. The women discovered from the owner that this house was the shelter to which the body of Maj. Gen. John Reynolds had been carried on the morning of July 1, 1863, fatally wounded in the Battle of Gettysburg. Today, as in 1863, Maj. Gen. John Reynolds lies motionless on a cot on Steinwehr Avenue as his aides rush to find a coffin for their fallen leader. A woman in mourning blacks holds mute vigil over the man, awaiting the coffin, motionless in her rocking chair as the living pass them by.

Though there are not many houses on Steinwehr Avenue, the house turned craft shop could be one of a few. But my attention is drawn away from the houses, Northeast along Steinwehr, my eyes following an almost three hundred sixty degree turn that now directs me southeast along Taneytown Road. I have spotted something curious: a swirl of pale pathways, crowned with an arrangement of evergreens and bare deciduous trees that cast spidery shadows across the manicured fields. Even from this distant aerial image, I see white speckles smaller than pearls, carefully cast in organized strands across the field labeled Soldiers' National Cemetery, adjacent to Evergreen Cemetery, lassoed by National Cemetery Road. I click to zoom. The bumps of headstones each cast their own minute shadow, arranged alternately in circles and in grids, the sweeping arches of graves lining teardrop-shaped plots. From this aerial view they look like braille, something that I could reach out and touch, read and understand.

## [Ghosts of Gettysburg]

The dead of Gettysburg may well outnumber the living. The number of monuments in the town might eclipse the number of businesses. But for a small town of nearly 7,500 people, Gettysburg maintains its status as a premiere national tourist attraction, calling forth thousands of tourists yearly. Back on Steinwehr Avenue, not three hundred feet from the Soldiers' National Monument that greets visitors to the cemeteries, is a business called Gettysburg Ghost Tours. The company is one of eight paranormal tours in the tiny Pennsylvania town, many of them venturing out in groups at night, led by a guide dressed in period costume who describes the famous Gettysburg ghosts and their historical haunts. They tell stories of Union soldiers hitching rides in the backs of pickup trucks, the sentry who can be spotted standing atop a Gettysburg College building, and the ghosts of Spangler's Spring. They encourage their customers to make use of devices that can record Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP), the images and voices of ghosts that are often neither visible nor audible without electronic aid. With the hopes of capturing evidence of the spirits that linger, tour guides direct tourists to point their cameras, video and audio recorders into the dark.

In 2001, *USA Today* staff wrote that Gettysburg was the "consensus top choice as the essential American place, Gettysburg is the symbolic heart of America" (Desjardin XVIII). The Ghosts of Gettysburg tour company writes that they explore places in the town "where the slain once lay in rows, and the wounded suffered horribly, waiting to become corpses themselves; to cemeteries where the dead lie...sometimes not so peacefully. Gettysburg may very well be, acre for acre, the most haunted place in

America” (GhostsofGettysburg.com). The Travel Channel featured photographs from the company Ghostly Images of Gettysburg on an episode of *Most Haunted*. Images from this same company were also featured tellingly in *USA Today’s* “10 Creepiest Places 2010.” The idea that Gettysburg is the “heart of America” and that Gettysburg is also one of America’s most haunted sites is not contradictory; the American heart is haunted.

The ghosts described and perhaps observed on Gettysburg ghost tours are “slaving, horrified medics and the agonized wounded; they are tramping regiments marching in the night,” gathering around Spangler’s Spring, Little Round Top, in old homes, in schools, and in inns (Gramm 30). The tours are for the most part presented in a humorous and amusing, though reverent, light, serving as entertainment and relaxation to tourists after a long day of more “serious” sightseeing. The juxtaposition of seriousness and humor, according to Robert C. Thompson in his essay, “‘Am I Going to See a Ghost Tonight?’: Gettysburg Ghost Tours and the Performance of Belief,” allows guides to “go father in conveying the true seriousness of Gettysburg’s history” (Thompson 82). This juxtaposition holds the avid attention of the tourists, who are likely to be listening more closely when serious moments arise than the traditional Gettysburg tours, with the humorous and adventurous moments rendering the serious moments all the more solemn in comparison (Thompson 82). Thus, even without the appearance of a specter, the tours are a useful tutorial vehicle, helping tourists gain a unique understanding of this event of the Civil War as they search for the ghosts of American history. Gettysburg ghost tours, as they represent the quirky yet profitable and educational potential for the haunting of Gettysburg, do much to show us about the presence, history, and uses of Gettysburg ghosts. Locals heckle them, historians dismiss them, skeptics deny them, and Civil War

buffs reprimand them for exploiting one of the bloodiest battles in American history for entertainment. But the popularity of such tours, the prevalence of such stories in the area, and the intense interest that they have garnered lead me deeper into a discussion about the nation's relationship to war, death, mythology, race, and the haunting nature of loss.

The hills and fields of Gettysburg are covered with more monuments than any other American Battlefield, and thousands of visitors pay homage to those who fell to protect their ideals (Thompson 80). Sometimes, all ghostly energies desire is recognition of their presences and of their former lives. Often, when ghosts receive these, or so the stories go, they are no longer bound to the places they haunt. It would seem that Gettysburg ghosts have both the recognition of their current presences and of their lives and deeds, each in great supply. Why, then, do they return? What trouble tethers them to the battlefield, walking, standing, staring continuously after almost 150 years? In other words, Kent Gramm asks, "What is it that haunts them? (Gramm 30). Here, Gramm introduces a key facet in the nature of a haunting. *The ghosts who haunt us are haunted too*. By asking this necessary question, Gramm creates a space for the transformative nature of haunting to take hold in our understanding of the war. This space can deferentially acknowledge both the weight of the soldiers' sacrifice and the bloody and terrible nature of their battle:

Have not the country and our very lives been perfumed by their sacrifice?  
Is that sacrifice not as sweet and proper as any in the long, speckled  
history of humankind? But what is wrong with this picture? These brave  
boys killed each other...they perpetrated the dirtiest horrors and coldest  
brutalities of their age, on a scale yet unknown on this continent. Maybe it  
was not so sweet and proper.

Gramm 32

That which haunts the ghost drives the ghost to linger, transitively haunting the living with these same concerns as we peer out over the battlefield and try to imagine the scene.



The scene generally described is heroic, honorable, and noble, permeated by fantastical stories of fathers and brothers who “gave the last full measure of devotion for the noblest ideals ever to appear in this...country”(Gramm 23). But the ghosts ask us for more than just this flat reflection. Something more than the legend, the drama, and the heroism of the Civil War haunts us through their haunted bodies.

Perhaps the stain of murder haunts the ghosts, animates their spirits and plagues their disembodied consciences. As Gramm writes, “Maybe [the ghosts of Gettysburg] tell us that to die in battle means to be destroyed by the evil in all of us; and for some this evil cannot be shaken off, not after a hundred years” (Gramm 33). While the North parades the memory of Gettysburg as the prevailing of truly national and American Northern values over the South, the South romanticizes their lost battle for heroism, chivalry, and importance. These overly-idealized connections to the battle mask the true nature of those three bloody days. Here, the liminal, deconstructive space that the ghost occupies, as outlined in the pages of my introduction, is filled with collisions unique to Gettysburg. Yes, the ghosts hovering above the fields, who die day after day, collapse the binaries of imagination and reality, body and spirit, past and present, as all ghosts do. But in the haunting of Gettysburg, even more binaries cave and combine: “Innocence pairs strangely with guilt, honor with shame...the divine will with the worst that is in the human heart,” right with wrong, North with South, freedom with slavery, death with life (Gramm 32). In the space between a nation’s ideals, an officer’s command and a soldier’s bullet or blade, thousands of men killed and were killed. The innocence and nobility of a young man dying for his beloved country is fully intertwined with the guilt and shame of the butchery of his fellow man. The seeming innocence of dying for honor, glory,

freedom, and justice, in an age of sentiment and sentimentality, cannot be purely extracted from the mixture of war, with its destruction, hatred, and massacre. The divine will was strategically evoked by leaders to sanctify the goals of each side of battle and promote their personal goals. Without surviving Gettysburg, some hyperbolize, “The United States would not have survived, and with its death would have fallen the idea of global democracy” (Desjardin 7). Yet this costly preservation of democracy brought the white South to its knees and its sovereignty to the righteous North. The national memory of Gettysburg shines with all of these seeming contradictions and peculiarities, a place whose monument-studded geography ironically stands as a gaping loss for both the Confederacy and the Union.

Tourists clamor over the thousand memorials, peer out over the hills, and imagine the scene in endless repeat. Re-enactors dressed in Confederate greys and Union blues crowd the restaurants and cafés in the warm summer months, setting their muskets and swords down tableside. They can imagine the scene, they can perform it, they can try and feel what it was like to stand there on the edge of battle. But, as Gramm writes, “The one thing we cannot imagine is what it means to be shot and killed in Civil War battle. Although we might be able to imagine what it was *like* to be shot and killed, we cannot imagine what it *means*. The ghosts could help us with that...” (Gramm 28). We cannot know and yet we try, as evidenced by the booming tourist trade and the flourishing tour companies. Yet engaging in such attempts, seeking out the ghosts of Gettysburg, is not a hopeless and morose task. As David L. Eng and David Kazanjian write in Loss: The Politics of Mourning, “Reliving an era is to bring the past to memory. It is to induce actively a tension between the past and the present, between the dead and the living”

(Eng and Kazanjian I). Those who interact with and follow the ghosts of Gettysburg to their historical moment make use of this tension. In this motion they carry the potential to locate themselves within the histories of power and disempowerment embodied by the narrative of the Battle of Gettysburg.

### [Lincoln, Spiritual Medium]

Union troops were in a state of peril as a Confederate attack ordered by General Robert E. Lee on July 2<sup>nd</sup> began to violently press the Union's left flank eastward. But instead of pushing Union troops as planned up the spine of Houck's Ridge, or the deadly Devil's Den, a miscarriage of orders pressed the Union division over the Round Tops. On the southern end of the battlefield about two miles away from Gettysburg's town center, the granite spur of Big Round Top, known as Little Round Top, proved a strategic stronghold in the Union's left flank. Commanding officers issued last-minute orders to dispatch Union troops in order to protect the hill and defend against the Confederate assault. Just a few minutes after Union troops flooded the slopes of Little Round Top, Confederate troops began to fire from below the boulder-strewn ridge. The battle began. As many historians suggest, the surrender of Little Round Top may have ended in Union defeat in the skirmish. They assert it might have resulted in the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg, and perhaps the entire war, if not for the timely arrival of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Division. Crowning the southern slope of Little Round Top, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Division arrived just ten minutes before the struggle and defended Union ideals to the last and bloodiest.

Minutes before, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Division had found itself at a fork in the road as they rushed to Little Round Top, unsure of which path to take to aid the Union. Just then, a rider on horseback approached, galloping to the front of the group and leading them to the treacherous but pivotal battle. The rider, soldiers later attested, struck them as strange. He did not identify himself as he trotted his stallion before the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine in a faded uniform and an outdated tri-cornered hat. The soldiers thought that a strange glow emanated from him and from his horse as he led them up the correct path to Little Round Top. Many of them said his face bore an uncanny resemblance to George Washington, recalling portraits of the legendary general and president. How inspiring must this tale have been to the Union men, that the spirit of a founding father had not only guided but had taken up the Union cause to die again for righteousness and liberty. His appearance suggested that there was one genuinely “American,” sanctified and blessed side of the war on which to fight, one in perfect alignment with the principles of the nation, and that they were on it.

As this legend with no single source suggests, there is no account of the battle of Gettysburg, no one text or authority that outlines with perfect truth and accuracy *what really happened*. What in some circles of academia is considered fact Civil War buffs dismiss as myth, and what is circulated in elementary schools is rejected in the town of Gettysburg. Even moments after the battle, there was no authority that could claim flawless precision and reliability concerning the sequence of events, because each version draws from myriad sources, each with a different perspective and a different set of goals in mind (Desjardin 13). Eyewitness accounts, diary entries, and memoirs alike presented conflicting and corrective versions of the battle. What many describe as the “fog of war”

clung about the visions of soldiers, clouding postwar memories of combat veterans of all ranks, leaving them to fumble about trying to piece together the scene (Desjardin 15). Union and Confederate officials alike skewed their accounts of the war in order to save face for the losses each side sustained.

After three days of battle at Gettysburg, the smoke cleared and revealed as many as 11,000 American dead. Many Civil War Scholars continue to contest that number given the aforementioned lack of unbiased and reliable accounts. In any case, these many thousands constituted a loss of epic proportions for the grieving American nation. But Thomas A. Desjardin, historian for the National Park Service at Gettysburg, writes that our current formulation of Gettysburg as “the greatest, most heroic, most important, most savage battle this nation has ever fought...was assembled by eloquent and ambitious men who were not soldiers, were never in a battle, and only set foot on the field of battle weeks, years, even decades after the shooting stopped” (Desjardin 13). In this moment of bereavement, which I argue has not yet ended, shifting meanings of Gettysburg were and are simultaneously created, altered, erased and sustained, to the contemporary effect of foregrounding the battle in American history and memory.

