

**THE AFFECTIVITY OF WHITE NATION-MAKING: NATIONAL BELONGING,  
HUMAN RECOGNITION AND THE MOURNABILITY OF BLACK MUSLIM WOMEN**

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing Canadian and Swedish national imaginaries into comparative dialogue, this dissertation considers how ideals of liberal, anti-racism paradoxically persist alongside white supremacist investments in the sanctity and authenticity of a white citizenry as well as the terror of Black and Muslim subjects. A sense of fear, threat and vulnerability are examined as useful “bad” feelings nurtured for the ends of white nation-making; while, the contingencies for assimilation reveal how ideals of racial tolerance can simultaneously be retained. Engaging with tropes of “rescueability” this dissertation proposes that the Muslim woman who performs witnessable acts of assimilation and possession can allay the terror of Islam that she otherwise represents. A death by “honour-killing” however is what signifies her most triumphant assimilatory act and greatest prospect for national and human belongings. White liberal solidarities solidify through a collective mourning and horror over her brutal death and thus fear of violent, unassimilable Muslims can persist. Contemplating the refusal of Black humanity, the unremarkableness of Black death, the dread of Black reproduction, and the fetishization of Black women’s pain this dissertation questions whether assimilatory futures and mournable human life are equally available to Black Muslim women. Analyzing case studies from Canadian and Swedish media, I argue that Black Muslim women must figuratively kill their Black and Muslim selves for the possibility of being re-born into the “grievability” of Canadian or Swedish whiteness. Even so, the narratives of Afro-Swedish Muslim women reveals how one might trespass on the dictates of assimilation by refusing to wholly surrender the antagonist parts of the self. Women become slippery subjects who are unpredictable in their acculturation. Public humiliation, however, is wielded as a painful pedagogy to discipline she who troubles the matrices of assimilation. Finally, by analyzing representations of the Black Muslim female figure in Canadian performance and visual art, this dissertation explores what it might mean to release desires for national and human belonging by choosing to embody the alien or the monster. In this way, women are visually displayed as releasing the demands of assimilation as they willfully inhabit the non-human.

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## **Introduction**

### ***Prefacing Violence: Regulating the Black Female Body***

I begin with two short narratives taken from my personal history which alternately take place in Toronto, Canada and, Stockholm, Sweden during the second and fourth years of my PhD studies, respectively.

#### ***Toronto:***

“Jan has beautiful brown skin.”

Your body seizes in shock as you realize you have become the subject of inquiry, the object for theorization in the public space of the university seminar.

“Please do not use me as your example” you firmly state, trying to withhold the tremor from your voice.

“No, no, no” the professor says with nonchalance. Dismissing your protest, she once again repeats to the class, “Jan has beautiful brown skin”

*What’s happening? What’s happening here?*

The others are silent. Watching. Waiting. Anticipating?

“Please do not use me as your example” you insists again, speaking into the hushed room. Your objection thrusting you even further into the place of spectacle.

Another Black woman enters this scene by offering up her own body, in place of your own.

The only other Black body in the room volunteers for public scrutiny in your stead.

Offering her dark brownness as “beautiful” replacement for your resisting skin.

“Use me,” this Black woman suggests.

“No” comes the reply without hesitation. “I’m using Jan.”

*What’s happening? What’s happening here?*

Stunned. Bewildered. You sputter, “But... I said that you can’t...?”

“Well, I am. I’m going to,” she retorts with finality.

Taken aback by this blatant pronouncement of power, you speak a torrent of critical race analyses.

Trying to explain.  
Trying to make this stop.  
Trying to fill the space with something other than your anatomy.  
Trying to get your body back.  
Attempting to take your skin off of her tongue and out of her mouth.

The others remain silent. Watching. Waiting. Salivating?

Eventually. The discussion moves on.

You're humiliated.  
Shamed and ashamed.

### ***Stockholm:***

You sit down to work in the appointed scholars' reading room in the national library of Sweden (*Kungliga Biblioteket*). You are, as always, the only Black person in the space. You have just begun to write when an older white man, completely greyed and heavily wrinkled, turns fiercely towards you and begins to speak angrily in Swedish—a fury slightly dulled by the muffle of your ear plugs.

You ask him, in English, what he is saying. In reply comes a barrage of questions: “Are you allowed to be in this room?”; “Do you have the card required to use this room?”; “Have you worked in this library before?” Each query is spat out from a face twisted in rage and a voice wrangled with indignation.

Registering the racist presumptions of his interrogation and its assumption that you are out of place, you refuse to answer. Placing your ear plugs back in you turn towards your laptop and resume your writing. The indignation of the man is now beyond containment. “Hello?!”, “Hellllo?!!” he calls, infuriated by your silence. Outraged by your unwillingness to answer these questions of surveillance from he who has positioned himself as sentry of this Swedish national institute of knowledge and sanctified national history. “Fine!” he exclaims loudly in a tone that intermingles exasperation with menacing threat. He exits in a huff.

The room is nearly full with others working. They see all of this, of course. And yet, are silent.

Watching. Waiting. Anticipating?

You prepare for the approaching violence. You mentally rehearse to defend yourself against the degradations you know will soon come.

A security guard enters.

She approaches you in a whisper, asking in Swedish, if you have proof of your right to be in the scholars' room.

You speak up into the hushed air and are less so addressing the guard than those around you who are assenting to this form of governmentality through their muteness.

“Can you tell me why I am, specifically, being asked whether I am allowed to be in this space?” you demand in your most articulate of voices, summoning all composure, enunciating in your native tongue. “Has everyone else been systematically checked? Or, is it that this man has decided that because I am a young Black woman there is no way that I could possibly belong in this scholarly space?”

As you resoundingly pose these questions, the guard is emphatically gesturing for you to lower your voice. To respect the quiet of the room. To be quiet.

“I am being racially targeted,” you finish, using rudimentary political language you hope will be understood.

The security guard takes out her radio and calls for back-up.

The air is heavy with the tension of waiting.

A white male guard enters the room. He sees you, and advances.

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In each of these instances, the sight and site of the Black female body — my body — initiates forms of racist violence. In the Canadian university seminar the prodding of my skin by the mus-  
ing (“Jan has beautiful brown skin”) enacts a painful pedagogy. Where I have dared to presume (in what retrospectively feels like a disastrous bout of naiveté) that I am an equal participant in the intellectual dialogue I find myself swiftly laid bare as a speculative dark surface. My presence is disciplined through the humiliation of the subjugation and the pageantry of the mortification. My body does not belong to me in this moment but to the speaker, who can call upon it at will through all of the authority bestowed upon her by the white supremacy that permeates our academic institution as well as our Canadian context at large. Insistence operates in one direc-

tion, allowing not for my insistent refusals but stipulating that my surface be open to public scrutiny. It is therefore a corrective moment for both myself and for she who seeks to take my place (“Use me”). We are not permitted here to choose the direction of the disciplinary laceration regardless of whether our intentions are to escape anti-Black violence or to become willing subject to it (“No, I’m using Jan”). We are thus instructed in the ways our Black female bodies are to be instrumentalized, scrutinized, punished and possessed — as if predisposed for the rhetorical debasement. This is a bitter lesson. Many months pass before I am able to recount this episode to another professor. In response, I am told that I need to “grow a thicker skin.” Hence, I am instructed on the ways my body’s surface should be(come) able to sustain such spontaneous degradations. The painful pedagogy continues even through the recollection of the mortification.

In the case of the Swedish national library, the Black female body that has entered into segregated white space is assumed to be enacting the violence of trespass. The elderly white Swedish man would have grown-up with ideals of racial homogeny and since had to witness its sully through the mass arrival of Black bodies like my own; the largest part of whom have come to Sweden from Muslim majority Somalia, which begs the question of whether I am also presumed to be Muslim. My presence thus becomes an incomprehensible and astonishing violation of space by encroaching on the whiteness of the scholarly room and of the institution of national heritage<sup>1</sup>; a dark intrusion upon one of the last places he perhaps expected to encounter the foreigner. I further compound the affront by having the audacity to turn away from the interrogation. The scandal is in my refusal to submit to the impertinent, policing queries. A transgression

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<sup>1</sup> Kungliga Biblioteket, as the national library of Sweden, collects and preserves all print and audio-visual materials published in Sweden. It also holds many of the country’s rare book collections and operates as a government agency (<https://www.kb.se/in-english.html>)

that would again intensify if I am indeed taken to be a Muslim woman. Although I do not wear the intolerable Muslim veil by spurning the probing questions I would become intolerably insubordinate to the demands of knowability meant to confirm the un-veiled Muslim woman's possession. I am thus disciplined for the insolence of my presence and the impropriety of my non-compliance, even if only speculatively Muslim. The silence that pervades the room consents to and is part of the corrective violence. In a reparative act, the white virtue of the space is restored through my ejection from it, while the humiliation of the removal enacts a didactic reprimand that ensures I will not return. Later, following an email and phone-in campaign initiated by friends on my behalf, I meet with the director of the library and the head of security. I am informed that the rules of the library are to be modified: the next time one sees someone who does not belong a librarian is to be informed, rather than a security guard. The irony is lost on them. And so, the violence is bound to continue through the discerning of trespassing bodies.

The violence that unleashes at the periphery of my Blackness is a public one. That is, both episodes are carried out within the realm of a public institution (with a complicit public audience) and — as I discern — seek to control or re-inscribe racial codes embedded in either public domain. Although these precise incidents are particular to my experiences, their disciplinary aims are not singular to me alone and also allow us to consider identities (i.e. Muslim) that might change the nature of the affront or alter the scope of the reprimand. As such, these disquieting anecdotes preface this dissertation's broader queries into how various kinds of corrective, defensive and regulatory violence venture to retain certain places as white spaces by quelling or averting the trespass of those located as Other.

## **Theoretical Intentions and Preoccupations**

My interest in how white space is fortified through the infliction of pain as pedagogy (e.g. public humiliation, the stipulations of possession; denials of belonging) most focally pursues questions of racial nationalism and the twinned operations of white supremacy. Hence, as I ponder the violences that buttress white space (or, establish spaces as white) I am making explicit reference to the terrain of the nation and the strategies called upon to secure, uphold and otherwise invigorate white nation-making. Shifting from my personal rumination on the punishing spectacle of scrutinization in a Canadian public university and forceful ejection from the Swedish national library I am intrigued by what and whom initiates the trespass as well as what ends a fear of invasion or the intolerability of insubordination serve within the national imaginaries that more widely inform Canadian and Swedish contexts. Specifically I ask, what precise danger is Blackness conceived to represent to either Northern welfare nation? What forms of violence thus become instrumentalized and justified in the effort to thwart the threat that Blackness is imagined to pose? What kinds of peril or menace are anticipated to come from the presence of the Black female subject — to warrant panic at her arrival, the protective rallying of institutional forces, or employing the restraints of humiliation and a voyeuristic intrigue? Furthermore, what other Others signify the trespass in ways that similarly solicit the contempt and aggressions of the white liberal nation, albeit through different legacies of white nationalist refusal and dominion? In particular, how do Muslims also figure as intolerable outsiders — threatening to sully white liberal national space and endanger its white normative subjects — whose treachery is comparably imagined as imminent and is thus to be ruthlessly barricaded against? Do Muslim women and specifically the “veiled Muslim woman” symbolize peril and invasion in ways that resemble or diverge

from the loathing and punishment that coil around the bodies of the Black female subject? What can we then learn of the variable nature of threat and the objectives of a disciplinary racist violence if we consider those who straddle the trespass through the compounded strangeness of, Black Muslim women? And then, through what means can Black Muslim women shift from representing threat to being recognized amongst they who are to be protected from it?

Building at once upon critical race theory scholarship coming out of Canada (e.g. Bannerji 2000; McKittrick 2006; Thobani 2007) as well as Sweden (e.g. Hübinette 2012; Sawyer & Habel 2014; Mulinari & Neergaard 2014) — alongside those works that pursue a general analysis of the racial-political conditions that structure contemporary Western liberal democracies (see Balibar 2004; Butler 2009; Brown 1995; Mbembe 2016; Puwar 2004) — I quite simply and plainly postulate that in both Canada and Sweden the normative national subject is, white. To then figure that the defence of the dominion of whiteness within these two countries in large part entails championing the authentic national membership and the pre-eminent value of this subject is not strictly speaking, the novel insight that this dissertation seeks to offer. Instead, I thank my intellectual forebears for the theoretical platforms by which we can conceptualize the forces that enable whiteness to reign as supreme and in turn, sustain the historical derision of Black and Muslim persons within the present (e.g. Ahmed 2014; Fanon 1965, 1994; Gilroy 1987; hooks 1981; Jiwani 2009; Mbembe 2003; Sharpe 2016; Zine 2012) — even within the most beseechingly liberal and/or democratic nations. It is through an exploratory examination of the less transparent work of emotions that I make my contribution to this archive through a dialogue that contemplates the affective import of the violences wielded against Black and Muslim subjects — treated as encroaching bodies — in the service of Canadian and Swedish white nation-making.

Hereby the implications of terror and vulnerability, the utility of mourning, the conditions for human recognition, and the politics of assimilation all come to reveal how the acknowledgment of the pain of some subjects and the administration or dismissal of that of others can be pivotal to preserving the racial perimeters that decide national belonging. What I propose is this: the sense of threat and fear that appear with the presence (or, anticipated arrival) of Black and Muslim persons into white national space operates as useful “bad” feelings (Ahmed 2014). In this regard, even as a fearsome Blackness and Muslimness are defended against, the commonsensically unfavourable feeling of being fearful is advantageous for upholding the racial logics that structure the imaginary of the nation and authenticate its members. Herein the vulnerability felt by the white normative subject that balks in alarm in the moment of encounter works to emotively verify the legitimacy of their own national belongings; whilst simultaneously signifying the impossibility that those from whom they flee can likewise belong to Canada or Sweden. The forces of governmentality that are deployed to keep the terror and menace predicted or induced by such Black and Muslim Others back and away from the edges of either white dominated nation can be justified — however brutal the blow or fatal the outcome (Butler 2009; Mbembe 2016). It therefore also becomes fruitful to maintain white fear and nurture white vulnerability by ensuring both the proximity (impending or actualized) and continued intolerability of those who are deemed to incite the tremor.

From the earliest stages of this research I have been fascinated by the ways negative affects might have pleasurable effects. In this sense, terror as that which is tenderly massaged and fear as what is carefully nursed into a prolonged state of feeling have been the affective frameworks through which I have contemplated the instruments of white hegemony for quite some

time. I remain foremost indebted to the work of Sara Ahmed (2014a) and that of David Theo Goldberg (2009; n.p.) for drawing my thinking into this complex and often paradoxical realm of emotions. Additional factors that have emerged as paramount to my understanding of how the racial perimeters of national belonging are decided and upheld are the boundaries that determine human belonging and those that correspondingly govern the response to and signification of death. When completing my comprehensive exams death made an unexpected appearance. As I posed broad exploratory questions about power, freedom, human subjectivity, and nationalism death simply kept showing-up as an uninvited, relentless and yet deeply compelling theme. Here-in reading Giorgio Agamben's (1999) analysis of the *Muselmann* brought me towards the conditions that create the living-dead or the non-human; Judith Butler's (2009) meditations on precarity is incisive for revealing some of the implications of a "grievable" death as well as the non-grievability of those whose humanity is refused; Achille Mbembe (2003) had me consider the utility of suicide for those evacuated from the sites of valuable or recognizable life; while Etienne Balibar's (2004) theorization on "death zones" incited my initial deliberations into how those considered to be disposable may or may not become precarious through the promises of Western national membership. Proving seminal to my own thinking, each example conveys conditions of a twentieth or twenty-first century politic that exiles certain selves from the precarious body of the Western democratic nation or else, exiles certain territories and its inhabitants from precarity. Either way, an expulsion from humanity conjoins the exile as does the deliberate extermination of inconsequential or insupportable life. I conclude this dissertation through a return to some of these theoretical beginnings. Yet, a point I want to emphasize within this introduction

is that as one of the cruxes of my analyses, throughout the entirety of the dissertation, death emerges as a signifier for what marries national belonging with human inclusion.

Thus death continues to insistently come up and often does so in ways I did not always predict or initially set out to achieve. I am immensely grateful for this appeal to death although — as you shall read — it has taken me to some very grim and difficult places. I do not doubt that there is cogency in the claims that I make, grounded as they are by each chapter’s empirical examples and informed by the scholarship produced by the brilliant minds that have come before me. Even so, at many points throughout the writing process I found myself startled by what emerged from my own theorizing. I have been viscerally struck at times by the horrors of racism as I articulate them, although it is precisely the horror, pain, terror, and death that anti-Black racism, Islamophobia and nationalism depends upon that I largely aim to reveal.

On the one hand, fear of death and the dread of Black and Muslim persons, as those who are deemed to signify the imminence of death, operates as another welcomed caress by the sense of threat that patrols the borders of white national belongings. Yet, fear and its attendant “bad” feelings do more here than register the authentic community of citizens. Recognized as those who are entitled to protection from harm and are to be defended from the approach of death (and thus from those who bring death near) white normative subjects also comprise the community of the living. Muslims herald the death of national values through corrosively illiberal and misogynist cultural practices, the haunting of the barbarous nightmare, the terror of the Islamist and the plotting of explosive violence, and slaughter of the liberalizing daughter (Hellgreen and Hobson 2008; Razack 2007a, 2007b). Blackness in turn represents a propensity for violence as well as a ruinous inclination towards deception that promises to deplete the resources of either social wel-

fare nation (Miller 2016; Wright 2000); while, Black womanhood in particular terrorizes and defrauds through the deathly chamber of the womb which reproduces social death (Browne 2002; Burman 2007; Elebro 2007). In this sense, the danger of racial disharmony also predicts a cultural, liberal and fiscal demise that must be warded against. Because Muslim and Black subjects anticipate destruction it is not their deaths (or, jeopardy to their quality of life) that are to be averted or grieved since they are exiled from the vulnerabilities that affirm the value of human life and reinforce national belongings. Amid such denials however, I consider how national memberships and human recognition might become available to Muslim women and then, Black Muslim women through the politics of assimilation and the implications of mourning. To convey how, why, and under what terms national and human acceptance is conceived as a possibility for women who are regularly refused access to both, I must first briefly relay what renders Canada and Sweden as useful sites for this comparative analysis.

In spite of the stratagems by which the dominion of whiteness is defended and re-entrenched what is curious about both Canada and Sweden is that, desires for racial homogeneity persist alongside the idealization of racial diversity. As two Northern welfare nations that are internationally reputed for their progressive liberal politics and comprehensive social welfare systems (Nordin 2005; Park 2013) the national imaginaries of either country also emphasize a unique capacity to accept that which is different (evidently, from its normative self). In Canada the official policy of Multiculturalism is perhaps most readily called upon to witness a willingness to endure racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic and Indigenous multiplicity (Bannerji 2000). In turn, Sweden's expansive record of humanitarianism and long history of accepting asylum seekers and refugees marries with both official and popular claims that this tolerant country is in principle anti-racist

or devoid of racism altogether (Pred 2000). I explore the history of these ideals at greater length in chapter one through a methodical comparison of Canada and Sweden as part of the effort to understand why such paradoxical racial fantasies co-exist. In part I contend that such displays of national benevolence are also embedded with affective stratagem by conveying how white goodness makes way for white vulnerabilities through, an incautious and overly generous opening-up to a dangerous and exploitative outside; and, as a tactic to keep Black and Muslim persons proximal in order to regenerate fear. The rupture to racial hegemony can thus still be begrudged and ideologically refused.

Canada and Sweden, of course, are not the only Western liberal countries to boast of dedications to tolerance while simultaneously maintaining that the nation and its recognized subjects are normatively white (see Bowen 2007; Butler 2009; Essed 2009; Goldberg 2009; Wekker 2016). Furthermore, I do not argue that anti-Black racism or Islamophobia are peculiar in themselves to Canada or Sweden — hence why I can call upon critical race theory literature from a range of national contexts as I do throughout this dissertation. I am not stating that racism or nationalism operate in an identical or monolithic fashion within either of these national contexts (which my assortment of empirical examples seek to make clear); nor am I building an argument to advocate that multiculturalism or tolerance should begin to work “properly” or as promised by at last affirming Black and Muslim national belongings, although it precisely this that some subjects do indeed long for. Rather, my objectives in bringing Canada and Sweden together through this research is to demonstrate some of the conditions that white supremacy orchestrates. It is not that Canada and Sweden are uniquely white supremacist but rather that they offer two tenable platforms through which we can glean some of the particular ways white supremacy operates

within these two countries amid the liberal, anti-racist paradigm and upon the bodies of Black and Muslim people — in denial of their sentience and/or in apathy of their mortality.

Yet, does the refusal of one's humanity occur with the same level of endurance for Black and Muslim subjects and then, between Canada and Sweden? What are the psychic, social or material costs for those who are ejected from the sites of recognizable and valuable life? If the longing for national and human inclusion can ever be fulfilled, through what stipulations or sacrifices? How might even this satiation however, be organized to serve the ends of white nation-making? On the heels of these queries I argue that assimilation functions as another element of the paradox whereby ideals of national tolerance allow that some of those who demonstrably acquiesce to the mortal and affective demands of assimilation can begin to approach a legitimized national membership. In performing witnessably integrative gestures one can thus hope to enter into the community of the living whose humanity is in part affirmed by their feelings of fear, vulnerability to harm, and the mournability of their deaths as the loss of valuable Canadian or Swedish lives. Contemplating the Orientalist and neo-imperial tropes of the "veiled Muslim woman"; the anticipation that the assimilating un-veiling/un-veiled Muslim woman will submit herself to the pleasure, possession, and liberal values of the Western nation; and the white proprietary grief that surrounds the "honour-killed" Muslim woman or girl, I advance that Muslim women (predominantly of Middle Eastern descent) who proffer their bodies and lives in these ways can begin to approach recognition. Following these Islamophobic logics, Black Muslim women can accordingly access mournability by figuratively bringing death to the intolerable parts of the self. Promised to accompany the obedient destruction of her Blackness and Muslimness is a re-birth into the "grievability" (Butler 2009) of Canadian or Swedish whiteness. Hence,

I argue that the possibilities for national and human recognition available to some Black Muslim women continue to invoke Black death and also rely upon the conceptions of the saveable Muslim woman. Is to have one's sentience affirmed through national acceptance, however, enough of a recompense for the systematic forms of psychic and physical brutalization that recognition first compels and then perpetuates? What would it mean for Black Muslim women to choose otherwise? How might Black Muslim women trouble the familiar strategies of white nation-making as confusing or slippery subjects, who sometimes ascribe to integrative acts and yet refuse to perform the integrative suicide? What other kinds of embodied possibilities become available to Black Muslim women who forfeit their investments in national belonging and attach not to humanity but to the non-human?

### **Methodology**

From February-July, 2017 I held a visiting doctoral student position in the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University (under the supervision of Dr. Tiina Rosenberg) and from February-September, 2018 I was a visiting doctoral student and research intern at the Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism (CEMFOR) at Uppsala University (under the supervision of Dr. Mattias Gardell). Through my affiliation with each university, the generous assistance of my local supervisors, as well as my wider involvement in the political and cultural life of Stockholm (i.e. attending public lectures, art exhibitions, and film screenings; joining the activist group *Black Queers Sweden*; arranging informal dialogues with artists and scholars; co-organizing a workshop on racism and affect theory; co-facilitating an international reading seminar inviting Black scholars from across Scandinavia) I was granted access to a considerably wide network of thinkers. The first three chapters of this dissertation build upon a range of empirical materials

such as, news reports and media interviews, academic case studies, and art exhibitions. Notably, it was frequently through my conversations with artists, writers, scholars, activists and diversity workers in Stockholm that I was either first made aware of a number of the empirical examples I reference in this doctoral thesis or became privy to their particular cultural import (e.g. artist Makode Linde's Black cake exhibition; the right-wing political party, the Swedish Democrat's, television ad dramatizing the plundering of the national treasury by "veiled Muslim women"; the case of Fadime Sahindal; and the infamy of Mona Walter).

Although Toronto, Canada has long been my main cultural and national context and was the focus of my Master's thesis research on Black Muslim women, I often found myself beginning with reflections of what I know of Sweden and questioning if, how and with what contextual nuance such complexities may or may not exist in Canada. In developing my analyses through a selection of Canadian empirical cases (e.g. the murders of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia sisters; the anti-veiling "code of conduct" in Hérouxville, Québec; Québec's secularism bill against religious symbols; a CBC interview of once Somali refugee Mayran Kalah; and early 90s suspicions that Somali refugee families were defrauding the social welfare system) what has become clear is that the examples from the two national context do not evenly divide. However, as relayed in the previous section my intentions in examining Canada and Sweden are not based in the hope of being able to claim that conditions of anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, nationalism, and assimilation are simply interchangeable between these two countries. Rather, the materials that I rely upon throughout allow us to glimpse some of the ways white supremacy functions and is sustained alongside liberal, anti-racist ideologies by pointing to instances where this duality can be perceived and/or holds popular or political significance.

Between February and August 2018, I conducted fieldwork in Stockholm, Sweden.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the historical events, scientific findings, case studies and media summaries that I so often turn to throughout this dissertation, I am also interested in how individual Black Muslim women come to understand and react to anti-Black racism and Islamophobia. Moreover, I ponder what impact these perceptions of anti-Black and anti-Muslim sentiment might have on how women conceive of themselves in relation to Swedish (non-)belongings. In this regard I wished to query into other levels of feeling by asking what sorts of affects come up for those whose daily lives are carried out in white dominated space. If an affective stratagem is indeed deployed by the forces of white hegemony, how does it feel to be the object of fear or to be made subject to the demands of assimilation? Throughout the course of one-on-one interviews that ranged from forty minutes to an hour and thirty minutes, I asked participants a series of open-ended questions about their Black, Muslim, and Swedish identities and experiences of discrimination (e.g. “Do you think that people who encounter you in public assume that you are Swedish? Please tell me why you think this”; “Have you ever felt hostility from other people in Sweden because of your religious affiliation to Islam or racial identity? Please tell me more”). Interviews took place throughout central Stockholm or in the surrounding suburbs at public locations that participants’ suggested themselves (i.e. shopping malls, art galleries, public parks, cafés). I met most women through the referral of my research project by friends, acquaintances or colleagues who passed my contact information along to Black Muslim women in their own social or professional circles who they believed might be interested in participating. In one instance, a snow-ball method was successful since a participant referred her relative; while, in two other instances I was directly

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<sup>2</sup> The first interview was held in April 2018.

asked by women I met at informal gatherings if they could participate once I disclosed why I was visiting Sweden. Part of what has emerged from the eight interviews I conducted of Afro-Swedish women between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five include the racist implications of, prying questions, humiliation, shame, and staring. Additionally, the recognition or dismissal of their humanity arose through a number of women's reflections although I did not raise the topic myself (e.g. Lina: "They [white Swedish colleagues] just don't see me as human. It has to be that"; Jamilah: "Your intelligence is questioned. Your humanness is questioned"). Women's analyses of their experiences determined much of the direction of my own analysis since the encounters with racism that they relay truly emphasize the quotidian nature both of violence (e.g. untoward questions, the absence of a farewell, a penetrative stare) and that of their disruptive refusals (e.g. the confusion or sneakiness that they perform through certain styles of dress or ways of walking). Hence, the scholarship that I turn to alongside participants' narratives frames rather commands the orientation of my theoretical interpretations, which are thematized by the conflicts that take shape within these Afro-Swedish women's daily lives.

I did initially intend to conduct interviews in both Stockholm, Sweden and Toronto, Canada by way of comparing and contrasting the factors that most inform Black Muslim women's experiences of race and nation within either fieldwork site. However, through a series of unanticipated events this original research plan could not be realized. In short summary, I encountered a number of bureaucratic delays which meant that the start date for my Toronto-based fieldwork had to be postponed; which eventually came to collide with the time frames stipulated by my migration permit, inter-university partnership, and travel arrangements to Sweden. By the time I returned to Toronto after a long absence I was unable to commit or re-enthuse those

prospective participants who had unofficially expressed interest in the project almost a year before, whose acquaintance I had first made at artistic events or public lectures around the city. Without the time to generate enough new interest<sup>3</sup> my options were to either delay the completion of the PhD or, to choose another research method. Thus, Afro-Swedish Muslim women's narratives structure the fourth chapter of this dissertation while the fifth chapter investigates the visual representation of Black Muslim women in Canada through art and the possibilities therein. Even so, I do not encourage that my analysis of art be read merely as a concession made in the presence of a research dilemma. This is not only because the significations of art already appear with considerable analysis in chapter three and to a lesser degree in chapter one, but also owing to the fact that I understand the last two chapters of this dissertation as speaking to one another.

In contrast to the rhetorical suicide I argue is performed by the assimilating ex-Black/ex-Muslim woman in Sweden (see Chapter 3), participants' narratives reveal that processes of assimilation can also contain degrees of fluidity as some move back and forth between the cues for the unassimilable and assimilating subject. Making note of these differences I am inspired to inquire into a third option by asking what it would mean to neither choose the elimination of one's Blackness and Muslimness nor enact the fluctuation between rejecting and affirming these Othered identities. What might come from a stable inhabitation of one's Otherness and a relinquishing of the desire for human and national acceptance? Do representations coming out of Canada allow us to read Black Muslim women as choosing to inhabit the non-human rather than seeking a way into humanity? What can we say to be the benefits of such an inhabitation when we consider that Afro-Swedish Muslim women experience the regular denial of their humanity as

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<sup>3</sup> I was able to conduct two interviews of Black Muslim women in Toronto — far below the saturation point for the qualitative research I intended.

painful? Further, in contemplating how participants' assimilatory disobediences are sometimes realized through their aesthetic or sartorial practices within Sweden, how can a willful embodiment of the non-human Black Muslim female figure in Canada be visualized? Such are the questions that art enables me to explore through an imaginative and at times, radical theorizing. The works of art by Camille Turner (2007), Sandra Brewster (2007), and Riya Jama (2018) that I consider play with fantasy, the unfamiliar, the unknowable and the alien in forms that appear to encourage these kinds of inquiries.

Yet, as my readers have critically brought to my attention, the exacerbated strangeness and embodied rebellions that I argue Canadian art visualizes offers an uneven representation of disruptive possibility when measured against the discussion of Afro-Swedish Muslim women's sneaky, slippery and sly gestures of refusal. I contend that the techniques Afro-Swedish women invoke in response to racist humiliations and white nationalists expectations reveals the powerful performative devices of unpredictability and unfamiliarity. However, I must concede that I have not included the potential for the utter refusal of assimilatory norms in Sweden in quite the way that my examination of art in Canada suggests. It is important to note that these types of refusal may occur within these Afro-Swedish women's lives and might have been revealed through a different set of interview questions. Even so, I do not want to extend this admission farther than it ought to go at this point. What remains uncertain is whether the inhabitation of a non-humanity can be decided or enacted by subjects that do not solely exist upon the canvas or within the performance art piece. Can Black Muslim women who have somatic form give-up on national and human belongings in the same way? Do the conditions of everyday life within Canada or Sweden allow for such a rejection or render it as appealing, liberating or useful? Such queries intro-

duce a space for future research that perhaps finds a way to more smoothly marry qualitative interviews with artistic analyses. As I contemplate the ways the affective mechanisms of white nation-making in Canada and Sweden rely upon the violation of as well as the threat of violation from Black and Muslim subjects what I aim most to demonstrate are the mortal requisites, assimilatory contingencies, and willful denials that shape Black Muslim women's relation to national and human recognitions.

## **Chapter Summaries**

### **Chapter One**

#### ***Comparing Canada and Sweden: National Imaginaries and the Contingencies of Racial Fear***

Operating as both a literature review and theoretical framework this first chapter examines the historical racial logics as well as the more contemporary ideals of multiculturalism that draw Canada and Sweden into meaningful juxtaposition—particularly through the tensions of white nation building. Making note of the racial hierarchies that figured Nordic peoples within an elite and endangered humanity, this chapter examines the institutionalized defence of Swedish whiteness through national eugenics programs along with the nostalgic longing for a mythical white purity. Such yearnings are witnessed in the white supremacist rhetoric of both right wing political parties as well as the covert anti-immigrant resentments harboured by the liberal left. In these ways, nationalist longings for a state of racial homogeneity evidence the discomfort of an overwrought Swedish goodness that begrudges the rupture catalyzed by the entrance of the non-white refugee. By comparison, narratives of loss, injury, and betrayal similarly propel discourses of national goodness and fantasies of racial hegemony within Canada. Surveying the colonial biopolitics of psychic, cultural and physical deaths through which the geography was (intended

to be) cleared of and claimed from Indigenous peoples, this chapter takes up multiculturalism as a mechanism meant to ease white anxieties amidst the self-conscious compulsion to liberalize and endure the influx of non-white Others. Hence, it is precisely through the acts of national benevolence that Canada and Sweden come into communion since, white regrets over an unheeded goodness are imagined to render either nation as vulnerable and susceptible to alien injury. Absented from historical memory, along with uncomfortable slave-trading and colonial pasts, Black peoples in these two Northern welfare countries come to figure as both revolting and inhabitable (Sweden) or, parasitic and deceptive (Canada)—thus, always refractable from the normative national subject. In turn, dread of the Muslim nightmare introduces an affect through which a faceless community of white citizens can solidify; that is, as they seek the surveillance and annihilation of those who menacingly threaten injury to the white nation. Yet, conforming to the acculturations available to “good” Muslims, the humanity of the grievable Muslim woman is briefly considered. Engaging with the analyses of Sara Ahmed (2014a) and Brian Massumi (2010) on fear, however, this chapter speculates that to maintain the boundaries of the white liberal nation, the imminence of threat must be able to persist in a state of infinity so that fear of Black and Muslim persons becomes necessarily immortalized.

## **Chapter Two**

### ***Grief, Mourning, and Possession: Exploring the Assimilatory Potential of Muslim Women***

Contemplating the grievability of the assimilating Muslim woman this chapter proposes that her death — by “honour killing” — initiates a productive mourning and affirming sense of horror that enables white solidarities to be renewed upon her maimed body. As such, the unveiled, assimilating, Muslim women’s entrance into humanity anticipates and potentially necessitates the

grief of her destruction. Reflecting on the badness of the insistently Muslim, unassimilating/unassimilable, “veiled Muslim woman,” this chapter considers the aggression read in her unwillingness to integrate (and thus, unveil) as well as the inappropriate unkindness or, assault of her impenetrability. Hence, the bad Muslim woman becomes monstrous as she who is cloaked from the gaze of the voyeur and yet, has access to a non-reciprocal power of looking. By way of displaying her innocuousness as the yielding subject, this chapter suggests that the Muslim woman must therefore perform her integration on the level of emotion. That is, the assimilation of one’s affective responses and affective aspirations must occur in ways that verify her: alignment with the nation; compliance with possession and imperial rescue; and, labour towards a redemptive goodness. Accordingly, the Muslim woman who is becoming good is the self-hating subject: despising the abject parts of the self that harbour a dangerous potentiality and thus cannot be accommodated into the normative national community. Examining “honour-killing” cases from Canadian and Swedish media, this chapter further considers how a brutal death appears as the most substantial testament to Muslim woman’s prospective goodness, white national loyalties, and assimilation into liberal values. In turn, she becomes fully possessable through the public memory of grief and recyclable images of her mangled body. It is then across the altar of her remains that white national solidarities can be continually replenished as an outraged and horrified whiteness affectively reaffirms the boundaries and values of a national collectivity. A public melancholia over her loss is harnessed as a functional state of feeling. Yet, making note of the hyper-visibility of “oppressed Muslim women’s” pained bodies and the invisibility of Black women’s psychic-social oppressions, we must ask: Can Black Muslim women become lives worthy of public mourning?

### **Chapter Three**

#### ***The (Im)Possibility of Black Muslim Women's Mournability***

Meditating on the conditions of Black death, this chapter questions the grievability of a life when death is at once expected, awaited, induced, familiar and dismissible. Extending the theoretical considerations from chapter two which speculate that the corpse of the unveiled, assimilating Muslim women is affectively useful for the ends of white nation-making, this chapter asks what national ends the deadened Black subject serves; and, more specifically, whether assimilatory futures and mournable life are equally available to Black Muslim women. By way of interrogating the prospects of Black Muslim women's grievability this chapter first pursues close analyses of the historical legacies that sanction the unremarkability and destructibility of Black persons as the living-dead or "black corpse" as well as the metaphysical readings that indicate the exile of Blackness from the realm of the fully human. It is thus by locating Black beginnings at the site of the dead and the non-human that we can begin to comprehend the place of Black woman's bodies within discourses of death, fear and mourning. Of particular interest here are dominant discourses of the reproducing Black female body and Black motherhood, which render her womb as a site of death and as a death machine. Herein, Canadian forces of governmentality are wielded to abate the violence of Black reproduction whereby pregnancy materializes as an undisciplined and criminal urge. While in Sweden, the Black mother enters into death before she is able to bring forth more unwanted Black life, more of the living-dead. Furthermore, contemplating the ideological registers that either dismiss or voyeuristically dwell on Black women's pain, we can consider how suffering is made to belong to the Black body so that to grieve her pain appears as nonsensical. In the face of Black woman's deathliness and disposability, this chapter returns to

the question as to whether Black Muslim woman might have access to a form of social resuscitation that is barred to non-Muslim Black women. Engaging with case studies from media interviews in Canada and Sweden, the dissipation of Muslim women's Blackness reveals the ways they can be re-born as legitimate Canadian or Swedish subjects; that is, particularly as they sterilize their Black death wombs and kill the non-integrable parts of the self, which eventually includes their compliant un-veiling as ex-Muslims. Even so, the phantom of the aborted self would continue to be read off the surface of the skin, requiring the spectres continual expulsion so that women can re-enter into mournable life.

#### **Chapter Four**

##### ***Assimilation's Painful Pedagogy in Sweden:***

##### ***Humiliation, Prying, Shame and the Regulation of the Black Muslim Female Subject***

Continuing to consider the ontological conditions of assimilation, this chapter contemplates how Black Muslim women might become disruptively, irreconcilable subjects. That is, as those who withhold the assimilatory suicide but yet at other times, perform the signs of the properly assimilating subject. Contemplating the narratives of eight women living in Stockholm, Sweden this chapter proposes that acts of humiliation operate as a form of assimilatory pedagogy. In this way, humiliation is meant to at once abate the constant threat of white national death and to re-inscribe Black Muslim women back into comprehensibility as familiar objects of domination. In particular, the humiliation of "prying" questions, as quotidian forms of interrogation, seek to capture women who have become slippery subjects. As such, the degradations of injurious speech acts function as both corrective and defensive tactics that reprimand as well as re-educate the imperitently evasive body through the humiliation of the untoward query. Accordingly, the intention

of the prying inquiry is not necessarily to reveal an answer to the unknown so much as to subject women to the dominion of the address. It is through these techniques of humiliation that the body's openness and controllability is revealed amidst the demand to answer the intolerable question. By examining the conditions and effects of prying through women's reflections, racist violence is therefore located within the ordinary. What intermingles with the lessons of humiliation is thus, an absented humanity, uncertain ontological existence as well as the sense of shame that arises from the body's "failure" to be a white Swede. From here, we can then recognize how and why Black Muslim women might come to comply with the normative demands of integration through docile acts of self-regulation and self-management. Yet, contemplating forms of a quotidian refusal that may arise in the presence of humiliation's quotidian restraints, this chapter also interrogates how women possibly choose to re-occupy difference in a manner that is at once tricky, disobedient, and unanticipated.

## **Chapter Five**

### ***Willful Art in Canada: Embracing the Alien; Becoming the Monster***

Extending my examination from chapter four into how and why Black Muslim women might disrupt or disobey the directives of assimilation this chapter explores what it means to release desires for national and human belongings by choosing to embody the alien or the monster. Engaging with representations of Black Muslim women in performance and visual art created by Black Canadian artists, I explore how Black Muslim women might not only accept the alienness or monstrosity which inscribes their surface but can decide to exacerbate their strangeness as a willful act. Pondering whether one can ever hope to be recognized as Canadian if they are not first recognized as human, this chapter thus considers the forfeiture of the attachment to human

recognition (i.e. promised to follow national assimilation) as women willfully inhabit the non-human in a manner that is at once excessive and irrevocable. Rather than seeking an answer to how Black Muslim women in Canada can eventually find a way into humanity I am questioning what a non-humanity can do for these persons as its embodiment becomes willful. How does art visualize disobedience? By visually exceeding the racial perimeters that seek to decide and regulate her difference this chapter suggests that art reveals the porous nature of the frames that decide the normativity of Black Muslim women's non-acceptance as human and as Canadian. The display of her exacerbated alienness or monstrosity thus visualizes an ontological and affective rebellion against the racist frames that first refuse Black subjectivity in Canada. Even as Black Muslim women can be disciplined for their insubordinate desires and bodies and thus, reintegrated back into the anti-Black and Islamophobic logics of the frame their monstrous or alien inhabitations have the capacity to incite the disruption and reveal the fallibility of racist norms.

## **Chapter One:**

### ***Comparing Canada and Sweden: National Imaginaries and the Contingencies of Racial Fear***

What makes the seemingly disparate countries of Canada and Sweden most explicitly comparable are the racial contradictions that similarly structure their national imaginaries. Ideals of a progressive politics, anti-racist goodwill, the benevolences of a celebrated social welfare system, and an exemplary humanitarianism are carefully cultivated within both nations. And yet, the edicts of multiculturalism or tolerance that bolster Canada and Sweden's separate pledge to the liberal acceptance of difference (Bannerji 2000; Nordin 2005; Pred 1997), exists alongside investments in the sanctity of whiteness and the preservation of a white citizenry. The national ideals that reflect the embrace of those coming from outside either Northern welfare nation quickly muddy in the duality or disingenuousness of the welcome. My intellectual forbearers in critical race theory have long since brought our attention to the racist, colonial and nationalist hypocrisies that Canadian multiculturalism and Swedish tolerance are built upon (Habel 2014; Hübinette 2012; Thobani 2007; Walcott 2003). Most notable for the purposes of this dissertation are the affective incongruities that render the very same subjects who are reassured by these national commitments that they can have a place within Canada or Sweden, as foreign terrors who promise the nations' undoing. Hence, it is the nearness of those who are prompted to come close that is used to precipitate the defence of national borders and sets a white citizenry quaking in fearful anticipation of the injury that the approach of such strangers signals. There is much that is fascinating about the fear that seems to trigger with the entrance (or, prospective entrance) of dark Others into Canada or Sweden. Or, to be more precise, there is much that is suspicious about the quality of this terror when we consider the ways that a sense of threat and the prospect

of injury are first orchestrated through benign claims of acceptance. If danger is proximal it is because it has been coaxed within reach.

Moreover, it is the allusive promise of national belonging that ensures that the terrifying will remain within range as they continue to strive for that which continues to be on offer. Hence, the national imaginaries of Canada and Sweden insists that the nation and its citizens have an indisputable capacity to receive persons of colour. Yet, there is also the insistence that these Others are responsible for menacing the racial, social, progressive and economic harmony of either white nation. The forces of governmentality can then be employed to protect all that is made vulnerable and authentic in this equation. How is it possible to simultaneously maintain commitments to racial tolerance and plurality alongside ideals of white supremacist singularity and fragility? In what ways might fear and its accompanying affects of terror, threat, and vulnerability assist in the negotiation of these contradictory investments, in a manner that serves the ends of white nation making? How are Black and Muslims persons, in particular, located as the objects of this fear and for what ends? Queries such as these are at the crux of this dissertation which considers the ways Canadian and Swedish belongings rely upon a continuous sense of threat, which is strategically replenished through the fear of Black and Muslims subjects. Here I consider the differential forms of fear that broadly inscribe Blackness and Muslimness as well as the particular dangers situated in Black womanhood and the incompatibilities read into the “veiled Muslim woman.” It is the peril and incongruence these persons are made to represent that is used explain and maintain the impossibility of their acceptance within the body of the white nation. Thus, ideals of racial plurality and racial homogeneity can be concurrently retained. This chapter offers historical contextualization and rudimentary theory for situating and understanding this

paradox of anti-racist acceptance and white supremacist investment. As such, I first engage with the mythical narratives, immigration policies, and contemporary political resentments that uphold the white hegemony of Canada and Sweden. I then make note of the abrupt emergence of anti-racist or non-racist edicts through the initiatives of liberal governments while considering the longstanding racist discourses that continue to render Black and Muslim persons as national enemies. As such, this chapter stands as a critical precursor for understanding how strategies of white nation-making operate through the affects fear, terror, and vulnerability. From here we begin to be able to conceptually grasp the (im)possibilities of belonging and prospects for assimilation that determine “veiled Muslim women’s” and then, Black Muslim women’s national and human recognitions which are focal to the queries that shape the remainder of this dissertation.

### **Sweden: White Purity, Colonial Denials and the Yearning for Racial Homogeneity**

Scholarship that engages with the racial ideologies that organize Swedish identity often emphasize the immediate correlation made between being Swedish and being white (e.g. Miller 2016; Pred 2000; Sawyer & Habel 2014). That is, to be Swedish often means to be white (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 426, 427) to the extent that the national identity is bound up with a recognizable and inherently white subject. To have what is called a “Swedish appearance” therefore means to embody a sanctified “white purity” that continues from Swedes’ tautologically verified position as “the whitest of all whites” in the earliest renderings of a “white race” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427). Understanding the repressed, re-written or fabled pasts (Garner 2014; Sawyer & Habel 2014) that preserve the hegemonic “myth of the Nordic race” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014) is, for some scholars of post-colonial theory, what allows us to grasp the histor-

ical formation of Swedish whiteness as well as this Nordic nation's sense of its own injurability. Hence, in order to contextualize Sweden's particularly privileged and long-standing investment in ideologies of racial singularity and separatism I begin here by plotting the emergence of Nordic supremacy.

In 1900 French anthropologist, Joseph Deniker classified the peoples of the Nordic region (i.e., the Swedish, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Icelandic) as the "race nordique" (Garner 2014, 408). As of 1916, the American race theorist, Madison Grant, took up Deniker's schema by further positing the *Nordic race* as propellers of "human progress" and as "endangered" in this rite (Garner 408). Within these early racial hierarchical posturings of whiteness, Swedes specifically occupied the place of the most genuinely and purely white — thus winning them the status of being, "the elite of humankind itself" (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427). Notably, critical race theorists Tobias Hübinette and Catrin Lundström (2014) mark 1905-1968 as Sweden's "white purity phase" (428). Throughout this period of Swedish history "Swedish race thinking" was institutionalized and instrumentalized to scientifically verify the noble distinctiveness of the Swedish nation as well as the biological perfection of its superior, unadulterated peoples (428). In 1909 the "Swedish Society for Race Hygiene" was established by a number of the country's most esteemed thinkers (428). A primary objective of this collective was to secure Sweden from the threatening pollutants of "social degeneracy and proletarianisation, miscegenation and immigration" that it was feared the nation would succumb to without the employment of "radical biopolitical reforms" (428). As part of legitimizing a national doctrine of racial preservation the Swedish parliament unanimously supported the decision to open Uppsala University's "Race-Biological Institute" in 1921 (Hällgren 2005; Hübinette & Lundström 2014).

The unsurpassable whiteness of the Swedish people could therefore be readily evidenced through state-supported racial science that relied upon the systematic measurements of Swedish bodies against those of minority, inferior, and strange Others. What followed were decades of purity-based laws, which included: the regulation of immigration (especially of Jews and Roma), a mass sterilization program,<sup>4</sup> along with the forced cultural assimilation and genocidal repression of the Roma populations as well as the indigenous Sámi peoples (Hällgren 2005; Hübinette & Lundström 2014).

Notions of a once racially homogeneous Sweden, however, are the stuff of phantasmic nation-making (Hällgren 2005, 319; Nordin 2005; Hübinette & Lundström 2014) that reaches further back than the construction of the “race nordique” or Uppsala’s racial biology but, entails a longer exercise of historical forgetting and re-writing. Ideologies of “one-ness” have been employed to bind a people together in the midst of what was a centuries old multiracial and multicultural society (Hällgren 2005, 319; Nordin 2005; Hübinette & Lundström 2014). Buried in the perhaps more innocuous forgettings is the record of the earliest migrants in the form of “English coinmakers,” in approximately 1000 A.D. (Nordin 2005, 16). Prior to 1800 disparate peoples already resided within and passed unencumbered through the Swedish landscape (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427). A heterogeneous movement which resulted from, Sweden’s colonial exploits within the Nordic region (e.g. imperial rule over Finland and a “personal union” with Norway); participation in the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and colonial possession of the Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy until 1878; and, international trading ventures in Asia, Africa and

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<sup>4</sup> Hübinette & Lundström (2014) reveal that between 1934-1975 over 60,000 people in Sweden were sterilized through this program, with the majority being Roma and white Swedish women from the “lower- and working classes who were deemed to be “sexual transgressors” (428).

the Americas (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427; see also Hällgren 2005, 323). Immigration to Sweden remained largely unrestricted from 1860 to 1917 with the first ban of entry coming into effect in 1931 to bar “‘coloured peoples’ from visiting and settling in Sweden” (Nordin 2005, 17). This ban most immediately ended (or at least, interrupted) Sweden’s share in the voyeuristic custom of gazing upon African and Indigenous peoples, alongside other “human freaks,” exhibited in traveling carnivals that would cross into the country (17). In the midst of such evidence that documents a Swedish past of both unregulated or more fluid borders as well as the colonial-monarchy’s early encounters with ethnic-racial multiplicity, a number of questions arise.

Through which national narratives can an innately white Swedish subjectivity continue to be reified, mourned or preserved as a sanctified past, in the present? Which bodies recognizably gesture towards a “Swedish appearance” and how might this kind of surface reading rely more upon the cues of an unquestionable whiteness to guard against racial pollution, rather than any certainty of national membership?<sup>5</sup> Moreover, considering the fact that Nordic superiority already anticipated its endangerment from the time of its earliest conceptualizations *and* that migration restrictions initially emerged in order to bar the freakish spectacle of “coloured” bodies, we might then inquire: What are dominant investments in Swedish racial homogeneity protecting or protecting against, that might in turn inform contemporary conceptions of the national identity?

The eventual erection of national borders has had a direct impact on the lives of the Sámi peoples whose traditional territories (known as, “Sápmi”) in the Nordic regions’ far North have been partitioned and claimed as part of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia (Lantto 2010). Al-

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<sup>5</sup> Consider here how ethnic or national Others (e.g. Northern Europeans or other people of European descent) might “pass” as acceptably Swedish looking in ways that would not provoke or alert fears of racial contamination in the public space.

though the division of the Arctic terrain has historically been imprecise and often fluctuating, as Patrik Lantto (2010) explains, gaining dominion over the Sámi (who were already taxed for occupying their Indigenous lands) also meant that state rulers in the eighteenth century could legitimize their claim over the “territory they [the Sámi] used” (545). With the establishment of the border between Sweden and Norway in 1751, the Sámi were amongst those made to take on either Swedish or Norwegian citizenship as part of the stipulations of nation building.<sup>6</sup> Despite this compulsion of official citizenship the Sámi were not considered to be members of either Swedish or Norwegian society (Lantto 2010). Such a distinction between national citizenship and social-cultural inclusion is one that Sweden cultivated through policies that maintained the segregation of the Sámi from the majority population, including through the formal isolation of Sámi practicing traditional reindeer herding in 1890 (Weinstock 2013). As part of the economic bid to gain access to the rich natural resources plentiful in Sápmi (Baer 2005), however, the nineteenth century saw the Swedish parliament’s invocation of a “paternalistic” approach to the Sámi through which their rights to the land could be readily contested (Weinstock 2013, 414). In accordance with this territorial challenge the Sámi were represented as: “slowly dying out,” “at a lower stage of evolution,” and thus unable to “successfully compete with Swedish farmers” (who were encroaching on Sámi territories as settlers, hunters and fishers [415]); open to “scientific stud[y]” and “primitive, or closer to nature” (Öhman & Wyld 2014, 249); and, of a culture that is “inferior compared to Swedish culture” (Baer 2005, 259). Lars-Anders Baer (2005) — a former president

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<sup>6</sup> At this time Finland was under Swedish dominion and Norway was joined to Denmark so that the ruling states can also be referred to as “Sweden-Finland” and “Denmark-Norway,” and then Russia (Lantto 2010, 545). However, the 1751 border negotiations that resulted in “enforced citizenship” simply indicate “Sweden” and “Norway” (545). As a point of reference, Finland was later “lost to Russia” in 1809 and Norway was forced under Swedish dominion in 1814 following the Napoleonic wars (546).

of the Sámi parliament in Sweden — argues that although such derisive depictions of the Sámi could not be as openly articulated by the government of Sweden today, colonial sentiments nonetheless continue to operate through the persistent denial that the Sámi peoples' claim to their land can be “legally enforceable” (260).

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have therefore witnessed the exploitations of Sámi territories for “mining,” “forestry,” and the “testing of military weapons” by the Swedish military and later by NATO and “well-paying foreign nation[s]” in the era of post-cold war demilitarization (Öhman & Wyld 2014, 250). The land is thus pillaged for the natural resources that lie “dormant” (249) in an uncultivated Sápmi and weaponry can be tested and refined in these territories because they are simply designated as “unpopulated, uninhabited wilderness” when insignificantly occupied by the Sámi (250). Quite tellingly Sámi academic May-Britt Öhman (2014)<sup>7</sup> conveys that the word “Sámi,” used to describe the peoples Indigenous to Northern Europe, translates as “human” within the various Sámi languages (249). The Swedish government's capitalization of Sápmi for industrial and military ends therefore indicates for Öhman that, “[t]he Sámi, the humans, just aren't [recognized to be] there” (250). Amidst the contradiction of colonial perceptions that at once allow that, the Sámi are “close to nature”; insists that Sámi traditional territories (which are comprised of natural terrain) are an “uninhabited wilderness”; and determine that Sápmi is open to environmental exploitation — begin to be comprehensible through Öhman's analysis. It is not that these Nordic regions are empty per se but rather that they are empty of valuable or recognizable human lives, despite that fact that it is through their humanity that the Sámi people define themselves.

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<sup>7</sup> In a partially auto-ethnographic piece co-authored with Aboriginal Australian academic, Frances Wyld (2014).

The Sámi who live within what is known as Sweden are both Indigenous to the territories of Scandinavia and hold Swedish citizenship and yet, they are rendered as foreign through their cultural practices and ways of engaging with the land. Considering the eighteenth century effort to enforce Swedish citizenship upon the Sámi while also maintaining their social segregation, the experiences of these people reveal how one's foreignness is not only explicable through place of national origin or the bodily signifiers regularly used to determine racial difference.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the Sámi the stranger within the nation is located by their disparateness from normative Swedish culture and values. For instance, if "Swedish race thinking" stresses the perfection and superiority of Swedish peoples — carrying on from the 1916 conception of the "Nordic race" as precipitators of "human progress" (Garner 2014, 408; Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 428) — then it is probable that the Sámi's nomadic, nature-oriented traditions disappoint or fail to align with such imaginings of Nordic or Swedish supremacy. Moreover, instead of contributing to "progress" within the Sweden or the Nordic region the Sámi's traditional use of the land (i.e., reindeer herding) is understood to compromise dominate economic interests and industrial development in ways that further compound their foreignness (see Öhman & Wyld 2014). By some degree the on-going exploitation and structural dismissal of the Sámi peoples in Sweden predicts the contemporary resentment of migrants as both bearers of irreconcilably foreign cultures and as burdens to the economic prosperity of the nation, as is discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Notably, notions of "Nordic exceptionalism"— as a "form of branding" that defensively enwraps the region — at once overlooks the conflictual place of the Sámi within the Northern

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<sup>8</sup> Sámi peoples can look phenotypically similar to white Swedish people.

territories and also refuses the truth of Nordic participation in and profit from colonialism and slavery (Sawyer & Habel 2014, 1). In terms of the erasures of slavery and colonialism, such a fantastical feat is accomplished through the region's self-perception of being annexed from continental Europe (Sawyer & Habel 2014; Hübinette 2012), which thus dislocates these historical violences into a distant and "intrinsically different" although nearby elsewhere (Nordin 2005, 2). In the political and narrative divorcing of Northern Europe from its indefensible colonial neighbours of Western Europe there are conceivably two things happening here, particularly as we think in relation to Sweden. First, the homogeneity of a distinctive peoples is confirmed through the denials of colonial involvement which thus disappears the unhelpful memory of overseas exploits and multiracial arrivals. Secondly, the unmatched superiority of Swedes can reach into a present to inform remoulded discourses of unrivalled national goodness and inherent anti-racism (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 433). That is, a dominant Swedish national identity can be structured by the ideals of both an unaltered whiteness as well as a progressive, non-racist polity which can serve as a moral example to a racially-fraught and prejudicial West (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 433). A "deliberate forgetfulness" (Hübinette 2012, 52) is required to allow for a homogenous racial lineage to be without a point of scientific origin or manufacture but to be reified as that which always was and uninterruptedly has been. But further, within the specific ideological scope of a "Swedish exceptionalism" investments in both racial purity and the absence of racial categorizations exist in parallel (52).

Continuing from these forgettings of problematic beginnings are the claims reverberating from the 1932-1976 Swedish Social Democratic Party's remaking whereby the country is revamped as uniquely non-racist (Nordin 2005). Sweden as a society where race has no place — a

race-less society — can be continually affirmed as such through the absence of what would be a contextually irrelevant racial discourse that has become antiquated beyond the point of effective memory. The undeniability that “Sweden today is not a racist country” (Hübinette 2012, 52) is exemplified not only in the statistic and legislative evidence of Swedes’ world-record capacity for tolerance (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 424) but, in the country’s ethically astute responses to the oppression of peoples in the hostile non-Nordic outsides. From this race-less place a benevolent humanitarianism is demonstrably bestowed upon the persistent “flood” of asylum seekers. Tolerant Swedes’ willfully sacrifice both purse and soil. Because “Swedish racism” is immediately dismissible as oxymoronic, critical race scholars explain that there is no language that would enable people of colours’ experiences of racism within Sweden to be heard (Sawyer 2008, 426). Or, to put it differently: to speak of racism in Sweden is to speak from a dead language, that has no valid or dominantly intelligible space for articulation. Race is an unseemly past that has been made to pass by and out-of-sight (Goldberg 2009), through the nation’s “official anti-racism and multiculturalism” (Hübinette & Lundström 2011, 44).

Even so, the idealizations of a colour-blind and politically progressive Sweden finds more recent interruption. In 2010, the openly “anti-immigrant” right-wing nationalist group the Swedish Democrats (SD) were inducted into parliament (Norocel 2013).<sup>9</sup> Founded in 1988, what steers the political ideology of the SD is the longing to return to the glorified and fictionalized time when the Swedish nation and its rightful peoples were not inundated by the “ethnoracial conflicts” and “non-Western patriarchal excesses” (Hübinette & Lundström 2011, 50) that have been allowed to weaken the welfare state through the strain of “unrestrained

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<sup>9</sup> The SD won 6 seats thus, entering parliament for the first time.

immigration” (Norocel 2013, 5; also see Hübinette & Lundström 2014). By re-articulating the white purity concept of “folkhemmet,” which is variably translated as “the people’s home,” “race home” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427-428) and “the home of [Swedish] people” (Norocel 2013, 6), the SD’s election campaign emphasized the familial oneness of a lineally authenticated citizenry united as dependents under the protective authority of a heteropatriarchal head of the Swedish “extended family” (Norocel 6). Undergirding the platform of the SD — and often re-appearing in academic explanations for its parliamentary victory — is the long-time festering of discontent, dissatisfaction and betrayal held by a general votership and “dissident” *angry white working class men* (Hübinette & Lundström 2011, 34, 42). The presumed failings of multiculturalism exemplify how the Swedish welfare state has in turn failed its rightful peoples and compromised the security of the nation, which is now “injured” and under threat by both “mass immigration” and multiculturalism itself (Garner 2014, 414; Norocel 2013, 15).

The results of an unheeded goodness, a foolishly incautious humanitarianism, and lax migration policies are, as the SD leader Jimmie Åkesson laments: “honour killings, segregation, opposition, rootlessness, gang-building, rapes, robberies and the questioning of Swedish traditions and symbols, unemployment, lower grades and knowledge levels in schools, religious fundamentalism, genital mutilation, oppression of women, forced marriage, increased social costs and reduced welfare (The SD-K 2009 84:5)” (Norocel 2013, 15). To scorn the practices of a presumed cultural backwardness and unassimilability in tandem with the signs that witness the demise of social prosperities and national traditions renders these dangers as inseparable in their capacity to unravel the nation. In this way, we can imagine “robberies” to mean the intrusion into Swedish homes, ransacked by the inherently criminal migrant invader who seizes both personal

property and social resources; or, the social resources that *are* the personal property of the rightful citizen. Captured in this on-going theft is then foreseeably the once unquestioned privileging of Swedish “traditions and symbols” along with a reigning sense of security and accomplishment. Now destabilized, Swedes are uprooted from their sanctified roots and met with imported atrocities that upset the sensibilities of a protectively patriarchal but, gender equal society (Norocel 2013). Yet, as Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard (2014) explain, advocates for this right-wing anti-immigrant politic comprehend such violent sentiments as being demonstrable of their capacity to “care” (49). In empathy for the well-being of white Swedes, the Swedish nation *and* in compassion for immigrants, supporters of the SD extend their help by, “sending them [migrants] back to their ‘true’ home” and thus assisting to “preserv[e] their purity as the ‘other’” (53). In the solicitude of this act, the “badness” of migration for all parties is averted or rectified through a banishing affection (53). Hereby, deportation becomes an act of tenderness. Because the motivating force of this wishful expropriation is described as a kindness and concern (51), members of the right-wing refuse the possibility that this wish could be a racist one (49). To *care* for both those who are alike to the self (as a testament to Swedish racial and cultural homogeneity) and for those who are unalterably different and irreparably unassimilable allows these affections to culminate as investments in repatriation — that is, sending migrants back to their countries of origin. A repatriation of the Other to the purity of the illiberal homeland and a cultural repatriation of the unrooted Swede within the land of their birthright. What becomes particularly interesting within this *goodness as banishment* national ideology is that it repeats within the sentiments of the Swedish anti-racist.

Steve Garner (2014) as well as Mulinari and Neergaard (2014) insist that the rise of right wing populism in political parties is not solely the effect of a recent surge in xenophobia or, of openly white supremacist thought across Western Europe. Instead, these scholars suggest that such hostilities must be understood as a part of a continuity of racisms in Europe and within the Nordic region in particular. As such, the racist rhetoric and nationalist aspirations of the SD are not to be treated as an “anomaly,” “aberration” (Mulinari & Neergaard 2014, 53) or unaccountable point of “rupture” (Garner 2014, 407) since such sentiments are deeply embedded in conceptions of Europeanness as well as wider notions of Swedishness, including those found within the anti-racist and feminist progressive movements (Hübinette & Lundström 2014). The immediate public response to the SD’s successful entrance into the legitimate realm of Swedish politics was largely one of anti-racist outcry, protest and disgust (Hübinette & Räterlinck 2014). However, a number of scholars suggest that despite such visceral reactions, the white supremacist desires and regrets most intrinsic to the principles of the SD and its broader sympathizers closely correlate with the covert nationalist longings of a liberal, pro-multicultural Sweden (Hübinette & Lundström 2011, 2014). What then unites dominant ideologies of a liberal and unwaveringly tolerant Sweden with white nationalist principles? In what ways can the effects of affect reveal the ties of this racist race-based kinship? How might a sense of fear, betrayal, injury or resentment be part of the emotive force that binds these seemingly disparate investments of national identity together?

Notably, the progressive left can be described as harbouring a sense of injury that emits from the betrayal of an irrefutable Swedish anti-racism by the presence of migrants of colour. It is as if to say: if people of colour remained outside the boundaries of Sweden, so would racism.

Part of what renders Sweden as a nation in “crisis” then, as argued by Hübinette and Lundström (2014), is a “white melancholia” whereby the loved object that an incomplete mourning holds onto is the image of a “new Sweden” as a politically progressive nation (433; see also Eng 2003). As such, the presence of migrants is held responsible for the rise of the SD and thus, the “*disruption* to the exceptionalist image and the privileged position of Sweden ... [as] being humanity’s avant-garde and a beacon for antiracism and everything that is considered to be good and progressive” (423). Speculatively, the prominence of a right-wing politic amongst a Swedish populace is comprehensible through the regrettable availability of migrant bodies against which racist ideologies can further germinate and then wage public attack. Non-white foreigners become living catalyst of what is imagined to be a recently emergent racial hatred. What is then betrayed and/or placed under threat are the national ideals that invest in the unquestioned non-racism of the country. Following the line of thinking embedded in this “progressive” wail one can surmise that Sweden could most easily and demonstrably be anti-racist without the troubling presence of Othered races. In this way, a commitment to an anti-discriminatory ethos can also be said to be that which longs for a state of racial homogeneity whereby a liberal goodness would not require empirical or internal national proofs but would persist uninterrupted through the purity of whiteness.

Furthermore, in the left’s emphasis on the newness of racism within Sweden can be found the perpetuation of colonial, slave-trading and multiethnic erasures as racial oppressions are allowed to be an upsetting contemporary aberration. Hence, as those of a progressive anti-racist politic publicly proclaim that “We like difference,” “Refugees welcome” and decry the anti-migrant ethos of the SD as “un-Swedish” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 423; Norocel 2013, 4),

yearnings for a Swedish racial singularity would continue to pervade. Accordingly, difference remains locatable on the sites of certain bodies who are in a state of arrival from the spaces beyond the nation. As anti-racists assert that they “like” this difference that both comes towards them and needs the humanitarian protection of “new Sweden,” racial plurality is figured as what seeks or, has found entry into the otherwise white nation and not as that which has a historical presence. The sentiments of right-wing political sympathizers are then not “un-Swedish” because of the ways they deny a multiracial past or contribute to the perpetuation of racist violences. Instead, they are “un-Swedish” through the trespass on the idealized terms that stipulate that Sweden is a country where race and racism have no place. Swedish tolerance is thus troubled when it must be enacted as a counter-discourse against a visible bigotry that has been unforgivably induced by the presence of non-white persons. Goodness must now be evidenced in unanticipated ways whereby the necessity to demonstrate this benevolence provokes the rupture. By coming “too close” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 508) people of colour have betrayed the conditions of a liberal tolerance and threatened the longevity of this (newer) Swedish value.

### **Canadian Goodness: Multicultural Benevolence and Tolerant Vulnerabilities**

Throughout my 2017 research trip to Stockholm<sup>10</sup> the mention of Canada as my most recent point of origin would readily invoke exclamations of delight and approval as Swedes would forthcomingly declare their affections for the Canadian nation. In these moments of unconcealed fondness I would at times be told that Sweden is popularly known as “the Canada of Europe” or even, “little Canada.” A correlation which I was meant to understand as being a reference to the

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<sup>10</sup> Visiting Doctoral Student (supervisor, Dr. Tiina Rosenberg). Department of Culture & Aesthetics. Stockholm University, Sweden.

international reputation of progressive politics and gender equality, shared between these two countries. In a nation that continually reaffirms its incomparable goodness and more covertly defends its unique place within humanity, it is curious that to be likened to a nation across the Atlantic is not only appealing but popularly entrenched with visceral responses of assent. What of a “Swedish exceptionalism” allows for its comparison to the Canadian nation? Querying into the ideological investments that draw these seemingly disparate liberal Western nations into relation, I seek to examine how narratives of loss, injury or betrayal also appear alongside and/or propel discourses of national goodness and racial hegemony within Canada.

As political theorists Rita Dhamoon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2009) contend, Canada is formulated through a series of contrasts that organize the population along historically infused lines of “internal differences” (164). Specifically, Dhamoon and Abu-Laban draw these lines between the fraught subjectivities of: Indigenous and settler, white and non-white peoples, French and British (referring both to ancestral origins and language), as well as immigrants and “native-born” (164). Of course, the boundaries between these embodied points of difference often collapse either into each other — dissolving the boundary — or, refuse the historical truths that would allow the opposing subject-object to be acknowledged in its existence. For instance, “the settler” who is also “the immigrant” and most recognizably “white,” can be (and often is) imagined through languages of founding and rightful ascendance that dissolves the Indigenous presence that would mark a point of white migrant arrival and its violent colonial beginnings (*see* Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012, 296). In turn, “immigrant” is already the place holder of non-white peoples so that to be “native-born” has no comprehensible meaning against bodies of colour that are perpetually inscribed with the signs of arrival, foreign beginnings or, the erasable

claims of indigeneity (Alfred & Corntassel 2005; Bannerji 2000; Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012; Walcott 2000). It is then the historical trajectory and ideological work of these forms of contrast that must be surveyed in order to grasp the racial supremacies of Canadian nation-making.

Probing the imperial legacies that have established the ideological footing for contemporary imaginings of the Canadian nation the act of “managing” populations (Goldberg 2009, 328) appears as a persistent form of institutionalizing work. Within these recent pasts are located the unceasing manipulations of Indigenous peoples. Herein, the Indigenous were first managed by the butchering force of cavalry as the British Empire claimed sovereignty over inconsequentially peopled lands (Alfred & Corntassel 2005; Thobani 2007; Razack 2012). In the periods marking the immediate before and after of Canada’s independence from the British Crown, Indigenous populations were then “civilized” to the point of psychic, cultural and, not infrequently, physical death (Thobani 2007). Such spatial and racial forms of relational organization continue to inform our current imperial times within Canada (Coulter 2007; Razack 2012; Smith 2012). As sociologist Sherene Razack (2012) explains, it is against the city of an on-going colonization that the dismissibly dispossessed Indigenous body is made to appear as inexplicably incompatible to and irritatingly vulnerable within modern life (908, 911). Hence, these undesirable wards are rendered as those who must be both “assisted into modernity” and “repeatedly evicted from the civilized spaces of the [white] settler” (908). It is then, arguably, in managing the Indigenous into the spaces located in the realms outside of “grievable” (Butler 2009) existence that an emptied physical and affective landscape can be meaningfully filled with, what feminist sociologist Sunera Thobani (2007) describes as, “[o]vertly brazen assertions of the racial superiority of Canadians” (250), along with the rightful subjects that ontologically embody this supremacy.

Yet, the methodical act of banishing — through psychic, social and bodily exile — cumbersome object selves whose claims of land and life pose an “internal danger” to Canadian security (Dhamoon & Abu-Laban 2009, 176) did not conclude the task of rectifying clear boundaries of difference. Rather, the “great adversity [endured] in founding the nation” (Thobani 2007, 4) was followed by the need to control the incomings of an insistent outside. According to historian John Price (2013) declarations of and a demand for a “White Canada” arose amidst nineteenth century “racial anxieties” (629) as Third World subjects came too close; whose entry as immigrants and refugees posed a threat to the “collective welfare and prosperity” (Thobani 2007, 4) of the European settler nation. As such, management becomes a question of numbers: allaying the too many, preventing the flood of unassimilable dependents, and affirming the whiteness of the national body through the practice of restricted migration and civic participation. A selectively (im)penetrable Canadian border thus appeared in the form of, the 1885 Chinese head tax and then the 1923 ban of Chinese immigration (Price 632); the 1908 “Continuous Journey Act” deployed against potential South Asian arrivals (632); the reconfiguring of Canadians of Japanese descent as enemy spies during World War II with the violent removal of 20,000 Japanese Canadians from their homes in British Columbia and the corresponding placement of 19,867 of these persons into forms of internment or, what is more properly understood as “incarceration” (Dhamoon & Abu-Laban 2009, 172; Oikawa 2012, 22-23 ); the highly regulated entry of Black persons from the Caribbean and the African continent as undesirable and unacceptable newcomers from the early eighteenth century into the mid-twentieth century (Abdi 2005; Mensah 2010); the acceptance of “second-class whites” in the form of Eastern and Southern Europeans as replacement labourers for an instrumentalized Asian void (Price 2013, 633);

and, the rapid reproduction of Europeanness and the firm entrenchment of a “white Canada” with a 6.5 million increase of European migrants between 1941 and 1961 (Price 637).