President Abraham Lincoln was one of those eloquent men. When the smoke cleared and the pockmarked battlefield came in to focus, the nation’s leader had lost over three thousand Union sons. Many of the dead were white Northern men, but a significant portion of all Union combatants were formerly enslaved fighters serving in white-led segregated troops who, at the time of the battle, were not yet guaranteed equal pay. On November 19, 1863, four months later, as he dedicated the Gettysburg National Cemetery with his monumental Gettysburg Address, Lincoln spoke of the lingering nature of this

loss, and from the “fog of war” stepped the revenants of the Union and Confederate dead. The address revealed a president haunted not only by this loss but also by the blemished legacy of the founding fathers, whose specters of “four score and seven years” before made their voices heard throughout the Union commander-in-chief’s speech.

Lincoln was troubled by the miscarriage of this nation once “conceived in Liberty,” tarnished by the prevalence of chattel slavery and the degradation of the unity of the states as demanded by secession. He acted throughout the address as a sort of spiritual medium for the fallen soldiers of the American Civil War, speaking for them and through them, giving their deaths political agency, and making meaning of loss. At the time of the speech, the nation was still gripped by the trials and atrocities of a war that Lincoln asserted acted as a test to these great principles, and the war would rage on for nearly two years after the battle. In the speech he positioned the Union upon the moral high ground of the war, one supported by the ideals of the founding fathers, created under the truth that “all men are created equal.” Lincoln dedicated a portion of the battlefield, which was still visibly recovering from the acts of war that colored it earlier that year, as the “final resting place for those who here gave their lives.” But by asserting that the sacrifice of the soldiers’ physical bodies promoted the spiritual vitality of the Union, Lincoln did not appear willing to grant dead soldiers peace. It would perhaps be appealing to let Lincoln’s speech stand simply as a poetic and quintessentially American eulogy, now recited by young Americans in their primary education. But the Gettysburg address does not accomplish the goal of quietly laying the honored dead to rest. Instead, it deploys the deaths and mobilizes the spirits of the fallen soldiers for the political purposes of the Union.

Towering above all other men, gaunt, with dark eyes and a masking, thick beard, Lincoln was the picture of a haunted man. He delivered the Gettysburg Address at a period in American history where Spiritualism enjoyed its greatest levels of popularity. Lincoln was doubtlessly familiar with the Spiritualist movement, or the belief system that postulated that the dead are both willing and able to communicate with the living under the correct circumstances. Having suffered the losses of three of his four children, Lincoln even attended at least one séance with the purpose of communing with his dead progeny (Martin, Birnes, and Noory 202). The Gettysburg address seems to be a similar performance of communion with the dead, attempting to contact and make meaningful the devastating loss of his both biological sons and the fallen sons of the body politic. The address was both a performative utterance and spiritual evocation, harnessing the dynamic power of the séance not simply to make ghosts appear, but to call on them speak.

In the speech, Lincoln spectralizes the recently dead soldiers, lending them ghostly and haunting qualities. He sets the ghostly dead to the task of haunting American minds with the moral tenets and political purposes of the war through the shape of their loss, a gaping hole of about 3,000 men on their lines of defense. Lincoln insists the world *can never forget what they did here*, and why they did it. The president exalts the sacrifices of those who *gave their lives that that nation might live*, lending their deaths political power and moral weight as necessary sacrifices for the preservation of republican ideals. Lincoln identifies veterans' singular, ghostly ability to sanctify the field: *We cannot dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our*

*poor power to add or detract.* This ultimate American sacrifice, he demands, should haunt the living minds of the nation, evoking the transference power of haunting: the living are haunted by the honored dead because the dead are haunted by the ways they killed and died for their nation.

Though history books mark Gettysburg as a decisive Confederate defeat, Lincoln's public support remained perilously low. Even his supporters doubted an upcoming reelection victory in the fall of 1864 (Desjardin 198). But through the address, Lincoln urges both his constituents and his fighters onward, despite the devastating losses of a country, in the words of *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greely, that was "bleeding, bankrupt, almost dying...[longing] for peace...[shuddering] at the prospect of fresh conscriptions, of further wholesale devastations, and of new rivers of human blood" (Greely). Lincoln entreats the Union conscience to continue the unfinished task of their fallen sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands. The Union must continue its fight, this logic indicates, if only to justify their incredible loss: *It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.* Lincoln appeals to tradition by nodding to the Constitution's *government of the people, by the people, for the people*, echoing the words of the founding fathers that began in "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union...", one threatened now by secessionist ideals. Lincoln suggests that Union soldiers fight on the side of righteous American



patriotism, one more closely allied with the founding principles of the United States than those of the Confederacy, whose moral and governmental system is undermined by the evils of slavery and disunion. After all, the ghost of George Washington is not said to have appeared to Confederate troops. President Lincoln masks the atrocities of war with the nobility of martyrdom, the elixir for a dying nation, renewing his political viability for reelection. He states that, in honor of the sacrifice he directed as Union commander-in-chief, the Union must continue to dedicate itself to the “great task remaining before us,” a kind of refocusing of the mission of the war in the midst of mourning. Thus the emptiness evidencing the Union losses came to signify a positive space, a chasmic well of meaning from which the Union could draw sustainable purpose.

Lincoln was often described as a melancholic man. Certainly, by Freud’s definitions, he expresses aspects of mourning through the Gettysburg Address. As Eng and Kazanjian write, “What is lost is known only by what remains of it,” and Lincoln’s words and legacy display melancholic brooding over Union remains: over their bodies, their graves, their ideals, and their ghosts (Eng and Kazanjian 3). Freud writes that “mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud 243). Melancholia, however, is a distinct reaction from “normal mourning,” which entails full closure of loss, because melancholia is a sustained devotion to the lost object. Melancholia is mourning without end. At the moment of the address, Lincoln had suffered the losses of his sons, of his soldiers, stood the threat of the loss of the war and possibly of his ideal of American democracy, battled with depression and

faced a potentially squandered reelection. Lincoln presented a distinctly melancholic disposition, which the address reflected.

By the nature of the address as a speech projected to the American people, Lincoln forged a collective melancholic connection to the losses sustained at Gettysburg. The address serves to prime its audience for the haunting of Gettysburg; it is at once a eulogy for the honored dead and a projection of melancholia onto the bereaved nation. The Gettysburg Address acts as both an examination of crippling loss and a refusal of closure, necessitating a constant communion with its spirits. Eng and Kazanjian write:

Unlike mourning, in which the past is declared resolved, finished, and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present. By engaging in “countless separate struggles” with loss, melancholia might be said to constitute...an ongoing and open relationship with the past—bringing its ghosts and specters, its flaring and fleeting images, to the present.

Eng and Kazanjian 4

And so Lincoln constructs an ongoing and open relationship with the past by pulling its specters into the present, engaging his listeners in melancholia, offering “a capaciousness of meaning in relation to losses encompassing the individual and the collective, the spiritual and the material, the psychic and the social, the aesthetic and the political” (Eng and Kazanjian 3). This language of binaries should sound familiar within the framework of this project. The constructive liminal space outlined in this quotation, which Lincoln illustrates so eloquently in the Gettysburg address, is that occupied by ghosts. The “capaciousness of meaning” established by the address is the very flexibility that allows me to reimagine its significance in the haunted American mind.

As I have asserted earlier, and as Eng and Kazanjian remark in their work, melancholia, or as I define it, the search for and discussion with ghosts, is a state of creative deconstructiveness. It maintains creative potential despite its popular repute as a

pathological state of mental disorder. Melancholia contains the possibility for “animating loss for hopeful...political purposes” (Eng and Kazanjian 2). Lincoln sculpted the shape of this loss into the possibility of a Union victory, which would grant not only an ideological defeat of but also greater central governmental control over the American South. He utilized the same framework after the ambiguous Union victory at Antietam, another of the bloodiest Civil War battles, in order to present and promote his Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln animates the deaths of thousands by suggesting that the loss can create an overall gain, that dying for the Union at Gettysburg and even Antietam was not meaningless butchery but the performance of true patriotism. The address, though met with incredible public ambivalence, struck a chord that resonates in the present. Nearly two years after its delivery, in his eulogy for the assassinated president, Senator Charles Sumner noted the error of Lincoln’s prediction that “the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here,” on that dedication day in 1863. Instead, Sumner suggested, “The world noted at once what he said, and will never cease to remember it. The battle itself was less important than the speech” (“Abraham Lincoln Online). In other words, Sumner acknowledges that Lincoln’s speech would be successful in all its haunting, lingering functions. Many years later, New York Governor George Pataki was called upon to offer words of consolation and inspiration at the first year anniversary of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Perhaps Pataki could conjure no words of his own to address the devastation of the attacks. Perhaps Pataki could not imagine the creative potential for unity that the events of September 11, 2001 contained for the city and nation. Perhaps he did not want to engage in the animation of this loss for the hopeless

political purposes of the ensuing “war on terror.” Pataki instead approached the podium and recited the Gettysburg Address. Then, as in 1863, this was a message of hope through haunting, mobilizing that hope for political gain.

### [Birth through Death]

And so the Gettysburg wound was left open as an instructive display of national mourning and of Union/Northern moral, economic, and military superiority. Walter Benjamin’s framework of Marx’s historical materialism as outlined in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940) provides us with an understanding of the creative importance of Lincoln’s melancholic gesture. The thesis insists upon the superiority of historical materialism over historicism. Without using the specific term, I have already identified historicism’s limited potential in my introduction as I describe its rupture and uncertainty in the event of a haunting: “Acknowledging a ghostly presence in the home is a rupture in the Dominant Narrative of traditional historiography, a sign that our minds have accepted that there is perhaps a truth untold, partly erased, or repressed” (Bowe 6). Benjamin states that historicism has the tendency to “blot out everything” one knows “about the later course of history” in order to grasp or hold onto one true, fixed version of the past that cannot return. Benjamin identifies the adherents of historicism as empathetic with only the victor, who is of course the white male author of the oppressively narrow Dominant Narrative. Eng and Kazanjian also recognize historicism’s insistence “upon a hegemonic identification with the victor’s perspective.” They note its “desire to...create fixed and totalizing narratives [of the past which] precipitates despair...Historicism’s fixing of the remains of the past is hopeless.” (Eng and Kazanjian 2). In contrast, historical materialism’s approach to mourning remains animates “history for future

significations as well as alternate empathies” (Eng and Kazanjian 1). By coloring the Gettysburg Address with melancholic hues, Lincoln certainly used the devastation at Gettysburg to his own political advantages. Yet he accomplished this while leaving the wound open to further “significations” and “alternate empathies” because of his refusal to let the dead rest. As though he left the front door open, the ghosts continue to file in.

As the introduction to this project emphasizes, *Linger* is an appeal to the reader to approach with a high degree of suspicion any historicism that holds a resolved not melancholic, relationship to trauma. This historical materialist approach available through the haunted understanding of Gettysburg allows us to see that traditional historicism’s grasping version of Gettysburg is one that attempts to shut the door between the past and the present. It does not force us to locate ourselves within haunted systems of privilege and repression established before, during, and after the Civil War. Historicism’s “grasping” version of Gettysburg does not account for the acts of meaning making and authorship in the writing of Gettysburg and how those acts contributed to a national memory of the event. Its narrowness does not account for the ghosts. Though I have already suggested that there is no one authority on the events of the battle, the victor (Union) authored Dominant Narrative of the event, which is to say, historicism’s approach to Gettysburg, is one that is generally taught and accepted in American classrooms, albeit with a different sense of loss in the South. It is certainly a version that by third grade, as I stood in front of the classroom and recited the Gettysburg Address from memory, I had absorbed in my Northern school. I could identify geographically and politically with the movement towards abolition and emancipation, whereas “many white southerners’ sense of personal and regional identity is connected with their feelings of

pride in their families' Confederate past or with their belief that the North victimized the South" (Eichstedt and Small).

But for me and for my classmates to the contemporary Republican Party, and across to the left wing, Lincoln is the great Emancipator, a kind-hearted, self-made, grandfather like character who flourished in the humblest of Indiana log cabin origins. And the Civil War was a battle that the ancestors of my New England classmates fought in died in, against racism, to righteously protect African Americans from racial slavery. In our Northern classrooms, the white South was always in the wrong, in the war and in recent memory. In my darkened cinder block walled classrooms, black and white footage of the Little Rock Nine and the turmoil in Selma was interposed between images of plantation home "grandeur." My picture of the South during my Northern public education from 1995 to 2008 was a hazy, geographically and temporally isolated amalgam of constant injustice towards blacks. This was assembled through the imagery of news footage, documentary films, Confederate Civil War portraiture, and the white-facilitated reveries of racial justice established in books like To Kill a Mockingbird. The Civil War was our first crusade towards equality, we were taught. And by "our," of course, I mean the great (predominantly) white North; all of my classmates of color were virtually written out of positive self-identification within our history books.