As of the 1960s, Canada began to self-consciously liberalize amidst a global surge of anti-racist and anti-colonial movements along with an increasingly unstoppable flow of migrants from the global South (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007). The official policy of Multiculturalism was therefore presented as both a demonstrable gift of tolerance as well as an “ideological coping mechanism” (Bannerji 2000, 43) to temper what would otherwise be, a distraught whiteness and overwhelmingly demanding foreign presence. Introduced by the liberal party in 1971 under the administration of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, scholars of postcolonial and political theories attest that from its inception multiculturalism was employed as a receptacle into which social grievances could be deposited and swiftly forgotten (Bannerji 2000), or better yet, metamorphosed. These grievances are understood to include: racism, xenophobia, Francophone sovereignty and an English-French rivalry, Indigenous land claims and allegations of broken or non-existent treaties, inequitable classed-based access to meaningful employment and sufficient housing (Bannerji 45). In the stead of such complaints of social injustice, the non-specificity of national unity was deliberately made to appear. “Difference” (and its corresponding inequalities) became the stuff of “culture,” “diversity” and “tradition” — not of the political (Bannerji 45, Thobani 2007, 249). Comparable to Sweden, a newly multicultural Canada could thus be internationally valorized for its progressive acceptance and celebration of the many forms of cultural differences which seek (and can expect to find) non-prejudicial harbour within its boundaries. A “relatively recent[ly] invent[ed]” (Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012, 296) national value was accordingly re-made into an inherent ethic; naturally native to Canada from the furthest reaches of

an imagined-to-be tolerant antiquity. Replacing a once avidly declared white Canadian supremacy is thus a commitment to plurality that is articulated in the language of forever and always has been.

Under the edict of Multiculturalism, ethnic and linguistic minorities are said to be awarded protections against discrimination as they are simultaneously encouraged to share and entertain their cultural differences (see Government of Canada, 1985/2014). Yet, as has long been argued, this official commitment is often the very platform upon which an authentic Canadian subject can be affirmed (Walcott 2003). The citizen that displays an un-coaxed capacity for tolerance; who can be benignly entertained by the spectacle of minority cultural traditions; and, proudly glorifies in the visible presence of racial-ethnic diversity, are not to be counted amongst those who benefit from the protections of the Multiculturalism act. Rather, in bestowing such benevolent graces these abstracted subjects already possess and also decide the privileges of national belonging. Almost invariably this authenticated Canadian subject is said to take form in the white body (Bannerji 2000; Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012; Walcott 2003). Part of “coping” with the influx of an outside foreign to a nation of European descent thus encompasses the effort to demonstrate a compassionate and liberal willingness to accommodate “multicultural others” (Bannerji 2000, 42), while also maintaining colonial inscriptions of the rightful national body. The white subject is the self that lineally and visibly references Europe and signifies the glorified hardships of imperial ascendance. Whiteness and the white body therefore function as a political subjectivity that fortifies national identity. As the embodied agent of Canadian nationalism, the white self inhabits the essential racial criteria that establishes “legitimate and full citizens” (Bannerji 6, 42). Multiculturalism therefore performs the work of contrast by presenting a

reliable ideological construct through which the “colonial European turned into Canadian” (Banerji 42) can be territorially and epistemologically located; and then, be re-affirmed again and again, against the foreigner (Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012, 296). Accordingly, the “newcomer” is the peripheral, non-white citizen of an always questionable belonging who seeks to cross the cultural threshold into what remains, “white Canada forever” (Ward 2002).

In the simultaneous retention of a white supremacist national identity alongside attestations of a devoted multiculturalism, the attributes of the legitimate Canadian citizen most clearly unfurl. By way of offering some context we can note that, imaginings of the goodness of the nation reach back to the period of British decolonization during which time Canada became internationally known as both “peacekeeping” and an advocate of the UN, based on its public support of newly sovereign countries (Price 2013, 636). In our contemporary era, the vested national ideal is therefore of a humanitarian Canada with an unsurpassable capacity for compassion evidenced most baldly in policies of immigration, refugee status, citizenship (Thobani 2007, 69), and of, tolerance. The compassionate goodness of the nation — which is based on an “ethic of care” — is in turn reflected in the qualities of the rightful citizen (Thobani 107). As migration scholar Lloyd Wong (2007/2008) explains, a twenty-first century (post-9/11) constitution of Canadian citizenship imagines a form of “social membership” that includes formal and legal obligations (e.g. voting, obeying laws) but, also reaches beyond these responsibilities towards a deeper, affective point of attachment witnessed through a citizenship of “desirable activity” (85). Although Jacqueline Kennelly & Kristina R. Llewellyn’s (2011) analyses of the discursive indoctrination of the “good and active citizen” locates the Canadian subject’s duties in acts of democratic engagement that “delegitimiz[e] ... the affective, emotional and relational” (911), other

scholars attest to the acts and qualities of love, affection and kinship rendered characteristic of the authentic white citizen (Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012; Park 2013; Wong 2007/2008).

As the 2007 controversy over the so-called “lost” and “found” Canadians conveys, evidence of an irrefutable citizenship is available in “personal characteristics” that take shape as, “love of country, sacrifice and hard work” (Harder & Zhyznomirska 297). These attributes mime the normative values and identity of the nation and speak to a body politic that reinforces the “myth of national descent” through claims of kinship (297). Hereby a legitimate polity can claim the national territory through birth and birthright. Quite possibly, “hard work” and “sacrifice” first function as euphemisms for the toil of European settler ancestors whose colonizing labours are a credit to both the nation and their kin. Investing in the nation as a site of care — that is, a caring nation and a nation of caring citizens — can further be understood as the labour of a multicultural sympathy. As part of the birthright subject’s demonstrable “national attachment” (Harder & Zhyznomirska 313) is then, plausibly, an investment in the re-written, forever goodness of Canada. Hence, the acceptance of the Third World difference that comes near becomes a crucial component of loving and sacrificing for the nation, by upholding it as a place that embraces those of a racial-ethnic periphery. Enduring the dogged demands made by those Others of a questionable national attachments is therefore part of this love.

In what Augustine Park (2013) terms “racial nationalism” the idealized, “good citizen” is the citizen that is “culturally white” (580; see also Hage 2011; Thobani 2007). Importantly, this whiteness is not only or merely of the body but is of cultural practice and construction, mirroring the national identity. Even so, this is a whiteness that is still written on the skin since, the recognizably white subject *is* presumed to honour a robust and loyal citizenship (Bannerji 2000; Hard-

er & Zhyznomirska 2012). As Park asserts, culture “supplies a grammar for racial coding” (Park 2013, 584), without the necessity of an overt pronouncement. “Multicultural others” of various cultures and suspect transnational loyalties<sup>11</sup> in turn, reflect a “thin citizenship” that is neither substantially connected to nor contributing to the “shared values, cultural identity, and sense of belonging” (Wong 2007/2008, 80) faithfully held by the culturally white. Hence, even as multiculturalism verifies the tolerance of an “open society” (Park 2013, 585) it also made into the source of non-cohesion. Non-white persons hold a perfunctory national membership, although they remain “cultural[ly] fragment[ed]” (Bannerji 2000, 10). The citizen of foreign origin is, again, the visible symbol of contrast that signifies everything the nation tolerates but, in its truest form, is not.

It is then in Canadian national benevolence that vulnerability lies in wait; lurking, in a way that is similar to the dangers posed by goodness in the case of Sweden. Specifically, the subject that is not “us” and comes from a territorial and lineal elsewhere advances a substantial threat of upset. The outsider within is parasitic in their exploitative approach to the value of Canadian citizenship and the benefits of the welfare state (i.e., healthcare, education, social services); and, exasperating in their refusal to integrate (Park 2013). The non-white Other is the allegorical “recalcitrant alien” who, following Park’s incisive analyses, rejects assimilation in favour of their “obstinately cultural” ways (589). This is the wrong kind of culture. The cultural that is not the culturally white. Defiant. Uncooperative. Cynical in the capacity to exploit. As the “citizen of convenience” the racial-cultural alien strategically takes material and political refuge in a hospitable multicultural Canada even as they fervently remain patriots to a savage homeland

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<sup>11</sup> I.e., those with dual citizenship, “multiple citizenship,” and who frequently move between Canada and the country of a backward origin (Wong 2007/2008, 80)

(589). Notably, Dhamoon and Abu-Laban (2009) explain that even as the foreigner is an “insider” to the rights and claims of citizenship their original and unrelenting outsidersness means for them hold a treacherous capacity to, “corrup[t] and threate[n] ‘our’ national identity; ‘our’ dominant norms of the body politic... and ‘our’ public space” from within as the “internal dangerous foreigner” (169). Non-contributing. Non-participating. Abusive (Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012, 302).

### **Blackness: An “Absented Presence”<sup>12</sup>**

Despite the historical enslavement of Africans peoples on the colony of St. Barthélemy (pre-1800s) as well as the once regular spectacle of Africans in touring human zoos (1800s to early 1900s) (Nordin 2005), prior to the 1960s Blackness (and Africanness) was a limited often disembodied presence in twentieth century Sweden (Sawyer 2008). As feminist anthropologist Lena Sawyer (2008) explains, representations of persons of African descent largely took fictionalized or grossly exaggerated shape in the absence of a significant Black population. Before the 1960s Swedish imaginings or certainties of what Blackness could be circulated in the form of: the writings of missionaries, (ghastly) illustrations in children’s books, conceptions of African liberation movements as relayed through the discourse of “development aid,” as well as popular writings on African American musicians and artists (91). Born in the 1950s and 60s the “first generation” of Afro-Swedes were then “the children of [white] Swedish women and African

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<sup>12</sup> I borrow the phrase “absented presence” from Simone Browne’s book *Dark Matters* (2015). Browne’s coinage of this expression describes the simultaneous invisibility of Blackness within studies of surveillance alongside the over-representation of Black persons as the targets of state surveillance strategies. My use of “absented presence” refers to the absence of Blackness from Canadian and Swedish historical memory or national imaginaries despite the fact that Black people have been present within both countries from their earliest formations, through slavery and colonialism.

American and/or Caribbean musicians or sailors” as well as American-born biracial children adopted by white Swedish families (92). As of the 1970s, a “second generation” of Afro-Swedes began to arrive in the form of students from Caribbean and African countries<sup>13</sup> (98); Ethiopians seeking political asylum; and later, “larger numbers of Somali and Congolese refugees” who began coming to Sweden in the 1990s (98).

As for Canada, Black persons have been within the nation since the 1600s (Walcott 2000, 7). Into the early nineteenth century, a Black presence could specifically be documented amongst the enslaved, indentured labourers, servants, and free skilled labourers (Abdi 2005, 50-51). The earliest records of Black arrival report the “enslaved child-companion” (Mendes 2011, 7; Winks 1971, ix) Olivier Le Jeune, who entered New France in 1628 with “the so-called English Conqueror of Quebec,” David Kirke (Winks 1971, ix). Importantly, the “British military ledger” the *Book of Negroes* archives “pre-Confederation black arrivals into Canada” (Browne 2012, 545; see also David Sealy 2000). The ledger specifically documents the 1783 departure of the freed Black Loyalist (along with those still enslaved) from a British evacuated New York, onboard 219 ships setting sail for Canada, England and Germany (Browne 2012, 546-547). Black Studies scholar Simone Browne (2012) pointedly notes that the *Book of Negroes* serves not only as a “record of escape” of the Black Loyalist who generally served the British as a bargain for freedom (547) but, also offers an archive of Black surveillance (547) and the corporeality of travel (545). That is, Browne argues that as the first official document to regulate US-Canada migration “that explicitly linked corporeal markers to the right to travel” (545) the surveilled crossings and mobilities of Black bodies operated as a form of state patrol that was part of instituting the very

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<sup>13</sup> Sawyer specifies Tanzanian and Zimbabwean students, by way of an example (2008, 98).

border between the US and Canada (547). In turn, this earlier counting, logging, managing, and watching of Black movements into Canada helps, as Browne further suggests, to historicize the entanglements of “visibility, invisibility, migration and surveillance in the nation” (545).

Throughout the 1960s-70s Canada saw an influx of Black migration following the 1962 modest adjustment to the nation’s blatant white migrant preference; the 1967 introduction of the points based migration system; and the establishment of Canadian migration offices within Caribbean and African nations (Mendes 2011; Mensah 2010). Further, throughout the early 1990s and 2000s large numbers of Somali asylum seekers came to Canada in the escape from civil war (Maynard 2017, 160).

Despite such archival evidence, however, scholars writing on a Black presence within Canada or Sweden similarly note the ways Blackness is often nullified from the historical record and absented from historical memory (*see* Browne 2012; McKittrick 2006, 2007; Sawyer & Habel 2014; Walcott 2000, 2003). Rather, the presence of Blackness is that which is narrowly situated within the immediate present and therefore rendered contemporary, always newly arrived, and readily (dis)locatable to the outside place of foreign origin. A “multicultural Other” (Bannerji 2000). Black feminist scholars Lena Sawyer and Ylva Habel (2014) explain that in the case of the Nordic region more generally, Blackness and Africanness<sup>14</sup> remain difficult to locate within the regions’ “identities or cultural productions,” which is, in part, the effect of “the politics of Nordic whiteness” (4). As such, the cultural nuances that Blackness and those of the African Diaspora contribute to these Northern European nations is hidden in a form of obscurity engineered

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<sup>14</sup> which are terms of identification that are used in alternation by Sawyer in recognition of the tensions, difficult entanglements, and “blurriness” that reflect “their lived reality,” most specifically in Sweden (Sawyer 2008, 89)

by anti-Black racist productions of knowledge that position African identities as negligible to the constructions of Nordicness (4). Black/African persons not only number amongst the generally dissociable category of immigrant but, Blackness can be taken to be that which “overlaps with the meanings of a[n] ‘immigrant’” (3). Sawyer and Habel therefore argue that Blackness and the African Diaspora are “refracted” from the signifying discourses of a regional white Nordicness so that — similar to the *culturally fragmented* outsider within a wider Canadian ideological rendering — the refractable Black subject is amongst the adjunct selves that maintain the constant re-inscription of racial and ethnic belongings that distinguish “Nordic national identities” (3). As a refractable object, the Black body is correspondingly measured against the whiteness and unrivalled femininity symbolized in the “blond hair, blue eyes, pale skin” that, “posit Swedishness and Scandinavian/Nordic ancestry in binary and hierarchical opposition to Africanness and blackness” (Sawyer 2008, 89). Blackness represents that which Swedishness is not and cannot be.

At the same time, contemporary invocations of the Black body in Sweden imagine it to be a kind of Otherness that is at once revolting and frightening but then also, inhabitable and quite literally, eatable (*see* Hübinette & Räterlinck 2014). From the 2011 controversy of Lünd University students donning Black face and “playfully” reenacting a slave auction as well as the Swedish parliamentary minister humorously consuming the grotesque and screaming body of a Black woman in cake form at Stockholm’s *Moderna Museet* (modern museum of art) in 2012 Tobias Hübinette & Lennart E.H. Räterlinck (2014) suggest that the Black Other within Sweden can be that which signifies forbidden and lost desires (506) or, is the Other who has “come *too close*” (508) and thus invokes the discomfort of the white subject. Perhaps similar to the contra-

dictory desires of the progressive Swede who advocates for anti-racism even as they resent a non-white presence, Hübinette & Räterlinck explain that the performative embodiment or consumption of Black bodies is part of the wish to “approach the Other” (508, 512). In this gesture, as these scholars propose, is the hope to overcome alienation within a deeply racially segregated society informed by a lingering “colonial prohibition” (508, 512). Approaching the Other, however, is not done through “a genuine encounter” but is instead grasped through appropriation, embodiment, and ultimately the “reification” of the self (508). The phantasmic desire is thus sustained in a performative “mixture of fear and fascination for the subordinate group” (505, 508). Unsurprisingly, the dominant public response to both the Lünd and *Moderna Museet* events was to deny their racist overtones and anti-Black humiliations (502).

If, as Hübinette & Räterlinck put forth, the embodiment and devouring of Otherness means to access lost desires it remains striking that the appropriation is of the Black body in pain. Where the white subject seeks a knowability of the alienated subject-object is in the moments of most wretched torment. In this way, the Black Other might be those recognizable and comprehensible only through the events of infliction and who come close in the happenings of suffering. Sweden’s denied colonial history and slave-trading past can conceivably appear as part of these “forbidden and lost desires.” That is, the perhaps unspoken wish for corporeal dominion over the once-enslaved Black self is brought forth into a present as university students sell each other in nostalgic jest. Alternatively, the Black body is that which can be cut into, served, and sweetly tasted in a playful ritual that enables a kind of proximity and exploration of the imagined inside of Blackness. Yet, this is done without the literal threat of proximity or the social taboo of a resurrected intrigue in racial biology. The goodness of the white Swedish nation is potentially

re-affirmed even here since, in inhabiting or digesting the pained Black body the humanitarian nation might affectively confirm — through the performative — the torment and grief it continues to save the African refugee from, at the cost of national injury.

Similar to Sweden, Blackness in Canada often reflects a subjectivity that presupposes a point of entry into an already established “Eurocentric terrain” (McKittrick 2014, n.p.). As Black feminist geographer Katherine McKittrick (2006) contends, Blackness exists as that which is divorced from the spatial. Black persons are rendered in terms ejected from “[p]hysical geographies” except in the territorial projections that locate them “outside the borders of the nation-state” (99). It is through such geographic denials that unroot (or, re-root) Black subjectivities from longer national histories that, as McKittrick contends, “nation-purities” are “reifie[d]” (99). Black Canadian communities are then constructed without a legacy. In this sense, it is seemingly not impossible to imagine Black bodies within the nation, numbered amongst the other beneficiaries of multiculturalism. What remains less tenable in the historical national imaginary however, are Black subjects or Blackness as “constitutive of Canadianness” (Walcott 2000, 7; see also Walcott 2003). Notably, McKittrick (2014) argues that the language of multiculturalism speaks in the vernacular of a futurity. There is thus an “anticipatory tone” of what could be in the one-day of a multicultural “promise” rather, than of what *is* as a reflection of the policy’s outcome (McKittrick n.p.). Blackness as such, is annunciated in the language of multicultural becomings whereby the Black subject-object who is ceaselessly in the state of the newly arrived can take-up and invest in the anticipation of the “anticipatory tone,” by hoping to eventually share, celebrate, and be protected for their cultural difference. In this discourse of futurity and its prescribed in-

vestments, the pasts of Black presence and contribution to the country is erased in the language of what is to come. History is lost in the potentiality of Blackness as a “recent phenomenon” (Walcott 2000, 7) within Canada.

Yet, even for a Blackness that is recognizable as an accommodated appendage to the multicultural nation the appearance of this interminable “newcomer” signifies the parasitic and criminal undoings of the harmonious society, which indulgently conceded to award Black admittance. David Sealy (2000) suggest that “[t]he very notion of Blackness” is bound up with “events, movements, appropriations, translations” that are part of the construction of “capitalism and the nation-state” (92). In this nexus, Blackness translates in contradiction. Specifically, Sealy at once allows that: the “[t]ruly Canadian” Black subject rejects the relevance of race within a nearly non-racist Canada (99)<sup>15</sup>; being Black is antithetical to “being a ‘good Canadian’” (101); and, the “irrational[ity]” and “criminality” of the Black migrant<sup>16</sup> is quintessential of “[a]uthentic Blackness” (101; see also Maynard 2017, 175). The Black subject is to anticipate the gifts of tolerance bestowed by the pluralistic nation; however, the inherent non-cohesion of Blackness preemptively bars cultural membership, regardless of naturalization. Turning again to McKittrick (2006) we also learn that, “the hypervisible black subject is dangerously un-Canadian” (99, 102) and thus “unacceptable” from within the productions of Canadian space (xv, 102). It is then not that the nation is unwilling to accept this dark difference that comes towards it seeing that, it is the in-

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<sup>15</sup> which I read as furthering the ideologies of a progressive tolerance

<sup>16</sup> Here Sealy is specifically referring to Black Caribbeans migrating to Canada from Jamaica in this last description. Although, as Sealy indicates, Jamaicans are disproportionately criminalized within the sentiment that surrounds Black migration (e.g. *Baker v. Canada*, see Chapter 3) we can nonetheless understand that these discourses of danger, violence, and cultural non-cohesion are used to refuse the value of all Black lives in Canada.

compatible qualities of Blackness that erects the barrier. The Black body is its own point of closure.

Black feminist scholars also suggest that the spatial figurings of Canada's borders are enacted as a form of domination erected through and against the exclusions of Black female bodies (Burman 2007; Maynard 2017; McKittrick 2006; Ritchie 2017). The trickery of the Black female migrant (or, migrant to-be) is posited in the dangerous site of her reproductive capacities. By strategically giving birth to yet another Black child, the "passport baby" (Browne 2002), this migrant woman is accused of anchoring herself within a nation to which she otherwise has no valid claim (Burman 2007, 186; Maynard 2017, 180). Here is, the "too many" of the Black body (Maynard 159). Here is, the "excessive fertility" (Maynard 181) of the over-producing, forever licentious Black women. And here is, the threatening and deceitful procreation of more unwanted Blackness (181; Ritchie 2017, 168) that corrodes the value of citizenship as it is regrettably awarded to the Canadian infants of sneaky alien mothers. As part of their racial-sexual dominations, Black women in Canada are at once knowable as sites of "exploitation, exploration, and conquest" (McKittrick 2006, xiv) and also threatening for their unknown or "not-yet-known" insides. The duplicitous fetus lies in wait in the over-reproducing Black womb or otherwise, contraband is transported in the "hollowed" interior of a "non-reproducing body" — the "drug mule" (Burman 2007, 186). Thus, in the poignant words of critical theorist Jenny Burman (2007), the migrant, mobile Black female body is taken to be "[a] body that can hide, conceal, deceive — as it moves into and out of our national space" (186).

In these derisive renderings of the Black body as parasitic, deceptive, trespassing, inhabitable and pained the seemingly relentless badness and alienation of the Black subject-object, ar-

guably, not only pointedly brings into question their national belongings but challenges their place within a recognizable humanity. In Saidiya Hartman's influential text *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) she explains that the enslaved African, in a slave trading U.S., held a paradoxical position in relation to personhood. That is, the enslaved could be "subjects" (with will and reason) through their capacity to commit criminal acts; "victims" of legally unpunishable levels of corporal violence; and also, "objects" as property and flesh (Hartman 1997, 21). From within this paradox, pain is inflicted as a form of punishment against the Black "subject" even as the Black "object" is presumed to be immune to pain's sensation. What is "humanly intolerable" can be therefore be made "socially tolerable" (97) while, by negation, the enslaved object confirms the existence, liberty and individuality of the white bourgeoisie subject. Extending Hartman's analyses to consider the subject-object status of Black persons in post-slavery Canada and Sweden we can surmise that the criminality of Black border-crossings, Black wombs, and the danger of national-racial impurity, all allow for a Black subjectivity that is defined by that which threatens to cause harm. The Black subject is the willful perpetrator of violence. In this regard, they can be violated without impunity (Mbembe 2003; McKittrick 2014) for the sake of safeguarding the white liberal, once "bourgeoise," subject in a manner that shifts the Black subject into the object whereby, the flesh can be tortured without feeling. It is then from the site of the body that Black persons would be evacuated from the realm of humanity. Further, it is because of the injury they *could* will against the white national subject that renders Blackness open to inhuman forms of pain, as retribution or deterrent. Because this pain is unbearable to the recognizable human subject the Black self would be evacuated from their humanity.

Within the context of Canada and Sweden we must then ask: What are the forms of (corporeal, psychic, social) punishment wielded against the Black subject that dislodges them from a shared humanity? And, for what crimes, injuries or threats against the nation or authentic national subject? Moreover, in what ways is humanness collapsable into the category of national citizen? What does it mean to feel one's erasure from the realm of the human when the pain inflicted against one's body is immediately deniable since it exists outside of the space of the socially or physically possible? How might this relate to the simultaneous presence and denial of racism in either nation — whereby the pain of racism is rejected even as racist exclusion is a penalty for an “inherent” Black criminality and deception? Notably, because the Black subject-object is necessary to affirm the liberal white subjects of Canada and Sweden an expulsion from a recognizably shared humanity would not necessarily mean to also be banished from existence. Instead, there would need to be *some kind of life* for the negation to complete or to be constantly regenerated. Securing the “safety” and “survival” of the authentic citizen might not then entail the “biophysical elimination” (Foucault 2003, *in Mbembe 2009*) of the threatening Other into the *shadowed* space of a *dissolved humanity* (Mbembe 2003, 21-22). Rather, Blackness is perhaps functionally relocated into a different kind of humanity. That is, a type of humanity that can be victimized, again, in a manner that makes the “flood” of Black refugees and Third World peoples into the reluctant arms of the progressive nations comprehensible. Even here, as victim, the Black body would thus remain a signifier of the “unsurviving, the swallowed up,” the “difficult and too much to bear” (McKittrick 2014, 17). Not sentient beings that must be embraced as members of the “sanctified universe” shared by the fully human Swede or Canadian within “the universe of moral obligation” (Wynter 1992 ); but, as the “naturally... violated” (McKittrick 2014, 17) vic-

tim — who also has the capacity to victimize — and whose desperation for national entry endlessly affirms either country's goodness.

### **Islamophobia and the Muslim Nightmare**

The eviction of Black persons from the realm of a recognizably shared national membership and thus, humanity (Thobani 2007) is a kind of dissidence that similarly enwraps the highly visible bodies of Muslims. As David Theo Goldberg (2009) attests, the fear and suspicion of Blackness has historically “book-ended” the aversion to Muslims (163). However, as Deepa Kumar (2012) seeks to make clear hostile approaches to Muslims or fearsome imaginings of Islam within the European imagination in particular, have been neither consistent in their motive nor always necessary to uphold. For instance, Muslims merely counted as one pagan “enemy among many” that uniformly threatened the “Christendom” of Europe from the eight to the eleventh centuries (11, 13). Only in the late eleventh century did Muslims become distinguishable as a precise danger amidst the economic and “territorial ambitions” of European rulers (13, 14). Hereby “Islam became a convenient ‘other’” as part of galvanizing support for such aspirations (14). The “Muslim enemy” (14) thus emerged with Spanish-Christian leaders’ desires to re-claim the Iberian Peninsula (i.e., “Spain, Portugal, and parts of southern France” [11]) from Muslim dominion. Correspondingly, Muslims came to be depicted as “the ‘enemies of God’” with the initiation of the Crusades in 1095 that employed religion as a vehicle to “[m]obilize the population for a holy war” (15) as the emperor of the Christian Byzantine Empire and Pope Urban II collaborated to defeat the “Muslim Seljuq Turks” and institute Latin rule in the Middle East (14). Hence, the im-

age of Islam and Muslims that persisted during this time emphasized the “demonic” and heretic nature of the faith and the paganism and violence of the Prophet Muhammad (15-16).

With the emergence of forms of European nationalism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the corresponding collapse of projects for a “united Christian Europe,” the need to retain Islam and Muslims as the “external enemy” became less important as Christians began to divide amongst themselves according to their identification with a specific European nation (17). In this period antagonistic perceptions of Islam gave way to what Kumar describes as general “indifference” and a tolerance of Muslims (17). The rise of the Ottoman Empire and its conquest of Constantinople<sup>17</sup> and parts of Europe however, was met with conflicting views in the sixteenth century of “the new Muslim enemy” (18). On the one hand Turks were considered to be “ethnically European” by some and admirable for the “efficiency,” “grandeur” and virtue of the Ottoman Empire (18-20). Alternately, earlier impressions of Muslims lingered through popular constructions of Ottoman Turks as “cruel and violent” (19) and Islam itself as a “constant danger” to Europe (Said 1979, 59). With the decline of the empire (and its military might) in the seventeenth century and the rise of a sense of European superiority — with the re-writing of European history and lineage by intellectuals around the time of the Renaissance — the Ottomans were reduced to the *despotic* (Kumar 2012, 20), even as Islam retained much of its image as a “dangerous forc[e]” (Said 1979, 60). As of the eighteenth century the “Muslim world” was variably understood as “exotic” (21) or unremarkable (22), until the ambitions of modern European colonialism and Orientalism required notions of Muslims that would legitimate the aims of conquest (23; see Chapter 2). Such historical legacies would have inevitably shaped perceptions of

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<sup>17</sup> Modern day Istanbul

Islam and Muslims as familiar dangers within the European country of Sweden and the settler-colonial nation of Canada as conveyed through the imaginaries of British and French settlers

Within a contemporary Canadian context, inconsistently kept records of a Muslim presence (Hamdon 2010, 10; Malak 2008, 80; Mendes 2011, 11, 13) mark the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the earliest arrivals in the form of Syrian and Lebanese male traders (Hoodfar 2005, 136; Husaini 1990, 99; Mendes 2011, 12) as well as Turkish and Arab unskilled labourers and peddlers (Abu-Laban 1981, 99; Mendes 2011, 12). With the incomplete lifting of restrictions against non-Western migration in the 1960s, significant numbers of Muslims were able to enter the country, with the largest wave arriving from South East Asia and East Africa in the 1970s (Azmi 1997, 154; Hamdani 1984, 8; Mendes 2011, 12). Yet, even as the precise number of Muslims in Canada (that considers consecutive generations) remains unspecified due to irregularly kept consensus figures (Hamdon 2010, 10), scholars writing on this inexact but irrefutably diverse population (Dossa 2009, 15; Hamdon 2010, 10; Hoodfar 2003, 75; Mendes 2011, 13) agree that the violent events of 9/11 unequivocally mark the entrance of Muslims into the nightmares of the national imagination (see Mamdani 2005; Moghissi 2009; Riley 2009; Zine 2012).

Visceral lessons from the “moral panic” (Razack 2007b, 7) centring on the 2003-2004 Shari’a debate reveals that Muslims and Muslim communities wield “conservative and patriarchal forces” that persists within: non-modern or pre-modern, un-enlightened, tribal, and religious frameworks that demand the collaborative interventions of Canadian feminists and a disciplining governmentality (Razack 2007b, 3, 6, 9-10). Vomiting from within this savagery is the certainty that, in the words of Sherene Razack, “Islam and Muslim men are intrinsically threatening... antithesis[es] of Western civilization... to be watched and regulated” (18). Muslim populations

trigger the “social anxieties” (7) of a once British imperial legacy’s desolation into “a barbaric multicultural present” (8-9). Contaminating (11); terrorist; culturalist; Islamist; “unassimilable immigrants”; feudal (25); misogynist; in need of “cultural rehabilitation” into Canadian social norms and values (Zine 2012, 44); of “illiberal culture” and “illiberal clothing” (Zine 2012, 12, 48); “undesirable citizens” (18); lurking; haunting (Zine 2012); expellable (Syed 2012); saveable (Jiwani 2009; Razack 2004); those amidst whom the Québec ban on “conspicuous religious symbols” becomes necessary (Mathelet 2015, 36); “fanatical, scary and a threat” (Riley 2009, 58); and alternately, nationally disloyal or exceptionally patriotic (Riley 63).

Accordingly, Muslims in Canada are the terrorist plotting to bomb the CN Tower and the Canadian security services headquarters in the way of the 2006 *Toronto-18* (Razack 2007a, 3), whose destructive desires (though thwarted) confirm the failure of these Others to properly adopt Canadian values (Zine 2012). It is against these “bad Muslims” that the government powers of surveillance, restraint, the suspension of civil rights, and physical and/or social annihilation can be justifiably wielded in states of injury and/or “exception” (Razack 2007b, 6; see also Agamben 1999, Mbembe 2003). That is, to protect against these “enem[ies] within” (Zine 2012, 1) that: menace the peacekeeping principles of the nation, seek to harm or replace “‘real’ or ‘ordinary Canadians’” (Riley 59) and, not least of all, “imperil” Muslim women (Razack 2007b, 2005, 2004). In contrast to such banishable badness — which is often imagined to either be met at the border or to have already succeeded in its infiltration — are the “good Muslims” (see Hage 1998; Kassam 2015; Riley 2009; Mamdani 2002; Syed 2012). “Good Muslims” are not quite yet (or, ever) the dominant “us” but, remain definable as those investing in the effort of assimilation and acculturation. These are the willfully rehabilitating Muslims who “explicitly and visibly” exhibit

their Canadian patriotism (Arat-Koç, 2005, 43 in Riley 2009, 63). As such, they participate in the modern liberation of Muslim women and war against “bad Muslims,” from whom “good Muslims” are also vulnerable to revengeful, fanatical injury (Jiwani 2009; Kassam 2015, 622; Riley 58).

Not dissimilarly in Sweden, 9/11 marked a stark shift in the conceptualization of an Islamic and Muslim presence (Listerborn 2015; Sander 2006). Notably, the Swedish government does not keep records on residents’ religious affiliation<sup>18</sup> so that estimates of a Muslim population (those affiliated with the religion or migrated from “Muslim countries”) must come from the approximations of the Islamic Centre (250,000-300,000), the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities (110, 000) (Listerborn 101); and scholarly studies (e.g. the post-9/11 “MusPol project”: 300,000-350,000) (Pred 2000, 813). As Carina Listerborn (2015) explains, from 1975 to 1990 the understanding of Muslims within the Swedish nation largely focused on the practicalities of religious accommodation<sup>19</sup> (101). Muslims did indeed enter political debate as a foreign “problem” in the 80s and 90s with the arrival of Bosnian-Muslim asylum seekers fleeing war and later, ethnic-cleansing in the former Yugoslavia (Listerborn 101; see also Pred 2000, 51); while the 90s saw a burgeoning anxiety over the “extremism and anti-Semitism” emitting from Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East (Listerborn 101). With 9/11, however, Muslims in Sweden shifted from the category of Muslim “foreigner” to that of the Muslim threat. Here, the “figure” of the Muslim in the Swedish imagination was readily implicated in the

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<sup>18</sup> Nor is a consensus kept on race or ethnicity. Rather, as Listerborn (2015) relays, the Swedish government records the number of persons who have a “foreign background,” which means those who were either “born abroad themselves or [are] people who are born in Sweden but with both parents born abroad” (100).

<sup>19</sup> i.e., availability of halal meat and religious education

attacks in the U.S. (Sander 2006, 812). Further, with the more proximal mass slaughter of 22/7 in Oslo, Norway in 2011 Swedish Muslims were rendered as open to retributive attack in public space and political discourse, before it was confirmed that the attack was carried out not by “Al-Qaeda allies” or Muslim immigrants but by a white, anti-Muslim, anti-feminist, right-wing extremist (Gardell 2014, 130). In this way, the identifiably Muslim body — as a violent subject-object — can be, and is, subjected to violence as a penance doled out by the vulnerable “ethnic” Swede who is both pained and made ever more vulnerable to injury by the harm done to neighbouring Scandinavian or allied North American nations. Injury is felt across borders.

The political platform of the anti-immigrant party the SD is one that accommodates a changing object of racist derision (Mulinari & Neergaard 2014). “Shifting” from Jews, to Black persons the present call to expel the migrant from Sweden, by the SD, is most centrally fixated on Muslims (Mulinari & Neergaard 2014, 49; Mulinari & Neergaard 2012, 68; see also Gardell 2010, Fekete 2009). While the presence of a generalized “migrant” (or, those of “foreign background”) are consistently expellable for their mass inclination towards “cheating” and “misusing” the resources of the Swedish welfare state, Muslims occupy a particularized category of “burden” and cultural corrosion (Mulinari & Neergaard 2014, 49). According to Åkesson, the current leader of the SD, Muslims and Islam embody Sweden’s “biggest foreign threat since World War II” (48). In the shadow of this imminent Islamic crisis are thus the non-assimilating demands a Muslim population is soon to unleash on a swindled Sweden. Without a “reversal” (presumably of Muslim migration) led by the SD these demands will appear in the dreaded form of Shari’a law, female circumcision, sexual violence (more rape by Muslim rapist), gender divided swimming schedules and swimming education, patriarchy, gender inequality, and

unrestrained “collectivistic cultures” (48). In extension of a “caring racism” that seeks exclusion and repatriation for the “sake” of the migrant, members of the SD also express concern for the second generation of “young Swedish Muslims born and raised in Sweden” (Mulinari & Neergaard 2012, 78). As the SD activists argue, Muslim youth encounter difficulties in Swedish society primarily because of their disconnection and “uprooting” from “their ‘authentic’ culture and cultural home,” which only affirms the need to compassionately eject Muslims from Sweden and bar their future immigration (78).

Yet, as Mulinari and Neergaard (2012) stress, anti-Muslim racism within Sweden is not exceptional to the campaigns of the SD. Rather, the rhetoric of a Muslim threat to “security, gender equality, and freedom of speech” (67) that must be “controlled, feared and preferably expelled” (69), comfortably operate as normalized sentiments in political debate (including by the Liberal party), mainstream media, and institutional processes (68-70). Hence, as Islamic studies scholar Mattias Gardell (2014) relays, Muslims, regardless of place of birth, remain unrelentingly exterior to what it means to be a Swede (133). Following the thread of Islamophobic discourses within a Swedish context, any Muslim who might appear as “likeable” and “good-hearted” — thus, feasibly fitting the characteristics of Canada’s “good Muslim” — does so for evil aims (133) that are directed against the Westerners they can never be.

In *Threat of Race* (2009) Goldberg engages with the metamorphosis of Muslims within the European imagination, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Transforming from the immaturity of the “ordinarily strange” in the nineteenth century, Goldberg explains that the twentieth century saw the appearance of the seemingly abstracted, sometimes disembodied “figure” of the Muslim (165). Thus “the Muslim” once more emerges as an enemy (see Kumar

2012), appearing now as contemporary Europe's living nightmare (Goldberg 2009, 165). That is, those who mark death's approach: the death of values and the lack of value for life (167). Not the living dead, but those who cause death. If, as Benedict Anderson (2006) influentially proposes, the imagined community of nations is reinforced through a sense of calendrical, clocked activities, I speculate that this dread of the death-causing Muslim nightmare possibly appears as a simultaneously held fear (thus, the affective "act" of fearing or being fearful) that allows for the construction of a normative Canadian and Swedish community. Even as Canadians or Swedes will never meet most of their fellow citizens they can, arguably, be confident that these other faceless members also and simultaneously fear the "figure" of the Muslim as nightmare. Facing a "family of white nations" is then the compulsion to use lethal force against "a menacing [Muslim] cultural Other" (Razack 2007a, 5), which in turn becomes a justifiable execution against (and, of) they who seek the destruction of those they haunt. As such, Western nations such as Sweden and Canada<sup>20</sup> can allow that as humanitarian and rights-protecting countries they are not prone to violence but, must wield it against those who are inherently violent.

It is then the threat of the "figure" or, the "idea" of the Muslim that propels the disciplining action against a Muslim population, within or outside national borders. Yet, the aliveness of these "living," proximal Muslims also comes into question. As those who pose a threat to the "human life" within the West and can in turn be civilized to death, they are considered to be "not of the human itself" (Butler 2009, 131). Interestingly, however, the dead and/or vulnerable body of the "oppressed Muslim woman" is analyzed in post-colonial theory as an extinguished life that can be recognized as (or, approaching) the human and thus be mourned as such by the Islamo-

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<sup>20</sup> both of which participated in the US led war in Afghanistan

phobic and fearful nation (see Razack 2007b, 4). We can then ask: How does the vulnerability of “the Muslim woman” mean to access a form of humanity that allows her life to be mourned as “grievable” (Butler 2009, 14-15)? How might the humanity of the grieving white subject be confirmed on the altar of “the Muslim woman’s” deadened body? Alternatively, how does the still living “veiled Muslim woman’s” body function as part of the Muslim nightmare, that “visual[ly] assault[s]” (Bowen 2007, 187) the liberal sensibilities and “freedom of consciousness” (Mathelet 2015, 35) of the witnessing Western subject? Or, signifies the looming threat that must be averted through a “code of conduct” (e.g. Hérouxville, Quebec [see Mathelet 2015; McAndrew & Bakhshaei 2012; Zine 2012]) and other civilizing forces? Furthermore, what shape does fear or mourning take when the “veiled Muslim woman” is Black and thus, is also situated through the terror of Black women’s fertility?

### **Objects of Fear and the Futurity of Injury**

Commenting on our contemporary era of defensively inverting liberal democracies, Achille Mbembe (2016) describes Western state efforts to both ascertain and maintain the demarcation between “its own citizens — those who are seen to belong — and the rest” (23). As part of a *discourse of national survival* there is thus the perpetual “struggle against an enemy” (23); inciting “colossal process[es] of inversion” (23) as well as “heightening and reproducing the affect of fear” (27). Critical to the feat of warding against the approach of the non-citizen is, according to Mbembe, an unrelenting sense of alert (27), as liberal democracies and their citizens must be ever vigilant in the patrol for the “ubiquitous yet obscure figure” of today’s enemy, who has the omnipresent power to be “everywhere” (26). An impending state of siege is then what must be

protected against through the constant vanguard of the security state and the readied fear and anxiety of the normative subject who could be dispossessed by those who seek to take their place. Here is the “apparition” of an enemy, without a face unless it is veiled (26); without a place, unless it is advancing towards “us”; and, without a name, unless it is that of the “Negro[e], Ara[b], Musli[m] and never far away, Je[w]” (32). Such enemies, in the way of the most wretched colonized subjects, seek to supplant the powers of the liberal democracy (“their masters”) and soil the nation, decomposing it into “an immense dump, Muhammad’s dump” (32). “Permanent threat” requires “permanent alert” and existence becomes “a series of ‘small traumas’” (27).

In this state of permanent, imminent threat the danger of enemy infiltration and the junking of the nation (that is, as a mass junkyard, re-filled with junk people or, “garbage humans” [Balibar 2004, 141]) is always the horror on the horizon. Not that which has already arrived or taken place, but as what exists infinitely in the could-be. Sara Ahmed’s work on fear in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014a) becomes useful here for understanding the operations of anticipated injury. Specifically, Ahmed argues that there is a “temporal dimension” to the way fear relates to the object whereby, the feeling of fear is an intensity that is bound up with the approach (65). The approach of that dangerous something or someone that is, can, or is in the process of coming near. In this way, the fright experienced in a present is for the harm of a future. Hence, in Ahmed’s words, “[f]ear involves an *anticipation* of hurt or injury” (65). Yet, even as the body “shrinks back” from its dangerous openness to the world in order to avoid the pain to be one-day caused by “the object of fear” (69), Ahmed explains that there is not then the wish, by the fearing subject, for the object of fear to “pass by” since it is in this passing that “fear can no longer be contained” (65). As such, the nation or liberal democracy that secures its borders and

citizenry against the impending injury inflicted by an illusive enemy would also seek to maintain the imminence of the threat, massaging the sense crisis (Goldberg 2009), so that the object of fear — in the form of Black and Muslim persons — does not become absented in its capacity to terrorize in a futurity.

As a complement to Ahmed, Brian Massumi's (2010) analysis of fear and threat also suggests that the affective feeling of fear is the "actual mode of existence" of threat (54). Whether the danger that is anticipated to strike in the future does indeed materialize does not, according to Massumi, determine its realness (53). Rather, the feeling of fear that is linked to the possibility of threat *is* what makes the danger a reality and allows the potentiality of danger to exist in a forever (53-54). Extending Massumi and Ahmed's analyses to what we know of the sense of vulnerability to injury that plague Sweden and Canada, we can then conjecture that the barbarous, misogynist, or aggressively veiling Muslim as well as the inherently violent, suspiciously fertile Black subject-object are always coming near; that is, endlessly approaching with the sneaky intention to deplete and "junkify" either nation. Incautious policies of immigration and asylum may be what renders each country open to the world as a dangerous outside finds its way in. Riffing-off Ahmed, I propose that to be fearful of Black and Muslim persons as "object[s] of fear" is then what confirms and immortalizes the cultural threat and necessitates the "shrinking" of the bodies of the normative subject away from those who will eventually cause them pain, and already do so by inciting the unpleasant experience of being fearful. From here, however, I must ask: What are the specific, contextual threats posed by the loss of Black and Muslim selves as consistent figures of fear? What forms of danger arise through the compounded figure of the

Black Muslim woman? How would these enemy subject-objects “pass by” and what would be displaced within the Swedish and Canadian national imaginaries through this movement?

Notably, Mbembe’s (2016) theorizing on the national securitization against the omniscient enemy seems to suggest that the faceless danger nearly in our midst is posed by the non-citizen thus, necessitating the vanguard of the citizen and government (see also Massumi 2010). In turn, Sunera Thobani’s important text *Exalted Subjects* (2007) explores the ways the stranger “who threaten[s] their [normative white subject] collective welfare and prosperity” (4) can possess the certificates of Canadian citizenship, in particular, and still figure as the menacing outsider. In this way, as suggested earlier, fear can be understood to be incited not only by the dangerous subject-objects that have not yet arrived but, is also stimulated by those who have already been awarded entry. Hence, although official membership has been benevolently (though heedlessly) granted, the racial Other — “within the nation’s psychosocial and physical space” (76) — remains a figure of deceit and cultural incompatibility. For these figures the futurity of fear is arguably reflected in the extent of their corrosive possibility: what sort of danger, drain, and non-liberal pollution they *will* unleash on the vulnerable populace now that they have gained admittance. And, in both their freakish capacity to reproduce and manipulate the immigration system (e.g. via family reunification policies) the threat of arrival is not nullified. There are always more Black and Muslim bodies. Approaching. Seeking to take-over. Threatening to junk the nation.

Key to her analysis Thobani puts forth the argument that in contrast to the outsider/stranger (4), the (white) national becomes sanctified as the “exalted” (5). Specifically, by “embod[ying] characteristics of the nation” (5) (i.e., compassion, lawfulness, tolerance, gender equality [5, 107]) the *exalted subject* occupies a “particular kind of [humanity]” (5). Following

this reasoning, Black and Muslims therefore do not merely signify an adjunct and menacing citizenry but represent “ontologica[l] and existentia[l]” difference (5). These “figure[s] of concern” (4) are then culturally *and* ontologically, not alike to a dominant “us.” Yet, even as the affective force of fear ejects all racial Others from the category of existence reserved for the “exalted” white national *and* locates dangerous Black and Muslim subject-objects as antithetical to national belonging, these forms of expulsion cannot be complete.

Turning again to Ahmed, we learn that what is imperative to the British normative national ideal is the “multicultural” conscription that the white nation “love[s] difference” (Ahmed 2014, 133). The national imaginary, of an idealized tolerance, can thus be confirmed in its benevolence through this necessary investment in “multicultural love” (128, 133). Hereby, the outsider who seeks welcome is both encouraged to maintain a yearning for entry and is extended the promise of being one-day enclosed in the love of the nation, from within the nation. This love, however, only follows once the foreigner has demonstrated their own obligatorily loving capacity to contribute to the national ideal by learning to be(come) like the dominant “us” (128). Notably, Bannerji (2000) proposes that discourses of assimilation within a Canadian multicultural framework control “immigrant” populations through “a constantly deferred promise” of belonging (9). Harder & Zhyznomirska (2012) relatedly contend that “love of country” is conceivably one of the obligations undertaken by those vying for Canadian citizenship (297).<sup>21</sup> While in Sweden, as has already been conveyed, both the humanitarian acceptance of Third World bodies and the call for their repatriation are illustrations of a Swedish capacity for “care,” if not love (see Mulinari & Neergaard 2014). If we can thus extend Ahmed’s localized example of multicult-

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<sup>21</sup> Of course, the “they” in this instance refers to the “lost” and “found” (white) “Canadians” of the 2007 *Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative* controversy (Harder & Zhyznomirska 2012, 293).

tural love to consider the particular ways it might operate within Sweden and Canada we then find a cultural-political oscillation between embrace and expulsion. A rhetorical tension arises within the revered presumption of inherently unassimilable Muslim and Black subject-objects. Specifically, these forever threatening alien Others are at once urged to become alike to the exalted subject and offered a loving acceptance that is said to be tolerant of that which “we” at once or, otherwise flee. Such a paradox becomes even more evident when this Other is a Black Muslim woman since she simultaneously embodies the cues for the unassimilable and assimilable subject as well as the duality of the victim and the aggressor. If Muslim and Black persons in general, and Black Muslim women in particular are they who could-be or should-be like a dominant “me” and are generously coached (in presumably different ways) to strive towards this kind of transformation, we must then ask: What happens to fear?

For the contemporary subject of the neo-colonial liberal state Mbembe (2016) explains that, to be without the enemy would then also mean to be without “the kind of relation of hatred that would authorize the free exercise of many otherwise forbidden desires” (26). It is then through the movements of a sadomasochistic desire (23) that this enemy is invented, insularly protected against, or captured as “the disturbing object” within a “hallucinatory zone” (23). Within Canada and Sweden the “hallucinatory zone” of a threat-seeking desire would be phantasmically occupied, as I have proposed, by an innately violent Blackness (McKittrick 2006) as well as the inherently terrorizing, “anti-citize[n]” Muslim (Zine 2012, 7). The “forbidden desires” of these anti-racist countries would then be indulged through the expelling of these alien outsiders for the security of the imminently victimized nation. Thus, satisfying a wish for homogeneity that an idealized benevolence and multicultural love would not explicitly allow for

(Hübinette & Lundström 2014; Maynard 2017; Zine 2012). Yet, this banishment must not be absolute. Instead the “object of fear” must remain captured so that the whiteness and “apartness” (Ahmed 2014, 63) of the normative subject can be continually renewed and re-affirmed. There must therefore be the constant proximity of the fearsome Black and Muslim enemy; even as this fear marries with the imperial desires of possession and conquer through the presence of the “veiled Muslim women” and Black Muslim women. The dilemma facing a national imaginary thus becomes a question of how to at once, keep those we fear near-by, preserve the ideals of racial acceptance, and refuse a non-white cultural citizenship.

## **Conclusion**

What we can gather from the fearsomeness that enwraps the bodies of Black and Muslim subjects is the affirmation that Canada and Sweden both possess the capacity to accept racial Others and are ideologically dedicated to doing so. Thus, as either national imaginary would have it, fault is not to be found in the execution of tolerance or multiculturalism but in the barbarism of those who continue to come close and threaten injury. Blackness cannot be integrated into the social welfare nation because it will wreak havoc upon it. Black persons are not only incorrigibly criminal but already evacuated from human recognition; while Black women in particular reveal the parasitic nature of a disposable Blackness through their reckless reproductivity. Muslims are culturally ill-suited to these progressive welfare nations and thus will terrorize a liberal, secular citizenry with the illiberal and violent spectacle of their savage ways. The bodies of “the veiled Muslim woman” already signify the nightmare of this cultural danger. The underlying logic in

racist discourses such as these is that Canada and Sweden are willing and able to receive difference yet, Black and Muslim subjects are simply too contrary and too dangerous to accept.

What remains less clear, however, is why the imaginaries of these two countries bother with these assertions of racial plurality and tolerance when the utmost desire is for racial homogeneity. There must be more to this preoccupation than the self-conscious compulsion to liberalize amidst the grievances of post-colonial subjects, as referenced earlier in this chapter. What I speculate here and throughout this dissertation is this: white goodness makes way for white vulnerabilities. If white subjects can be affirmed through the fear of Blackness and Muslims that they rightfully belong to Canada or Sweden, then there must be something to ensure that the fearsome will continue their terrifying approach. The edicts of multiculturalism and tolerance produce this very *something*. Hence, as Black and Muslim subjects strive for the national belongings implicitly promised through ideals of acceptance this seemingly appropriate yearning becomes an encroachment with the design to plunder the nation. As the forces of governmentality secure against the racial, social, and fiscal erosion posed by these threatening Others, the white subject as well as the whiteness of each country is also secured. In the chapters that follow I continue to explore how fear of Blackness and Muslims operates in the service of white nation-making in Canada and Sweden. As part of contemplating the ways national (non)belongings are bound up with notions of vulnerability and human recognition, I also consider the politics of assimilation and mourning. In this regard, the positionalities of (Middle Eastern) Muslim women and Black Muslim women as uniquely unassimilable or assimilable subjects is central for understanding how human belongings can be contingent upon national belongings, so that access to the latter becomes a mortal matter.

## **Chapter Two:**

### ***Grief, Mourning, and Possession: Exploring the Assimilatory Potential of Muslim Women***

How do the feelings of fear, loss, horror and grief operate in the service of white nation-making, particularly as part of insulating against the presumptive non-integrability of “the veiled Muslim woman” and the fatal injury imagined to be incited by a Muslim presence? How might these *bad feelings* (Ahmed 2014) become welcome, not only for reinforcing a sense of racial-national collectivity but, also for regulating the affective permitters that distinguish between assimilable and unassimilable, grievable and ungrievable and thus “good” and bad,” Muslims (Butler 2009; Mamdani 2002)? Most specifically, in what ways might the mortally maimed bodies of the properly, assimilating, Muslim woman — “honour-killed” in the process of realizing her goodness — work to generate a form of public mourning that replenishes white solidarities within Canada and Sweden, as two self-asserted liberal Northern welfare nations?

That is, whereby Canadian and Swedish national imaginaries would comparably rely upon the spectacularized, brutal deaths of some Muslim women as part of, instrumentalizing forms of violence (i.e. endured by these Muslim women and, waged against “violent” Muslim populations [Razack 2007a; 2007b; Hellgreen & Hobson 2008]); fortifying white authentic belongings through a sense of threat (Mulinari & Neergaard 2012; Thobani 2007), while also retaining ideals of liberal goodness and the capacity to accept difference (Bannerji 2000; Hübinette & Lundström 2011; Nordin 2005)? Drawing these queries together, what I hypothesize here and throughout this chapter is that, the assimilating Muslim woman’s death is of greater cultural and political value than the witnessable acts of national acculturation she obediently preforms in life. Always and necessarily slaughtered by the near-fabled Muslim Father or Muslim family (within

the boundaries of the liberal nation and within the purview of its aghast, authentic subjects), her mangled corpse reveals its utmost utility in the ways a national whiteness can consolidate around feelings of horror and grief in her wake, through a collective performance of mourning. Hereby loss of life appears as critical to the mechanics of (neo-imperial) possession: gaining infinite dominion over the body of the Muslim woman that is exposed, as a corpse, upon the altar of the white nation; and also, retaining fear of a murderous Muslim threat which in turn, defensively reinforces the normative boundaries of the nation and its subjects.

In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009) Judith Butler reflects deeply upon the frames meant to organize recognizable humanity and apprehensible life in the midst of contemporary war and the surges of nationalism (5, 42). Butler suggests that those who threaten (my) life and thus are deemed to not be “lives” in themselves are the destructible, killable, or already killed “threat to [fully human] life” (42). Accordingly, the “affective responses” (39) of “horror or outrage” (42) that would follow the loss of lives “recognizably like me” (39) — in nationality or religion — would not be felt with the “same” register of emotion when the lives lost are incompletely human. Grief cannot be a mirrored upset when the dead are the figures that “figure[d] the threat to life” and were only questionably alive (25). Here is death with a dulled outrage. Here is the loss of the already destructible. Butler in effect suggest that Muslims have been precisely rendered as these uncertainly human lives amidst our current age of war (125). Muslim lives, according to Butler, are deemed to be, “less than human,” “not quite human” (42) or, as those not recognizable as being “of the human itself” (125). From here we can conjecture that the death of the threatening, non-human Muslim would not be felt as a loss that hurts since with this death there is the reassuring end to the self that seeks the demise of the fully human and wholly

grievable community of belonging. Taking my theoretical lead from Butler, what I contemplate here are both the affective conditions that sanction the non-grievability of Muslims as well as those contingencies that appear to allow such persons to otherwise be retrievable as lives— that is, situated amongst the living and thus grieved when extinguished. Thus, I am questioning how the “not quite human” or non-human Muslim make their way into the grievability reserved for recognizably human lives. What national benefit would there be in opening up mourning to those who usefully signify the threat of death, particularly when this opening up hinges on the witnessable assimilation and brutalization of Muslim women?

At the centre of my interests is how Muslim women, in particular, are denied grievability but then, can alternately be rendered as subjects for whom this ontological and social metamorphosis appears as a potentiality, as women affectively shift from being figures of a threatening unlikeness into the grievability of the “recognizabl[y] like me” (Butler 36). Accordingly, this chapter moves through analyses of the badness, danger, deception and hostility assigned to the bodies of “veiled Muslim women” in colonial pasts and presents, to the forms of goodness, “rescue-ability” (Jiwani 2009, 736) and voyeuristic pleasures accredited to physically and symbolically “un-veiled” Muslim women. Proposing that the former are figured as unassimilable/un-grievable and the latter are read as potentially assimilable/grievable, this chapter examines “honour-killing” cases in Canada and Sweden, taken-up by scholars and media alike, to more empirically think through how the mournful death of the assimilating woman is utilized for the sake of white national solidarities. Again, but put differently, I ask: How does the death of the rescueable, assimilating, un-veiled Muslim woman become a useful and desirable loss of life? Does her entrance into a recognizable sameness and humanity accommodate and perhaps, anticipate, the

grief of her destruction? What I venture is that the death of the assimilating Muslim woman — killed with a violence that reinforces the supposed barbarism of unassimilable Muslims and Islam more generally — is used to incite a form of mourning that is immediately of service to the forces of nation-making and governmentality within either Northern welfare state. As such, she would be “saveable” in the neo-imperial, Orientalist sense of cultural assimilation into the mores of a progressive politic — here being, Canadian and Swedish liberal values. Nonetheless, she is necessarily not a life worth saving from death. The unhappiness of a public grief over her deadened body serves a happy purpose.

### **The Badness of “Veiled Muslim Women”**

Mahmood Mamdani (2002) argues that, incited by the violent events of 9/11 there is political motive for Western powers to be able to readily recognize and quarantine an evil Islam by differentiating “between good Muslims and bad Muslims” (767). Correspondingly, mariame cooke (2002) and Yasmin Jiwani (2009) suggests that “the veiled Muslim woman” is vested with the possibility for goodness and thus, with the potential to be a “good Muslim.” With this potential we are to understand that she is not “good” in and for herself but rather, can be *made* good through her openness to the neo-imperial gesture of saving and thus through her demonstrable worthiness to receive as well as benefit from the act of rescue (cooke 2002; Jiwani 2009) — confirming, what Jiwani terms, her “rescue-ability” (736). Paramount to the perceptibility of her “rescue-ability” and possible goodness are witnessable gestures of cultural integration whereby she aspires to belong to the whiteness of the nation as object of possession and as a subject

counted amongst an “exalted” citizenry (see Thobani 2007).<sup>22</sup> Becoming “more ours” (Cooke 2002, 469); becoming “more like us” (Jiwani 2009, 736); and thus, desiring to be “like us” (Kassam 2011, 560). As I am proposing, the violently extinguished life of the Muslim woman offers some of the most steadfast proof of her labour towards a prospective goodness. In this way, a brutal death and the resulting maimed body become demonstrable testaments of national loyalty — that is, of, becoming “ours” and “like us.” The deadened self thus proffers a substantial source of what Krista Riley (2009) terms “national accumulation” (61) as women emerge as martyrs to the liberal values into which they were tenaciously assimilating at the time of their demise. The discernibly rescue-able Muslim woman therefore diligently aligns herself with a liberal ethic in a manner that not only opens her up to neo-imperial benevolences but also, to death. She is, supposedly, killed (by her unassimilable kin) for her subscription to the mores of the Western liberal democracy and yet, this type of death is critical for substantiating the veracity of this subscription for the nation that avails itself of her expiry through a unifying mourning.

If there are Muslim women who can become good there must also be those who fail to convincingly convey their receptiveness to rescue. That is, those women who will, presumptively, always be “bad Muslims” and expellable as “culturally incompatible” (Zine 2012), contaminate the nation (Razack 2007b). As part of more acutely grasping the assimilable and conjointly mournable Muslim woman I therefore begin with reflections on the badness of her unassimilable sister. Hereby we encounter “the veiled Muslim woman” for whom tears of grief are not to be shed since it is in her deceptiveness, tribal (instead of white national) loyalties, back-

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<sup>22</sup> Here again, Sunera Thobani (2007, 5, 107) describes the “exalted” as white subjects who are sanctified as nationals and who emulate those values avowed to be principle to the (Canadian) nation (e.g. tolerance, gender equality, compassion, etc.). See Chapter 1.

wards polygamous practices, and coercion of the integrating Muslim girl (Razack 2004, 2007a), amongst other evils, that her body signifies the threat of Islamic barbarity rather than the allure of mourning the lost possession. How does this badness take shape through the bodies of some Muslim woman but not through others? What is being politically disciplined (Razack 2007b), refused, or exiled in the visceral responses of revulsion, hatred, fear and so on, (see Woodhull 2003) incited by the Muslim woman who is situated outside of a human grievability and located within the danger of the questionably alive?

Julia Kristeva's classic and much cited work, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) posits that abjection (the "abject" being the "radically excluded" [2]) is that which, "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules ... is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles" (4). Paired with this catalogue of the unassimilable threat (1), Kristeva allows that one of the most basic responses to the abject is that of revulsion, gagging, vomiting, and thus the desire to expel that which defiles (2-3). Yet, in the presence of decay and refuse — that which incites nausea — a "me" is able to witness what they "permanently thrust aside in order to live" (3). I invoke Kristeva's analyses to consider the unassimilability of "bad Muslims" more generally on the way to understanding the badness attributed to Muslim women who are regarded as unassimilable. From here we can speculate that to viscerally react with revulsion or nausea at the sight or mention of the identifiably, unassimilable Muslim may be part of the border-reinforcing task of expulsion upon which techniques of white nation-making rely. To gag at the sight of "bad Muslims" of decayed, pre-modern values can be interpreted as the thrusting aside of the culturally corrosive presence that impedes on "our" way of life and on "our" livelihood (see Razack 2007b; Zine 2012). Returning once again to David

Theo Goldberg's (2009) theorization on what he calls, the "figure of 'the Muslim'," we are reminded that the twentieth century witnesses the advent of "the Muslim" as abstraction (165; see Chapter 1). As such, "the fear of death" that ignites at the approach of Muslims (into Europe) is not a form of dread that quakes at "individual Muslims" or "Muslim communities" so much as at, "*the idea* of the Muslim" (165). As a disembodied threat this figure can taunt a European imaginary as a danger that is at once elusive and yet, ever nearby. Thus, as Goldberg explicates, "the Muslim" emerges as a familiar nightmare that pledges death to liberty, life, and the values of civility (165). It is then this figure that can be read into the abject thus augmenting that which "we" already know: they are not quite lives in themselves (Butler 2009). Here is at once a defensive, instructive, and regulatory refusal of a national inside to accept what cannot belong. Or further, the nausea signifies refusal to digest they who cannot be accommodated into the otherwise liberal body of the white nation, which instead vomits up the necessarily discardable threat.

In a way, this badness (as well as the potential for goodness) has historically been signified through the bodies of Muslim women and the insistent signification of the veil. The veiled body as immediately equivalent with the Muslim female body (Zine 2006). The veil on the insistent Muslim, female body. The veiling of the body that insists on a visible difference (Bowen 2007; Trinh 1986-1987); insists on its Muslim difference. An unapologetic, demanding Otherness. Hence, even as the veil is continually aligned with Islamophobic and Orientalist tropes of Islam's supposed misogynistic savageries (see Abu-Lughod 2002; Arat-Koc 2002; cooke 2002; Fanon 1965; Jiwani 2009; Razack 2009), evidently not all "oppressed" veiled women warrant relief from their sartorial chains. Instead the unassimilable, non-saveable and disobedient woman of an unyielding Muslim veil doggedly chains herself to this symbol of decay by which she also

terrorizes the normatively white nation. In her acclaimed text “Helpless Maidens and Chivalrous Knights: Afghan Women in the Canadian Press” (2009) Yasmin Jiwani builds on Lisa McLaughlin’s (1991) supposition that “societal redemption” imposes a point of beyondness. Extending McLaughlin, Jiwani specifically contends that there is a place beyond salvageability and redemption into which “‘bad’ women” are disposed (and presumably abandoned or forgotten to their wretched fate) since their “deviance exceeds the limits of the ‘rescue-able’” (Jiwani 2009, 731). Jiwani therefore surmises that amongst the Muslim women of a veiled oppression there is, dominantly, a differentiation between what she terms, the “worthy or unworthy victims of rescue” (729). What is remarkable about this construction is that both those “worthy” and “unworthy” of rescue are conceived of as “victims.” Allowed through this formulation is, again, that the un-assimilating or, unassimilable “veiled Muslim woman” is still figured as a victim of and victimized by the implied barbarity of her religion, culture and the Muslim men who represent both. Even so, as victims “unworthy” of rescue “the veiled Muslim woman” who will not unfetter herself from the veil signifies a form of deviance that is outside the terms of cultural resuscitation and the benevolences of liberation.

As an illustration of just how one can at once be read into victimhood and yet deemed undeserving of the full protections of neo-imperial magnanimity are the more recent cases of Canadian Muslim women who seek to re-enter Canada after venturing to ISIS occupied Syria (i.e., the self-declared Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or “Daesh”). In reports coming out of mainstream Canadian (*National Post*) and U.S. (*CNN*) news media, we learn of Canadian citizens who, at the behest of husbands or boyfriends intrigued by the Islamic State, left studies or careers in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta to live within Syrian territories ruled by the ISIS

“caliphate” (*National Post February 2019*; Wedeman 2019). Central to these stories is the question of whether or not Canada can, will, or should aid the safe retrieval of these citizens who now face a possibly deadly plight as detainees in an unstable Syria amidst the throes of a collapsing caliphate (*National Post February 2019*; Wedeman 2019). What appears to be nearly as pressing as the likelihood of these Muslim women’s repatriation, however, is the absence or presence of a sense of regret. *Do they regret leaving Canada for an ISIS-run Syria?* At what is in all probability a suspended state between life and impending death — balancing on the prospect of repatriation or abandonment — it is about repentance that the reporters most wish to know. In the thinly cloaked undertone of the reportage we can thus imagine the interview questions to be more bluntly posed as: Do they harbour remorse for their decision to align with Islamic extremist and terrorists Muslim men? Are they repentant for the backwardness of their own choices and contrite for their disloyalty to a liberal-secular Canada? And then, do they deserve to be delivered from imminent death?

In the familiar discourse of the victimized Muslim woman (see Razack 2004), the interviewees do indeed speak at length of their coercion by Muslim male partners; while also attesting to an ignorance of ISIS or any armed-conflict before departing Canada as they avidly declare their own innocence and lack of criminal wrong-doing (*National Post February 2019*; Wedeman 2019). Yet, these Canadian Muslim women deny any sense of regret and will not recant their actions. Instead of renouncing a murderously illiberal Islamism (as it is dominantly perceived to be within these same media outlets), the interviewees relay their devotion to their Syrian-born children (and thus, Muslim families) and describe an undeterred support of Sharia law (*National Post February 2019*; Wedeman 2019). Furthermore, at least one of these remorseless pro-

nouncements emerge from a mouth shrouded by the niqab and from a body already disobediently held away from neo-imperial possession through the barrier of the chador or abaya.<sup>23</sup> If they are disinclined to rebuff Islamist values it is improbable that they will rebuff the Muslim veil. Although these women want to leave Syria and re-enter the Canada of their citizenship, the failure to declare an absolute rejection of that which is illiberal and atone for their illiberal choices witnesses their badness and refuses their rescue-ability. Without the articulation of regret and a renunciation of the evils that Islam and Islamists have brought upon them (as is likely anticipated) these women confirm their unassimilability through their stubborn withholding of repentance.

Interviewees do not communicate the wish that they had desired in a different way — in a more liberal way. Women’s treasonous loyalties that first brought them to Syria can be understood as an initial betrayal of the benevolence that granted them Canadian citizenship and in turn expected their integration. Now unwilling to assimilate past desires by repenting their illiberal choices women would not be assimilable within a liberal Canadian present. Here are then Muslim women who are still bad. If Canada does in fact deny their re-entry or refuse to come to their aid, we can surmise that these women are not only being deemed unworthy of rescue from the immediate danger of war but also become unworthy of saving from death. As women neglect to express remorse as a sign of their prospective goodness and deservedness of rescue, the Canadian nation can in turn refuse to entertain regret at their demise. Rather, women become at fault for their own deaths by enunciating their allegiance to barbaric practices and savage Islamists that only promise death. Accordingly, such persons are not to be counted amongst those who seek to be *like us* but are instead, those who deceptively seek to be amongst an “us” and are ever ready

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<sup>23</sup> Ben Wedeman (CNN 2019, n.p.) gives an interviewee from Toronto, Ontario — Dura Ahmed — the following description, “Her face covered by a black veil, with just a slit for her eyes.”

to plunder the goodwill of the nation while holding true to that which is repressive. Here are thus lives that “we” neither rescue from destruction nor mourn when lost since they signify the repugnance and disposability of the unassimilable threat.

What can be imagined in the place that is located beyond national assimilation — for these Canadian women in Syria or “veiled Muslim women” in Canada — is, in part, a willfulness that also gives the vulnerable the Janus-face of the aggressor: willing in the wrong way (see Ahmed 2014). Here is a will that moves in an inappropriate direction and enacts the wrong kind of refusal by clinging to the veil and hence the evils of Islam. As such, what can be read on the surface of these insistent bodies is an unwillingness to integrate into the cultural norms that the normative subject ascribes to and national ideals ordain. Which can also include, a non-cooperative insistence on publicly expressing one’s religion in the offensive adornments of “the spectacle of strangeness” (Najmabadi 2006, 253): the veil. The victim’s defencelessness collapses into the violence of “a public visual assault” as the headscarf that will not be lifted but stubbornly persists in its veiled presence is felt as hostile, aggressive, and “inappropriate” (Bowen 2007, 187).

For a contextual example that draws us back within the borders of a Canada we can readily conjure the political controversies in Québec surrounding Bill 21, initiated by the province’s centre-right government and ironically tabled by the Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness (Shingler 2019). Given the accompanying title “An Act respecting the laicity of the State” (Shingler 2019), the bill proposes to ban “religious symbols” on the bodies of persons (newly) employed in the public sector (e.g. teachers, officers of the court) and would demand that those who seek access to public services (e.g. public transportation) uncover their faces (Montpetit 2019; Shingler 2019). As critics make clear, the ban indirectly fixates on the Muslim

veil, by ordaining that Muslim women either un-veil or are absent from the public space (Montpetit 2019; Peritz 2019). Examining the forms of Islamophobia that camouflage in the secular politics of Québec, Siegfried Mathelet (2015) relays that the “religious sign” is understood to intrude on the protected “secular appearance of public space” (Mathelet 35): Infringing on the “freedom of consciousness” (Mathelet 2015, 35) of a looking public. The gaze of the liberal (and liberally gazing) subject is therefore offended by the non-secular symbol which one’s consciousness is coercively and non-consensually “exposed” to. Rather than appropriately exposing herself through the kind of openness that attends assimilation, the Muslim veil as well as the Muslim woman who wears it, are perceived to condemn an areligious populace to withhold that which they do not wish to see. The veil is an incompatible sign that visually disturbs or entraps the secular psyche as it also represents a threat to the very values that holds a secular Québec together and more broadly binds a liberal Canada: “a threat to social cohesion and national unity” (35).