Even as recently as the 2012 Republican Primaries, Newt Gingrich's former aide Rick Tyler referred to the Civil War as a fight for civil rights and cited Lincoln's crusade against slavery as source of pride for contemporary Republican party members. Tyler dismissed MSNBC's "race-baiting" by referring to the proud history of the Republican Party on air with Rachel Maddow and Al Sharpton: "If you want to talk about the

Republican Party, the Republican Party was started by Abraham Lincoln, we fought a Civil War. Six of the nine planks in the 1856 platform were a civil rights platform. We were the start of the civil rights party” (MSNBC). The Republican Party continues to defend its white supremacist roots with these familiar claims. But even in 1980, just miles away from the site of the murder of three Civil Rights activists in 1964, Ronald Reagan attempted to appeal to white racist Southern voters in Philadelphia, Mississippi, by controversially promising to restore states’ rights. States’ rights, of course, hinted in code the possibility of legalizing Jim Crow and Lynch Law once more. The Republican Party has consistently fallen back on their pride of Abraham Lincoln, but the ghosts that hover on Gettysburg’s hills and fields, houses and stores, cemeteries and monuments problematize this reflection of Lincoln as a Republican crusader and of the Civil War. The ghosts suggest not only the aforementioned spiritual costliness of war, but also that this “new birth of freedom” of Lincoln’s was strangely born and perhaps miscarried. The Dominant Narrative that posits the Civil War as a true realization of civil rights for African Americans is a hegemonic identification with the victors. It does not account for the anti-black terrorism that defined American Slavery and later Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and Lynch Law. It does not account for the far-reaching impact of murder, death, and violence, towards African Americans into the American future. It does not account for the racial terrorism that exists today as a testament to the legacy of racial slavery.

Anders Stephanson asserts in Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right, “There was a great deal of talk about...the eradication of sinful slavery as the final battle. The United States would be born again, a ‘mountain of holiness for the dissemination of light and purity to all nations,’ as one Reverend in Philadelphia decreed.

With the end in sight, the Unionist cause could be interpreted as divine vindication” (Stephanson 65). Lincoln clearly makes use of the notion of divine vindication as well as popular spiritualist mysticism in order to bring about the “new birth of freedom” mentioned in the address. But what is the nature of this new birth of freedom? When Lincoln spoke the phrase, he referenced the abolition of slavery, an obvious nod to his earlier Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln’s new birth of freedom speaks to the opportunity for the nation to more accurately realize, through the abolition of slavery, the principles of equality nominally outlined in United States’ founding documents. Just as George Washington is said to have visited the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Division, Lincoln is also haunted by the founding fathers and the hypocrisy of Slavery as an institution in the “land of the free.” His adherence and reverence towards these principles during the address, which is partly a eulogy, constructs the Union dead as having died to attain republican ideals, and depicts the dead as returning to maintain this goal. In the same way that the South fought voraciously for states’ rights and self-sovereignty, for “opportunity and expansion for everyone amid minimal or no governmental regulation,” the meritocratic Jacksonianism embraced by Lincoln’s rhetoric of republican equality had the same power to “mask a profoundly unequal society” (Stephanson 30). The flimsy universalism of emancipation was able to conceal what continued from antebellum America as both lawful and lawless policing of black bodies and the divestment of white Northern moral interest in protecting vulnerable post-war subjects.

The nature of abolitionism and thus of the “new birth of freedom” that Lincoln proclaimed did not call for the immediate absorption of Black subjects into American citizenry, thus it could not be considered the “final battle” for the freedmen or for a



public striving for meaningful equality. It was not a movement so democratic or universal as Rick Tyler and so many other Americans may idealize. As Stephanson continues, “Opposing slavery did not mean that one was in favor of a free, multiracial citizenry living in republican harmony...Instead, one tended to be against *mixtures* as well as unfree labor. Loud calls for a ‘free’ state often signaled an attempt to keep blacks out, coupled, at best, with some colonization scheme to rid oneself of blacks already present” (Stephanson 29). Even President Lincoln pushed ludicrous colonization plans in order to racially cleanse the United States of blacks post-emancipation, proposing in 1862 a remedy to export freedmen to Central American and Haitian colonies. This suggestion revealed Lincoln’s own racisms by configuring future emancipated masses as a problem to be eliminated by the white elite from the American home. In response to this suggestion presented to African American leaders of the era, Frederick Douglass aptly concluded that Lincoln displayed “all his inconsistencies, his pride of race and blood, and his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy.” Douglass continued:

The argument of Mr. Lincoln is that the difference between the white and black races renders it impossible for them to live together in the same country without detriment to both. Colonization, therefore, he holds to be the duty and the interest of the colored people...Taking advantage of his position and of the prevailing prejudice against them he affirms that their presence in the country is the real first cause of the war, and logically enough, if the premises were sound, assumes the necessity of their removal.

Douglass 511

It is easy, just as we idealize and mythologize the horrors of war itself, to reflect on the Civil War as a noble fight by the North against slavery, with Lincoln as their captain. Therefore it is also possible to consider, as many Americans do, that the Civil War was a fight for civil rights. But, as Douglass asserts, the Union approach to Emancipation and to the Reconstruction of Southern government engages in tactics of victim-blaming, which

produced racial resentment within and without the Union. As Douglass writes, victim-blaming tactics of much Civil War rhetoric positioned the existence of slavery, and thus the costly eradication thereof, as some fault of the enslaved themselves. That Lincoln, as the Union leader, proposed removal of the masses of African descent reveals that the call to Civil War was as much an anti-Slavery movement as it was a self-righteous white supremacist exercise of policing racial boundaries. As Frances E.W. Harper plainly surmises in her novel Iola Leroy, Or Shadows Uplifted, “I think that some of these Northern soldiers do two things—hate slavery and hate niggers” (Harper 49).

### [Reconstructed Violence]

As the ghosts of Gettysburg pull us into the context of the war, their lingering encourages us to examine the consequences of their deaths and the war effort in general. Our melancholic attachment to the event allows us to reengage and better understand the underlying themes of white supremacy in a movement so romanticized and valorized. By literally embodying the past in the present, ghosts problematize the present by signaling the irresolution of the past. By doing so, we can trace in the present systems of inequality to their root historical contexts. Moving to the period of Reconstruction, after the fuming gun barrels had cooled and the dead were interred, the nation held the unique opportunity to incorporate a new body of four million emancipated enslaved into her citizenry. Those emancipated individuals were also in the process of interpreting and adjusting their newfound freedoms. But the foundation of blood and concrete had already been poured upon Black and Red others; our haunted home was built and renovated upon structures of positive investments in white supremacy. In 1899, more than thirty five years after the

Emancipation Proclamation, Charles Chestnutt authored a perfectly fitting allegorical expression of this haunted home in his short story “Po’ Sandy.” Sandy, enslaved to “Mars Marrabo,” escapes slave labor through his wife’s magical capabilities. His wife, Tenie, uses sorcery of African origin to transform Sandy into a majestic pine tree, hiding him from his master and spelling him back into a human for nightly conferences. But one day Tenie was sent from the plantation just as a small team of lumbermen was sent to collect wood for Mars Marrabo’s wife’s kitchen. After hacking and dragging Sandy’s pine body to the lumber mill, feeding the groaning trunk through the wheezing saw mill, and building a kitchen for the master’s wife, Sandy’s spirit lingers in the timber that houses the means of production and sustenance for these white southerners. However, Master Marrabo’s wife is so unsettled by the eerie feeling of the kitchen at night that she refuses to go near it, abandoning confrontation with the murderously contracted lumber to the cooks and the enslaved. Thus, American institutions were created using the flesh and blood of the “African” other, haunting whites yet forcing the confrontation and self-identification with the murdered lumber on freedmen.

What could become of the kind of pathologized white supremacy that was so deeply entangled in the founding of this nation since its construction on stolen soil? Racism itself became a ghost, lingering, whispering and shouting, attempting to become invisible in order to endure. And it did and does, potent and murderous, invisible to those privileged enough that they can ignore it, meanwhile making ghosts of the living in the eyes of the law. The Civil War brought victory to the North and validation to its abolitionist, that is to say, largely white and conservatively Christian, foundation. The Union eradicated “sinful,” unchristian slavery, what Stephanson writes had been

constructed as the “final battle” for the Nation, and “freedom” was won for all men. But the legacy of an institution that preserved power dynamics for the South proved that “abolition is not emancipation” (Gordon 162). At this time, the broken nation grappled with “The Negro Problem,” an open ended debate on what the role the emancipated population should assume in American society. The end of the war marked the perilous period of Reconstruction to the decimated Confederacy.

The freedom offered through the Emancipation Proclamation was tenuous at best. Slavery was not officially de-constitutionalized until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1868 with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the first of the Reconstruction Amendments. The country now hotly debated questions of Blackness, citizenship, and political participation. The 1857 Dred Scott v. Stanford decision, which had ruled that people of African ancestry could not be considered U.S. Citizens, was repealed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment two and a half years later. The vote did not arrive officially until the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1870, which held that state governments could not deny the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Lincoln himself only moderately supported the enfranchisement of freedmen, wishing to limit their political participation to Union veterans and “the very intelligent” of the race (Gienapp 155). The beginning of Radical Reconstruction had come to the South in 1867: the Union supplanted Southern civilian governments and replaced them with the rule of twenty thousand U.S. Army troops over ten Confederate states. This adjustment to Union occupation also paired with the economic shift from wealthy, landed gentry utilizing forced labor to sharecropping, an agricultural system widely open to abuse and termed neo-slavery. Labor was performed mainly by tenant

farmers and convict laborers, with chain gangs striping the south, reconstructing war-torn cities like Atlanta, Georgia, and laying railroad track.

I am not suggesting that abolition of racial slavery was not a huge step towards racial equality, because that much is obvious. But I do mean to assert that the space between abolition and true emancipation is a greater gap than the convenience of historicism is generally willing to relay. The Dominant Narrative does not care to actively remember this truth. A collective amnesia seems to have stolen over voices like that of Rick Tyler, painting the Civil War and Emancipation with a fairer palette than the one it contained. But the sordid legacy of racial slavery lingered long after the Emancipation Proclamation and the later end of the war. Though the institution of a domestic and international slavery no longer existed, critical discussion of its shaping effects on Anglo and African Americans was and is needed in order to “effectively move forward,” assert Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small write in their work *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Eichstedt and Small 1). “The lack of talk about...slavery suggests its power and pain, and suggests that concentrated social forgetting has become an organizing principle” (1). The authors invoke Irwin-Zarecka’s concept of “social forgetting,” quoting, “‘When even the minimal signs of memory work are missing, when graves are left invisible and unattended, for example, or stories remain untold, these are strong indications of a past confined to oblivion’” (Irwin-Zarecka in Eichstedt and Small 2). Slavery haunts through the return of the ghosts at Gettysburg involved in its preservation and dismantling, just as it haunts the legacy of social inequality and racism towards African Americans. Collective amnesia, or social

forgetting, organizes the legacy of enslavement to a closed chapter in a history book, subsequently obscuring the devastation that defined Reconstruction.

### [Lynch Law]

In direct affront to Northern governmental Reconstruction efforts, as well as in defiance against migrating “carpetbaggers,” Union-loyal Southerners derisively called “scalawags,” and alliances of freedmen, the White South began its own Reconstruction-era civil war. As some Confederate-loyal Southerners had been banned from the polls as punishment for rebellion and the black vote was legalized in 1870, white Southerners feared, perhaps irrationally, a governmental and social take-over by the freedmen and their allies. The object of this white paranoia featured punishment of former enslavers and their families, especially wives and daughters, and the privileging of illiterate, brutal, and violent freedmen. D.W. Griffith’s 1915 film The Birth of a Nation, a huge national motion picture success and racist tribute to the White South, depicts this fictional scene at the polls. White actors in blackface conduct the polls with authoritarian ruthlessness, denying the “moral” white plantation owners, those formerly privileged and powerful, their rightful vote.

Griffiths’ film pictures the noble rise of the Ku Klux Klan in 1865, born out of the necessity of protecting white women, white rights, white property, and the white vote. The Birth of a Nation conveniently omits the truth that the Ku Klux Klan and other paramilitary organizations like the White League and Red Shirts were, in reality, white terrorist militias on rampages of racial hatred. Instead, it constructs another truth in the

service of white supremacy; W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that the film represents “the Negro...either as an ignorant fool, a vicious rapist, a venal or unscrupulous politician or a faithful but doddering idiot” (Lewis 330). As the Ku Klux Klan practiced extrajudicial killings and punishments, “Lynch Law” took hold in the South. As Ida B. Wells-Barnett writes in her 1895 work, The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States, “‘Lynch Law’ has no...regard for human life. Assuming for itself an absolute supremacy over the law of the land, it has time and again dyed its hands in the blood of men.” (Wells-Barnett 9). Under Grant’s presidency, The Civil Rights Act of 1871 attempted to suppress Klan activities, but the mob violence continued, “conscious that it [would] never be called to an account...The press and even the pulpit, in the main either by silence or open apology...condoned and encouraged this state of anarchy” (Wells-Barnett 10). After the premier of The Birth of a Nation, Du Bois noted that the “number of mob murders so increased that nearly one hundred Negroes were lynched during 1915 and a score of whites, a larger number than had occurred for more than a decade” (Lewis 331). After showing the film in the White House, the first film screening in the building, Woodrow Wilson said the film was “like writing history with lightning,” lamenting only that it was “all so terribly true” (330).

Ida B. Wells-Barnett writes of the expressions of “unbridled power” of white men on the body of the emancipated, formerly enslaved person. In the thirty years after Emancipation, Wells-Barnett documents in The Red Record, “more than ten thousand Negroes [had] been killed in cold blood, without the formality of trial and legal execution” (Wells-Barnett 3). To explain the rise of white-accepted and enacted extrajudicial killings, Wells-Barnett writes:

The slave was rarely killed, he was too valuable...But Emancipation came and the vested interests of the white man in the Negro's body were lost...In slave times the Negro was kept subservient and submissive by the frequency and severity of the scourging, but, with freedom, a new system of intimidation came into vogue; the Negro was not only whipped and scourged; he was killed.