How does the visibly strange body of the “veiled Muslim woman” then also upset the pleasures of looking, as craved by the liberal gaze? It helpful here, I believe, to turn to anti-colonial perspectives that engage precisely with the strategies and frustrations of these controlling desires. Throughout Franz Fanon’s untempered writings in *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) he expounds on the colonial tactics waged by the French to destroy Algerian society from within. Fanon explains that behind the liberal mirage of rescuing the “cloistered” Algerian woman by the French from the barbaric Algerian man — by coaxing her to de-veil — multiple strategies of conquer were unfolding (37-8). Specifically, in de-veiling women were at once considered to be, “converting” to Western values or, “Europeanizing” and thus gaining access to (the promise of) French belonging (Fanon 1965; see also Najmabadi 2006, Woodhull 2006); and, accepting

“rape” by the colonist as they shed their resistance along with the veil hence marking these women as “possessable” and available for adventure (Fanon 1965; see also Razack 2009). Moreover, the success of conquer and “penetration” represented by un-veiled Algerian women’s bodies also symbolized the “opening-up” of Algeria to French domination (Fanon 1965; see also Najmabadi 2006; Yegenoglu 1998).

Following a line of analyses similar to Fanon’s, Winifred Woodhull (2003) conveys that, for the French colonists who were seeking the complete mollification of the Indigenous peoples and their absolute yielding to the mores of colonization, Algerian women were at once taken to be representative of the colony’s “resistance” and “vulnerability to penetration” (574). Women signified both “regressive” and “progressive” colonial possibilities (571) and thus became emblems of “social assurance” as well as “objects of fear, hatred and vitriolic attack” (571). Before the moment of un-veiling or, amidst women’s refusal to uncover this “body out of reach” (Yegenoglu 1998, 39) disturbingly barred the Western gaze that longed for a possessive knowing and thus, troubled the powers of spectatorship. In the “insistence on wearing the veil” Algerian women therefore did not only signify the collective resistance to colonization. Rather, as Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) explicates (with reference to Fanon [1965]), in rejecting the “pacification” of un-veiling and thus bodily exposure veiled women were “able to see without being seen” — collapsing an imagined reciprocity through this withholding of the self (142). Within a broader Orientalist frame of looking, Yegenoglu usefully suggests that the veil on the body of the “Oriental” and presumptively Muslim, woman incites the angst of a visible invisibility (142). Here is the figure that we see as being vexingly unavailable to our gaze. The figure that visually

signifies mystery and fantasy yet “disappoints” the desires of discovery and the pleasures of access (142).

Extending these analyses of a colonial past to think through Canada’s settler-colonial present,<sup>24</sup> it becomes plausible that a contemporary aversion to the “veiled Muslim woman” — as she who inappropriately insists on and aggressively attacks through the visuality of her difference — is bound up with this looking without being seen and the disappointments that follow. What I mean here is this: the grievance that women forcibly compel a viewing public to encounter the religious sign that violates the secular-liberal consciousness does not form the entirety of claims of discomfort. Rather, a component of the visual assault, following Fanon and Yegenoglu’s reasonings, would be that “the veiled Muslim woman” is solely invested with the power of gazing upon the exposed body as the non-veiled Western subject is instead laid bare, available for inspection. Again, thinking of the example of Québec we can surmise that the white secular subject is intolerably made to look upon the religiously intrusive body and then must also suffer the indignation of being looked at by the should-be penetrable self. Of course, even the woman who is wearing the hijab can be “seen” as a physical, material subject-object. However, the viewer is kept from seeing the parts of her that they wish most to examine. According to the mechanism of white supremacy and Western imperialism, it is inappropriate for the subject of subjugation to possess the powers of the spectator; it is contradictory for the object of voyeurism to access the pleasures of the voyeur. Hence, part of the “visual assault” is the disappointment of the expectant gaze and the unfairness of an inverted non-reciprocity in the act of looking. There is an unkindness and aggression read into this kind of impenetrability and non-possession. Fur-

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<sup>24</sup> and, arguably, Sweden’s contemporary neo-imperialism

ther, in confronting the physical shape and presence of she whose knowability the liberal subject seeks and otherwise anticipates might reflect a “tease”<sup>25</sup> of appropriation. That is, the teasing visibility of the object of desire that taunts desire and after which, the neo-imperial hunger of possession and conquer salivates — yet, does so without gratification. Instead, the gaze is barred by the terms of a consent (or, assent) that willfully will not come. The visually impenetrable veiled body, who impertinently will not offer herself up to a liberalizing “rape” becomes the embodiment of deception (Yegenoglu 1998, 45) and trickery (Lewis 1999, 537). As such, she passes through “our” secular, liberal public space not as the assimilating and potentially good Muslim but, in the guise of the spy and in the cloak of the monster.

Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard (2012) offer an illustration from the Swedish public arena that aptly demonstrates just how the impenetrable body can both terrorize and defraud the white normative subject and nation. Writing of the far-right, anti-immigrant political party, the Swedish Democrats (SD), Mulinari and Neergaard argue that the SD capitalize on convictions of Islam’s irreconcilability with “the West” by further expanding upon the “clash of civilizations”<sup>26</sup> rhetoric already heavily in operation in Sweden from the period directly following 9/11 and Sweden’s allied invasion of Afghanistan (76). As a case in point, Mulinari and Neergaard describe a campaign ad the party circulated on public television ahead of the 2010 parliamentary elections. In the commercial we see an elderly white woman moving slowly yet, deter-

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<sup>25</sup> to here mimic the corresponding misogynist language

<sup>26</sup> A theory that is directly borrowed from Samuel Huntington’s (1993) infamous and highly contentious text of the same name, which expands upon Bernard Lewis’ original coinage of the term “clash of civilizations” in his 1990 *Atlantic Monthly* article entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage.”

minedly with the help of a walker<sup>27</sup> towards tables upon which the state budget is being counted and will presumptively be administered. The scene is set as a race, marked by the presence of suspenseful music and the pulsing of a buzzer amidst the red flashing numbers of a rapidly decreasing budget. With laborious breath this Swedish granny makes her way forward, looking back distressfully over her shoulder. Out of the darkness, we suddenly see a group of nearly a dozen women moving swiftly from behind the protagonist and quickly surpassing her. Each competitor that emerges from the shadows is dressed either in a burka<sup>28</sup> or in an abaya<sup>29</sup> paired with the niqab.<sup>30</sup> The folds of their full bodied coverings swish and expand in the air as they briskly advance as a collective, even as some push baby carriages ahead of them. Only as the women near the end of the race do we clearly perceive for what they have been competing: the chance to pull the state budget lever labeled “*invandring*” (immigration) or that marked “*pensioner*” (pensions). Many brown hands (bearing what appear to be wedding rings) successfully grasp the *invandring* handle as a wrinkled white hand piteously reaches towards the *pensioner*, albeit, too late. In their brief examination of this ad, Mulinari and Neergaard deduce that what is being indirectly articulated is that part of the “threat” posed by Muslims and Islam must rest with “Muslim women and their families” (76).

Pushing this analyses still further I suggest that, most obviously the SD is dramatizing the competition for public resources. Hereby we can imagine that the white Swedish retiree has,

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<sup>27</sup> a mobility device

<sup>28</sup> a full bodied covering, including of the entire face, with a mesh over the eyes for vision

<sup>29</sup> full bodied cloak

<sup>30</sup> a face veil that only leaves the regions above the mouth or nose visible

plausibly, contributed to the economic prosperity of the nation throughout her career and is now most in need of receiving the tax benefits she laboriously inches towards. Yet, instead, the state budget is gripped by the greedy dark hands of those who demand much of a benevolent, humanitarian Sweden but offer nothing in return. In such a piece of racist propaganda, the “threat” that is being alluded to through these stroller-pushing women’s charge of the national treasury is then also that an alarmingly unjust distribution and depletion of public funds is promised with the arrival of a foreign outside. It is not that Muslims are the only foreigners whose entrance is made to signify economic peril yet, here “veiled Muslim women” appear to most readily symbolize that which is different and thus, hazardous. Interpreting this hazard through the theorization on neo-imperial responses to the visuality of the veil elaborated thus far, we can deduce that immigrant women who wear Muslim veils and hence cannot be fully looked upon, preemptively signify that their presence within Sweden will also be non-reciprocal, through the non-reciprocity of their gaze. Further, if the burqa or abaya are taken as women’s refusal to appease the gratifications of the voyeur, such a withholding of the body anticipates that they will also deny to offer themselves up to acts of assimilation that appease national desires of possession. Modelling the aggression that is read into “veiled Muslim women’s” capacity to see but remain unseen, the SD campaign ad portrays a ferocity in the competitors charge forward that at once seems to frighten and overwhelm the white Swedish petitioner, who can only cower in the face of the stampeding force of Muslim women. Here we see that veiled women are truly as hostile as their attire communicates them to be and it is in the cowering of this vulnerable white normative subject that we are meant to figure the vulnerability of the nation. Hence, in these veiled women’s seizing of the state budget for their own ends it becomes clear that those who will not consent to a liberalizing

“rape” threaten to instead rape the Swedish nation, by bankrupting the social welfare system through a vicious, non-integrating treachery that guarantees to multiply — as the baby carriages indicate. Riffing-off of Goldberg’s (2009) assertion that, within Europe, Muslim women’s headscarves signify the threat of more Muslim men, I propose — alongside Mulinari and Neergaard — that the danger of Muslim men and the Muslim family are indeed alluded to in the ad. Not only does the rustling of women’s burqas or abayas signal the insistent difference that such migrants will bring with them but, the depletion of Sweden’s economic resources and the rebuffing of assimilatory values also reveals in the visibility of their wedding bands and, again, the carriage for the infant. Such “bad” Muslim women, presumptively, offer themselves up through marriage for possession to “bad” Muslim men. In this way, an unyielding veil denotes her unyielding loyalty to they who can have no place within the nation as the folds of her veil also shroud the Muslim men who skulk in the shadows of the nation’s nightmares. And then, alas, the Muslim couple will together plunder Sweden’s coffers by reproducing offspring that will inevitably unleash the same kind of wreckage.

If the “veiled Muslim women” is aggressive for refusing possession by a liberal voyeurism and depraved for her fidelity to the conniving Muslim family, how might she come to be understood as not merely aligning with terror but actually representing the Muslim nightmare? Mary Ann Doane’s (1991) well known work on the “femme fatale” notably suggests that the woman “who insists upon looking” becomes mirrored by the monstrous and is “freakish in [her] difference,” as readily seen in the genre of horror (27; see also Žižek 1989). Eventually she

is punished for the offence of “active looking” (27).<sup>31</sup> What at times exacerbates or marks the horror and out-of-placeness of the looking woman is, the veil (46). As a “surplus surface” that conceals the depths of the eroticized female form Doane echoes others as she speculates that, in “block[ing] the gaze” (48) the veil alludes to that which is hidden, disguised, and inaccessible in the midst of the expectation of the woman’s “to-be-looked-at-ness” (46). The veil thus exceeds the sartorial as its presence becomes an act in itself: blocking, disguising and not too far way, deceiving. Further, as the woman who is imagined to “insist upon looking” even as she insists on not being looked at, the veiled woman becomes freakish, slipping into the realm of the frightening. We should, however, acknowledge that Doane’s “veiled woman” is not specifically, “the veiled Muslim woman.” Even so, we can continue to attend to the preceding (anti-)colonial theories on the aggression read into the visuality of the Muslim veil from under which women gaze but cannot be fully gazed upon, alongside critical scholarship such as that of Goldberg (2009) who communicates that “the Muslim” figures as a nightmarish emblem of fear. It is thus by amalgamating the analyses surveyed up until this point — on what precisely decides the badness of veiled women — that I am able to put forth the further claim that, the unassimilable “veiled Muslim woman” is also she who embodies a haunting and represents a more contemporary nightmare. Taking another example from Québec, the much discussed case of the Hérouxville citizens’ “code of conduct” (see Mathelet 2015; McAndrew & Bakhshaei 2012; Zine 2012) offers an empirically grounded illustration of how “the veiled Muslim woman” can indeed haunt the white imagination.

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<sup>31</sup> Doane (1991, 27) makes direct reference to Linda Williams’ (1984) analysis of women in horror films wherein she who is penalized for daring to look and encounters the monster as the self in the mirrored-image.

The details are as follows: in 2007 the town of Hérouxville in Québec, Canada put forth a “code of conduct” that explicitly outlined the practices locally deemed as unacceptable and which any prospective residents (particularly those who are immigrants to Canada [McAndrew & Bakhshaei 944]), must consent to refrain from partaking-in. Notably, the practices unwelcome within Hérouxville — which was then (and likely still remains), a homogeneously white, French-speaking, Catholic and largely Canadian-born population (Zine 2012, 58) — include, the following: “public stoning” of women (Mathelet 2015, 31), “honour killings” (Zine 40), veiling (Zine 41), and other such forms of barbarism. The “customs” banned from Hérouxville seemingly ward against the savagery promised to follow the arrival of the Muslim man (and, the Muslim family) thus rendering these violences as part of the nightmare of the Muslim presence. However, what makes these restricted acts possible is first the bodies of “veiled Muslim women” who signify Islam’s misogyny and Muslim men’s brutality even before and without the necessity of their enactment (see cooke 2002). Simply to conjure the image of the migrant, veiled subject-object is enough to become witness to and vanguard against this treachery. Furthermore, it is the prospect of her arrival that decides the imperativeness of this code within a majority white, Christian, French-Canadian town. They are compelled to prepare for her coming along with the violences that follow her, that define her. In this way, she haunts as the figure that is not seen but is always coming near as a perpetual spectre that is, in the words of Jasmin Zine, “lurking in the shadow’s of the town’s imaginary” (Zine 2012, 42). Thus is the ceaseless approach of she who seeks to enter our community; take what “we” have; outrage us with savagery; and hold “our” liberal consciousness captive within the folds of her veil. Hence, she is both victim of monstrous acts but also, embodies the monstrous as the still-veiled, impenetrable body. Sections of the code, no-

tably, also belabour the intolerability of covering one's face other than at the time of Halloween celebrations (Zine 41). Quite fascinatingly there is then an effort to contain her haunting to the day "we" anticipate and are fully prepared to encounter the monstrous. Yet, outside of this, she is the "bad" Muslim of the waking nightmare.

### **The Assimilating, Rescue-able, "Good" Muslim Woman**

If these are the qualities of the bad "veiled Muslim woman" who haunts liberal dreams and frustrates voyeuristic desires — returning to our initial query — I once more question how some women appear as salvageable subjects that hold the potential for "societal redemption" (Jiwani 2009, 731). Are the women who successfully convey their rescue-ability the very same as those who once menaced the white nation? Or, are there prerequisites for salvageability that already decide that some women have more possessable or saveable futures than others? Again but put differently, I ask: if Muslim women can be located into goodness, what are the particular conditions for this shift? For this becoming? Krista Riley (2009) emphasizes that "simply not [being] 'bad'" (61) falls short in fulfilling the requirements expected of Muslims who seek to be accepted into the Canadian national body. Rather, the proof of one's goodness and value as a saveable subject entails what Riley calls "practices of national accumulation" (61) whereby one conveys a witnessable Westernization through the visible absence of fanaticism and through an amplified Western national loyalty (63). I propose that what intermingles with the demand to display one's innocuousness as a subject yielding to the dictates of such societal values (i.e., secular non-fundamentalism, anti-Islamist, patriotism) also entails, for Muslim women, the integration of emotion. That is, the assimilation of one's affective responses and affective aspirations in ways that

verify women's alignment with the nation, as they make their way towards a redemptive goodness.

First, it could be said that part of the affective assimilation is the performance of happiness, whereby integration is conveyed as a source of pleasure. Reflecting on more contemporary spectacles of un-veiling numerous scholars have commented on the displays of joy and "liberation" read into young Afghani women and girls' public removal of their burkas, following the U.S. and allied invasion of Afghanistan (see Arat-Koc 2002; Butler 2004; Jiwani 2009). While this is a highly contextual example mired in the vestiges of U.S. militarism and imperialism, it nonetheless offers useful insights into the emotional contingencies of Muslim women's potential goodness. In offering-up their bodies, as knowable, to the Western gaze — captured by the photograph, the video, and the witnessing soldier — the un-veiling, liberalizing Muslim female defers to the pleasure of a looking Western public. Women and girls, whose contours are understood to submit to visibility through the abandonment of the veil, neither "insists" on their difference nor do they insist on looking. Instead, their can be "looked-at-ness" indicates a knowability that plausibly satiates the desires of neo-imperial possession. What unfolds is then what Doane (1991) describes as "the pleasure of seeing the prohibited female body" (19). Yet, as an image that is mediated through the frame of the camera — which still maintains a distance between the actor and object of looking — the viewer can retain the pleasures of the voyeur and the fantasies of the "peeping-tom" as they still pursue her one-day full possession (19-20).

Alongside this, of course, is the un-veiling woman's own pleasure or happiness in un-veiling. Sara Ahmed (2010) suggests that objects can be infused with the potential to bring happiness so that one can be "directed towards objects already anticipated to cause happiness" (28),

while what is deemed to bring about pleasure is “already judged to be good” (28). Following this logic, if un-veiling is made to point towards rescue-ability and possible goodness as traits that “provide a means for making us happy” (27), the act of an integrating un-veiling might be that which promises women the happiness of national belonging. Here happiness could be “presumed to follow” (27) the requisite disrobing and its attendant anti-Islamist patriotism. Moreover, if the bared and now possessable Muslim women’s body brings about the pleasure of the Western spectator and this pleasure in turn decides her eligibility for societal redemption, both her un-veiling and “looked-at-ness” would be assessed as good. However, what of the affective demands that dwell not in the site of pleasure but, compels discomfort or other “bad feelings” (Ahmed 2010) in the display of assimilability? I would like, for a moment, to return to the concept of abjection and my earlier suggestion that the unassimilating Muslim woman incites visceral responses of revulsion as the decaying body that threatens to contaminate the nation and is thus vomited from the national body. With this analysis in mind, I inquire whether the un-veiling Muslim woman who seeks to evidence her assimilability must also gag at the thought and/or sight of “the veiled Muslim women,” whom she must not be. In particular, I ponder if the Muslim woman who is attempting to convey the ways she is becoming “like us” and offering herself up to be “ours” is called upon to liberalize her feelings by refusing the presence of she who aggressively insists on her difference. As such, the assaultively non-integrating “veiled Muslim woman” would necessarily incite a nausea that might represent the un-veiling woman’s rejection of this threatening barbarism and frustrating unknowability. This gag reflex declares: “I am not like her.” It is in this that the Canadian Muslim women detained in an ISIS-run Syria fail so that they are instead situ-

ated as the hostile veiled selves whose unassimilability provokes the retching in she who is properly aspiring for belonging.

Moreover, the part of the un-veiling Muslim women's self that once, almost, or could have been "like her" is vomited up from and out of the integrating body: "spit[ting]" the intolerable self "out" to "establish" the good self (see Kristeva 1982, 3). The subject that is at once worthy of rescue, compliantly available for possession, and labours towards the national ideal (Ahmed 2014) is therefore, in part, the self-hating subject. That is, the subject that appropriately despises and casts away its dangerous potentiality. Rejecting the aspects of the self that cannot be accommodated into the normative national community notably entails acknowledging the interpellation (i.e., you are a "veiled Muslim woman") and its attendant overdetermination (i.e., the "veiled Muslim woman" is either dangerous or saveable), to ultimately invest in the dictates that order the public neutralization of the un-veiled body.

In the "honour killing" cases from Canada and Sweden that will be examined below, the death of the assimilating un-veiled or not-veiling Muslim woman aligns with tropes of the dangerous Muslim man since it is very often he that performs the fatal act of violence. However, taking note of how defiantly unassimilated Muslim women can also figure as the conveyors of death (i.e., as she who brings death near or, whose illiberal loyalties render her at fault for her own impending death), I wish to consider how the un-veiled Muslim woman might enact another form of slaughter. If the self-hating subject indeed casts aside the intolerably unassimilable self that she must not be, I propose that this ejection also enacts a type of extermination. That is, annihilating a prospective badness through the purging of the abject from her resolutely integrating body. Here she affectively brings about the death to a lurking difference that: threatens to kill her

potential for national belonging; anticipates a mournless demise for which she would be found culpable; and, is imagined to endanger the lives of the normative subjects she desires to be eventually counted amongst. The *spitting of the intolerable self out* can thus appear as a mortal refusal of the veiled nightmare that the assimilating cannot risk being.

Echoing Butler's (1997) questioning of why Althusser's subject accepts the interpellating hail, I also ask in regard to the un-veiling, assimilating Muslim woman: "Is this a guilty subject?" (5). What makes her agree to *not* insist on her difference and invest in the visceral expulsion? Does she as the "guilty subject" accept that her veiled body would assault the secular consciousness so that she harbours a sense of guilt for the upset? Is the integrating nausea also made up of the bile of shame? Are these feelings nonetheless desirable as further "proof" of her eventual goodness? Furthermore, is the "veiled Muslim woman" truly the abject — the "radically excluded" — if there are these possibilities for her inclusion into the national fabric as well as the expectation that she strives for national absorption? Or, does the abject already divide along lines that distinguish between the insistently veiled/discardable/unassimilable and the un-veiling/possessable/assimilable? Following a slightly different line of reasoning, I also question if the prospective goodness of the assimilating and un-veiled woman always or, in actuality comes into completion? By this last query I imply that the subject who strives towards her integration into the national body may perhaps bare herself to the voyeuristic nation in a manner that repeatedly administers the pleasures of possession and yet, does not gratify her own longing for acceptance. In this way, the nation would obtain her but give nothing of itself in return. Or else, I ponder if goodness goes unrealized in the instance that the appropriately un-veiled Muslim woman possibly chooses otherwise, by forsaking the task of affective assimilation and aligning herself with

the badness that she once abhorred. How then might death become the force that resolves all such complications and satisfies each query here posed?

In response, I propose that the death of the assimilating Muslim woman renders her as a useful corpse in two regards. First, as the memorialized dead she is absolutely and forever possessed by the liberal nation that can securely mourn the lifeless body of she was becoming good and is now unable to betray this compliance in the stasis of death. Death compels her resolve. Secondly, in her own favour, death may come as a welcomed sacrifice of the physical self. Hereby her deadness could be testament of her unwavering refusal of that which cannot be accommodated into the national imaginary, while she herself would be affectively absorbed into the nation through the very same possession that mourning dominantly allows. Although she actively rejects the traits or values of an unassimilable badness, however, the sacrifice of her life for an integrative death would nonetheless come as a passive act. The assimilating, un-veiled Muslim woman neither wills her own death nor actively brings it about. Rather, the fatal violence that she always necessarily succumbs to at the hands of the Muslim man or Muslim family — supposedly for her Western assimilatory desires — can be interpreted as a mortal consequence she accepts as a part of the costs of national belonging. As such, the properly self-hating subject would be she who, in life, might anticipate her death and is be able to take pleasure in knowing that such a demise will at last allow her to come into the life of the nation. Here at once would be the death of she who is worthy of rescue and deserving of being grieved when acts of assimilation, calculatingly, place her in the way of death.

## **The Fatality of Assimilation**

As part of this chapter's examination of how the death of the assimilating Muslim women is instrumentalized for the ends of Canadian and Swedish national desires, I shift here to an examination of "honour-killing" cases that mired Canadian or Swedish media and public debate. Relying heavily upon scholarly analyses of these case studies, I first propose that the violently extinguished life of the Muslim woman or girl offers some of the most steadfast proof of her labour towards integration and prospective goodness. In this way, a brutal death and the maimed body become demonstrable testaments of national loyalty. The deadened self thus proffers a substantial source of "national accumulation" (Riley 2009, 61) as one emerges as a martyr to the values of liberal assimilation.

### ***Canada: Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia sisters***

On December 10, 2007 sixteen-year-old Aqsa Parvez was strangled to death in her family's home in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (Haque 2010; Jamal 2015; Shier & Shor 2016). Notably, Aqsa was killed by her Father and brother, allegedly in response to her "refusal to wear the hijab" (Zine 2012, 49) — as she instead donned "Western-style attire and behavior" (Shier & Shor 2016, 1176) — and for her corresponding desire to "lead a 'normal' life of a Canadian teenager" (Olwan 2013, 540; see also Haque 2018). Zine (2012) thus explains that Aqsa's death was popularly understood to be the result of the "pathological" brutality of a *culturally imported* Muslim and Pakistani patriarchy (48, 49). Here is the violent death of the refusing to veil Muslim girl, asphyxiated by an Islamic or Muslim "culture" incongruent with Canadian norms (Shier & Shor 2016, 1176). We can thus conjure the image of the maimed body of the resistively Muslim

girl, killed by a barbarism we already know to dread. If un-veiling and its attendant openness to dominant possession is also a requisite to Canadian belongings, Aqsa, as the not-yet-veiled and supposedly refusing-to-veil Muslim girl can be plausibly imagined to have been becoming good. In rejecting the donning of the hijab — even in the face of the coercions of the savage Muslim man — Aqsa also rejected the badness of a Muslimness that aimed to render her unworthy of rescue and as disloyal to the liberal nation. Aqsa’s life is reduced to the violent event of her death which then renders her dying as the most triumphant moment of her assimilation. It then appears as better to physically die at the hands of the murderous Muslim Father/brother/family and to have an afterlife in public memory as she who was *becoming like us, becoming ours*. Better this than, to live the life of the socially dead and to haunt the national imagination as the “figure” who brings death (Goldberg 2009).

Taken as yet another testament to the mortal violence endured by the properly assimilating Muslim girl is the Shafia case. As Dana Olwan (2013) explains, on June 30, 2009, the drowned bodies of three young women were found in a vehicle pulled from the Rideau Canal in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The sisters, Zainab, Sahar and Geeti Shafia — all teenagers from an Afghani migrant family — were quickly located as victims of an “honour killing.” Collectively murdered by the collectively barbarous Muslim family: Father, brother, and Father’s polygamous second wife (Shier & Shor 2016). Perpetuated by the Canadian media was the general conclusion that these deaths signified the punishment of the “rebellious and disobedient” girls from a Muslim home who had “shamed ... their family” (Shier & Shor 1174) through their incongruent desires to live “a Canadian life” (Olwan 2013, 540). With these acts of murder we are therefore meant to find the drowning of assimilating desires; the fatal suppression of nationally integrating

values; and, a sadistic attempt to annihilate a burgeoning patriotism to secular liberty with the suffocating cloak of murky water. Here is the death of “our” values that the “figure” of the Muslim threatens to bring through the invasion of grossly unacceptable, culturally “alien” acts of violence (Olwan 541), witnessed in the preemptive killing of she who was almost “ours.”

Furthermore, if the Muslim woman who is moving towards goodness accepts the guilt (and perhaps, shame) for the assault her covered body is said to provoke in a gazing public, the feelings of shame her Westernizing is imagined to invoke in the Muslim family (Shier & Shor 2016, 1171) would therefore be the wrong kind of shame. Rather, this would be a tribal shame with a murderous impulse that speaks to a pre-modern irrationality and a refusal to feel guilt for the harm one induces. Notably, the Shafia sisters’ deaths also performs as another mechanism of governmentality. The 2009 handbook for aspiring Canadian citizens articulates a promise to “severely punish the ‘guilty’ actors of “honour killings” as perpetrators of “barbaric cultural practices” that exceed “Canada’s openness and generosity” (Olwan 544-545; see also Puar 2007). The verdict of first degree murder that concluded the Shafia trails fulfills this penal vow (Olwan 534). The drowned bodies of the Muslim girls as well as the process of disciplining the crime gestures towards the cultural-political boundaries of Canadianness (see Olwan 2013, 545-46) in a manner that allows a dominant national imaginary to refuse its own asphyxiation. There was, however, a fourth body. Another Muslim women was plunged to her death by the treacherous Muslim family. Rona Amir Mohammad’s deadened body was also pulled from the scene of integrational wreckage. As Olwan convincingly explains, Rona’s body could not be “recuperate[d]” by or recognized within Canadian values in the way of the Shafia sisters since she was the first wife in a polygamous Muslim marriage (540). From here I suggest that Rona could instead be

depicted within the media as she who had already forfeited her potential rescue-ability and turned away from the tasks of assimilation through the unforgivable backwardness of a religiously informed non-monogamy. Illegal. Tribal. The bad Muslim woman who wills in the inappropriate direction. The “victim” outside of the logics of social resuscitation.

***Sweden: Fadime Sahindal, Sara (Maisam) Abed Ali, & Pela Atroshi***

On January 21, 2002, Fadime Sahindal, was fatally shot by her Kurdish migrant Father in Uppsala, Sweden (see Hellgren & Hobson 2008; Mojab & Hassanpour 2002). Fadime was killed, purportedly, for her refusal to enter into an arranged marriage (or, “forced marriage”) with a Kurdish relative (Razack 2004, 150) in favour of the *romantic love* that had blossomed with a Swedish man (see Mojab & Hassanpour 2002; Kurkiala 2003; Razack 2004, 2007; Wikan 2008). In both the period prior to Fadime’s violent death and in the public discourse that followed her demise, the Muslim Father was depicted as a loose cannon of patriarchal fury. Beating the young, loving couple upon encountering the outrage of their modern romance (Mojab & Hassanpour 2002, 56); spitting both saliva and misogynistic slurs in the face of the daughter (Mojab & Hassanpour 57) who is embracing the Swedish principles of independence and gender equality (Shier & Shor 2016, 1167; Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 386); ejecting her from the Muslim family and ultimately fulfilling the threat to end her life (Mojab & Hassanpour 2002, 57; Wikan 2008, 15). An archaic raging against a young woman’s autonomy. The pathological and “tribal” nature of the Muslim immigrant man and the Muslim immigrant family who are themselves bound to the dictates of “culture” (Wikan 2008, 16). It is this notion of a “culture clash” (19) that Unni Wikan (2008) consistently employs to explain the actions of Fadime’s Father and the supposed complicity

ity of the Sahindal family in the aftermath of Fadime's death. However, Wikan proposes that we are understand the Father not only as a danger to the freedoms and mortality of the daughter but also as an injured party. Specifically, Wikan conceives of Fadime's Father as "a victim of a 'culture'" which stipulates that he must maintain absolute dominion, "accept no challenge to his honor," and thus administer punishment as part of retaining control and restoring the familial reputation (16, 19). In this vein, the Muslim Kurdish man emerges as a victim to the antiquated customs it is alleged he must abide by as well as enforce; Fadime's Mother and extended family are victims to the cultural demand to uphold their loyalties to the "tribe" (17); and Fadime herself becomes the casualty of traditions that are meant to retain the integrity of the collective (17, 20). Such are Wikan's conclusions following her analysis of the criminal trial of Fadime's Father, police investigation records from interviews of members of the Sahindal family, along with Swedish media reports from before and after Fadime's murder. Despite these records, what appears to most clearly inform Wikan's reasoning are the Orientalist perceptions of the "Muslim Other" and the "world of Islam" (Kumar 2012, 31, 33) in which her writing is heavily steeped.

Reflecting briefly on Edward W. Said (1979) and Deepa Kumar's (2012) interpretations of Orientalism we gather that an Orientalist logic — to put it simply — emphasizes the "dynami[sm]" and "ever-changing" qualities (and thus, supremacy) of European civilization in contrast to the "static," "premodern" and "backward" characteristics that comprise the Orient (Kumar 30,31) — which is itself said to be culturally and racially defined by Islam (Said 41). Correspondingly Wikan's analysis places particular stress on the un-changing nature of the Father and family in ways that imply that their "backward[ness]" must be understood through the moral underdevelopment or stagnation characteristic of their culture, as Muslim Kurds. Hence, it

is not only that these individuals are meant to be familiar through their “premodern” loyalties and beliefs but Wikan is also covertly insisting that the “static” nature of the “Muslim world” from which they have come entraps them within its barbarity and determines their actions, through an inflexible bind that grips them despite migration to a modern Sweden. Even so, it remains unclear whether the triangulation of victimhood that Wikan proposes—which imagine the Sahindals as inexorably fettered to certain “tribal,” authoritarian principles—in fact correlates with the popular discourses that circulated at the time of these events in Sweden.

Swedish scholars Zenia Hellgren and Barbara Hobson (2008) notably indicate that the “public drama” that unfolded in the media, the courts, and came to shape popular perceptions in the wake of Fadime’s death had a distinctly different reckoning of the liabilities of culture. The familiar xenophobic sentiment that “immigrant families” are irrevocably bound to customs that are irreconcilable with “Swedish norms” was already operative within a dominant Swedish imagination ahead of Fadime’s murder (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 391). As such, Hellgren & Hobson argue that the violence visited upon Fadime was used in the mainstream Swedish media to witness the alarming consequences of that which was already known: the immigrant Muslim family’s incapacity to “adapt” to Sweden’s liberal ethics (392, 394). In this way, both Father and family are perceived to be homicidally ill-aligned with Swedish values. Culture therefore does not manifest as what victimizes, represses, or coerces the Sahindal’s but only describes and predicts their brutality. Orientalist logics of course repeat through this popular interpretation however, the “static” and “backward” characteristics ascribed to the Sahindals more explicitly continues in the legacy of envisioning the “terror” “devastation” and “lasting trauma” posed to Europe by Islam and Muslims (Said 1979, 59). Amidst such representations part of what is interesting about

Fadime are the ways we see that the very violence that is perceived to threaten the life of the Muslim migrant daughter is the same vehicle through which she is disentangled from the cultural unassimilability and “premodern” nature of her relatives. More precisely, I propose that her romantic desires or sexual agency is understood to be what renders her in peril of dying *and* indicates that she can subscribe to “Swedish norms” in ways her family cannot (Hellgren & Hobson 392). The danger and non-assimilability anticipated from the Muslim immigrant family thus serves multiple purposes.

Notably, there have been other cases interpreted as “honour-killings” — before Fadime’s — that preoccupied the Swedish media and came to be seen in the criminal courts. The most prominent examples are the murders of teenagers, Sara (Maisam) Abed Ali in 1996 and Pela Atroschi in 1999 (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 390; Gardell n.p.). Similar to Fadime, both of these young women were of Kurdish descent and were believed to be killed by members of their Muslim families for — as Hellgren & Hobson (2008) communicate it — daring to “reject their homeland culture and embrac[e] Swedish norms of gender, sexuality and individualization” (390). Sara was strangled by her brother and a male cousin, both teenagers themselves (Hellgren & Hobson 391), in the city of Umeå in Northern Sweden (Wikan 2008, 27). The details of Sara’s death are sparse and the precise motive fragmented. Wikan (2008) relays that the debate “raging” within the Swedish media and amongst academics at the time questioned whether Sara’s murder was “culturally conditioned” (33) or, more appropriately reflects violence against women as a

universality (36, 38).<sup>32</sup> Bolstering speculations in favour of the former are reports of, Sara's brother accusing her of "sleep[ing] around with Swedish guys" (Wikan 2008, 27); hearsay accounts of Sara's Father habitually beating her and lamenting her adoption of Swedishness (28); and the unsubstantiated suggestion that her murder was plotted by her Father and four uncles (28). None of these claims of treachery appear to be verifiable beyond the pages of Wikan's text, which is often narrated in a tone of romantic tragedy.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Pela, we learn that she was fatally shot by two of her uncles — with the involvement of her Father and another uncle — after being first "lured" from Sweden to Iraqi Kurdistan by family members (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 391). Here too the precise motive for Pela's killing remains vague or contested (391). Wikan (2008) broadly suggests that, "Pela's 'crime' was the same as Sara's and Fatima's: she had become 'Swedified'" (41). What can be clearly ascertained is that her murder was planned in Sweden and carried out in Iraq where her Father falsely confessed to having killed his daughter and received a five or six month sentence by the local courts in the city of Duhok<sup>34</sup> (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 391; Wikan 2008, 43). The

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<sup>32</sup> Mikael Kurkiala (2003) indicates that a similar debate followed Fadime's death. In addition to universal understandings of patriarchal violence or, the opposing argument for attending to the sanctions of culture, Kurkiala identifies the following positions: "the particularistic interpretation" (i.e. attending to the psychological instability of Fadime's Father, rather than the supposed tenets of "Kurdish culture"[6]); and, "Swedish identity politics" (i.e. "honour killings" are critical for establishing "Swedishness" in opposition to the Other [7]). Kurkiala insists on a cultural interpretation (7), while my own analyses in this dissertation engages with how Swedishness invokes such deaths for its own ends. In this way I attend less to the question of why these women were murdered and more so to how their deaths become pivotal to white nation-making.

<sup>33</sup> Hellgren & Hobson (2008) mention Sara's murder, alongside those of Fadime and Pela, as one of the "three prominent cases [to] bring the notion of honour killings into Swedish discourse" (390). However, much like Wikan, these scholars do not provide details that would explain what rendered Sara's death specifically comprehensibly as an "honour-killing" for a Swedish public. We are instead left to make much out of the mention of her Kurdish ancestry (as a hint towards its racist implications); the murder by male family members; and, the general conviction that she opposed familial customs and sexual conventions (390-391).

<sup>34</sup> also spelled "Dihok" or "Dahūk"

public interest surrounding this case focused on, 1. the fact that Pela's younger sister, Breen, brought the murder to the attention of Swedish authorities and testified against her uncles as a primary witness; 2. the unprecedented expanse of Swedish legal jurisdiction into international territories whereby the Duhok criminal ruling could be over-turned and the uncles given life-sentences to be served in Sweden, where the murder was plotted; and, 3. the ways Pela's death could be called upon to reinforce racist convictions of the incorrigible nature of Muslim migrant families who — regardless of long-time residence in Sweden and/or Swedish citizenship — supposedly, continue to subscribe to gender, legal and cultural principles that are widely disparate from those held in Sweden (Hellgren & Hobson 391; Wikan 39, 40). Part of what is striking in each of these three cases that centre on the death of the daughter is that it could be conveniently ignored that the homicidal "Muslim family" was neither composed of practicing Muslims nor particularly religious (Gardell n.p.). Specifically in regards to Fadime, her Muslimness slips in and out of the discourse as it is variably claimed that the Sahindals are nominally Muslim (Wikan 23) or not Muslim at all (Hellgren & Hobson 392).<sup>35</sup> Either way, it appears that the Kurdish migrant family that has entered into the gaze of a scrutinizing media and an aghast Swedish public simply become commonsensically Muslim through the violence, misogyny, and foreignness into which they are most explicitly read.

Despite the attention that the killings of Sara and Pela garnered, however, it is Fadime's death that appears as most pivotal for solidifying dominant understandings of the mortal dangers

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<sup>35</sup> Wikan explains that Fadime's Muslimness was often queried in the media. Her sister, Songül, is recorded in a police interview as stating that all members of her family "including her Father" are Muslim, although non-practicing (2008, 23; *Police Authority, Uppsala County, 2002, Police Investigation Report, C 10-369-02*). In contrast, Hellgren and Hobson (2008) definitely state that Fadime's parents are Catholic (392) however, the authors do not offer any information to clarify or support this assertion.

that loom before the autonomous Muslim immigrant young woman. The violences visited upon Sara and Pela are referred to as a retroactive foreshadowing of Fadime's fate and thus, to express regret for the life that could have been saved (see Wikan 2008, 30, 38). It is as if one were to say, if only the lessons of the Kurdish Muslim family's treachery and unassimilability learned from these previous "honour-killings" had been properly heeded, Fadime might have lived (see Kurkiala 2003, 7). It is then not merely public intrigue, alarm or a reanimation of anti-immigrant rhetoric that triggers with Fadime's death, as can be said in the cases of Sara and Pela. Already well-known for her public opposition to an arranged marriage and the detailed accounts she offered to the media of the abuses suffered at the hands of her Father (Mojab & Hassanpour 2002, 56; Wikan 2008, 17), in death, Fadime was erected as a "public icon" (Kurkiala 6) to the "resistance [of] patriarchal cultures" and a "martyr" to the desire for independence from familial and cultural restraints (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 391, 392). It is then the killing of Fadime that decisively confirmed the failures of assimilation and the inadequacies of Sweden's integration policies (Wikan 29) as well as the negligence of prominent immigrant organizations to actively "preven[t] honour killings" (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 393). Fadime's death also induced a sense of urgency within the governmental sector to create policies and programs to protect immigrant girls' (romantic) agency and to thus secure the lives of a liberalizing youth from the fatal retaliations of their foreign household (Kurkiala 2003, 6). In this there emerges a sense of responsibility towards both the properly integrating as well as to the values of the nation as part of "defending" Sweden's edit of gender equality (Hellgren & Hobson, 386). Yet, what remains particularly peculiar about Fadime's case are the ways in which — in both life and death — she can be publicly celebrated as the liberalizing, adoptive daughter of the liberal Swedish nation.

Although the issue of veiling/un-veiling does not directly appear here, Fadime was in a sense rendering herself as open to possession, available for the dominant gaze and thus worthy of saving in a manner similar to the gesture of un-veiling. As already alluded to above, these signposts of assimilability were specifically demonstrated through, the media spectacle of her resistance to the “forced marriage”; her public decrying of the failings of integration; her testaments to the violences visited upon “Kurdish girls in Sweden” and implicitly within Muslim families; and, through her prominent role as a champion in the “campaign” against “honour killings” (Kurkiala 6; Mojab & Hassanpour 2002, 57). The immigrant Muslim Father as such is depicted as someone fervently committed to a “culture” incapable of sharing in “Swedish values” which are understood to include, the acknowledgment of the child’s right to “autonomy and individuality” (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, 391) — not to mention, romantic will and sexual liberty. By contrast, Fadime does not insist on her difference but instead, aspires for national absorption. That is, following her cruel abandonment by the unnatural Father,<sup>36</sup> along with her own rejection of his crude and (normatively) incestuous<sup>37</sup> demands, Fadime appears as the daughter who calls out to the Swedish Father (see Norocel 2013) for both paternal protection and recognition of her progressive loyalties. It is through these assimilatory appeals that Fadime figuratively un-veils, even in the veil’s material absence (Molina n.p.). As the Muslim woman who readily displays her capacity for goodness and actively welcomes the voyeuristic looking of a television

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<sup>36</sup> Fadime’s Father, reportedly, demanded that Fadime forfeit all contact with the family and leave Uppsala (the city where the Sahindals resided) if she wished to marry her Swedish boyfriend — a stipulation that Wikan (melo-)dramatically describes as an, “expulsion into exile” (26).

<sup>37</sup> Fadime reported to the media that her family expected her to marry a cousin (Razack 2004), which would be normatively understood as incestuous within Sweden although this practice might more appropriately be defined as endogamous within other national or cultural constellations.

watching public she confirms that she is *becoming ours*. Already available to intimate Swedish desires through the affections of the Swedish boyfriend, the adoptive daughter is also available for the ravishing adventures of the Swedish patriarch — as the incestuous state. Similar to the Canadian case of Aqsa Parvez, Fadima Sahindal, arguably, reaches her full assimilatory potential in death.

The memorial service held in honour of Fadime — at which thousands came to mourn (Kurkiala 2003, 6; Mojab & Hassanpour 2002, 57)<sup>38</sup> — took place in the principal church of Sweden, the Uppsala Cathedral (*Uppsala Domkyrkan*) (Gardell n.p.). Hence, with the memorialization of her life in the greatest vespers of Swedish Christianity and at the central seat of the nation's Lutheran tradition, the integrating young Muslim woman is ultimately embraced into the very heart of the covertly Christian fold of the secular Swedish nation (Gardell n.p.). As such, she becomes something other than the Otherness of “the Muslim” in death. Not only does Fadime appear as a martyr for the cause she campaigned against (i.e. the violence of the Kurdish migrant family; death by the hands of the violently patriarchal Kurdish Father [Kurkiala 2003, 6,7; Wikan 2008, i.e.,16]), her corpse also satisfies “our” immediate desire to *look* since she is given up to the preeminent altar of Swedish Christianity (Molina n.p.; Gardell n.p.), while her body is eternally laid bare on the altar of possession through the public memory of grief. Prior to her death Fadime allegedly requested that her funeral be held at this church and that she be laid to rest in its grounds, which was interpreted as an expression of her love for Uppsala and the de-

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<sup>38</sup> Notably, the mourners included the Swedish Prime Minister, members of the Swedish monarchy (i.e. the Swedish Crown Princess), immigration ministers, and other state officials (Kurkiala 2003, 6; Wikan 2008, 13).

sire to be forever near her Swedish boyfriend<sup>39</sup> who was interred in the cathedral's cemetery (Wikan 2008, 13,17). Making note of these desires it could be said that she was not simply "given up" to Swedish possession through death but gave herself up by soliciting this kind of taking. With her burial in the graveyard she is thus evermore entombed within the oldest traditions of Swedish Christianity, ensconced in the municipal home of Swedish ideals of purity (i.e., Uppsala; see Chapter 1), and indisputably committed to the Swedish principles of romantic freedom. In this way, the intolerable infringement made upon of each of these values by the Muslim migrant Father can also be grieved through the relentless, proprietorial mourning of Fadime.

### **National Utilities of Mourning**

Commenting on the lingering affective responses to Fadime's death, Razack (2007b) anecdotally recalls a conference in Scandinavia where the image of Fadime's lifeless body was presented to a largely white audience. In the midst of the "palpable warmth and white group solidarity" that filled the room — feelings that collectively answered the call to lament the common plight of Muslim women — Razack questions the purpose of this grim public display (4; see also Jamal 2015).<sup>40</sup> Taking-up Razack's inquiry I also ponder what utility the exhibition of the corpse serves, especially when it is of the Muslim woman already proved to be worthy of saving and

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<sup>39</sup> Who died in an automobile accident four years before Fadime's own death (Kurkiala 2003, 6).

<sup>40</sup> Through Amina Jamal's (2015) work we learn that the Scandinavian presenter displaying Fadime's corpse and eliciting this white grief was none other than Unni Wikan (55). Not only does this connection make sense when considering the romantic tragedy and neo-imperial rationalism of Wikan text (as seen within this dissertation chapter) but, it also raises questions of how Nordic goodness and white nation-making more broadly relies upon the grievable dead body of the Muslim woman or girl since Wikan is Norwegian. See also Razack's book, *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (2014a) for her explicit critique of Wikan's Orientalist sentiments which uphold "European superiority"; predict "peril" to a Norway that acknowledges the cultures of non-integrable "racial Others"; and, warns of the ingratitude of Muslims amid an excess of European generosity (73)

celebrated in her victimhood. How might the white warmth and solidarity that Razack writes of as saturating the Nordic room be a continuation of the unifying affects that likely permeated Fadime's funeral in Sweden? More broadly, I question how the dead bodies of some Muslim women (or, girls) are employed as objects of a collective grief that affectively reaffirms the boundaries of national collectivity. What work does grief, mourning and horror perform in the practices of nation-making within Canada and Sweden? In what ways are the exalted subjects in either nation affirmed in their values and affirmed as valuable through the Muslim woman's deadness?

In the earliest surge of the U.S. led "war on terror" — in which Canada and Sweden mobilized as allies in defence of "the West" — sentiments of horror were widely articulated in response to the restrictions placed on women in Afghanistan by the Taliban (see Abu-Lughod 2002; cooke 2002; Jiwani 2009). As conveyed in the much cited words of then U.S. First Lady Laura Bush, a sense of horror overwhelmed liberal sensibilities in the face of faceless women: burqa-clad, *sans* make-up, moving in the shadow of male relatives (Jiwani 2009, 732). Not only do "our hearts break" on behalf of oppressed Muslim women but as Bush further bemoans, the Western world is meant to balk at the terrifying illiberal futures prophesied through these women's fate (cooke 2002, 470). Understanding that contemporary Canadian and Swedish discourses on the threat and misogyny of Muslims are, in part, products of the political aftermath of 9/11, the coupled compassion and alarmism voiced by Bush might help to contextualize the utility of the deadened Muslim women's body within these Northern welfare states. Again, I return to the public mourning over Fadime's death in Sweden: here repeatedly invoking the image of the corpse that is in turn used to replenish imaginings of the dangers of foreigners and of Islam. In

the flocking of thousands of Swedes to the macabre spectacle of Fadime's funeral, I postulate that the likely sorrowful outrage that permeated the Uppsala Cathedral is an appendage of horror. If Americans and their Western allies are meant to register horror at the thought of Afghani-Muslim women's repressions, horror can materialize as a civilized response and securitizing reflex. That is, in feeling horror one instructively rejects the "illiberal" acts as being outside of the realm of civilization, while also affectively barricading against its intrusion into "our" national home. Hence, alongside the Swedish sighs of grief over the murdered daughter and lingering moans of alarm over the brutality of the Muslim patriarch, the perimeters of Swedish values are being vigilantly reinforced. Fadime's dead body helps to witness the horror and disturbance of trespassing "cultural" mores that are incompatible with Swedish ideals. Specifically, because gender equality is, as Hellgreen and Hobson (2008) assert, "a marker of the Swedish state identity" and so-called "honour-killings" are employed as a demonstrative contrast for "defining gender equality in Swedish society," a violent misogyny can be emotively quarantined as a foreign import (386; see also Shier & Shor 2016). The Swedish public body can collectively recoil, insulating itself from the alien dangers of alien Muslims.

In this drawing away from a callousness that neither belongs to "us" nor amongst "us," a sense of collectively as a Swedish public can be reified. Following Benedict Anderson's (2006) classic line of reasoning I propose that a community of the exalted can imagine each other through the conviction of a shared fear of Muslims. In a similar manner I here conjecture that this community can in turn unify through a common horror over both the savage slaying and the spectacle of the slain body. Through her memorialization Fadime therefore becomes forever "ours" through death. That is, not "ours" as she who has fully shed her difference since it would

always be necessary to recall her Muslimness and Kurdishness by way of re-invoking the violent Muslim Kurdish Father, the danger of unassimilable immigrants and their cultures, and the attendant threat of Islam. Rather — as Razack (2007b) has shown us and Wikan (2008) confirms through the tragic tone of her scholarship — because the details of her murder and image of her corpse can be readily conjured, horror can constantly reignite through the public memory of her killing. A renewable horror means for this dead Muslim woman's body to be a site upon which white national solidarities can be continually replenished, as an outraged whiteness binds together across the altar of her remains.

Similarly, I argue that grief can also be a recyclable affect that both (re-)produces a communion of the exalted and appeases the neo-imperial desires of possession. In David Eng and Shinhee Han's compelling text "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia" (2003), Sigmund Freud's earliest theories on "mourning" and "melancholia"<sup>41</sup> are employed as a framework for a "de-pathologized" understanding of the feelings that shape migrants of colour's experiences. The authors particularly engage with the melancholic state of "suspended assimilation" that Asian Americans must dwell in as the "ideals of whiteness" remain out of reach (345). Herein, Freud's definition of melancholia is explained as an "interminable grief" since one is unable to "get over" the loss (345). Mourning, by contrast, is described as the response to "the loss of a loved person ... or some abstraction ... such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (345), which includes the process of releasing that which is lost. As such, melancholia is then conceived of as a "mourning without end" (345). Staying for a moment with Freud's logic, I propose that the murdered Muslim girls — thinking specifically here of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia sisters in

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<sup>41</sup> as seen in Freud's 1917 text, "Mourning and Melancholia"

Canada — could be the lost “loved person[s]” mourned by dominant Canadian society whose “hearts break” in reaction to these orchestrated deaths. Yet, with the loss a number of complexities unfold.

First, it could be said that these young women became “loved persons” post-mortem. Again, with the details of Aqsa’s alleged refusal of the hijab and the Shafia sister’s “rebellious” behaviour (circulated by the Canadian press as testaments to the desire to live “normal” Canadian teenage lives) the active integration of the rescue-able Muslim woman is appropriately demonstrable. However, these acts of assimilation are only circulated and celebrated after each teens’ murder. The violent death, and its media pageantry, are then required for these young women to be recognized within a wider national imagination as she who was seeking to become like us. That is, with the proof of their integrating goodness appearing in the wake of death, the teens are located away from the unsalvageable badness of the insistent Muslim woman, who is ultimately ungrievable (as seen with the fourth victim in the Shafia case). As such, the young women enter into (a kind of) personhood and lovability as grievable lives. Even so, Aqsa and the Shafia sisters double as “loved persons” and “abstractions” since with the mourning of loved lives lost, there can also be mourning of the ideals that these teens are made to represent. The abstraction that is mourned is then the ideal of assimilation into the white nation. If the dead teen is understood to have been in the process of fulfilling the ideal, the nation can mourn being deprived of the ideal’s completion. In a sense, this national mourning begins to blur with melancholia since death sanctions a “suspended assimilation” as the process of cultural integration is fractured. It is then whiteness, in this case, that endlessly grieves the failed absorption of the brown

female body into white ideals; even as the assimilating Muslim woman is perceived as symbol of this ideal only once she becomes the lost object.

Furthermore, if grief over the murdered Muslim woman is indeed part of what helps to reinforce the various perimeters of either nation (i.e., (un)acceptable cultural values; white belongings), it is also plausible that the inability to “get over” her loss appears as useful so that melancholia is harnessed as a functional state of feeling. In Uppsala, Sweden a public monument has been erected to memorialize the life (and death) of Fadime. Upon the shrine of this famed victim, one finds a mirror in which their own image can be reflected. In paying affective tribute to the assimilating Muslim woman, the Swede encounters the self. The memory of her death and the lingering public grief re-inscribes the normative Swedish subject: “we” are reminded of who “we” are and all that “we” are not, in the looking glass of a horrifying death. The presumptive violence of “the Muslim” in a sense anticipates that the death of the assimilating Muslim woman is to come. As such, her life perhaps already promises her death which in turn, promises “our” grief (see Ahmed 2010) as well as the national affirmations that follow. A grief that reflects us back to ourselves would thus be a useful feeling that must not be lost along with the loss of life and incomplete assimilation. Rather than withdrawing from this Muslim woman, as the lost “object” and “ideal” (Eng & Hans 2003, 345), her death is grieved again and again at the site of the memorial. Sorrow is refreshed or, remains fresh. This is the recycling of grief. As one witnesses the shedding of their own tears in the mirror of Fadime, they also perform the shedding of the un-absorbable foreign body. That is, the tears of an unconsolable grief performatively discard the savage Muslim patriarch and the unassimilable “veiled Muslim woman.” In turn, the perpetual mourning of the dead assimilating Muslim woman — murdered anew each time the memorial is

visited or the image of her corpse displayed — fixes her in reliable place. Containing her in/ through “our” grief. Satisfying the desires of possession. And, nullifying the prospect of the nightmare by ultimately controlling the haunting.

### **Limits of Assimilation and Mournability: Black Muslim Women**

Notably, in the “honour killing” cases that affectively enthralled a Canadian public the grieved Muslim young women were of Pakistani or Afghani origin; while in Sweden, the perpetually mourned young women were all of Kurdish descent. I thus ask: how might the structures of feeling examined thus far meet their limit in the Black body? Would similar notions of rescue-ability, assimilable potentialities, or a sense of unending grief appear if the Muslim women in question were Black? As Black feminist thinkers explain, Black femininity is often rendered as knowable, invisible, and ultimately disposable within Canadian and Swedish legacies of racial-sexual dominations — particularly as over-reproducing, socially under-productive bodies (Maynard 2017; McKittrick 2006; see also Hübinette & Raterlink 2007). Even as an anti-Black racist and Islamophobic liberal state laments the ways Black and Muslim men “treat their women” (Mbembe 2016, 32; see also Razack 2005), Black women are frequently placed beyond the realm of protection or rescue (Maynard 2017; Ritchie 2017). Reflecting on the subjugating tropes that dictate the hyper-visibility of Muslim women’s pained bodies and the invisibility of Black women’s psychic-social oppressions (Walcott 2003; see also Hartman 1997), I therefore ponder whether the possibility of proving one’s worthiness to be saved and ability to “become” good is equally open to Black Muslim women. Hence, could it be that the knowable Black female body renders Black Muslim women as already possessable and ravished by the voyeuristic gaze? Or, are they

deemed to be inherently deviant and thus discardable to the realms beyond “societal redemption”? Furthermore, if Black women are socially located outside of protectability as the impossible or unredeemable victims of violence, can Black Muslim women become lives worthy of public mourning? Specifically considering the overdetermination of the hijab as a symbol of Muslim women’s presumed oppression and possible saving, I ask: Does the veil on the Black Muslim woman allow her to enter into a conditional grievability? What are the limits to this could-be assimilability and potential mournability when the devaluation of Black womanhood awaits on the other side of the expected un-veiling? It is an answer to such questions as these that the following chapters of this dissertation pursue.

## **Conclusion**

Borrowing largely from Butler’s work on grievability, this chapter has sought to examine how the logics of white nation-making in Canada and Sweden at once, decide the non-mournability of “veiled Muslim women” who refuse to perform appropriate gestures of assimilation and also, rely upon the brutal deaths of those who acquiesce to such assimilatory demands. Directly influenced by theories coming out of anti-colonial and critical race theory scholarship that engage with the tropes of possession and rescue, this chapter proposes that women who remain disobediently fettered to their Muslim veils face an ungrievable death. That is, as retribution for the abjection, deviance, aggression and non-reciprocity read into the body that is insistently and impenetrably shrouded. Although recognized as victims — in keeping with the neo-imperialism of Canada and Sweden — the badness of the stubbornly veiled and thus unassimilable Muslim woman renders her ever open to death and yet, at fault for her own mournless demise. In con-

trast, the un-veiling Muslim woman who appears to subscribe to the affective and physical stipulations for assimilation demonstrates a prospective goodness that also reveals her prospects for national belonging. Thus, as she i. opens herself up to the voyeurism that seeks the power and pleasure of her absolute knowability, and ii. relinquishes her attachments to the terror and intolerance of Islam, Islamist and the Muslim man, the assimilating Muslim woman also begins to enter into the heart of the nation by becoming a grievable subject. As case studies of “honour-killings” in Canada and Sweden convey, however, it is the violent death of this nationally integrating subject that is of greater value than her life within the nation. Always and necessarily murdered by the barbarous Muslim Father or family, her corpse witnesses: the irrevocability of her national possession through the finality of death; as well as the triumphant sacrifice and testament to her allegiance to normative Canadian or Swedish values. It is here, most notably, that the solidarities of a dominant whiteness can both unify through a collective grief that mourns the loss of she who was *becoming like us* and solidify through a sustained fear of “the Muslim” that the horror over her maimed body allows.

Although the final note on Black Muslim women’s possible non-grievability attempts to trouble the conclusiveness of my analyses into the assimilatory potential of veiled or un-veiled Muslim woman, I wish to introduce yet another disruptive reflection even here. Mainly this disruption comprises my own unease with the utility Muslim women’s brutalized bodies are called upon to preform throughout the course of this chapter. Self-reflexively, I therefore ask: How might this very chapter enact a recycling of the corpse that it otherwise seeks to critique? In what ways does this section spectacularize and essentialize said Muslim women’s pain so that the pleasures of the voyeur can continue simply through the reading of these pages? Foremost in my

concern here are the “honour-killing” cases from Canada and Sweden described in unsparing detail. My analyses, questionably, follow in the legacy of the medias’ preoccupation with these women’s or girls’ deaths and, undoubtably, build on scholarly work that has recurrently excavated these same graves through the rigour of social theory. Notably, Eve Haque critically engages with Aqsa Parvez’s murder as a central site of theoretical inquiry in publications from 2010 and as recent as, 2018; Amina Jamal (2015) recounts the killings of both Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia sisters<sup>42</sup> — comparing class differences — in the very same order that I have unwittingly presented them above; and, the account of Fadime Sahindal’s death in Sweden joins that of Scandinavian scholars Wikan, Kurkiala, Hellgren & Hobson as well as those academics theorizing from a Canadian context like myself (i.e. Razack; Mojab & Hassanpour). How then might this piece (and that of those who have come before me) also presume the availability of Muslim women’s deaths in a manner that anticipates, depends upon and instrumentalizes their fatal plight? Are we not, figuratively, holding up each woman’s cadaver to another kind of altar of horror and outrage by being able to interminably recant her suffering and contemplate the dominant discourses that follow in her wake? Is she being mummified for the pleasures of theory, that unrelentingly strives for a closer look? A more knowing gaze? To these questions I do not have a satisfying answer, other than to acknowledge the probability of these faults and to again recall this chapter’s hypothesis, which can be paraphrased as such: the grievability or un-grievability of Muslim women (un-veiled or veiled, assimilable or unassimilable, respectively) witnesses not so much the desire to retrieve or rebuff their sentience but, rather an affective resource by which the white national imaginaries of Canada and Sweden are vitalized. Hence, this dissertation — once again

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<sup>42</sup> mentioning only in passing the death of Rona Amir: the murdered first wife (see Jamal 2015, 61)

— makes reference to the dead because it is precisely upon this repetition that I argue certain structures of nationalism rely.

**Chapter Three:**  
**The (Im)Possibility of Black Muslim Women's Mournability**

How is Black existence — from the very point of gestation — rendered as an inherent instrument of violence and readily instrumentalized by violence, within projects of white nation-making? Do the injuries that are visited upon the, specifically, Black female body register as a hurt that should be made to cease if she is perceived to reproduce terror, precipitate death and be a natural receptacle of suffering? What does this devaluation of Black life, the disregard for Black death, contempt for Black pain, and the mortal fear of Black women's bodies then reveal about Black Muslim women's access to grievability? Can her death inspire an empathic horror, trigger the pangs of national grief or, signify her assimilatory potential in the way of the un-veiled Muslim woman, despite these derisions of Blackness? Throughout the previous chapter, "Chapter Two: Grief, Mourning, and Possession: Exploring the Assimilatory Potential of Muslim Women," I sought to examine the ways some Muslim women (often of Middle Eastern ancestry) might garner entrance into mournable humanity and national belongings. By first exploring the forms of refusal or compliance that relegate women as either assimilable/*becoming good* or, unassimilable/bad, I consider how the corpse of the often, un-veiled and so-called "honour-killed" woman can become the object of white grief in manner that serves the ends of Swedish or Canadian nation-making. It is through the spectacle of her maimed body, I argue, that either white normative nation and its normative citizenry unifies in mourning and its attendant sense of horror; while also seizing hold of an unfaltering possession of the dead and the imminence of a Muslim or Islamic threat. The "honour-killing" cases which I examine are those that have received some of the most media pageantry and scholarly attention in Canada and Sweden over the past decade.

Notably, in each example women are either of Pakistani, Afghani or Kurdish descent. I now ponder whether such (neo-colonial and neo-imperial) investments in rescue, assimilation and the public performance of loss are equally available to the Black body. And even more specifically, to Black Muslim women. It is this query that I seek to take-up in this chapter. What I am probing are the assimilatory im/possibilities for those who do not waver on the line between social death and recognizable human life — in the way that Muslim women of Middle Eastern descent might through Orientalist reasonings — but are, arguably, already situated within the forsaken place of non-life.

In Christina Sharpe's profound text, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), she intimately engages with the contingencies of Black life when lived in relation to death — variably described by Sharpe as: “Black life lived in, as, under, and despite Black death” (20); “Black life ... lived near death, as deadliness” (7-8); and, Black life “produced by the wait toward death” (88). Amidst the imminence of Black demise — which shadows the undead past of slavery and the persistent annihilation of Black life in slavery's “wake” — Sharpe poignantly asks: “[W]ho in fact is in possession of a life that can be saved, because it is clear that in at least one direction Black lives are being destroyed” (86). Invoking Sharpe to draw a mortal line between the possible impossibility or, inconsequentiality of Black pain and the anticipation of Black destruction, I here question the “grievability” (Butler 2009) of a life when death is at once expected, awaited, induced, familiar, unremarkable and ultimately, dismissible. More precisely, I ponder: How can mournability appear as possible when the Black subject persists in such a state of inconsequential mortality? Further, if Black death is not registered as that which matters can we say that the lives lost were ever truly counted amongst the living? Put differently, is the de-

struction of the Black subject the same as the destruction of a human life?

Not unlike a Muslim threat, a fearsome Blackness can be invoked as a necessary point of contrast to a normative whiteness, that helps to reinforce national-cultural and racial borders (see Maynard 2017; Mbembe 2016). Hereby, Black persons can be counted amongst those whose imminent danger to white (national) life must continue to pulsate, even as pangs of grief seemingly would not follow the extinguishing of Black life. If Black subjects are once imperative enemies and yet, calculatedly exterminated (see Sharpe 2016), I am brought to question what national ends the deadened Black subject serves. Are there ways to be made dead and yet, continue to live? Is this the national utility of Black social death: the pleasure of enemy demise while also retaining the proximity of the threatening body? How can Black mournability appear as a possibility if the subject, even before a physical death, exists in a state of deathliness? Again, here would be the construction of Black subjecthood through what Sharpe describes as “the wait towards death” (2016, 88). Furthermore, considering that Black Muslim women would not be exempt from this dread and destructibility of Blackness, does their Muslimness nevertheless mean for them to also be read through the neo-orientalist tropes that decide Muslim women’s “rescueability” (Mamdani 2002)? Do Black Muslim women then enact gestures of assimilation and prospective goodness in ways that might unseat the non-grievability that their Blackness (and thus, anti-Black racism) otherwise makes them subject to? By way of approaching an answer as to whether assimilatory futures and mournable life are indeed open to Black Muslim women it is thus critical to, 1. Interrogate the prospects of Black grievability amidst the deadly contingencies of Canadian and Swedish white nation-making and, 2. Pursue a close analysis of Black womanhood in relation to these specific national imaginaries. In many ways, the global devaluation of

the Black female body that persists in “the wake” of African enslavement (Sharpe 2016) and colonization in itself proffers a hypothesis. The historical speculation on Black non-humanity and exploitability enables me to speculate on Black death. I will therefore consider the lingering of chattel pasts in, the contemporary forms of voyeuristic consumption that dwell on Black women’s pain as well as the fear of Blackness that is situated in Black women’s insides. The danger of Black reproduction. A multiplying enemy. The gestation of the socially dead. I suggest that Black Muslim women’s mournability is conditioned by the same racist discourses that render the Black womb as a site of death — as a death machine.

In the face of Black woman’s disposability (see McKittrick 2006), as the unremarkably dead, I propose that Black Muslim women might have access to forms of social resuscitation into the mores of white national belongings and thus, mourning that are barred to their non-Muslim sisters. Although the act of un-veiling most plainly arises as a means to a witnessable assimilability (see Chapter 2), this gesture<sup>43</sup> is nonetheless potentially undone by the frightful and expendable Blackness that would appear without distraction on the surface of the skin. I therefore argue that the redemptive possibilities available to Black Muslim women continue to invoke Black death, while also relying heavily upon tropes of the victimized and saveable Muslim woman. Firstly, what I suggest is a form of Black death that is either brought about through dilution or as a verbally self-induced elimination. Hereby, the figurative killing of their Blackness becomes a preliminary act for Black Muslim women who seek to enter into the mournability that neo-imperial logics allow us to imagine as being open to the Muslim woman<sup>44</sup> who is *becoming good*. Fol-

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<sup>43</sup> which, in *Other bodies* might point to a burgeoning goodness

<sup>44</sup> again, of Middle Eastern descent

lowing the demise of the Black self through this symbolic severe or suicide, women's Muslimness must eventually also be smothered in accordance with the dictates of assimilation which demand her full possession and refusal of Islam. Promised to accompany the obedient destruction of her Blackness and Muslimness is a re-birth into the body of Canadian or Swedish whiteness, which is always and ever grievable.

### **Black Death: A Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

where black is naturally malignant and therefore worthy of violation; where black is violated because black is naturally violent; where black is naturally unbelievable and is therefore naturally empty and violated; where black is naturally less-than-human and starving to death and violated; where black is naturally dysselected, unsurviving, swallowed up; where black is same and always and dead and dying (Philip 2008, 17)

Borrowed from the epilogue to *Zong!* (2008), poet M. NourbeSe Philip's reading of what is contained and produced by the archives of the TransAtlantic slave trade conveys the violability of Black life, particularly when memorable only in the (incomplete) tally of the dead (18). It is through Philip's work that I can conjecture that Blackness is subjected to terror because it is perceived as that which seeks to torment and catalyze distress. Blackness is open to destruction because it is believed to threaten demise and aims to destroy. Black life is thus figured in relation to suffering, and to death. Clearly influential to Sharpe's (2016) thinking, Philip further describes the deathliness of a Blackness that "originates," "emerges" and finds its "foreclosed" future through death (Philip 18). One of the truths that joins the "liquid death" (Philip 38) of the Africans massacred in the wake of the slave ship *Zong* with the contemporary murders of Black people as taken-up by Sharpe, are claims of necessity. That is, the necessity through which Black death is explained and dismissed, for state and/or capitalist ends. For instance, the necessity of putting captured Black subject-objects to death to avoid the cost of a greater economic loss

(Philip 189). What is lost is then not a life but the insured object that, I would add, held labouring capacities and the promise of a labouring future; and yet, as Philip laments, this object can also be extinguished with impunity in the service of monetary interests (189, 191). A crimeless murder. Inexplicable for me here is that in the imperative drowning of the object-thing, there is nonetheless a breath that can be smothered. Hence, I suggest that the object can emulate the functions of the living (i.e., breathing) without being counted as a life even as it/they can be brought to death: the impossible homicide, of the impossibly human subject. In turn, Sharpe argues that the “ongoing state-sanctioned legal and extralegal murders of Black people” (7) reflects that which is critical to the foundation and sustenance of (U.S.) democracy. Here is the Western liberal state sanctioning death not through homicidal impulse so much as through a murderous imperative. Here is the survival of the nation through the demise of the Black body. What then, I ask, is the value of a Black life when the “premature and preventable death” (McKittrick 2013, 3) is also the death that is pre-mediated, brought forth, and depended upon? And once again, is the destruction of the Black subject equivalent to the destruction of the human subject?

Claudia Rankine’s poignant piece in *The New York Times Magazine*, “On Racial Violence: ‘The Condition of Black Life is Mourning’” (2015), offers a grim yet compelling commentary on the place of Black life, death and suffering. Specifically, Rankine attests that the “white liberal [American] imagination” (n.p.) is that which “likes to feel temporarily bad about black suffering” (Rankine 2015, n.p.). Riffing-off Rankine I thus surmise that the bad feeling of Black suffering is then a feeling that does not stick. Rather, the quotidian character of Black death is that which a white self can *position against* (Rankine 2015, n.p.) and thus, unstick from. For Rankine, however, it is seemingly not only a dying Blackness that appears as both fleeting

and indispensable to the American everyday but also the presence of the “black corpse.” Here is the public display of the deadened body as bleeding spectacle and as a display of the ordinarily grotesque. Most readily Rankine refers here to recent police shootings of unarmed Black boys and men,<sup>45</sup> and the abandonment of their bullet-riddled bodies to the pavement, the elements, and the eyes of any who seek to look. The unremarkable cadaver. Not, as I put forward, in the process of dying or, living towards death but already dead and subject to the imminence of decay. Returning to my question as to whether a life precedes the premeditated death, I refer to Rankine in order to suggest that the anticipation and need for Black destruction allows that Black persons already embody the decay of the corpse before the moment of death. Said more bluntly: the imminence of the slaughtered body transforms Black life into a form of living-death. In this way, I argue, to live as a Black person means to exist in a state of decomposition as one exiled from the realm of the fully human and thus, fully alive. McKittrick (2013) notably contends that life has been “emptied out of” the geographic spaces in which racial others reside so that these terrains are historically rendered as the sites of the “unliveable”; which, in turn, *condemns to death* those who inhabit the places said to be devoid of life (7). How can we then also understand the Black body as a site of unliveability whereby, life has been “emptied” (both through a casting out from the geographies of valuable existence and through the imminence of death) yet, the physical body remains? Is this not then, the “black corpse”? Is this not then, a living death? Before the becoming of the corpse one would logically have first been of the living, after which death follows. Revolting slightly against this commonsensical reasoning, I want to think through the ways the “black corpse” can at times point towards the physical demise of the Black subject-object (as

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<sup>45</sup> i.e., the 2014 fatal shooting of 18 year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, whose lifeless body was left bleeding in the street, face down for four hours (see also Bosman & Goldstein 2014)

part of national imperatives of survival) but, at other moments point towards something else, that is, social death and the abortion from sites of life. It is upon this note of oscillation that I contend that Black death can be figured on the corporeal or somatic level as well as the phantasmic or immaterial.