3

Thus after chattel slavery was deemed illegal whites continued to assert dominance over black bodies, marking the “Red Record” with their blood. Wells-Barnett assembled The Red Record “of compilations made by white men, of reports sent over the civilized world by white men in the South” (5). Theirs was a prideful, sadistic exercise of hatred. Before the dangling bodies, what Billie Holiday refers to as the “strange fruit” of Southern trees, were removed from the branches, they were often used as target practice and then left in broad daylight as a symbol of white regard for black personhood. As pictured below, white spectators traded postcards featuring snapshots of lynchings as keepsakes of their white-supremacist extremism. As Wells-Barnett and Frederick Douglass noted, the justifications for extrajudicial killings on behalf of organizations like the Ku Klux Klan evolved from suppressing nonexistent black insurrection, to protecting the traditionally white vote and civic participation, to protecting the “inevitable” rape of white women by hyper-sexualized, hyper-criminalized black males (3). All of these sickening justifications existed in order to promote the cause of “No Negro domination’...the new legend on the sanguinary banner of the sunny South...Under it rode the Ku Klux Klan, the Regulators, and the lawless mobs, which for any cause chose to murder one man or a dozen as suited their purpose best” (3).

Authorities looked away or were directly involved in this rule of Lynch Law, and after a brief attempt to continue in Lincoln’s footsteps, President Andrew Johnson cared only to call the business of Reconstruction complete and withdraw Reconstruction



resources from the South. President Johnson preferred to limit centralized government and maintain states' rights to restrict the vote and exercise systematic oppression through Black Codes and anti-black violence. Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill of 1866, which declared that people born on U.S. soil, without regard to race, color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, are entitled to citizenship. While Radical Republican President Grant continued Reconstructionist interventions in the South on the grounds of protecting the rights of black Americans, the Compromise of 1877 afforded subsequent President Hayes a presidency on the grounds that all government troops be removed from former Confederate states. The government looked away as Jim Crow laws replaced the former Black Codes, and the "Red Record" continued to mark American soil as a haunting tally grew of extra-judicial killings and punishments delivered upon black bodies by white rage.



Facsimile of back of photograph. W.R. MARTIN, Traveling Photographer. (Handwritten: This S.O.B. was hung at Clanton

Ala. Friday Aug 21st/91 for murdering a little boy in cold blood for 35¢ in cash. He is a good specimen of your "Black Christian hung by White Heathens" [illegible] of the Committee.)

Neither the North nor the removed central government is exempt from blame for the murder of its citizens. As Robert M. Farnsworth writes in the introduction to The Conjure Woman, "The North's complicity in such acts was expressed by its withdrawal of concern and by its overlooking the brutal repression of blacks which was systematically taking place. It preferred to indulge in sentimental reverie about the old plantation life as symbolizing the natural white interest in healing the wounds of the civil war" (Chestnutt vi). Nearly 200 anti-lynching bills were proposed up to 1940 in the attempt to assuage anti-black terrorism and murder, with only three making it past the lower house of representatives between 1920 and 1940. As the BBC writes, "By making lynching a federal crime, the legislation would have allowed the central US government to prosecute those responsible, and overcome opposition from local police forces, who were often complicit in the crimes" (BBC). But none ever passed: each halted in the Senate, despite support from seven Presidents, making the government's ultimate complicity in lynching so apparent that the Senate was pressed to formally apologize in 2005 for their unwillingness to intervene in Southern provincial affairs. Stated Senator Mary Landrieu, who introduced Congress' apology resolution, "There may be no other injustice in American history for which the Senate so uniquely bears responsibility" (BBC).

## [The Indian Burial Ground]

As children, we tried to get lost in the New England woods. We would isolate ourselves to paths where we could not see the road through the trees, or haunt strips of water's edge uninterrupted by the glaring face of white-sided colonials across the lake. Low quality, high cost housing developments and frost-heaved graying roads inevitably intruded upon our collective reveries if we wandered too far from the heart of the woods. So we lingered in dark circles among the hidden places. The trees were the decorative fringes of our streets and town, yet we fantasized about an age of the opposite. We dreamed of homes, few and far between, huddled up against the dark protection of the pines and sugar maples, where spirits wove their ways between the trees leaving silvery trails as glowing evidence. We spoke reverently of ways to harness our certain powers and call forth the shining dead with their ghostly knowledge: we wanted to know about the times before us. After school we would cast about in the woods trying to build shelter from bark and branch, shielding our eyes to the present, and every sleepover we circled up in giggling rings, cross-legged and whispering, our hands thrusting back and forth across the smooth beige gloss of the Ouija board.

At some point, I suppose my sisters, cousins, and friends moved on from our collective obsession with headstones that flanked the family farms and skirted the small streams, yet I did not. We used to wonder about the people they hold and the spirits that they harbor. I still make special trips to meditate among them, lingering especially over the graves where rain and time have erased their names, epitaphs, birth and death dates. What is invisible is even more spiritually powerful and disarming than the sinister yet

comprehensible shapes of granite headstones: these graves without names, and also the graves that we cannot see, or the graves that we imagine, or the graves that we have forgotten to remember.

A haunting always demands an explanation, a source, and a history, even to inquisitive children. Our infantile skepticism allowed us to dismiss a ghost story or report of a haunting that did not contain sufficient cause or background to certify its plausibility. A story without this legitimacy was easy to tear apart with our juvenile logic, dismiss and forget. Stories with groundings in history, especially with local relevance, had the power to make us really grapple with the past in the present. We saw it flitting through our shadowy bedrooms just out of sight, reaching up transparent hands from under the bed, and radiating with silent and negative power from beneath the foundations of our homes. We drew a spiritual and imaginative power from the knowledge that our small New England town was the site of so much history. The “Indian burial ground” explanation, whether we were repeating local knowledge, TV show scripts, or written works, was always an acceptably chilling start or conclusion to a ghost story or report of a haunting. It had even more unsettling force than visits to the colonial graveyards in our New England town. The bodies could be anywhere, we thought: underneath our school, our houses, the grocery, the dentist, or town hall. The frequency with which these explanations appeared within our stories and within popular media suggest a romanticization of a “vanished” pre-encounter Native America, like that which existed in our wooded play circles.

As Daniel Heath Justice writes in his work *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, “Whatever home may be, its roots can draw both rich

nourishment and withering poison from the stories we carry about who we are, about our relationships with the world, and about our imagined pasts and dreamed futures” (Justice 46). Being frightened by Indian Burial Ground explanations and other spectral Native stories means perhaps that we saw the blood and tears absorbed over many years by the rocky soil of our beloved suburban backyards. Watching the past perform its terrors on the background of the present was enough force to bring us close together in the woods at night, gathered back to back, guarded in every direction against what Toni Morrison might call a “rememory.” These places had the power to remember, albeit in fragments, the traumas enacted there. They might assault any of us with their reality, their ability to call forth and obscure events we still cannot fully synthesize because of their impossibly deep pain. They might call our attention to the continuing injustices that made our privileged homes livable for our young, pale, blonde-headed brothers and sisters. Yet we continued to call this haunted space home, and we were shaped by this troubled environment to passively remember and actively forget the violent past that constructed our American home.

My exploration of Native ghosts and Indian burial grounds has less to do with spirituality within Indigenous cultures, focusing instead on the appropriation and representation of those cultural values in the haunted Dominant Narrative of colonial and frontier spaces. Scrutinizing Native spirits through the dominant discourse of Native spectrality and disappearance does not attempt to understand the diverse and contrasting forms of Native spirituality. I cannot and will not explain away the appearance of Native spirits in colonized spaces, recognizing that psychoanalytic explanations and Eurowestern discourses have no power to decide which spirits are real and which are the

manifestations of a guilty conscience. This chapter is a study of what the Dominant Narrative alternately remembers and forgets: it remembers a “vanishing” race, it forgets the murderous policies, attitudes, and actions that attempted and attempt to violently disappear that race. It is an examination of the unspoken yet inevitable conclusion that a society digesting media that emphasizes Native spectrality will generally equate Indianness with death. As C. Jill Grady writes in her work “Ancestors, Ethnohistorical Practice, and Authentication”: “Today...the dominant discourse on Native Americans endures as a discourse of the dead” (Boyd and Thrush 282). This chapter is an inquiry into the ways hegemony disremembers the trauma it creates. In the following pages I will pursue images of Native spectrality and its sociopolitical consequences.

Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush introduce the Indian burial ground explanation well in their work Phantom Past: Indigenous Presence:

It is a story that is familiar to most modern North Americans. When unexplained, sinister, or violent things happen in the landscapes and communities we inhabit, one explanation seems to satisfy us more than many others. Whether accounting for the haunted house down on the dirt lane, the spectral woods behind the subdivision, or the seemingly cursed stretch of highway up the canyon, one kind of story in particular helps us make sense of these places: *Didn't you know? It was build on an Indian burial ground.*

Boyd and Thrush vii

Thus Americans have been consuming the “Indian burial ground” explanation popularly for hundreds of years. The related trope of ghostly Indians has been prevalent in American literature beginning with the Puritans, who depicted Native ghosts as demonic manifestations. Enlightenment literature features the ghostly Native as the symbol of irrationality and darkness (Bergland 1). Romantic literature pictures ghostly Natives at the margins representing a population shrinking from existence, on the brink of extinction

altogether, a narrative that echoes the genocidal consequence of hungrily expanding Euro-America. Spectral Indians appearing in non-Native oral traditions, folklore, and literature have often been symbolic of a desire to disappear Native Americans in order to exploit and appropriate their resources. Authors such as James Fenimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, Hawthorne, Melville and Poe make use of the spectral or vanishing Indian character in their texts to the horror and delight of their readers. Their works thrived in the historical reality of the incredible land appropriation that defined American Expansion. Recent examples of spectral Natives offered in the context of haunted Eurowesterners include the 1979 *The Amityville Horror* and its 2005 remake, Stephen King's 1983 *Pet Sematary*, the 1986 *Poltergeist 2: The Other Side* and even Comedy Central's *South Park*. Some of these stories produced for mass cultural consumption boast the stamp "Based on a True Story," which of course lends its credibility from the fact that all American land was once exclusively Native.

Stories of Native ghosts, appearing on screen, in print, or in spoken word, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century or the 21<sup>st</sup>, perform a wide range of political and cultural work. There are distinct motivations for depicting American Indians as ghostly. Firstly, focus on spectral Natives constructs America's indigenous population as dead, a "problem" relegated to the past and to the grave. This is a tool of silencing that attempts to disallow living Native voices from active political participation, suggesting that Indigeneity has relevance only in dialogues of death. These images are reproduced from Indian Removal-era rhetoric that lamented the "vanishing race" even while it stole and sold Indian tribal lands, declared Indians the dependent "wards" of the government, and brutally forced their assimilation to Euro-Western society. Secondly, as Boyd and Thrush write, "Indian ghost

stories harness the very real Indigenous beliefs in the power and potency of the dead,” simultaneously giving shaky credence to the potential reality of these beliefs even while they are casted as “superstition” that should give way to progress (Boyd and Thrush ix). And lastly, as I have asserted in previous chapters, Native hauntings also have the power to disrupt dominant and official historical narratives that transcend fixed boundaries of time and space (xi). As Renée Bergland writes in *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects*, “We are haunted either by the revival of what we have repressed or by the (seeming) confirmation of what we have surmounted...To avoid horror, civilized people must avoid being reminded of what has been buried, and, just as important, what has been conquered. But of course, they cannot” (Bergland 11). Through this passage Bergland suggests that Native specters return, perhaps within the colonizing psyche or perhaps of their own volition, as gruesome reminders of the anti-Native interactions that continue to shape our nation and homes.

When considered closely, the Indian burial ground explanation is surprisingly guilty. It implies a fault or crime that lies on the colonizing countenance, recognition of culpability in the killing, robbing, and finally disturbing the bodies of vulnerable populations. When a non-Native American perceives herself to be intentionally or accidentally treading upon the honor of a Native grave or entity, that person implicates herself in a perceived displacement, destruction, or desecration. Claims to property blur, along with the collapsing of the past/present, living/dead binaries, as the haunted person must reckon with a space’s previous inhabitants. Eurowesterners investing in images of the spectral Native express a form of dominant/colonial cultural anxiety as these stories force a remembrance of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples and imply



uncertainty about colonial claims to property. While again I stress that this haunting does not necessarily promote cross-cultural understanding, it can regardless lead to mass consumption of a history more responsible for horrors of American “progress.” As Avery Gordon suggests, we can “look for lessons about a haunting” because “there are thousands of ghosts.” They cause “entire societies become haunted by the terrible deeds that are systematically occurring and are simultaneously denied by...public organs of governance and communication” (Gordon 64). Even while dominant discourse may downplay the social and governmental genocide of American Natives, the Eurowesterner chilled by the Indian Burial Ground explanation locates herself in a system of killing that derives its force from traditionally Native resources. Thus the process of critically consuming ghostly Native media or of being haunted by spectral Natives can be a transformative, self-revelatory process.