In his admittedly polarizing reading of Black ontology, Calvin Warren (2018) contends that “blacks” embody a “metaphysical nothing” that at once terrifies and sustains the metaphysical world (5). According to this logic, the violences enacted against Black subject-objects (i.e., shootings, murder, rape, objectification, extermination [6, 9]) are part of the effort to gain domination over the terror of a metaphysical nothingness that threatens to restrict human freedom (6). Black humanity is therefore an impossibility (6) since “blacks” are forms of “equipment” whose domination affirms the “Being for the human” (15). The terror of nothingness is conquered through the destruction of Black bodies — through murder or torment — as human forms devoid of the life of the human (6). From here we are to understand that Black demise confirms and secures the life of the recognizably human so that the terror waged against the Black “form” is critical to eliminate the terror that Blackness represents (21). In this way, Black bodies are merely objects to at once avoid and enact subjugation. Black suffering is, as I perceive it, again called forth. While Black death once more appears as a crimeless murder (Philip 2008) executed against they who are conceived as merely imitating the human as non-human objects that can nonetheless, be made dead.

Moreover, for Warren, it is not that Blackness once was a part of and then removed from humanity rather, this membership never existed (6). It is from here that we can be reminded of Rankine’s “black corpse.” Drawing Warren and Rankine together I therefore speculate that, as

human forms already outside human life Black bodies in a manner operate as corpses that point to a deadness that a white human world seeks to avoid. Again, Black selves persists as the dead and represent, for the living, the dread of dying. The sanctioned Black death that I describe above as the “crimeless murder” is once more nullified, but is done here through the pummelling of the already dead body. The mutilating of the corpse. A necrophilic preoccupation with continuing to draw blood through the brutal fondling of the deadened figure. What nonetheless persists is the contradiction between life and death: the maimed body stands in for the death of the enemy and yet, mortality cannot be said to have preceded the moment of demise. Hence, there is no becoming of the corpse for the Black subject-object since existence begins at the point of death. Thus, in the cringing away from the remains of the non-human, the aliveness of the full human is assured. Even so, the Black cadaver is not simply left to decompose but is preserved as antithetical to the human. Additionally, I suggest that, in their demonstrable deadness the Black body/corpse confirms that terror can indeed be conquered as those who embody nothingness and represent a vacant existence are bludgeoned back and away from the edges of human society. Perhaps taking liberties with Warren’s theory, in all of this I believe we can also interpret white supremacist strategies of nation-making. Hereby, the white human world can figure as the white nation and the full human can stand for a white citizenry. Warren thus offers us metaphysical reasonings for understanding the existing mechanisms that both, invoke Black terror as an instrument to confirm the vulnerability and human sanctity of a normative whiteness as well as justify the governmental forces (e.g. of border control) that implement and reply upon Black demise.

## **Contextualizing the Devaluation of Black Womanhood through the Womb: Reproducing the Dead, Gestating Menace, & Spawning Muslim Barbarism**

Locating Black beginnings at the site of the dead is, I believe, a useful way to comprehend the place of Black woman's bodies within discourses of death, fear and mourning. Such discourses can take a particularly harrowing shape through musing on the reproducing Black female body and Black motherhood. Sharpe (2016) asks us to consider slavery's system of "partus sequitur ventrem" (whereby the Black child is made to assume "the non/being of the [Black] mother") as sustaining an afterlife in the contemporary demonization of Black women and children (15). The "inheritance of non/status" (15) that once converted Black wombs into, what Sharpe calls, "a factory producing blackness as abjection" (74) thus persists in today's fantasies of Black genocide. Herein the Black uterus is located as both the vessel of impending criminality and as a conspicuous site for extermination (see Sharpe 80)<sup>46</sup>. Aborting the awaiting Black terror. A eugenics that anticipates the Black threat. The wish to eliminate the evil before it can emerge from the belly of the Black she-beast. A precursory expelling of the villain growing in the amniotic fluid of the non-human. A monstrous maternity. I wish to return to this birthing of the anticipated threat but, first, what of this inheritance of "non/being" or "non/status"? What of this factory of abjection as it applies to Black death? If Black bodies manifest as the corpses of the eternally dead, what is reproduced by the decomposing body can only be more death. The "inheritance" of nothingness (i.e., non-being, non-status, the metaphysical nothing [Sharpe 15; Warren 6]) is a deathly birthright as the Black child is birthed from the insides of death and born of the dead. Black birth is then an entrance or second coming into death as Black bodies are produced as the dead and

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<sup>46</sup> By way of an example, Sharpe refers to former U.S. Secretary of Education, Bill Bennet's, damning 2005 proclamation: "If it were your sole purpose to reduce crime.... You could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down" (Sharpe 2016, 80).

born as/from the corpse. Black life is then always a still-birth. Black women's wombs are thus not only factories of abjection but, death machines: reproducing the dead, manufacturing corpses. "Bodies are killed, no one dies, corpses are produced" (Goldberg 2009, 173; see also Agamben 1999). The slaughtered are already born dead.

Repeating across scholarly analyses of the fear of Blackness are imaginings of Black bodies as vessels of traveling terror. As such, these bodies are equated with the capacity to corrode the structural harmony of the Western liberal democracies into which they "swarm" and take treacherous hold (see Burman 2007; Mullings et al. 2016; Rankine 2015; Sharpe 2016). Within both Canada and Sweden the benefits of tax funded social services are, in effect, intended to serve and be used by either countries' inhabitants (see Miller 2016, 389). Even so, these very services become indicative of the dangers of a social welfare drain and criminal manipulations when utilized by Black persons (see Mullings et al. 2016, 27). In this way, the Black body is at once a site "emptied" of life (McKittrick 2013, 7) and also contains the terrifying ability to empty the spaces of the living, through the gluttonous depletion of governmental resources. In a nearly twinned image, Blackness therefore torments the livelihood of an "exalted" (Thobani 2007) Canadian and Swedish citizenry through: relentless unemployment, an abusive reliance on social welfare, incorrigible tendencies towards violence and criminal behaviour (Mullings et al. 2016, 27). It is, in part, this prospect of the undoing of white national prosperity that marries these nations' sense of Black terror<sup>47</sup>. When it comes to Black women, however, that which torments and frightens is seemingly located in the insides of the body. A germinating, gestating treachery that

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<sup>47</sup> Mullings et al. (2013) make this precise connection between Canada (Toronto) and Sweden — that is, as two countries sharing a sense of "white melancholy" and the longing to return to the *goodness* (Toronto, Canada) or, "hegemonic white national identity" (Sweden) lost with the influx of Black migrants (28).

is concealed as it lies in wait. What does it mean for the criminality of Black womanhood to be situated in the womb and for the conception of Black life to be seen as that which promises violence? Further, what can be said of the value given to Black life when reproduction foreshadows a danger conceived, nurtured, and delivered from Black women's most intimate bodily parts? That is, where the procreation of Blackness is not only a proliferation of death — the born-dead, the black corpse — but also prophesies an impending peril to the dominant social order. The danger of the fetus. The terror of the Black uterus.

### *A Note on Canada*

The depravity and impending national injury situated in the womb of the Black woman is well illustrated through the immigration case *Baker v. Canada*, which was seen in the Supreme Court in the late 1990s. Richly analyzed by my intellectual forbearers this case is oft cited to elucidate how the criminalization of Black women's fertility is deployed as a measure to secure the white nation (e.g. Aiken & Scott 2000; Browne 2002; Maynard 2017; Ritchie 2017; Wright 2000). Although it does not centre on Black Muslim women, I turn here to *Baker v. Canada* because it remains a palpable signifier for the fear of Black women's reproduction in Canada. As Aiken and Scott (2000) explain, Mavis Baker was a Black woman from Jamaica who came to Canada in 1981 on a visitor's permit (217). Overstaying her permit, she continued to work in Canada as a domestic labourer for the next eleven years, during which time she gave birth to four children. Suffering from postpartum depression following the birth of her youngest child in 1992 (217), Baker eventually came to depend on social welfare for her family's economic sustenance. Ordered deported from Canada in 1997, Baker unsuccessfully applied for a deferment of her depor-

tation by appealing to humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H & C). Upon the rejection of her H & C claim Baker's lawyer requested an explanation. They were presented with the notes of the deciding immigration officer, which contained the following observations:

The [applicant] is a paranoid schizophrenic and on welfare. She has no qualifications other than as a domestic. She has FOUR CHILDREN IN JAMAICA AND ANOTHER FOUR BORN HERE. She will, of course, be a tremendous strain on our social welfare systems for (probably) the rest of her life. There are no H&C [humanitarian and compassionate] factors other than her FOUR CANADIAN-BORN CHILDREN. Do we let her stay because of that? I am of the opinion that Canada can no longer afford this type of generosity (Aiken & Scott 218; *caps in original*).

Here is a migrant Black femaleness that is simultaneously confirmed to be trespassing, duplicitous and conjecturally psychotic. Baker's over-reproducing Black body is bound to plague the Canadian nation and manipulate its benevolence into exhaustion as an unskilled yet, excessively fertile parasite. *A tremendous strain on our social welfare systems*. Presumptively Baker does not produce valuable Canadian and thus human lives but, state liabilities. Greedy spawn of a scheming alien mother (Woodard & Mastin 2005, 273), with inordinate (non-human?) and reckless reproductive capacities. Baker is thus already outside of considerations of humanity or the affects of compassion. *There are no H&C factors*. I would argue that this is in fact a continuation of "the wake" (see Sharpe 2016). The once profitable and cultivated "breeder woman ... of slavery" who was coerced to multiple and "reproduce more slaves" (Woodard & Mastin 2005, 273) is remade as a degenerate body. In slavery's aftermath, she can be accused of illicitly procreating they who can only now be undesirable and yield no gain. Never more will anything of value emerge from this body in the wake of captivity. *Do we let her stay because of that?* Hence, Black women's gall to reproduce in itself becomes the dangerous act. Birthing Blackness is an act of violence. Irresponsible. Irrational. Uncontrolled. Undisciplined. Pregnancy as a criminal urge. Gestating

the Black child becomes a threatening impulse that requires the force of governmentality to stoppage the exploitative haemorrhaging of Canada's benign multicultural heart.

Dorothy Roberts (1997) attests that, from within a U.S. context, social policy has historically maneuvered to regulate the “corrupting tendency of Black motherhood” (8). The dangers of an “unregulated Black reproduction” (8) becomes that which must be curtailed. In this way, Roberts argues, policy aims to manage the “delinquency and despair” inherited by the Black child, who is already doomed by the inheritance of biological inferiority (8). Such is the legacy of Black motherhood. Deviance is passed through the umbilical cord that joins the wretched fetus to their unfit mother. The Black mother is unfit because of her biology. The Black mother is unfit because of her gall to become a mother: insisting on bearing more damaged Blackness. A vandalizing womb that delivers the vandal. Even from (the prospect of) inception, Blackness is a terror to the nation. What is particular to the case of Mavis Baker in Canada, however, is that she represents a deviant Blackness that has come from outside of the nation and remains as an “illegal” yet, demanding occupant. Returning to the words of Jenny Burman (2007), we can therefore deduce that a Black migrant femaleness is constituted in the dominant Canadian imaginary as, “[the] body that can hide, conceal, deceive — as it moves into and out of our national space” (186; see Chapter 1).

Baker is indeed taken to be “oversexed” and thus, sexually perverse as Delores Mullings, Anthony Morgan and Heather Kere Quelleng critically suggest (2016, 31). Taking this argument even further however, I propose that her threateningness is also encompassed by the transnationalism of her undisciplined child bearing. As a foreign terror Baker has an ungovernable capacity to bear children — that is, unleashing the spoiled fruit of her alien womb as she crosses the

Canadian border. What evidently comprises Baker's psychosis — rendering her a “paranoid schizophrenic” for the immigration officer — is thus this irrational and unruly disposition to bring forth more foreign, unwanted bodies into Canadian space. Echoing Charmaine A. Nelson (2010), the “black female body ... [becomes] the site of pathological sexual deviance” (19) with multiplying capacities. We are then to expect that there will inevitably be more pregnancies; more “passport babies” (Browne 2002; see also Maynard 2017, 180); and more reckless excess of inferior life. Again, her reproduction terrorizes as it also outrages the borders of the nation, its rightful citizenry, and the reasonable limits of Canadian humanitarianism. In turn, the “four Canadian-born children” can quite easily be imagined to be extensions of the life-time burden Baker herself symbolizes. The Black child is the annex of the burdensome. The Black child embodies the delinquency, deviance and despair bequeathed by the Black mother.

How do Black Muslim women then appear within these discourses of dangerous reproduction in Canada? Cynthia Wright's (2000) analyses of early 90s anti-immigrant rhetoric that specifically lamented the presence of Somali refugee families in Canada offers a compelling case study on this topic.<sup>48</sup> Most specifically, Wright engages with popular and government publications that reveal the common conflation made between Somali women's supposed immoral sexuality, duplicitous child-bearing practices, loyalty to warmongering Somali Muslim men and the eventual corruption of national welfare. By taking-up journalist and author Daniel Stoffman's

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<sup>48</sup> Somalis fleeing armed conflict and related humanitarian concerns in Somalia (UNHCR 2018) have been granted refugee status in Canada from the 1980s, into the present (Pratt & Valverde 2002). As Anna Pratt & Mariana Valverde (2002) explain Somalis numbered in the “top ten ‘source countries’ from which Canada accepted refugees from 1995 to 1998 (n.p.).

inflammatory article “Dispatch from Dixon”<sup>49</sup> printed in the August 1995 edition of *Toronto Life* magazine<sup>50</sup> Wright conveys how unsubstantiated claims can nonetheless begin to figure into public sentiment of the risks posed by African migration. Although Stoffman’s article rehearses the more general tropes of a welfare system overburdened by unemployed, non-contributing and scheming migrants (43),<sup>51</sup> his attention to Somali women is distinctly gendered in its resentments (45). Specifically, single (unwed or widowed) Somali women are accused of producing large families as they continuously give birth to more children and thus frightfully establish themselves as a “permanent” fixture in white Canadian space through sheer mass (43). Additionally, the bearing of offspring is made to signify women’s immorality or trickery since they are either having children outside of wedlock or else are “bogus single mothers on welfare” lying about their marital status (43, 45). In this latter instance of deception, I read that Somali Muslim women’s reproductive treachery is interwoven with the danger of the Somali Muslim man.<sup>52</sup> That is, the fertility of these Black men would also appear as a source of national peril since they re-

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<sup>49</sup> The title of the article refers to the large number of Somali families who have settled in Toronto and taken up residence in six high rise apartment buildings located on Dixon Road (Pratt & Valverde 2002; Wright 2000). The area and the buildings are criminally stigmatized because of the dense concentration of Somali refugees, presumptively on social welfare assistance.

<sup>50</sup> *Toronto Life* magazine was published in-print (also now, online) on a monthly basis. It reports on local news, while also covering entertainment and lifestyle for a readership that Wright describes as “the city’s upper-middle class” (40). Such an audience, for Wright, would precisely include those persons alarmed by the foreign invasion Stoffman narrates since Somalis would not only be crossing national and racial lines but also, class boundaries by moving into (what Stoffman misleadingly calls) “condominiums” in Toronto (44).

<sup>51</sup> Familiar anti-immigrant sentiments which are neither unique to Stoffman nor to Canada and have been shown to appear in Sweden. Here we can recall the SD’s 2010 campaign ad which dramatizes the plundering of the welfare nation’s state budget by greedy, immigrant, “veiled Muslim women” as well as the Muslim men who hide in the folds of the veil and the children of this dangerously unwholesome couple who promise to increase the treachery of the social drain (Mulinari & Neergaard 2012; see Chapter 2).

<sup>52</sup> From here we can again consider how the “bad” Muslim woman can be presumed to have yielded herself to the loyalties of “bad” Muslim men, so that her presence implies his (see Chapter 2).

main sexually potent, ever ready and able to Father more Black Muslim children. Yet, such offspring are sustained not through the economic means of the Somali Muslim Father but, through the patronage of the Canadian welfare state into which these children are born as citizens. The white nation must take on the role of both reluctant Father and virtuous patriarch. In this way, Black Muslim men can enjoy both the pleasures of their virility as well as a tax-funded social service system, even as they are elusively out-of-sight. In this regard, I propose that part of the menace of the refugee woman from Somalia rests in her willingness to harbour Black Muslim men in the shelter that is her vagina. Dissolute, she can unleash the parasitic bounty of her over-abundant womb and through this progeny secure the welfare cheque out of which these men can continue to fund their war-efforts in a war-torn Somalia (45).

It is in this last conjecture that popular anxieties can be seen to correlate with that of the Canadian government. Stoffman claims that single Somali mothers unify in their financial enterprising by hoarding their many children into unfathomably small rental spaces as a stratagem to maximize on their welfare profits (44). By saving on the costs of housing the excess welfare money is presumed to be, again, funnelled to Somali men to support their “clan warfare” (45). Notably, Wright explains that Stoffman’s suspicion that public assistance dollars are being used to clandestinely finance violence abroad is congruent with a report compiled by the Canadian immigration department’s intelligence unit and leaked to the public in 1993.<sup>53</sup> Derogatory, racist, and highly speculative the report implies that Somali refugees to Canada are not persons sincerely in need of refuge from war but are instead propagators of armed conflict (44). Hence, rather

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<sup>53</sup> The report was compiled during the time of “official crackdown” on welfare fraud under the administration of the New Democratic Party beginning in the early 90s’ and continuing with devastating consequences in Ontario under the leadership of Provincial Premiere Mike Harris as of 1995 (Pratt & Valverde 2002, n.p.).

than maintaining that these Black Muslim lives should be safeguarded from the prospect of a violent death, the legitimacy of their vulnerability is brought under question. It is not the lives of those who beseech the aid of a humanitarian Canada that are at risk; instead, the genuine peril is posed to the vitality of the social welfare system and the white lives it is meant to preserve. To claim that Somali refugees need saving from death is thus suspected as a stratagem to fatally defraud the Canadian government and endanger its citizenry. Concluded to be incompatible with “our western notion of honesty,” “opportunists” in ways that parallel the Roma peoples in Europe, and incomprehensibly steadfast to a worldview informed by Islam, Somalis are understood to be “pillaging” the nation (44-5). Although Somali women are not directly named as the local culprits assisting in this “international organized crime network” (44), the defrauding of “the Canadian people” is located in the “conspiracy” to defraud the Canadian welfare system (44). As recipients of welfare for the support of the ever multiplying Somali family, we are led to discern that women facilitate the pilfering of tax dollars since their interminable spawning of children would license the claim to social services.

### *A Note on Sweden*

In Sweden, there notably appears a Black deathliness in reverse whereby, the existence of the Black mother is extinguished before she can bring forth more Black life. She endures a physical death ahead of being able to bear more of the living-dead. Karin Elebro et al.’s (2007) investigation of maternal mortality amongst East African migrants to Sweden (i.e., Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia) reveals that Somali migrant women in particular make-up a significant number of unreported or misclassified maternal deaths (158, 160). What this study seeks to indicate is that, in the midst of Sweden’s record of having “one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the

world” (160), Somali women are dying of pregnancy related complications at rates higher than what is being reported within the national “maternity mortality registration” (160). The fact of death is being recorded yet, the reason for death slips out of the archive. What is happening in this misclassification? What else is lost along with this already emptied life? Notably, Somalis represent the most despised group of migrants within the Swedish nation (Jonsson 2017; Molina 2018). While Roma peoples are systematically expelled from and rendered as uncountable within Swedish society, Somalis are both the vessels and targets of a recognizable contempt. Readily locatable as migrant Black bodies Somalis epitomize the social dangers of the: manipulative, lazy, infantile and excessively multiplying African refugee (Tesfahuney 2017). Furthermore, as various critical race theory scholars in Sweden explain, Somalis are also taken to represent some of the worst savageries of Islam (Gardell 2017; Tesfahuney 2017). Although it is often women or girls of Kurdish descent who centre as the casualties of Swedish “honour killings” (inflicted by the ever patriarchal Muslim Father or Muslim family [see Chapter 2]), the gendered cultural practices of “child marriage” and female circumcision are reckoned to be barbarous customs that the suppositionally Muslim, Somali has brought along with them into Sweden (Tesfahuney 2017). Already deemed to be irresponsibly fertile drains on the social welfare state, migrants coming from a Muslim majority Somalia thus also become figured within exceptionally backwards manifestations of Islamic practice. Presumptively, these scorned customs would be exercised on Somali girls or women and would align well with the forms of misogynistic injury imagined to be endured by the “oppressed” Muslim female. Even so, it is not clear that a public display of grief or compassionate horror — on behalf of these Black Muslim women — accompanies the rejection of such traditions within Sweden. I thus ponder if women are themselves de-

rided alongside the derided practice. What I am implying here is that it is not merely “child marriage,” female circumcision and those who execute these customs that are held as contemptuous. Rather, she who is subject to these acts might also be subject to a like disdain.

If Somali women are assumed to be Muslim, Black Muslim women who wear the hijab are presumed to be Somali, and it is anticipated that Somali women will wear the hijab (see Chapter 4), I reason that such women are immediately read into the badness of the unassimilable “veiled Muslim women” (see Chapter 2). Despite being susceptible to “barbarous” practices, the migrant Black body of the Somali woman shrouded in Muslim garb predicts that she is beyond any prospect of acculturation into Swedish values — thus, forfeiting her access to public feelings of commiseration. It is then her unredeemable foreignness that at once explains her openness to foreign injury and renders her at fault for her own pain. What inspires horror would not be her suffering but rather, her unassimilability and the cultural wreckage it promises to unleash through an unbridled reproduction. Accurately documenting the maternal deaths of those who, in life, oppose the liberal vitality of Sweden while exploiting the nation’s over-extended goodwill would therefore be a task that holds little value. Hence, what dies along with the Somali woman is, arguably, she who was never meant to have a lasting place within the national body.

Returning to Elebro et al.’s study, it should be noted that these scholars draw quite problematic conclusions from their findings. One takes the shape of a call for greater attention to the “cultural and medical competence” of European health professionals when “caring for non-European immigrant mothers” (153). Another proposes that migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia — who do not appear to face similar rates of maternal death as Somalis — are delivered from this mortal fate due to being “more integrated into Swedish society” (158). Hence, through a death

brought about by the complications of labour these Somali women are, at last, being aborted from the perimeters of both Sweden and Europe. “Non-European immigrant mothers” for whom Europe does not have the institutional capacity to preserve from death. Unmanageable, unfamiliar, unsupportable alien bodies. Moreover, the inability to swiftly or completely integrate into Swedish society becomes a mortal matter. Non-integration evidently puts these Black (presumptively Muslim) migrant females at risk of death. Non-integration, in part, explains their death. Non-integration renders these women, in part, at fault for their deaths. Engaging with Elebro et al.’s primary findings, however, it is evident that what is being erased along with the women’s cause of death is, Black Muslim life. Put differently, it was in the pursuit of bringing forth more Black Muslim life that these women enter into death. Another life was either lost (a double death) or managed to survive in the aftermath of the pregnancy. The lives of both the Black Muslim mother and Black would-be Muslim infant are nullified in the unrecorded maternal death.

If, as Warren (2018) proposes, the violent dominion over the Black subject-object eases the fully humans’ terror of nothingness, I further question how this comforting subjugation might invoke the Black womb in Sweden. It becomes useful here to return to the spectacle of artist Makode Linde’s 2012 Black cake, exhibited at *Moderna Museet* (Modern Museum [of Art]) in Stockholm. The cake itself is a grotesque rendering of a Black woman’s body: legless, splayed on her back, bulging gut, handless with disproportionally small arms that rest on large breasts, and unnaturally elongated neck collared in a gold (tribal?) ring. And then, a minstrel-esque face with fang-like teeth and a red-lipped, gapping mouth. It is out of this mouth that Linde emits desperate screams of a staged pain. Museum guests in turn, cut into the pelvis of this monstrous dessert, revealing its blood red interior. Previously I suggested that the performative cutting,

serving and consuming of this cake permitted a white Swedish public to explore the imagined insides of Blackness (see Chapter 1). Directly following in the analyses of Tobias Hübinette & Lennart E.H. Räterlinck (2014), the cake can appear as an artistically sanctioned reckoning with the Black Other as both object of “discomfort” and signifier of “forbidden” colonial or race-biology desires (506, 508). Yet, how might the ample stomach of the cake also represent the bloated abdomen of the ever-pregnant Black migrant woman? How might the heavy breasts reference the outrage of the inordinately fertile and thus forever lactating Black female body?

I continue to contend that the carving of the cake’s pelvic region does indeed metaphorically convey a white Swedish examination of the foreign interiors of what is at once a troubling and fascinating Blackness. However, I wish to push this thinking a bit further. In the act of serving the cake to an awaiting white art audience there is the sectioning and slicing away of the Black female form’s genitalia, which eventually also includes a butchering of the lowest reaches of the protruding stomach. What I propose to be enacted here is the mutilation of the most terrifying and terrorizing part of the Black female migrant’s body: the womb. In destroying the uterus (along with all sexual organs) the white Swedish subject pacifies this reproducing danger and verifies their dominion over that which threatens the fully human, the full citizen, and the welfare state. The carving of the cake also stages the wombs removal as it is quite literally offered-up on plates for white consumption. In this extraction and devouring, the Black womb is no longer possessed by the frightful Black female body but becomes a possession of whiteness and of the white body. Finally, the white body will forever expel this mollified threat in the form of excrement. The Black womb is consumed and then transformed into the faeces of the exalted. Revolting. Necessarily discardable. In defacing the source of more Blackness the following is

achieved: the lurking and criminally destined fetus is aborted before it has the chance to emerge; the Black woman's reproductive excess is at last controlled; and, the mutilated mother presumptively dies from the knife wounds. A demise not recordable as a maternal death. Notably, some commentators argue that the cake itself and thus the cutting of the figure's genitalia is meant to reflect Sweden's opposition to "female genital mutilation" since "Sweden cares *a lot* about female genital mutilation, [which is] a traditional practice in parts of Africa" (Fisher 2012, n.p.). Yet, as Patricia Lorenzoni (n.p.) has explained, the artist Makode Linde has never been directly quoted expressing such sentiments of "concern." Even so, what are we to make of a national effort to draw awareness to female genital cutting, as performed on pubescent girls, through the mutilation of the minstrelized African woman? If Somali women are associated with this foreign practice, as part of the savageries of both Islam as well as a tribal Blackness, I contend that are we can also imagine that the white Swedish audience is performatively brutalizing the already despised and backwards migrant Somali Muslim woman. The very act that is deemed irreconcilable with Swedish liberal values is invoked to tame she who is both subject to and threatens to spawn more barbarism.

### **Black Pain**

In the spring of 2018 I gave a guest lecture in the Gender Studies Department at Uppsala University, Sweden. I presented an analyses of the Black cake, similar to that found above, along with images from the exhibition. My audience responded with open disgust to the images; visibly shuddering with contorted faces as my analyses of the exploration and subjugation of Black women's dangerous interiors unfolded. Yet, in the effort to convey the quotidian nature of consuming Blackness in Sweden I also argued that the act of staring can be read as another means of

violently devouring Black women's bodies within the spaces of the everyday (e.g. sidewalks, public institutions, shops). What I proposed is that the white gaze also performs a kind of visual eating as well as racist surveillance (see Browne 2012; Carby 1992) as Black women become available objects of an authoritative and Othering spectatorship on the streets of Stockholm<sup>54</sup>. In a room peopled almost completely by Swedish whiteness, this analyses of staring was first met with a heavy silence and then with a request to return to images of the cake. The audience wished to again see the horror from which they could, arguably, viscerally separate themselves from and thus affectively confirm their anti-racism. Inadvertently, the pained Black female body was invoked once more for white Swedish ends. Considering the cultural controversy that followed Linde's exhibition, images of the cake would likely have been well known to most, if not all, members of my audience. A wish to return to this familiar spectacle of a grotesque and suffering Black femaleness nonetheless filled the space. Had they forgotten? Was this an illustration of the "present desire and compulsion to disremember such monstrously intimate scenes" that Sharpe writes of (2010, 5)? Perhaps I was then witnessing a compulsive disremembering of the monstrosity of a disfigured Blackness (the cake), followed by the desire to re-encounter the brutalized female form through its re-exhibition. Lingering on the spectacle of suffering. Prolonging one's own mortification.

Reflecting once more on Rankine's assertion that the white liberal imagination "likes to feel temporarily bad about black suffering" (Rankine 2015, n.p.), I question whether this fleeting "bad" feeling that visits whiteness in the immediacy of Black pain is married with the desire for this suffering to cease? It could be that, through their open disgust my audience publicly demon-

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<sup>54</sup> a theme I explore with greater depth in chapter four

strated their refusal of the exhibitions most overt racist exploitations. The “bad” feeling of their discomfort (along with its public display) plausibly works to affirm that they themselves would not have found fraternity in the white laughter that accompanied the cutting of the screaming cake (see Hübinette & Räterlinck 2014, 506). Even so, the representation of Black suffering is nevertheless repeatedly called upon in order to access and convey this anti-racist unease. Similar to the maimed body of the resistively Muslim girl being that which reflects a mourning whiteness back to itself (see Chapter 2), the white Swedish subject again encounters the best parts of the self through a pained Blackness. I must again ask: Does the recognition of Black pain necessarily mean to seek its end? Notably, Kelly Macías (2015) estimates that in contrast to the empathy dominantly triggered by white women’s sorrow, the tears of the “less than human and less feminine” Black woman simply “make[s] others uncomfortable” (260). Contemplating Macías words alongside this encounter with a roomful of white discomfort, I further inquire if a sense of unease in the face of Black suffering is the same as a sense of compassion?

Thinking through the neo-imperial stipulations, reproduced within Canadian media coverage, that render some Muslim women as rescuable victims Yasmin Jiwani (2009) compares the near invisibility of violence against Black women. Making reference to the observations of Scot Wortley (2002), Jiwani explains that in Toronto, Ontario news stories of Black women’s experiences of intimate violence typically receive little consideration and are often relegated to the back pages of print media (731). As explanation for this neglect we are to understand that, “[n]ews coverage... focus[es] on those stories that ideologically make ‘sense’” (731). Speculating on the marginality of Black women’s suffering we perhaps could locate this ideological senselessness in: the impossibility of a Black female victim and thus an expulsion of Black

women from the realms of rescue-ability; the divorcing of Black womanhood from femininity; the general dismissibility of Black pain; as well as, the *ideological nonsense* of feeling compassion for a non status/non-being Blackness. In the midst of the negligible reportage of Black women's distress in Toronto along with the request to return to images of the pained cake in Uppsala, we nonetheless see that there is clearly something intriguing about Black women's suffering. What is contained in this intrigue must then be put to question. Saidiya Hartman's (1997) work proves useful once again for considering the complexities of the dual invisibility and hyper-visibility of Black pain. Hartman states that the spectacle of the suffering and captive Black subject-object is that which readily incites the identification of the viewer (20). What is at risk in the midst of this violent imagery, for Hartman, is the "condition of pained embodiment" becoming the naturalized state of the sufferer (20). As Hartman goes on to explain, feelings of identification problematically seek to "bring pain close" in a manner that at once exploits the display of the pained body, confirms that this pain belongs on the plain of the "spectral," and also renders the actual feeling of pain as incomprehensible or unwitnessable (20). The sentience and humanity of the suffering Black body is thus refused (20). Hence, even as the imagery of the tortured Black female form inspires a shocked disgust and the details of Black women's torment enters the edges of the printed page there can be argued to be something fitting, natural or commonsensical to this pain.

In answer to my reoccurring question we could surmise that, the (white) discomfort triggered by the depiction of violence against the Black female body therefore does not emerge from a sense of injustice or empathy that seeks to bring this suffering to a close. Instead, such feelings of unease possibly indicate that this pain is not meant for the self that witnesses it. The shock of

the grotesque could therefore be that which expels such suffering from the realm of the exalted wherein the display of violence allows the normative subject to declare: *This is a pain that does not belong to me*. As such, the violences against Black woman can be merely noted in passing by the Canadian media as a pain that is at home in the already defiled body. The naturalness of Black women's suffering might then comfort the normative Canadian subject as they can rest assured that these wounds are not their own. There is then no need to linger on such ordinary violence. In the case of Sweden, by "bring[ing] pain close" (Hartman 1997, 20) through the initial exhibition of the cake and the contingent request to see its imagery again and again, the whiteness in the room (of the art gallery, the seminar, and ultimately the Swedish nation) can find identification with the self through an affective dissidence, across the gore of the pained Black body. As such, when Black women cause injury to an exalted white subject/nation through the dangers of their deviant death-wombs part of the outrage would be that they have brought pain upon those for whom it is not meant. The white normative Swedish subject is, of course, capable of feeling pain considering that the sentience of the white body in itself would never be challenged (see Lee Gerden 2018). Yet, pain's appearance when administered against the white body by a non-status/non-being Blackness (i.e., the pain of vulnerability, manipulated good will, monstrous fertility, and the threat of nothingness) is that which is readily witnessable as a trauma and cruelty that should desist.

Black women can indeed be counted among "the invulnerable bod[ies] of colour" that Mara Lee Gerden (2018) describes as having to endure the most heightened and bloodied violences before their pain can be even minimally recognized by the white (Swedish) viewer (19; see also Trawalter et al. 2012; Silverstein 2013). Yet, because the Black body is that which *is*

meant to suffer I also argue that, it is to the Black body that suffering belongs. Pain is part of the monstrosity of Blackness. Accordingly, it does not make “ideological sense” (Jiwani 2009, 731) to dwell on the violences visited on Black women in Toronto (and Canada at large) as though this pain were out of place. It makes absolute sense for this body to be in pain. Yet, it is senseless to grieve her suffering. Of the brutalized and captive Black body Hartman writes, “the materiality of suffering regularly eludes (re)cognition by virtue of the body's being replaced by other signs of value, as well as other bodies” (1997, 21). Taking into account the dismissibility of Black women’s brutalizations in Canadian media I thus query if her pain and pained body are indeed being replaced by “other signs of value.” Again, I contend that the suffering Black woman signifies the destruction of she who terrorizes as well as burdens the nation hereby, it is probable that her pain is replaced by a wider sense of relief. The value with which the suffering Black female body is replaced is the value of retribution. Moreover, we can speculate that the marginality of her suffering creates more space for those whose torment can really be made to matter: the rescuable Muslim woman.

### **The Mournability of Black Muslim Women?**

“Grief, then, for these deceased others might align some of us, for the first time, with the living” (Rankine 2015, n.p.).