### [The Great Permanent Problem]

As Judith Richardson writes in *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley*, “Hauntings deepen investigation because of how senses of the past and place are apprehended and created, what they suggest about the marginal and invisible things that texture and define identity, politics, and social life” (Richardson 3). Richardson suggests that hauntings can occur especially when the “possession” of a space by any dominant entity “dispossesses” a marginal one. When questions of property rise, so do the ghosts, and when the ghosts appear, so do questions of property. Expanding

upon Gordon's suggestion that the ghost imports a "charged strangeness" to a haunting that "[unsettles] the propriety and property lines," I assert that the appearance of Native ghosts calls into question Eurowestern concepts of ownership, claims which legally and morally self-justified the dispossession of Native lands and cultural practices since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Gordon 63).

As early as 1653, the colonizing English had implemented the reservation system. Each warrior was assigned fifty acres and unoccupied territory for hunting in order to establish boundaries between white and Indigenous cultures and to free the land for white agriculture and settlement (Gossett 228). Almost immediately, a pattern developed with regard to Indian land appropriation: whites would assign Natives to reservations, subsequently covet those lands, and by one means or another (often force), seek to reacquire them (228). A pattern of racism followed the tension over land possession, as though myths, stereotypes, and reflexive violence justified ethnic cleansing. As Thomas F. Gossett writes in *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, "Hatred or contempt for the Indians were strong among those who stood most to gain from the appropriation of Indian lands" (Gossett 239). Renée Bergland identifies another pattern arising from Indian land acquisition: when examining the period known as Indian Removal, from 1824 to 1850, Bergland noticed a greater "obsession with ghostly Native Americans" than ever (Bergland 21). Along with the vicious racial oppression of this time, discourse on the Indian future usually foresaw the necessary death of "primitive" at the hands of valiant, "civilizing" American progress.

President Andrew Jackson brought with his presidency the harshest policies of Indian Removal to date, "shrouding the destruction of Indians and the appropriation of

their lands in a metaphysical mantle of moral justification” (Takaki 85). Jackson was elected on the trails of his bloody leadership during the Indian Wars, most notably, his role at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. At the “battle,” Jackson’s troops surrounded eight hundred Creeks. They killed, including the women and children, almost all of them (85). After the slaughter, and in keeping with his combat practices, the future president preserved the scalps of his killed. Jackson’s notions of limited federal government, as I have discussed in former chapters, had the power to “mask a profoundly unequal society” (Stephanson 30). Jackson’s well-designed presidential powerlessness thus functioned as a “façade for collaborative conspiracy” in Indian Removal and killing (Takaki 85). The President was able to superficially move to “preserve this much-injured race” by Removal while espousing in private letters the viewpoint: “I must destroy those deluded victims doomed to destruction by their own restless and savage conduct” (Jackson in Takaki 87, 85). Through his actions, inactions, and policies, President Jackson certainly espoused the frontier maxim, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.”

After the 1825 proposal to what Chester A. Arthur later described as the nation’s “greatest permanent problem,” the Indian Removal Bill passed (Arthur). Along with the legislative privilege of resettling any eastern tribe, the president was bestowed the honor of voiding all treaties with Indian nations. That same year, as a result of the Treaty of Rabbit Creek, the Choctaws were pushed through intimidation to sign away their ancestral lands or be forcibly governed by the state of Mississippi. They had chosen, “hedged in by two evils,” that which they thought was “least,” choosing to “suffer and be free” in Oklahoma rather than be governed under laws which could not hear their voices (Takaki 93). In 1831, one year later, the Choctaws parted, for the most part by bare foot,

from their ancestral home in the midst of piercing cold and winter storms. Of the estimated three thousand traveling Choctaws, nearly one fifth perished from the beginning of the fall (92). After this scene of genocide, the government sold these Mississippi lands to clamoring white settlers for a profit of nearly three million dollars (93). That same year, Sauk and Fox tribes, after a miserable winter in Iowa Territory and protesting pending removal from Illinois, approached civilian frontiersman in a peaceful appeal. Led by Black Hawk, the namesake of the event's future title The Black Hawk Wars, the entire tribes of men, women, and children returned to Illinois to peaceably resettle. After three months of panicked attacks by white civilian settlers on the group of one thousand Sauks and Foxes, only 150 of the 1,000 Indians who had begun the march from the Iowa country yet lived (Gossett 231).

The scene of Removal repeated in 1834 with the Cherokee Trail of Tears, which began of Cherokee lands Georgia. The forced relocation to lands undesired by white settlers was possible only after the state of Georgia passed an 1829 law that extended Georgia state authority over the Cherokee Nation. The law provided that any member of the tribe who tried to influence a fellow Cherokee to remain in Georgia would be imprisoned, and that Cherokees could not act as witnesses against white men in a court of law. Similar laws were then passed in Mississippi and Alabama, forbidding tribes to meet and Indian chiefs to exercise their offices, facilitating the Creek and aforementioned Choctaw Removals. Again, Indian Fighter Andrew Jackson conspiratorially looked away from the Cherokee plight, even in the face of the 1932 *Worcester Vs. Georgia* case, which held that “the state of Georgia had no right to molest” the Cherokee on their lands (Gossett 233). Forced to disappear by the sham treaties that signed away their lands, by

brutal military force, and under a semblance of legality, the Cherokee Nation was removed from their special and sacred home by the government and “ghosted” in the court system. Soon after, Cherokee men, women, and children were intimidated by “the gleam of bayonets in the doorway” to embark along “the weary miles of trail,” often with nothing but the clothes on their backs in the dead of winter. Of the fifteen to seventeen thousand Cherokee walkers, about four thousand died along the way (Takaki 93). Dominant discourse holds that the ethnic cleansing of “Removal is most often represented by non-Natives as a regrettable but temporary blight on the innate virtue of the United States and its citizenry” (Justice 47). Yet Cherokee collective memory holds this trauma differently. Justice writes: “Removal is more than a metaphorical concept: it is a historical trauma that continues to reverberate in the memory and cultural expressions of Cherokees today” (Justice 47).

### [The Vanishing Race]

Somewhere between the dominant discourse and the Cherokee memory lies the non-Native ability to simultaneously remember and forget the trauma of benefitting by (dis)possession. Bergland writes that in order for people imagine themselves to be American subjects, they must simultaneously “acknowledge the American horror and celebrate the American triumph”; honoring the acts of American democracy simultaneously embraces the great injustices in America’s history (Bergland 16). Thus Eurowestern culture regarded the violence of Removal with ambivalence. Some lamented the passing of what increasingly became considered the “vanishing race,” popularizing books like The Last of the Mohicans, even while settlers bore down on dearly bought Native homes and natural resources immediately upon their vacancy or even before. They

celebrated the miracle of American progress while expressing their investment in vanishing the nation's original peoples by buying their lands. Investing in their death through murder, or lamenting their dwindling life by creating and consuming narratives of the "vanishing" Indian, acted as devices of Removal. Portraying the race as vanishing and decrying that loss both relieved concerns about retribution and responsibility and contributed to manifest destiny's unending push of progress and expansion against the lands and bodies of Native peoples. Yet there remains a lingering uncertainty about property, because, as Coll Thrush writes, "Few processes of dispossession are ever complete" (Boyd and Thrush 71). Almost paradoxically, the marginalized memory of dispossession and the ghosts of the dispossessed regularly "rise to colonize our present" (Richard Terdiman via Mackenthun 104). In the paranoid and powerful stories of Native hauntings, the colonial role is often vengefully reversed, and the formerly colonized dead return to govern the environments of the living.

As Renée Bergland writes of Native ghosts and hauntings, "The American nation is compelled to return again and again to an encounter that makes it both sorry and happy, a defiled grave upon which it must continually rebuild the American subject" (Bergland 22). Again the language in examining hauntings returns to an acknowledgement of the continual return to crime and trauma (keeping in mind that committing crime is a trauma in itself), creating an unending cycle of self-reproach and fear. Invoking the rhetoric of melancholia, the unresolved mourning of loss examined in previous chapters, Jackson wrote:

Humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country...To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true

philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation of people to make room for another.

Andrew Jackson

Above, Jackson, Indian fighter carving the way for progress through Indian lands, reproaches the melancholic impulse of settler society. Eng and Kazanjian, as they explore the melancholic “politics of mourning” in their collection of essays titled *Loss*, write: “Melancholia’s continued and open relationship with the past finally allows us to gain new perspectives on and new understanding of lost objects” (Eng and Kazanjian 4). Jackson attempted to ebb the weeping of “humanity” because the act of lingering over the “tomb of this last race” evidences the murderous establishment of American Nationhood. Perhaps Jackson was concerned about the constructive possibilities of having an ongoing relationship with the graves of displaced peoples, and the potential for reconciliation with the living successive generations of the colonized remains. As stories of spectral Natives have retained their popularity since their incorporation into the American imagination, Jeffrey Weinstock’s assertion about the positive material effects produced by ghosts is true: “We value our ghosts...If ghosts do not return to correct history, then privileged narratives of history will go unquestioned...If ghosts not reveal crimes that have gone unpunished, then evil acts may in fact go unredressed” (Weinstock 6). Therefore, there is positive, creative potential in the colonial melancholic connection to Indian burial grounds.

The ongoing relationship to these graves allows us to see how living populations were and are “ghosted” in our society. Removal-era rhetoric constantly embraced the trope of the “vanishing” Indian, both invoking imagery of the dead and perilously casting living peoples as the living dead. The appearance and reappearance of Native specters in

colonized spaces is important not only because it once justified Indian Removal but also because it continues to minimize the remarkable cultural survival of Indian America. Louis Owens of Choctaw and Cherokee ancestry writes in *Mixedblood Messages*, “The very fact that tribal nations from the Southeast were so extraordinarily successful in making so-called Indian Territory a much beloved home after the horrors of Removal and before the horrors of the Civil War underscores the ability of indigenous Americans to move and in doing so to carry with them whole cultures within memory and story” (Owens via Justice 46). This message of survival and continuing relevance contrasts remarkably with the famously haunting 1851 speech attributed to Duwamish and Suquamish Seeath’l, also known as Chief Seattle.

Chief Seattle’s speech is contemporarily cited by environmentalists, progressive Christians, and even tribal communities, though it first appeared in translated script thirty years after its delivery (Boyd and Thrush 74). Henry Smith, transcriber and publisher of the famous speech, may well have been its author. As he was unlikely to have spoken Lushootseed, Seeath’l’s native language, Smith at the very least heavily retooled the oration (Bierwert). He structured it for publishing from his thirty year old notes that were likely marking the words of a translator. Ecological filmmaker Ted Parry later rewrote the speech in 1927, based on poet William Arrowsmith’s reimagination of the 1851 speech that Smith produced in 1887 (Bierwert). In addition to the surrounding controversy of its appearance, the speech is problematic because it draws heavily on the imagery of the “vanishing Indian” through the Chief’s appropriated language:

And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the



roads, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead—did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

Boyd and Thrush 74

As this speech is likely the collective rumination of a group of white writers, the construction and dissemination of the central theme of the speech furthers the discourse of the “vanishing race,” both executing and excusing the transformation of Indigenous places into white places (69). These words also outline the settler paranoia of surveillance, which surfaces as major theme in the dispossession haunting. That a marginalized spiritual entity will swarm and stalk him when the white man thinks himself alone suggests accountability to the “last red man,” a theme perhaps more terrifying to Eurowesterners than ghosts alone. *Seattle Times* writer Eric Scigliano, republishing the speech for the paper as a “ghost story like no other,” wrote: “‘You never know who might be watching—from above, or even nearer’” (74).

Many years after the speech and its publication, Edward Curtis’ 1907 photographic collection *The North American Indian* featured images of the “vanishing Native”, many of them staged and retouched in order to romanticize traditional modes of life that he understood to be disappearing. The first photograph of the series he titled “The Vanishing Race—Navaho”, picturing the backs of Navaho riders as they disappear single file into a dark mountain at the end of a worn path. Curtis’ description reads: “The thought which this picture is meant to convey is that the Indians as a race, already shorn in their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future. Feeling that the picture expresses so much of the thought that

inspired the entire work, the author has chosen it as the first of the series” (Gidley in Curtis 4). Curtis included, along with these hauntingly staged photographs, the text of an Inuit proverb: “My whole body is covered in eyes/Behold it! Be without fear!/I see all around” (Curtis). By selecting this proverb, Curtis also appeals to the white suspicion of being watched as in the white publication of the speech attributed to Seeath’l.

The surveillance theme exposed through the Seeath’l speech and Curtis harken back to the words of Chief Cobb of the Mississippi Choctaws to J.J. McRea, who had come in 1843 to urge the last few thousand remaining Choctaws to remove to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi:

Brother: Our hearts are full. Twelve winters ago our chiefs sold our country. Every warrior that you see here was opposed to the treaty. If the dead could have counted, it could never have been made, but alas! Though they stood around, they could not be seen or heard. Their tears came in raindrops, and their voices in the wailing wind, but the pale faces knew it not, and our land was taken away.

Takaki 90

Chief Cobb’s speech suggests that, though the white men authoring and enforcing the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek had unfairly acquired these lands, the Native dead would continue to be a part of the landscape. They would continue to survey and to mourn the movements of their living counterparts, living on through the contemptibly obtained geography. But by the time Curtis presented his work to his patron J.P. Morgan, policy had changed. Removal west of the Mississippi through the intimidation and sham treaties like Chief Cobb described had been largely achieved, to a loss of 10, 423,130 of Choctaw lands alone (90). Sentiments like “the only good Indian is a dead Indian” became more covert: the Indiana Territory, for example, offered its last Indian scalp bounty in 1814. Yet the policy of cultural and even physical killing continued with the paradigmatic shift

of the Civil War. Indicating their unwillingness to accede to tribal sovereignty, the U.S. government decreed in the 1871 Indian Appropriation Act that it would no longer form treaties with Indian Nations. The cycle returned to whites coveting Indian land: in the summer of 1873, the Department of the Interior sponsored “competitive surveying expeditions” in the Black Hills of South Dakota, marking a “turning point in the ongoing continuation of the Civil War as a Western war on Indian tribes” (Gordon 171). These expeditions clearly communicated the Government’s desire to open Sioux lands to economic development, advancing the “alliance of white supremacism, industrial expansion, and permanent war” (171).

### [Zitkala-Ša and Assimilation]

In her 1901 work American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings, Sioux author Zitkala-Ša writes of the twinkling lanterns of poor white settlers in the near hills of her Dakota home at night. The “light of the white rascals” shone down the hill as Zitkala-Ša’s mother warned her returning daughter of the “tribe of broad-footed white beggars [that] had rushed hither to make claims” on the “wild lands” of her home:

My daughter, beware of the paleface. It was the cruel paleface who caused the death of your sister and your uncle, my brave brother...He is the hypocrite who reads with one eye, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and with the other gloats upon the sufferings of the Indian race.

Zitkala-Ša 110

Zitkala-Ša was firmly planted in the middle of the Assimilation Era, which extended from 1880 to 1934. She published American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings after the 1879 establishment of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, the 1883 outlawing of the Sundance, and the 1887 Dawes act. Each was created as a weapon aimed at disappearing tribes and dissipating tribal sovereignty. Forced assimilation became the tool of ethnic

cleansing and exploiting Indian resources, as it better appealed to self-righteous and Christian Union mentality, which had already intervened in the immoral institutions of the American South during the Civil War. Residential schooling, illegalizing tribal rites like the Sundance, and allotting land together attempted to force a transition from tribe members to English-speaking, publicly educated, land-owning potential American citizens. Adopting a stance of political goodwill, reformers rejected the outright killing, starvation, and displacement of our nation's first peoples. Yet this stance was still centered on the death of the tribe; the widely accepted motto of the era, as of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, became, "Kill the Indian, save the man."

The move toward assimilation partly resulted from two Eurowestern misconceptions: the wide-held belief that our nation's original peoples had more potential to become civilized than formerly enslaved African Americans, and the often incorrect assumption that Indian lands were not being used for agriculture. Pre-Emancipation, there was "more praise of the Indian than of the Negro," though "the Negro was allowed to survive as a slave where as the Indian was either slaughtered or banished to lands where it was impossible for him to thrive" (Gossett 239). After the war, the Government transitioned from outright slaughter to more furtive forms of cultural destruction in order to plunder Indian lands and solve the "Indian Problem." Echoing Andrew Jackson's land-allotment programs, the 1887 Dawes Act, or the "Indian Emancipation Act," sought to break down reservations and accelerate the transition from communal property to the allotment of land to individual families. Stipulations in and changes to the act resulted in the rapid transference of land owned by Indian families to white settlers at incredibly low costs and high governmental revenue. The land opened to white settlers could then be

used for wheat growing, pine timber, and other white agricultural exploits. As Indian Affairs Commissioner Thomas Morgan postulated, “Indians were not using the land ‘for any purpose whatever’ and had ‘scarcely any of it in cultivation,’ and therefore ‘did not need it’” (Takaki 236). The result of the crippling Dawes act, just four years after its implementation, totaled 138,000,000 million acres of formerly Indian territories, which constituted a loss of sixty percent of their land base (238).

Zitkala-Ša’s work also explores the systematic cultural killing of the Residential Schools through her autobiographical sketches. Her childhood amongst tribal “teachers, caretakers, and models” in the Yankton Reservation of South Dakota came to an abrupt end when “missionaries arrived to recruit children from the reservation following official governmental policies of assimilation” (Zitkala-Ša xv). Following the promise of delicious “red apples”—perhaps a nod to the white man’s tree of knowledge—Zitkala-Ša parted from her mother at the ripe young age of 8 to attend White’s Manual Labor Institute in Indiana. Zitkala-Ša feelingly describes, after stepping off of the “iron horse” and into the halls of the school, the mechanisms of the government’s assimilation policies. At this juncture her white instructors attempted to shear her of her identity just as they forced the cutting of the students’ “long, heavy hair” (90). This cutting was performed not out of disregard for the traditions of her people, but with the direct knowledge that “among [her] people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!” (90). As the assimilating system was designed to “Kill the Indian and Save the Man,” terrifying and shaming the students by cutting their hair was an act of torture designed to kill any and all Native cultural values. “I cried aloud,” Zitkala-Ša writes, “shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck,

and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit...now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder” (91). Zitkala-Ša ends this short chapter titled “The Cutting of My Long Hair” with this imagery of brutal dehumanization, depicting a student body that is steered like a herd reared for slaughter. In the Quarterly Journal of the American Indian, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School Henry Pratt wrote: “Do not feed America to the Indian....but feed the Indian to America, and America will do the assimilating and annihilate the problem,” furthering the theme of animalizing, slaughtering, consuming, and being nurtured by the lands and bodies America’s first peoples (xvii)

The strict regimentation and hyper-structure of the institute, like the cutting of new students’ hair, played a large role in simultaneously dehumanizing and “civilizing” the students of the residential schooling system. Zitkala-Ša writes: “It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day’s buzzing...I have many times trudged in the day’s harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute” (96). Again, the author uses the language of “heavy-footed,” “brute” animals under the yoke, working forever under the unfeeling gaze of the “civilizing machine.” This passage harkens back to Zitkala-Ša’s mother’s earlier words regarding their shared history of Removal to the Yankton Reservation: “We traveled many days and nights; not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo... Both your sister and uncle might have been happy with us today, had it not been for the heartless paleface” (70). Each of these instances of animalization results in a death: the trials of Removal resulted in the sicknesses that killed Zitkala-Ša’s uncle and sister, and the cold rigidity of the school’s

chains...tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial” (97). These chains, which she actively tested through acts of rebellion in her schooling and in her valiant literary career, led her “to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization” (113).

The “civilizing machine” had more killing mechanizations than brutal rigidity and hair cutting. Children were forced to adopt English names, convert to Christianity, and forbidden to speak their native languages. In 1897, Zitkala-Ša left her course of study at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, to teach at the famous Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which was a model for the residential schooling process. Retired Army General Henry Pratt, founder of the school, “forced and prolonged separation from family” and frequently called for the “beatings, and food deprivation...[and] forced work” of his students. Through these separations, Zitkala-Ša writes, “In the process of my education I had lost all consciousness of the nature world about me...For the white man’s papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these same papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks” (112). Assimilation had forced a wedge between herself and that which she viewed as a healing life force, withering her “branches” and “natural coat of bark,” leaving a “cold bare pole behind” (112). Yet when Zitkala-Ša returned to South Dakota from her first year of “melancholy...black days” at White’s Manual Labor Institute, she could not find rest. Neither at home at the residential school nor in her mother’s cabin, Zitkala-Ša “seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid... Even nature seemed to have no place for me” (97).

The days of her lively childhood were gone, along with her mother’s comforting words, and Zitkala-Ša saw that the community around her had changed: “There were no

more young braves in blankets and eagle plumes, nor Indian maids with prettily painted cheeks. They had gone three years to school in the East, and had become civilized” (99). As a requisite for federal funding, Residential Schools were required to practice strict English-only policies. As a result, many students returning to the Reservation from these institutions found it difficult to communicate with their elders and their communities. Not fully absorbed into Eurowestern America due to rampant racism, yet unable to fully commune with their families, many students of these institutions occupied an inhospitably liminal space. Zitkala-Ša was discontent among the “Christian palefaces” yet unable to return to the innocence of her child; dissatisfied by her institutional education yet pursuing it at a deeply intellectually critical level. Each of these factors, accompanied by the unimaginably traumatic early experiences at White’s Manual Labor Institute and growing older out of a family context, changed her relationship to her mother: “My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write” (97). This liminality, as she is on the threshold between Native tradition and white absorption, girlhood and womanhood, mother and daughter, figures in her writing as ghostliness. In a way, the colonizing of Zitkala-Ša’s education dispossessed her mother’s role, resulting in the symbolic death of her living daughter:

After an uncertain solitude, I was suddenly aroused by a loud cry piercing the night. It was my mother’s voice wailing among the barren hills which held the bones of buried warriors. She called aloud for her brothers’ spirits to supper her in helpless misery. My fingers grew icy cold, as I realized that my unrestrained tears had betrayed my suffering to her, and she was grieving for me.

Zitkala-Ša 100

Just as her mother mourned an innocent daughter, Zitkala-Ša also suffered terrible loss.

Not only had her comforting relationship with her mother eroded, but she had also been



forced to neglect parts of her spirit, which was broken at age eight with the cutting of her braids. “Like a slender tree,” she writes, “I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God” (112).

### [Resistance and the Ghost Dance]

Despite the killing influences of forced assimilation, Zitkala-Ša’s collection of American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings is a work of lively resistance. Through illness, through desperation, through fierce racism and brutal sexism, her work resonates with her the same rebellion that moved her as she fought to preserve her long hair: “No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!” (91). The text rings with the whooping of her “heart for having...asserted the rebellion within,” as completing this complex work during the murderous time of the Assimilation Era as a Sioux woman was no less than a triumph (94). Zitkala-Ša’s work gleams “fiercely among the palefaces,” just as her speeches at the Earlham college oration contests won despite the “slurs against the Indian that stained the lips of [her opponents]” (102). In addition to the autobiographical sketches examined within this essay, the author, activist, and musician made use of the “retold tale,” telling and adapting oral Sioux legends for white and Native consumption. Through these tales, which are elegant, subtle, and powerful, literary critic Jeanne Smith suggests that Zitkala-Ša made “significant changes to the traditional tales in order to address key political and social issues in the lives of American Indians in 1901” (4). These changes create a space to both preserve indigenous literary traditions amongst the auspices of American literature and educate the non-Native public on pertinent Native issues such as dispossession, residential schooling, and assimilation.

Through her story “Dance in a Buffalo Skull,” Zitkala-Ša likely writes in solidarity with the U.S. governmental oppression of tribal rites as she depicts a band of field mice gathered around a beating drum under the prairie stars. They dance in the light of a small flame inside of the sacred buffalo skull, “frolicking” to the “boom-boom of a wee, wee drum” (45). Perhaps they are dancing the Ghost Dance, a ritual born of Paiute messiah Wovoka’s 1890 prophecy:

All Indians must dance, everywhere, keep on dancing...All dead Indians come back and live again...When Old Man [God] comes this way, then all the Indians go to mountains, high up away from whites. Whites can’t hurt Indians then. Then while Indians way up high, big flood comes like water and all white people die, get drowned, After that water go away and then nobody but Indians everywhere and game all kinds thick.

Mooney 26

Wovoka’s vision was widely embraced across Indian country, “seizing Indian imaginations and mobilizing their frustration,” with many tribes sewing the sacred muslin ghost shirts invested with protective powers and performing the dance (Takaki 229). Government officials and agents expressed their deepening anxiety as the Ghost Dance spread in popularity, disturbed by the widespread anti-white message of the movement and the symbolic deployment of the power of Native specters. As Renée Bergland writes, “Wovoka...developed the positive implications of Native American ancestral ghosts into one of the central elements of his vision. From the white American viewpoint, the same figures caused abject terror” (Bergland 161). To whites, the Ghost Dance appealed to the fear of the power of the spectral Native, as it signaled a potential prelude to armed insurrection of the living and dead. The spectral Native of the Ghost Dance came to represent for Ghost Dancers political opposition and spiritual potency within the increasingly tense and violent relationship to the United States. Allegorically, the mice

dance in secret revitalizing joy in the buffalo skull as a wildcat prowls on the edges of the light, preparing to pounce.

In *Dance in a Buffalo Skull*, the dark of night outside the buffalo skull hides the body of the slinking wildcat, and the drum muffles the sounds of its padded feet. But the cat is made visible by its fiery eyes, which “came on and on, just over the tops of the prairie grass” (45). Zitkala-Ša gives her readers room to read literally, qualifying her imagery: this only “might have been a wildcat” (45). Perhaps she suggests that the body of the cat is the U.S. government, military, or citizenry. Perhaps the glowing fireballs that move “nearer and nearer to the heart of the level land” are really the shots of the infamous Hotchkiss guns, which were so forcibly used against a band of Lakota at the Wounded Knee Massacre of South Dakota. Intercepting a band of Lakota in their search for safety, four American cavalry troops forced the company to their camp on Wounded Knee Creek. Big Foot, who had been concerned for the well-being of the group after the murder of Battle of Little Bighorn war chief and Ghost Dance supporter Sitting Bull, led the group of men, women, and children, who rose a white flag and complied with the troops. During the night, soldiers hauled the wheeled, large-barreled Hotchkiss guns up the ridge and trained them on the tepees of the resting band. In the morning, the Lakota were stripped of their arms in an atmosphere tense with danger. In an effort to reassure the group, medicine man Yellow Bird began to dance a the steps of the Ghost Dance, urging the party to wear the sacred shirts in order to rebel the white man’s bullets. A shot was fired at the stirring Lakota, hailing the start of a barrage of fire on the disarmed people. Those who attempted to escape were pursued, regardless of age or gender. The Hotchkiss guns unleashed fifty rounds of two-pound charges per minute, and when the

heavy smoke cleared on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1890, at the very least one hundred and fifty Lakota Sioux lay dead upon the ground (Takaki 238). A heavy snow began to fall as a mass grave was dug and the bodies hidden together. In fierce mourning or in death, the mice “scrambled out of holes both large and snug. Noiseless they ran away into the dark” (Zitkala-Ša 46). After the slaughter, the Ghost Dance movement lost much of its momentum.

In 1973, Wounded Knee once again became the focus of the nation’s anxious attention. American Indian Movement activists occupied a church and a trading post of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, demanding reform to federal policies injuring American Indians. The choice of Wounded Knee reinvested in the message of the Ghost Dance and in the legacy of the Ghost Dance religion. Thus the Wounded Knee Massacre and the Ghost Dance movement, even through the unending process of mourning the remains of brutal injustice and slaughter, were able to signify as sites of reclamation of tribal sovereignty through positive political mobility. The movement was able to harness the spiritual unrest of that area to gain visibility for continuing inequities. This positive political potential does not explain away the “guilty specters of racism that haunt the site of the massacre,” nor the spiritual disturbances that Tim Giago, founder and writer of the *Lakota Times*, notes in his article “Native American Ghost Stories.” Giago suggests that the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has been and will always be haunted by the massacre:

The elders would sit on the benches in front of the Wounded Knee Trading Post on the warm summer evenings when I was a boy and talk in whispers...I used to listen with interest and fear as they talked about the bitter, cold nights in December when the cries of frightened women and the terrifying screams of children could be heard echoing through the woods and canyons around Wounded Knee... Perhaps it was the suggestion of the elders that became reality to me because one winter

night in December I swear that I heard these mournful and frightening sounds outside of my cabin window.

Giago

The whispers of Giago's elders reveal a past of collective trauma and powerful resistance, and the "mournful sounds outside" his cabin window signal a continued significance of the violence of that event. On these haunted winter nights, in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, "points in the geography of a community...[take] on flesh and [become] visible for human contemplation. Here, the "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people," (Bakhtin in Boyd and Thrush 56). Thus the haunting of Wounded Knee and the Pine Ridge Reservation can speak to the lasting power of Native peoples to endure, even through brutal dispossession, killing, "vanishing", assimilation, and the repression of these histories in dominant discourse.

## [Conclusion]

### **The Haunting of The Myrtles Plantation: St. Francisville, LA**



(Moss)

At last, my research lead me back to a haunted space with which I was already familiar. The Myrtles Plantation of St. Francisville, about forty-five minutes north of New Orleans, has been featured in so many television shows and travelogues concerned with the paranormal and haunted America that it would have been impossible for me to miss. The Myrtles, formerly a vast indigo and cotton plantation, now functions as an inn, catering to guests who desire to spend the night at “one of America’s most haunted homes” (Moss). The Myrtles employs the same romantic notions towards the “antebellum splendor” that other plantation museums, from Virginia to Mississippi, consistently espouse (Eichstedt and Small 3).

In contrast to other Southern plantation museums, however, The Myrtles focuses specifically on the activities of the people enslaved there, hyperbolizing them for the entertainment of their guests through legends of murder and ghosts. Other antebellum historical sites tend to silence these experiences, preferring to valorize the white enslavers and erase the reality of the enslavement of human beings, as evidenced in the work of Stephen Small and Jennifer Eichstedt note in *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. The Myrtles, named for the blossoming bush the southern crepe myrtle, proudly claims its association with the National Register of Historic Places. Here, Avery Gordon again provides the insight: “The presence of the ghost informs us that the over and done with ‘extremity’ of a domestic and international slavery has not entirely gone away, even if it seems to have passed into the register of history and symbol” (Gordon 168). But Gordon does not address or acknowledge the ways in which the powerful Dominant Narrative attempts to resettle and recolonize a haunted, resistant space. I have gleaned from the websites of The Myrtles’, their Carriage House Restaurant, numerous newspaper and blog articles, travelogues, mentions on the Travel Channel, the History Channel, and A&E, that The Myrtles does not directly confront the system of chattel slavery that constructed its very foundations. Foundations that, I might add, are rumored to be built on an Indian burial ground (Chisholm).

Like other plantation museums, the historic tours exploring The Myrtles focus largely on the impressive architectural elements of the “big house,” emphasizing “hand painted stained glass, open pierced plaster frieze work, Aubusson tapestries, Baccarat crystal chandeliers, Carrera marble mantles and gold leafed French furnishings. Guided tours include the history, the architectural significance, and the enchanting stories of

mystery and intrigue” (Moss). Somehow, even within the powerful unsettling of a haunting, the Dominant Narrative of this white-owned plantation has managed the lingering of enslaved human beings, defiled Native spirits, wandering Confederate soldiers and murdered children to “mystery and intrigue.” Thus even The Myrtles, though advertising the stories of its ghosts, constitutes a “white-centric” museum because it is a site that normalizes and valorizes “white ways of organizing the world, including the world of labor (and enslavement)” (Eichstedt and Small 6). Instead of recognizing its position as a preserved site of human enslavement, The Myrtles is a self-acclaimed “peaceful” historic location, representing a past that white dominant society might implicitly desire. The website, created by the current owner of the inn, John Moss, reads: “The history of the South will always provide us with tales of romance and mystery. The saga of the Antebellum South and a lifestyle that will never be forgotten lives on at this grand mansion. A first glimpse of the mansion with its magnificent double dormers and lacy grillwork of the 120-foot veranda envelopes one with a complete sense of peace and tranquility” (Moss). In a paradoxical claim, the website invites guests to experience “peaceful antebellum splendor” in “One of America's most haunted homes”. It is the privilege of the Dominant Narrative to refuse to attend to the ghosts it marginalizes, lending The Myrtles this façade of “peace and tranquility.”

The Myrtles’ resident ghostly villain is Chloe, a formerly enslaved specter, who is said to have poisoned the wife and two daughters of her enslaver Clark Woodruff. Legend tells that Woodruff had an “intimate relationship” with Chloe, who thought that, if she resisted his grasp, she would be sent from working in the house to back breaking work in the field (Taylor and Wiseheart). After “taking up” with another enslaved



woman, Chloe began to worry that this transfer was imminent. She began eavesdropping on Woodruff family conversations, terrified of hearing her name. After finding Chloe eavesdropping at his door, Woodruff cut off her ear as a degrading punishment. Chloe baked the extract of oleander into a birthday cake for the eldest daughter either to regain favor with the father by healing his family or as retribution for her punishment. The only family members to eat the cake were Sara Woodruff, Clark's wife, and her two daughters, who died within hours of the poisoning (Taylor and Wiseheart).

Whether to protect her from a worse death at the hands of Woodruff, or because they were enraged at her murderous actions, Chloe is supposed to have been lynched by the other enslaved people of the plantation. Chloe is said to haunt visitors, gazing for long minutes on their sleeping faces until they wake, searching for something. Legend has it that because the gold-leafed mirror in the hallway was left uncovered during the times of death of Sara and her children, the three spirits visibly possess the glass ("Haunted Houses"). The spirits of the girls also play on the verandah and patio, frozen in their childhoods, while the ghosts of other enslaved people supposedly report to the house to work, passing by a lone Confederate soldier on constant guard ("Haunted Houses").

Eichstedt and Small write that Southern plantation museum visitors are "often told enslaved people's names and given descriptions of their feelings when it is useful in the aggrandizement of elite white master enslavers" (Eichstedt and Small 7). Certainly, descriptions of Chloe poisoning the family position the wife and daughters, and even Woodruff himself, as the innocent victims of a jealous and murderous slave. Yet *The Myrtles* employs a tactic that most plantation museums are unwilling to embrace. As opposed to other plantation museums, which rarely tell of enslaved people's "hopes,

aspirations, emotions, or experiences in any detail whatsoever,” visitors to The Myrtles certainly hear about Chloe’s personal life in detail; she is depicted as desirous of her master, as an irreverent eavesdropper who was righteously punished and who thirsted for the blood of innocents (7). Chloe is villainized by these reflections. Woodruff, in contrast, is described as a harsh punisher, but not a murderer or torturer. Certainly, the title of “enslaver” as opposed to “master” is never used in order to indict him as a participator in the institution of slavery. In fact, the farmer and judge was noted in his community as having a “reputation...for integrity with men and with the law,” though he was also popularly known to be adulterous (Taylor and Wiseheart). The white-centric narrative of the plantation perpetuates the image of Woodruff as a lawful punisher. Thus the museum avoids confrontation with the weight of slavery. Instead of interpreting the sexual power dynamics between the enslaver and enslaved as rape, histories of the museum such as “The Legends, Lore, and Lies of The Myrtles Plantation” indulge in the labels “intimate relationship,” and “lovers” (Taylor and Wiseheart). These labels play upon the familiar sexualized stereotype of black women as licentious and insatiable, which was created out of enslavement rhetoric to justify their rape. Thus the traditional plantation museum and The Myrtles plantation accomplish the same task of preserving the values and interests of the Dominant Narrative, effectively “depersonalizing and dehumanizing” Chloe’s legacy (Eichstedt and Small 7). Even her ghostliness is belittled: next to a picture one guest snapped of her spectral likeness, pictured in her turban above, John Moss writes on the website: “The ghost of Chloe, ‘hanging’ around, harmlessly haunting tourists” (Moss). This, of course, plays into the dominant white supremacist discourse that depicts enslaved people and later free blacks as lazy and vagrant.

The Myrtles plantation serves as the perfect conclusion to *Linger* because it acts as a haunted microcosm of the nation, touching upon the themes of haunting discussed in previous chapters. Beginning with the sightings of a ghost described as a “naked Indian girl” and the suspicion of intruding upon an Indian burial ground, The Myrtles hauntings foreground white anxieties over property as well as the displacement and remains of resistant Native peoples (“Haunted Houses”). Certainly, the inn and plantation do not directly confront the possibility of being constructed on stolen land; the Indian burial ground explanation is offered in passing and without examination in an attempt to lend credibility to its spiritual unrest. It is a convenient expression evoking the spectral Indian that characteristically avoids discussing living Native peoples. The Myrtles attempts to float upon the “tranquil” surface of the deep, dark legacy of United States hegemony and its killing interactions with people of color. Preserving the appearance of this tranquility, as expressed in many architectural reveries, effectively protects the Dominant Narrative. It allows its former master-enslaver inhabitants to escape criticism, transitively pardoning the white-centrism that still organizes the plantation. I also chose to study The Myrtles because the past will not remain fixed and inanimate here. There is a possibility for an “alternate empathy” arising from the margins of its victor-authored history (Eng and Kazanjian 1). Though the Dominant Narrative of The Myrtles manages Chloe’s resistance to an “tale of mystery and intrigue,” the possibility for an alternate empathy at The Myrtles remains. Chloe is not confined to the neat and untroubled history they tell.

Finally, *Linger* ends with my creatively imagining an interaction of a Northern white woman narrator with the spirit of Chloe. Though it is fiction, it represents two interacting historical moments: mine, and Chloe’s. While *Linger* is expressly not an

analysis of fiction, I use the medium to explore the positive possibilities of the haunting of The Myrtles, as I was not able to visit the site in person. The story functions as a model for how I, as a white woman at an elite institution in Massachusetts, can feelingly research a haunting and place myself within my larger racial context as inheritor of the white family. The inheritance includes not only white privilege but also the legacy of racism, torture, enslavement, and murder of people of color in the United States. Thus the narrator, a guest in the hotel pursuing the famed ghost of Chloe, comes to recognize herself not as a detached Northern white woman witnessing a Southern haunting by a enslaved black woman ghost, but as a haunted white woman implicated in the system of slavery and its legacy. The narration of Chloe's experience appears in brackets, suggesting that it lies in the margins or could potentially exist unseen or unheeded. Like the body of this project, this creative exploration proposes that this realization is a positive one, albeit terrifying and violent. To reiterate what Small and Eichstedt, "The lack of talk about...slavery suggests its power and pain, and suggests that concentered social forgetting has become an organizing principle" (Eichstedt and Small 1). The narrator's confrontation with the "power and pain of slavery" thus does not allow for this social forgetting, opening a space for the type of critical dialogue that remembers trauma. This space can allow "the United States and other countries to move forward more effectively [as] they face and deal with the atrocities that have occurred" (Eichstedt and Small 1).

In my story "The Space Where It Was, and A Place Like Home," Chloe is a haunting entity who is herself haunted, hearkening back to *Linger's* early examination of melancholic Civil War ghosts. Chloe's originary wound is not only the violent

amputation of her right ear, but also her rape and life-long enslavement by Woodruff. As the narrator becomes more familiar with the ways in which she perceives Chloe to be haunted, she transitions from regarding her as a spectacle of black bitterness and instead considers her to be a “human [agent] struggling to secure [her] own destiny” (Eichstedt and Small 7). The “red mask” which overtakes the Chloe’s vision in times of violence or anger is, for the narrator, an implicit reference to the Indian burial ground haunting of the plantation and nation. It places Chloe’s acts of individual violence among a greater history of violence perpetrated against people of color in the United States. The haunted story is temporally both fluid and collapsed, where the past takes place repeatedly alongside the present. Thus Woodruff is forever removing Chloe’s ear, the children are forever dying of poison, and the living white woman continues in her attempt to avoid self-recognition until she is forced to see herself in the lens of the haunting. As in reality, the official records in the story do not recognize an enslaved woman named Chloe. Yet the Dominant Narrative of the plantation continues to call her presence into focus for profitable exploitation, all the while attempting to manage her story of resistance in order to reinscribe white supremacy and occlude true recognition of American slavery and Native displacement. But she will not be captive: she continues to haunt the living at the Myrtles, constantly defying her bounds, washing her wounds, and bravely bearing her poisonous secret.

[Chloe]

### **The Space Where It Was, and A Place Like Home**

[The air buzzes thickly with the nervous drone of cicadas. The live oaks thrust up their limbs in urgent gestures. A mud-caked path carpeted with the blossoms of myrtle and magnolia leads to the road, which leads to the river, and there the Mississippi noisily bears its cargo through the delta maze. From the haze of decay and spoil rises the scent of the oleander: dark, beckoning, and deadly poisonous. The low branches bear its bursting fruit, their meaty sides splitting and spilling their downy seed into the Louisiana clay. In the sweet thickness of that atmosphere, a cry resounds and rebounds back to its source. It flies from the woods, across the luscious lawn, through the floral gaps in the wrought iron rail, into the open window of Woodruff's study, and down the hollow curve of Chloe's throat.]

There is a thud as she faints and the floor, now slick with blood, rushes up to meet her. Her cry and the thump of her body in the room next door awoke me from my slumber. Now, the cicadas once more reign in the quiet. I allow the swarm of the insects to shepherd my senses back to sleep.

[The space where her right ear was does not heal one week after. One month later and the gap festers. The stench that creeps from the wound when she unwraps the green turban, coil by coil, is too much for the small cabin. It clamors at the edges of the window, slips under the door, tumbles down the hall and hovers near the rafters, speaking the silent pain with unabated breath. She gently washes the wound with warm, salted water. It is a space where part of her had lived and now is gone. She cleans the cloth turban, too, meticulously, daily. Sometimes with salt, sometimes with sand. The clotted

purple where the blood dyed the fabric gives way again and again to green with the gentle twisting of her gentle hands. She always wears the turban to cover the space where it was. She does not want them to see what is not there.

Since that night, every night, she knows the knife. Its neat shining point is the subject of her perfect focus. Ropes of her nerves curve with its arc, each cell swollen with itself, on the brink of tearing and bursting in concentration. Yes, she had been found eavesdropping outside of Woodruff's door. His blue-white hands reach suddenly, luminously, into the darkened hall and drag her into the room. Their hue is violating in its familiarity as he forces her to kneel upon the floor of the neat study which she had tidied earlier that very day. They unwind the turban as she kneels, the green fabric snaking across her calves and shoulders, curling like a question mark on the wooden floor. Everything about this man is too familiar and reviling: the mechanics of his arms as he pins her to the ground, the heavy brow and dull grey eyes, the stench of sweat and grunt of effort. And now the punishment comes silvery sharp; it tastes of metal and bitten tongue and blood. Does she remember the crime then, at that moment? She strains to recall the reason her ear had found its way to that forbidden keyhole, but the particulars bleed into confusion in the fluid attention of dreams. And then they steal it from her with a swipe of pain that is at once completely strange and startlingly familiar, like returning to a place that was once, but is no longer, a place like home. Then the red comes to her vision, the blood flowing freely from the wound into her brow, her lashes, her sight. Her eyeballs wear the blood like a mask. She sees impossibility on the floor, where the formerly gorgeous curve of a familiar part lies, now useless and alien, without context, deaf and dead. The vibrating giggle of children sets the walls to motion. The planks of the

study wall contract like the beating of a heart. She awakes. I cannot tell you what she felt then.]

All of the rooms have names. I am staying in the Oleander Room, which is sweet and comfortable. But something unsettling keeps me from fully relaxing. I cannot deny that the hot spots and the cold spots around the enormous plantation home are becoming unsettling. On an eighty-seven degree day, as I sat at the desk to work, I found I needed to shut the window and put on a sweater. Yesterday morning, however, the air became so scalding hot in the doorway to the kitchen that I needed to take a cold shower to cool down. Of course, these temperature discrepancies will not prevent me from staying here for the rest of my vacation week. After all, my flight doesn't return to Boston until Sunday morning. Anyway, this house is too beautiful for me to want to leave. This morning I heard a girl whisper to her mother, "This place is too pretty to be haunted." The Southern Hospitality is certainly charming enough to make me forget the stories.

[She lingers over the table settings in the dining room, eyeing the silverware caressingly. A flour-dusted hand wanders to the stemware, cautiously yet unconsciously, driven by the desire to examine and to perhaps shatter its opulence. The sudden movement sets off a soft twinge of pain on the right side of her head. The memory of violation whispers into her empty ear well. Despite the pain, an inner smile forms along the wets of her lips, never configuring on her outer countenance. She releases a hiccupping sigh. In the silent room someone could have mistaken this exhale for a muttered two syllable phrase, perhaps something like "I am," or even, "Ha-ha." But she is alone among the wood paneling. She slips out like a thought before anyone notices her absence beside the sweating ovens of the Woodruff's kitchen.]



I noticed the wineglass was not where I left it upon the bare oak table. In the time when I left the dining room and returned seconds later with a tea tray, someone moved the solitary glass to the center of the table. Shivering, though the day was sticky and warm, I took up the glass and decided to dine on the porch.

[It is time to bake the tiered white layer cake. A cloud of flour dust envelops her as she stirs a copper bowl of batter with a browning wooden spoon. Two weeks ago, she had wandered down the flower-carpeted path and returned smelling of death and river water, the pockets of her apron brimming with a delicious secret. Chloe dragged a crude stool to the corner of the room in silent ceremony, pausing to ensure that the sleeping remained asleep as her light foot set a floorboard to moaning. A scrap of moonlight threw her work into relief as she bound the herb to the bare rafter with a strip of muslin. In a moment she was asleep. A while later she stands in the kitchen and steams the dried leaves, along with the stem, in a centimeter or two of water and a tablespoon of sugar. They look like sage, or like a bay leaf, innocuous and grey-green, and when she strains the concoction she collects the liquid and throws the pulp into the choking fire. It is this liquid, kept in a jar behind the stove, that she reaches for on the birthday of Woodruff's youngest girl. She incorporates it slowly into the milk so that it does not curdle. The flour hungrily absorbs this moisture, and she dollops the thick pale batter into the open-mouthed circular cake pans, thrusting them into the oven. She shivers but continues working in a trance, the crimson creeping back into her glance and turning the white cake red. In a moment the yellow vanilla sponge is covered in a film of sweet white frosting and piled high in layer after layer of snowy poison.]

I came to The Myrtles because I thought I might see something I'd never seen before. I am not sure if I believe in ghosts, but I definitely believe in the power of stories. I also came because, though one decayed and forgotten branch of my family once traced their roots to the South, I had never been south of Pennsylvania. Today, I was drawn again into the study. The young man at the front desk said, if I treated them gently, I could handle the records dating back to the earliest years of the plantation that line the lower shelves of the bookcase. I found, in the pages of a flaking leather-bound ledger, the major expenses and acquisitions of Mr. Clark Woodruff of 1808. I searched for the famous name among the human property Woodruff had detestably purchased to labor on the plantation, but could not find a Chloe in the margins. I had my back to the room as I placed the book back on its shelf, and was examining the other titles in the row in search of 1809, when a loud thud in the center of the room arrested my attention suddenly and completely. I whirled around. A gunshot could not have been more terrifying, more exhilarating. The room appeared empty. The air felt thick. I was alone.

[Chloe bears the cake into the dining room, a chore that would normally belong to a server and not the baker. But as it is the youngest girl's birthday, and that girl Cornelia has special affection for Chloe, her favorite cook, Woodruff accepts Chloe's suggestion that she serve the cake herself. It is a task Chloe wants to execute personally. Sara stiffens in the straight-backed chair as Chloe enters, turning her gaze immediately to her husband and laying a protective and prohibitory pink hand over his veined blue one. This he curls into a fist under his wife's grasp as Chloe grips the dull cake knife in a determined hand. Sara throws a defiant look in Chloe's direction as she cuts the first flawless portion. Cornelia tosses back her curly head and releases a rippling laugh, her older sister joining

in, laughing at nothing, delighted with the perfect frosting of the dessert. The giggle of children rings a familiar bell in Chloe's memory, and the pale white faces of the Woodruffs turn scarlet as the red floods her gaze again. Woodruff can no longer tolerate the tension in the room. Chloe does not notice him leave out the opposite door; everything about her is clanging with the sound of dark bells and death songs and hope. All in the space where her ear was, but is not. A sound escapes her depths, clamoring up a minor scale in the magnificent key of her breath, parting her soft lips mechanically. "Enjoy."]

I still have not found mention of her in the ledgers. But the search for evidence of her has kept me up nights. When I do sleep, I have feverish dreams of the soggy river path and awake with ringing headaches. I took a tour of the plantation last night, which they lead every hour and every half hour, every day, from nine to five. I decided, however, on a night tour, called the "mystery tour" by the guide. We left from the front porch at eight o'clock as night settled thickly on the inn. The tour was darkly humorous; the guide was a young employee who walked backwards and gestured wildly with her pale thin arms, shouting over the heads of the group. She told us that the plantation is haunted by at least twelve different spirits, and playfully suggested that we look in the hallway mirror as we passed. "Am I going to see a ghost tonight?" the father of two young girls joked as they clung, terrified, to his legs. There was a nervous murmur of laughter. I paused at the gold-framed mirror where the ghosts of Sara Woodruff and her two young girls, poisoned by a tainted birthday cake, are said to appear to visitors of the plantation. The rest of the group had lost interest in the looking glass, which had disappointed them by reflecting back only their expectant faces. I saw no faces in the

reflection but mine, but as I gazed at the glass, head cocked slightly to the right, a small handprint appeared at the bottom left corner where the reflection of my own white hand lay limp. I could feel the drum of my heart as the breath of condensation around it spread, blocking my own reflection. The walls seemed to undulate with my own terrified breathing. I do not know how long I lingered there or how long the handprint lingered after me, but I did not tell the group after I caught up with them. We instead pursued the other spirits while also remarking on what the tour guide deemed the plantation's "antebellum splendor." I followed in a daze.

[Violent sickness does not take long to claim Sara and her two daughters. They are feverish, vomiting. Their deaths are matter of hours. The evidence of foul play is clear to Woodruff, who demands that all hands on the plantation appear on the front lawn after the death of his first daughter. He waits on the steps of the verandah as a breeze sets the rocking chairs to their comforting rhythm. The body of his child lies in the house, stiff, covered in a white sheet that clings tent-like to her nose and feet. The sound of retching echoes through the breezeway as Sara and her other daughter drift over to death. The enslaved hands that half-heartedly attempted to heal the women begin to cover the mirrors of the house in cloth, as tradition demands after death. Their work is suddenly halted by a commotion growing outside. Dropping the cloth without covering the hall mirror, they rush out. Down the river path the others have caught her, Chloe. For the first time since the poisoning, she has emerged from her sleeping place, and they have trapped her on the river path. By the time Woodruff reaches them, their business is done. They gather in mute silence around the strange fruit of the live oak tree. Yet there is a trace of mercy here, deliverance from Woodruff's terrifying hands, which would have done

worse. Her body is instead borne up by black hands and black hands alone. Chloe is hanged on a high, twisted limb, her turban unraveling. It is carried away like a banner in the swift river wind, revealing the space where it was.]

I clung to the group at the tail end while the guide caressingly described the hand painted stained glass, open pierced plaster frieze work, Aubusson tapestries, Baccarat crystal chandeliers. She paused at the porch stairs with the ghost stories tailored for terror and less for truth. “Of course,” said the tour guide, “The Myrtles has always been haunted. It was built on an Indian burial ground.” Another nervous giggle from the group. During the next reverie on architectural romance I decided to leave marble mantles and gold leaf furnishings and resume my work in the study. I was no longer interested in these stories of violence that would be rendered irrelevant as soon as I left for Boston. I had plenty of gorgeous pictures and a sketch or two of the inn. I had even gotten some decorating ideas that could emulate the richness of the yellow wallpapered dining room that I might use in my Boston apartment. I had only to read the final ledger of 1830, still dust-covered, on the shelf. I was passively disappointed to find, amongst the financial transactions that year, that Woodruff and a surviving child moved from the indigo and cotton trade of St. Francisville, Louisiana, to a judge’s position in Covington. There were no more acquisitions to The Myrtles in his name after this year, and so I had not found Chloe among the books. But I read on. In Covington, his living daughter, Octavia, married...and here, my heart froze. Two years before, I had attempted to compile a family tree in order to organize a reunion in New England. Colonel Lorenzo Augustus Besancon, the memorable name of Octavia’s husband, marked the final name I was able to uncover in the tree, making Woodruff my blood relation. The father of Octavia

Besancon, the planter and enslaver, the indigo heir, The designer of the torture of Chloe, is my forefather. When I gathered the courage to turn around, the scene was spread before me: Chloe kneeled, Woodruff held the knife, and the taste of vanilla and something else, something bitter that I could not name, filled my mouth and lungs.

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