I return here to my initial query as to how mournability and the promises of assimilation become available to Black selves, particularly when considering the forms of social, bodily and existential alienation examined thus far. Specifically, I ask how Black women become apprehended as precarious lives (to borrow from Butler [2009]) and integrable national subjects amidst the fixed deathliness of Blackness and suffering of Black womanhood. Under what circumstances would

the death of a Black women allow her to be grieved in a manner that would — in the words of Rankine — “align [her] ... with the living” (2015, n.p.)? How does her death become something more than a “nonevent” (Hartman 2008)? Nelson’s (2010) examination of the portrayals of the Black female body in early twentieth century Canadian art notes the legacies of European imperialism in a “visual culture” (20) that depicts Black woman as both sexually deviant (19) and sexually accessible (23-25). Interestingly, Nelson explains that in white Canadian painter Dorothy Steven’s work *High Yellow* (n.d.) we see how the Black woman can become a subject of repute when she is dislocatable from a full blackness (30). The subject of Steven’s portrait can be read as confining her otherwise deviant sexuality to the moralist realm of heteronormative wedlock (as hinted through the presence of her wedding ring[30]); while, the fairness of her skin visibly references proximity to whiteness.<sup>55</sup> Nelson thus writes that this subject is “an embodiment of the desirable black body in the west that is historically never fully black” (30). Engaging with Nelson, I ponder whether Muslim identity might socially function as a diluent for Blackness. Hereby the bodies of Black Muslim women could reference a Muslimness that positions them as not “fully black” and thus not immediately dismissible to the regions of an unretrievable humanity in the way of the “black corpse” or Black death machine. A Muslim self might then be what enables Black women to gain proximity to the white nation and enter into the forms of mournability made available to the demonstrably rescuable, integrating Muslim woman. Muslim identity would necessarily have to be that which dissipates a full Blackness.

What is perplexing about this logic however, is that even as the Black self dilutes, one’s Muslim identity is also meant to eventually endure a process of elimination. As I explored else-

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<sup>55</sup> “High yellow” refers to a Black person with a light skin tone — a description that persists in the after-life of slavery and the plantation.

where (see Chapter 2), the Muslim woman who enters into grievable life and can be incorporated into the national body must first perform witnessable acts of assimilation into the mores of a Canadian or Swedish white normative culture. Such acts can be understood to include the rejection of her Muslimness as she instead reaches towards either white nation (i.e., seeking to become one of “us”; opening herself up to become “ours” [see cooke 2002; Jiwani 2009]). It is this properly integrating refusal of the Muslim self that is sometimes conceived to bring about her martyred death and thus sanction a national grief that can affirm her national membership, post-mortem. If women with a dissolving Blackness are to seek a place within the realm of national belongings and mournable life (and thus, recognizable and valued existence) it follows that they must also demonstrate their integrative potentials as the rescuable Muslim woman who compliantly disrobes. That is, she is to let both her veil<sup>56</sup> and her Muslim identity fall in tatters at the feet of the nation. What then is left of the self? Or, what does the self become or, become re-born as in the aftermath of this shedding? It is through case studies of two Somali Muslim women taken from major national news outlets as well as right-wing media, in Canada and Sweden, that I seek to address such queries.

### **Dissipated Blackness and the End of the Muslim Self: Case Studies**

In an article from CBC Radio (Canadian Broadcasting Company) headlined “Meet the Somali mom of 5 who just started doing stand-up” (Chiwetelu & Dineen 2018, n.p.) we find the following snippets of dialogue:

*Mayran Kalah knew she was funny at a young age. But growing up in Somalia, she saw that other girls were discouraged from expressing themselves.*

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<sup>56</sup> i.e., considering that un-veiling continually appears as an assimilatory prerequisite

*It wasn't until she was an adult living in Canada that Kalah truly realized how much she enjoyed being on stage and making people laugh.*

*When she arrived here at 16, she didn't speak a word of English.*

*Kalah's humour is rooted in her life story — like her career transition from goat herder to interpreter, or her experiences first arriving in Canada and learning English.*

*“Over the years — because I was from war-torn country I thought ‘I will not judge anybody’ ... because I will want you to do that for me.”*

*“I want to connect with people, make people laugh, put people at ease”.*

Mayran Kalah's narrative is fascinating on numerous levels, particularly as it allows us to speculate on the metamorphosis of the integrating subject in Canada. Notably absent from this story is any explicit reference to Kalah's Blackness or Muslimness rather, she is most readily identifiable as a once-Somali national, now refugee to Canada. Yet, there are ways that the residue of these unarticulated identities appear. We can locate leftovers of a dangerous Blackness in the violences and pain from which she is described to come (“I was from [a] war-torn country”); the deathly excesses of the Black womb can be revealed in the titled reference to her motherhood and large number of children (“Somali mom of 5”); and, in the acknowledgment of her African origins which we can locate as a site of familiarly massacred Black life (see Philip 2008). It is nonetheless foreseeable that an alignment with the terror of Blackness is lost through the signposts of her rescue-ability and capacity for “cultural integration” (Zine 2012). As a Muslim-majority country, Kalah's Somaliness renders her as presumptively (though, unspokenly) Muslim. In turn, we can readily conjure the misogynistic Muslim father or family and the suppressed autonomy of the liberalizing Muslim girl in the mention of her silenced humour (“growing up in Somalia ... girls were discouraged from expressing themselves”). Although brief, this story allows us to imagine the brutalities from which Kalah has been saved. A Muslim, teenage, asylum seeker

whose early longings speak to her previous unfreedom as well as her present assimilatory potential.

Hence, in adulthood, she is neither the Muslim subject nor does the prominence of her Somali-refugee past seem to draw her (back) into the non status/non-being of the Black body. Instead Kalah is re-cast or, re-born as the properly integrating subject. The testament to her appropriate re-making and demonstrable goodness are therefore witnessed in: her work as an interpreter, the learning of English, and the desire to diminish a public's anxiety ("I want to ... make people laugh, put people at ease"). Here is the relinquishing of the savage trade (i.e., goat herding), the foreign tongue, and the threat of the alien Other as Kalah seeks to become "like us" (see cooke 2002, 469; Jiwani 2009, 736; Kassam 2011, 560). It is significant that Kalah's plight as refugee — fleeing a place of patriarchy and civil unrest — can be readily recounted for a Canadian public audience. The retelling of this trauma continually assures a dominant "us" of the legitimacy of her rescue by "our" nation. Put differently, each detailed recounting of the foreign dangers from which she has been saved renews Kalah's authenticity as a saveable subject. While her asserted desire to appease those around her — shedding the foreign — illustrates her aptitude for "societal redemption" (see Jiwani 2009) and commitment to the conditions of the rescue: a pacifying integration. Paired with Kalah's narrative on CBC is notably a photo of her as young woman. In the visibly aged photograph she has short windblown hair and wears jeans and a t-shirt as she looks sultrily into the camera; an image we can imagine to capture her early days of asylum. However, we are also presented with more recent photos of Kalah in which she wears a headscarf that completely covers her hair. It is not clear whether this scarf is a hijab, but its presence allows us to ponder: Is this a lingering of the forsaken and unspoken Muslim past? Is this a

faltering of appropriate national loyalties? Considering the terms of assimilation, what I am asking here is whether the emergence of the headscarf can be taken as a symbol of the integrating subjects incomplete transformation? What would its unequivocal completion look like?

Mona Walter, in Sweden, perhaps offers one of the most explicit examples of what the irrevocable adaptation into the values of white nationhood can mean. Walter's refusal of aspects of her pre-Swedish self can be read in her candid abhorrence of Islam and (Somali) Muslim migrants, as seen in the following interview extracts:

*"I discovered Islam first in Sweden. In Somalia, you're just a Muslim, without knowing the Koran.... I didn't know what I was a part of" ... "So, when I found out, I was upset" .... It was in Sweden that Walters says she discovered Allah is a god who hates, and that Islam is not a religion of peace. (Hurd 2016, n.p.)*

*"Muslim women don't have freedom of religion. They live under the law of Allah, not under Swedish law." ... Walter warns that Islamic radicalism is a serious threat in Sweden, and says Swedish society should care more about women trapped in Islam. (ibid.)*

*She wanted to show us Muslim areas around Gothenburg, but had to first dress as a Muslim. She believes if she were to show her face, she would be attacked.... "I would never get out of there alive," she said. (ibid.)*

*...the teachings they [Somali youth] get in mosques, where they are told that they should hate unbelievers. Therefore, they also commit crimes caused by hate. Their [Somali] parents do not want to integrate and do not allow them to integrate with kafirs (infidels) (Osten-Sacken 2018, n.p.)*

*There is a choice. The Swedish system supports people so much.... We cannot just wonder why Somali criminals are what they are; we must ask ourselves: why are they not like us? (ibid.)*

*The creator [the Prophet Muhammad] of this ideology [Islam] was a criminal ... who said that killing people brings glory. How can we open borders for such an ideology? As we do not know who is coming to us, we must be very careful, especially since we see what happened to Christians in Muslim countries. (ibid.)*

*People keep telling me, "How can you say such things, if you are an immigrant yourself?" But I am not a danger for people living here. Many of the newcomers would cut off my head. I escaped from the Sharia regime in the Swedish suburbs. (ibid.)*

Having come to Sweden as a teenage asylum seeker from Somali, in adulthood Walter has become an anti-Islam "activist." Her rhetoric is readily taken-up by both right-wing as well as

mainstream media outlets<sup>57</sup> as testimony to the impending threat Islam and migration pose to Sweden — validated by the insights of this ex-Muslim Swede (see Carlqvist 2018; Chesler 2015; Hurd 2016; Osten-Sacken 2018; Taylor 2015). There is, of course, much that is curious about Walter’s story as well as with her use of Islamophobic, racist, and xenophobic discourses.

The attested nominal nature of Walter’s Muslimness allows her to credibly and deliberately separate herself from the evils of Islam. Hence, she can deny having had a willful or informed allegiance to Islam. Correspondingly, Walter demonstrates the swiftness of her integration into normative Swedish society since she learns to spurn this “hateful” religion shortly after her admittance into the nation. Interestingly, Walter’s prompt detachment from Islam was followed, as she describes it, by a brief period of atheism before her ultimate conversion to Christianity (see Hurd 2016; Sveriges Radio 2015; Taylor 2015). Walter not only sheds, what she declares to be an inherently violent and backwards Muslimness — a declaration that in itself could be enough to become the appropriately ex-Muslim — but she also enacts a religious conversion in tandem with her cultural conversion. I wish to pause here to ask: What is happening in these processes of conversion? What national assurances do such forms of re-making offer?

Mattias Gardell (2018) notably explains that Sweden is, at root, a Christian country (n.p.). We can thus deduce that Walter abandons a threatening foreignness that is incongruent with national values. Yet, she witnesses her capacity for cultural integration even further by willfully entering into — what is in Sweden — the religiously familiar. Unlike Kalah in Canada, any risk of Walter’s backwards slide into the dangerous incompatibility of Muslim identity (a hazard that was perhaps not wholly resolved with atheism) is nullified through her entrance into Christianity.

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<sup>57</sup> As reflected in various interviews or online editorials I analyzed, that span from 2015-2018

Any fidelity to an Islamic past is eliminated. Previously I proposed that an assimilating and thus resistantly Muslim, Fadime Sahindal, became a grievable national subject whose death could be mourned in the Lutheran vespers of the Swedish church (see Chapter 2). Walter's conversion to Christianity, in turn, appears to be part of the effort to enter into these vespers of national recognition. That is, religious conversion enacts the death of the Muslim self as she is re-born as a legitimate Swedish subject. Achille Mbembe's (2016) poignant remarks on the destruction of the self through suicide are worth quoting here at length. Mbembe writes, "To willingly relinquish one's existence by giving death to oneself is not necessarily to make oneself disappear. Rather, it is to willingly abandon the risk of being touched by the Other and by the world" (27). And further, "The killer kills himself [*sic*] while killing others.... [H]e disposes of himself, and disposes of some enemies as he does so.... [D]ischarg[ing] himself of what he once was and of the responsibilities that as a living being were once his to attend" (27). Drawing on Mbembe we can suggest that in *relinquishing the existence* of her Muslim identity Walter is not seeking an end to the self altogether. Rather, she removes the threat of being tainted by affiliation with this Otherness. *Discharging of what she once was*. In turn, Walter's continually verbalized repudiation of Islam, Muslim migration, along with her evangelical attempts to teach Muslims in Sweden "the truth about Islam" (see Hurd 2016, n.p.), performs the effort to dispose of the enemy along with the deadened parts of the self. Diverging slightly from Mbembe, however, I would contend that the result of these disposals is not Walter's relief from the "responsibilities ... [of] a living being" but, quite the contrary. By "giving death" to the Muslim self Walter can, at last, enter into the realm of the living.

Yet, even as Walter's Muslim identity is put to death so that she can be re-born into the life of the assimilated and mournable subject, Muslimness must be made to linger. Although her rejection of Islam and conversion publicly confirms that she is indeed rescuable Walter continually renews her need for protection through the reiterated claim that Muslim migrants pose a threat to her life. "I would never get out of there alive" (Hurd 2016, n.p). Because her life is threatened by the violence of the Muslim outsider, it should be recognized as a life that must be protected from threat. Without access to the forms of mournability that weave the body of the Arab or Kurdish "honour-killed" Muslim woman into the fabric of the nation, Walter replaces the savagely murderous Muslim Father with a murderously inclined local Muslim populace. "Many of the newcomers would cut off my head" (Osten-Sacken 2018, n.p.). Hence, Walter borrows from the familiar tropes of the oppressed Muslim woman to demonstrate her precarity and saveability — even as an ex-Muslim. However, Walter also plainly indicates her "likeness" to the normative white Swedish subject by presenting herself as vulnerable to the same dangers that plague the nation. Thus, reminding us: "I am not a danger for people living here" (Osten-Sacken 2018, n.p.). Despite "dress[ing] like a Muslim" for Swedish media (which presumptively means to have donned a hijab) we are never left to wonder whether such garb signifies Walter's re-entrance into Islam or reflects her faltering national loyalties, as might be otherwise in the case with Kalah in Canada.

And what of Walter's Blackness? Similar to the example of Kalah, Walter's once-Muslim (now assimilated) status appears to dilute if not, erase her connection to the non/being of an un-grievable Blackness. Walter's Blackness is also notably absent from media narratives. Even so, I question whether her overt disregard and criminalization of Somali migrants reflects an effort to

distance herself from the menaces of Blackness that still threaten to take hold through her own African refugee past. How then might an already dead Blackness be brought to slaughter once more for the benefit of the integrated ex-Muslim? Again, Somalis in Sweden are often depicted as those responsible for some of the worst drains on the social welfare state: excessive fertility, chronic unemployment, and transporters of barbaric gender violences (Jonsson 2017; Tesfahuney 2017). In continually deriding Somalis in Sweden for their supposed propensity for violence, refusal to integrate, and abusive culturally informed parenting practices (see Osten-Sacken 2018, n.p.) Walter can erect silos between those still committed to the backwardness of an African elsewhere and, herself. Such are the barbarities from which she comes, was once ignorantly imprisoned by, but is no longer. Walter's integration into Sweden can become plain as the vices of the non-integrating Somali parasite are called up and condemned. In this sense, the badness and unassimilability of Somalis must be made to continue so that it remains demonstrably clear what Walter is not.

I further ponder if there are certain promises that Walter is making or enacting through her contempt. While these African refugees are understood to threaten the death of the social welfare system and also represent the dead,<sup>58</sup> I question if Walter's ridiculing leverages the assurance that she will not reproduce death. That is, anything coming from her integrating body would be neither Somali/African nor Black<sup>59</sup> but, Swedish. Hence, her decrying of the burdensome African refugee preemptively aborts Blackness. We can be satisfied that Walter will not reproduce a violent Black non/being because she has already mutilated and thus sterilized her

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<sup>58</sup> i.e. those originating from sites of death and whose futures anticipate their deaths (see Philip 2008; Sharpe 2016)

<sup>59</sup> and, of course, never Muslim

Black womb — terminating its deathly potential through her loathing and rejection of the unasimilated. It is then not only the incompatibility of the dangerously fertile uterus and criminally inclined fetus that are being eliminated through such contemptuous denials, but also the abortion of the once-Black or African refugee self. To be re-born as a Swede also then means to have cast-off the Black husk of an “emptied” life (see McKittrick 2013, 7). As an ex-Muslim and ex-African refugee Walter saves herself from death by entering into the life of the white nation. The verbal bludgeoning of the Black threat that one cannot be also, in a manner, performs an act of care. Specifically, Walter demonstrates her concern for and loyalty to the white Swedish family as she dispels their unease by bringing the threatening parts of the self to slaughter.

### **The Haunting of the Dead**

Contemplating the pleasures of “cross-cultural dressing” Mary Ann Doane (1991) suggests that there is something gratifying for the white female subject in knowing that the garb of the foreign body can be worn but then at any moment, removed as they return to the supremacy of whiteness. It is a comfort to know that even as one “play[s] around” (see Brand 2001, 38 in *Sharpe 2010, 122*) in the body of the dark Other, “‘white skin’ awaits underneath” (Doane 528). How might these same pleasures of disrobing not appear as available to the re-born, integrated subject? In what ways might the non-mournability of Blackness continue to haunt the ex-Muslim who cannot cast off the brownness of their skin even as they enter into the white national body? Kalah and Walter’s integrative acts, in varying degrees, dissipates their Blackness and proffers a means of entering into recognizable existence. What I want to question here however, is whether their mournability “sticks” to their bodies even before or, without the articulation of their narra-

tives of rescue and assimilation. Thinking specifically of either woman's movements through the public spaces of the Canadian or Swedish everyday, is it not reasonable to presume that their brown bodies would first be read as Black by the normative white spectator? Do these women then continually re-enter into the deathliness of the Black corpse until the story of their national re-birth or evidence of an aborting contempt can be recited?

In her compelling text *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (2008), Avery Gordon explains that haunting and the materialization of the ghost indicate that “what's been concealed is very much alive and present, interfering precisely with those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed toward us” (xvi). Gordon further elaborates that haunting is “an animated state in which ... the over-and-done-with comes alive” (xvi). In tandem with these analyses, we can then surmise that in the moments that proceed the integrated subjects' witnessable acts or pronouncements of assimilation (i.e., proofs of becoming “like us”; a verbalized contempt for African migrants) a deadened/deadly Blackness repetitively reappears. Hence, the Blackness through which their skin is read in the spaces of everyday is a phantom of the aborted self; the spectre of that which they must not be. If the Black subject-object is indeed not countable amongst the living, the re-emergence of this smothered self would not represent an “over-and-done-with” that has “come alive” (Gordon xvi) but instead, a haunting by the perpetual corpse. Kalah, Walter and others like them would therefore have to exorcise the Black ghost each time it threatens to “interfere” with their hold on an integrated life. The perilous Blackness read off the skin must be continuously expelled and replaced by the re-made subject, before it can fully draw the converted back into the shadowed regions of the living-dead.

## Conclusion

Taking-up Sharpe's (2016) profound analyses of the destructibility of Black life in slavery's "wake" in conjunction with Butler's notion of grievability, this chapter meditates on whether Black existence can indeed be recognized as mournable when Black death is so often induced, familiar and thus unremarkable within the Western liberal nation. Engaging specifically with the ontological and metaphysical contingencies of white nation-making in the Northern welfare states of Sweden and Canada this chapter queries into the ways Black woman's bodies, in general, and Black Muslim women, in particular, figure within national discourses of death, fear, and assimilation. By examining how Swedish and Canadian forces of governmentality are violently wielded against a criminalized Black reproduction, I suggest that the Black womb (Muslim and non-Muslim) is made to signify that which threatens to bring about the death of these white nations and is thus, abortively disciplined ahead of being able to bear more of the living-dead. In the face Black woman's deathliness, this paper considers how Black Muslim woman might have access to forms of mournability, human recognition, and national belonging barred to non-Muslim Black women. Analyzing case studies taken from Swedish and Canadian media, I propose that Black Muslim women become mournable as the suicidal subject. That is, through the witnessable assimilatory act of self-slaughter I argue that these women at once dissolve their Blackness, sterilize the Black womb, and eventually relinquish their Muslim identity so that they can be, conditionally, re-born into the white national body. Yet, even with this killing of the Black self and refusal of their Muslimness, difficulties nonetheless arise. Mainly, the deathliness of Blackness likely persists upon the surface of the skin in the moments before and after the witnessable suicide so that, proximity to grievable life requires a constant reenactment of the inte-

grating slaughter. The threat of unmournable Blackness haunts those ex-Black/ex-Muslim women who seek recognizable existence. Moreover, because death is sought-after and celebrated, we are still left to ask: When do Black Muslim women's lives become grievable?

**Chapter Four:**  
**Assimilation's Painful Pedagogy in Sweden:**  
**Humiliation, Prying, Shame and the Regulation of the Black Muslim Female Subject**

In her incisive text, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (2000) Sharon Patricia Holland has us consider the necropolitics that ensure the survival of the nation. Paraphrasing Michel Foucault's (1973) speculations that society's "fear of death" can be forestalled by "transforming it into something else" (yet, remaining always in view of death and life's resistance to death) Holland writes, "[b]y ensuring control of the corpse, society ensures control of its opposite, the living nation" (41). The white national logics examined in the previous two chapters correlate well with Holland's reading. Specifically, the dangers which the unassimilating "veiled Muslim woman" and the over-reproducing Black womb are perceived to pose to the life and welfare of Sweden or Canada are controlled through Black Muslim women's abortion of the Black self and refusal of Islam. Fear of the demise of the social welfare system is transformed through the loyalty and possession these Black Muslim women's mortal gestures of assimilation proffer. In turn, women attempt to escape an ungrivable death through a transformation that would bring them into the mournable life of the white nation. The various case studies I have examined up until this point therefore provide us with compelling material for understanding what renders Black Muslim women as unassimilable and ungrivable (e.g. the Somali mothers in Toronto accused of welfare fraud) or, what assimilatory acts might present a way into national belongings and thus human recognition (e.g. Mona Walter in Sweden). Even so, because this empirical material is comprised of scholarly publications, news reports, scientific findings and interview excerpts, they begin as static objects of study. I wonder then if there is some danger of creating a false dichotomy that polarizes the unassimilable and assimilating Black Muslim

woman without being able to perceive certain nuances bound up with striving for or being refused a valid place within the white nation.

Between April 2018-August 2018 I conducted eight, one-on-one, qualitative interviews with Afro-Swedish Muslim women living in Sweden's capital, Stockholm. I interviewed women who were between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five, focusing on their experiences of anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, and sense of Swedish belonging. Motivating my fieldwork was an interest in the complexities of a life-long effort to situate oneself in relation to the demands or rejections of white supremacist Swedish society. What types of contradictions, desires, denials, indifference, strategies, despair or pleasures appear within the dailyness of women's lives that my scholastic research would simply not be attune to or know to ask? Of course, Afro-Swedish Muslim women's narratives also provide incomplete glimpses into these intricacies since that which we know is dependant upon what one chooses to divulge throughout the course of the interview. Even so, participants' sustained reflections provide intimate portraits — spanning histories of family migration and settlement, experiences from childhood and early adolescence, and into adulthood — that say much about the disciplinary, conflictual and unstable features of assimilation that we would not otherwise be privy to. Hence, in this chapter, I continue to examine the affective contingencies of white nation-making and the conditions of assimilation when invoked through or against the bodies of Black Muslim women. However, led by participants' reflections, I question whether assimilation can also be a less definite process than what we find with the annihilation of one's Black and/or Muslim identities. I thus consider what it means to have not undergone the complete abortion of the unmournable Black self nor, welcomed the absolute relinquishing of their Muslimness identities. Even so, women may continue to aspire for national be-

longing so that at other times, they perform the signs of the properly assimilating subject. In this sense, Black Muslim women would periodically embody the appropriate signifiers for national integration but, would be unpredictable or unreliable in their acculturation since the cues for a treacherous foreignness would continue to reappear. Put differently, women would appeal to the white nation and yet trespass on the dictates of assimilation by refusing to wholly surrender the antagonist parts of the self which continue to show-up, however impermanently. To what ends would Black Muslim women enact this fluctuation? What might it reveal about the chameleon nature of assimilation? Further, how do the racial forces of governmentality manage the disquietude catalyzed by these irreconcilable gestures of an incomplete or, discontinuous integration?

While I have engaged equally with the politics of white nation-making in Canada and Sweden through a continuous comparison of the two countries, I focus solely on Sweden here through Afro-Swedish Muslim women's experiences of assimilation's fluidity. What I seek to demonstrate is how the racist mechanisms of white nation-making in Sweden, which depend upon being able to recognize and regulate the assimilating/unassimilable and human/non-human subject, can be compromised in the face of the should-be familiar Others unpredictability — whether this occurs on the level of the body, will or desire. This is what the stories of the Afro-Swedish Muslim women I spoke with demand that we attend to.<sup>60</sup> Yet, participants' narratives also reveal the regenerating force of white supremacist powers which use forms of rhetorical violence to reinforce the racial mandates that expect their knowability. It is this reanimating feature of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia that women's experiences also call us to attend to. Engag-

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<sup>60</sup> In the next and last substantial chapter of this dissertation I consider how Black Muslim women in Canada disobediently embody difference. Rather than analyzing fieldwork narratives I explore artistic representation as a visualization of women's willfully non-integrating bodies.

ing with these complexities I thus propose that Swedish national anxieties prompted by Afro-Swedish Muslim women's inconstant assimilation is controlled or abated by subjecting women to forms of pedagogical humiliation, particularly when within white public space. The injuries inflicted through violent speech acts, I argue, attempt to discipline, regulate, and edify women who trouble the matrices of assimilation. The threat that these women's unreliable acculturation presents is meant to be neutralized through the pain of public reprimand.

### **The Quotidian Nature of Pain: A Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Nirmal Puwar's (2004) astounding work on "space invaders" offers a compelling framework for understanding just how Black Muslim women could figure as somatic conundrums against which the mechanisms that protect an idealized national imaginary may be wielded. Expounding upon the entrance of "the historically excluded"<sup>61</sup> into public realms "not historically and conceptually marked out as their 'natural' domain" (32), Puwar writes of how feelings of "unease" arise with the arrival of irreconcilable bodies of colour. In this way, "specific space can be disturbed" (32) — including that of the nation and the boundaries of the national imaginary — as those outside of the "racialised norm" show-up in spaces wherein their presence is not imagined (5, 32). If, as I have previously proposed, Black Muslim women in Sweden are refused national belongings and ontological recognition (see Chapter 3), those that access white national space without first acquiescing to the full terms for acceptance (i.e., a deadly assimilation) are disconcerting. That is, a public domain that has prepared either for women's exclusion or, post-mortem embrace can be disturbed by she who comes into (and moves around within) this space without clearly fitting

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<sup>61</sup> specifically here meaning Black and Asian

into its racial logics. Merely entering into a societal terrain not intended for Black and Muslim subjects can in itself be interpreted as a form of invasion that heightens the vulnerability of the white nation/citizen already convinced of its susceptibility to foreign attack. To then be the unanticipated somatic presence that has not only crossed into such a homogenous space but, upsets the categories that would allow one to be designated as either unassimilable or assimilable can be conceived of as an aggravated threat. Such persons become the suspect sites upon which white national anxiety unfolds. I therefore suggest that there is an effort to re-inscribe these dissident subjects back into comprehensibility by rendering them as familiar objects of domination.

Contemplating — alongside Judith Butler (1997) — how “certain forms of address” can have a violent impact on the physical body (4), I examine the ways queries put to Black Muslim women when in the white dominated spaces of Stockholm seek to bludgeon their bodies into a submissive knowability. I specifically refer here to questions that openly “pry” into the intimate particularities of Black Muslim women’s lives and life histories (e.g. religious beliefs, details of familial migration, parentage, types of food eaten, Swedish language proficiency, etc.). Hence, I argue that such flagrant yet, quotidian forms of interrogation seek to capture or possess the slippery subject. As objects of inquiry, the woman who slips out of “intelligibility”<sup>62</sup> (Butler 1990, 17) — as the incompletely banished or assimilated subject — are opened-up, pried into, and inspected in a manner that regulates the threat these persons are imagined to pose. Questions that are perhaps defended as an innocuous curiosity about the difference in “our” midst function rather, as discursive tools to arrest those who would otherwise escape the knowable. Women are

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<sup>62</sup> Butler defines “intelligibility” in relation to gender. Hence, Butler explains that “[i]ntelligible’ genders” are those that assume “relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (17), which continues from the “regulatory frames” that forcibly work upon the body to first produce and naturalize gender (33).

laid bare by the disciplining gaze of the white nation. What I am suggesting here is that the casually intrusive queries Black Muslim women are met with as they go about their daily lives seeks to assuage the injury posed by the incoherent Other by transforming them into what Elizabeth Grosz (1995) has described as, the “preferred body”: “under control, pliable, amendable to the subject’s will” (1). The body becomes exposed through the violent opening-up that such a rhetoric deploys. Thus, it is now intended to be the body that is “no longer (and not ever fully) in its own control” (Butler 1997, 13). Tactless and highly personal queries prob into (what are presumed to be) most enigmatic about such Others. A form of excavation is performed which refuses the unknowability of these women. Prying queries therefore work to claim the details of Black Muslim women’s lives; not as their own but, as that which belongs to a white public and to the forces that protect it. As slippery subjects, these women are then to be firmly grasped through, what Butler (1997) calls, a “violent rhetoricity” (13). Notably, this seizure is not dissimilar to the ways the “un-veiled Muslim woman” can be possessed by a voyeuristic white gaze (see Chapter 2) nor, is it removed from the dominion found through the pleasure of looking inside Black woman’s dangerous reproductive parts (see Chapter 3). For the Black Muslim women I interviewed in Stockholm, injurious speech acts (i.e., the invasive, demeaning, dehumanizing questions) operate in both corrective and defensive ways against she who is presumed to cause injury to the somatic order of the Swedish metropolis. Throughout this chapter I thus interpret these oral violences as a refusal of women’s ambiguity and thus the effort to secure against the unclearly assimilated subject. What is most striking about the corrective element of this “violent rhetoricity” within participants’ experiences, is the infliction of humiliation. To be more precise,

prying inquiries work to reprimand as well as re-educate the impertinently evasive body through the humiliation of the question.

While the analyses of prying as a quotidian racist violence clearly follows in the legacy of Philomena Essed's groundbreaking work on "everyday racism" (1990),<sup>63</sup> my conjectures throughout this chapter on the disciplinary mechanics of humiliation are most directly inspired by Essed's more contemporary scholarship. In the text "Intolerable Humiliations" (2009) Essed engages with humiliation as a "cultural phenomenon"; thus, locating one of its primary functions as the effort to "discourage or to punish resistance against oppression or ... to take revenge for infliction done" (132). Essed further allows that inflicting humiliation against those whose bodies place them outside of Western Europe's "homogenous whiteness" proffers a way to manage an "ambivalence towards tolerance" (137). Notably, "ambivalence" in this context refers to the resentment towards the presence of non-white or non-European persons that persists alongside edicts of tolerance that claim to acquiesce to their co-existence (137). A "humiliating tolerance" (137) therefore works to maintain the chasm between the authentic white European subject (the *tolerators*) and, those racial-religious Others who live amongst "us" but will never truly belong (the *tolerated*) and thus become ready targets of "public scorn" (132). Tolerance as a national ideal can continue to be glorified through the closeness of Others whose differences are nonetheless, methodically maintained. As part of the ambivalence (or perhaps, contradiction) of tolerance, I speculate that the tolerated are made to endure pain in retribution for: 1. the discomfort they prompt by first compelling the tolerators to bear the foreign presence of those who must

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<sup>63</sup> To paraphrase Essed (1990), "everyday racism" can be described as, "the various types and expressions of racism" endured by and importantly, "defined by," people of colour (or, "ethnic groups") when in "everyday contact" with white persons, in white supremacist society (31).

be tolerated; and 2. the outrage provoked by the tolerated person who dares not to aspire for belonging, however fruitless. Thinking alongside Essed, I interpret the impertinent questions that permeate Afro-Swedish Muslim women's everyday experiences of racism as an operative of a "humiliating tolerance." If women's narratives can be taken to reveal particular permutations of humiliation as a "cultural phenomenon" within Stockholm, I suggest that it is indeed wielded in vengeance by a populace that must suffer the sight of Black Muslim women in white public space. Even more so, however, I posit that women's humiliations are punishment for the impertinence of resisting the full conditions of assimilation. In failing to relinquish the intolerable aspects of the self by unpredictably fluctuating between Black and Muslim identities, women inflict pain by denying tolerating society both the gratitude and dominion it considers to be its due. As such, women's refusals and unknowability may humiliate the white nation. Prying speech acts therefore weaponize against the unyielding subject and rhetorically lacerate the body that resists comprehensibility. By inflicting discomfort and sometimes pain, such queries operate as "instruments of captivity" (Spillers 1987, 67). The violences of speech reprimand the already prodded subject and brands them as the possession of the tolerator. Herein the psychic wound instructs Black female Muslim subjects that their bodies are not wholly their own but, must instead be bound to/within the limits of Swedish tolerance — which refuses the liberty of their ambiguity. As a corrective mechanism, humiliation thus facilitates in the taming of the contested, disagreeable and confusing body — thus, restoring balance through a levelling pain.

The narratives of Afro-Swedish Muslim women examined throughout this chapter convey how such affective instruments of dominion are covertly deployed. Women's experiences thus demand that we attend to seemingly innocuous moments as racist happenings wherein their bod-

ies are being rhetorically torn asunder. Notably, participants' reflections on anti-Black racism and Islamophobia echo a question posed by Essed (1990) nearly three decades ago: "How can blacks prove, both to themselves and to others, their sense that racism exists even when it is not being overtly expressed?" (1-2). Violence must here be located amongst the ordinary. Racist violence is to be recognized *as* ordinary. Yet, the subtlety of certain rhetorical violences makes it difficult to prove that these words or questions are meant to hurt. Returning to Holland's (2000) meditations on techniques of national survival (41), she notably calls attention to the subjugation of the corpse and the mutilation of Black flesh as part of the *marking* and *making* of (white) culture (46). For Holland Black bodies are at once repositories for "the power of state ideology" and also, persist in a ceaseless condition of "existential torment" (46). Yet, in dialogue with Hortense Spillers' (1987) work on the captivation and objectification of the body through chattel slavery, Holland enjoins us to also pursue the "retrieval of mutilated female bodies" (*Spillers 1987, 68* in Holland 46). While the previous chapter of this dissertation sought, in part, to think through the necropolitics of Black Muslim female existence (i.e., as brutalizable/disposable or, suicidal/as-similable) I focus now on retrieving the maimed body. I must nonetheless emphasize that this recovery does not presuppose liberatory effects. In analyzing the experiences of Afro-Swedish Muslim women I aim to elucidate the ways that they "sense that racism exists" (Essed 1990, 2) in their day-to-day surroundings. Even so, accounts of racism and its humiliations, at times, indicate how women "appropriately" comply with the normative demands of integration that make incisions on their bodies so that, a *retrieval* can witness the forms of mutilation still underway and perhaps assented to. Alternately, women (and, often the very same woman who has acquiesced to assimilation in other ways) reveal how the maimed subject might nevertheless refuse

death. That is, by spurning the call to entirely sacrifice the threatening parts of the self and further *troubling* (Butler 1990) directive readings by inhabiting or, moving their bodies in unanticipated and thus confusing ways. What is at centre here is thus, the contradictions of the assimilating subject who does not turn over all aspects of the somatic self.

## **Humiliation & Prying Questions: Becoming the Exposed Subject**

### ***i. Muslimness***

The amplification occurs not only because they are unknown, but precisely because they are already “known” in ways which are seen to threaten the spurious claims on space for a coherent superior identity.... *The dread of being displaced from an identity that has placed the white subject as being central to the world* propels one to be *constantly vigilant as to the activities of the figures* that make it uncomfortable to hold on to this position. The vigilance borders on the paranoiac, *an anxiety that unleashes its own so-called “protective” symbolic and physical violence* (Puwar 2004, 49; *emphasis added*)

Beginning with this extended quote from Puwar’s *Space Invaders* (2004) allows us to consider the ways invasive queries can be read as the paranoiac regulation of Sweden’s white “exalted” spaces (see Thobani 2007). What specifically appears as curious in these anxiety-driven efforts to curtail the displacement of the legitimate national subject is that these “protective” violences (as rhetorical yet, directed towards certain physical bodies) seemingly work to not only expose what is suspiciously and inappropriately *unknown* about Black Muslim women but also, as Puwar suggests, lament the *known*. Although I maintain that prying performs a discursive excavation of the foreign body, the answer to the untoward question may already be known. Herein, the purpose of the query is not always necessarily to reveal what is presently hidden but rather, to subject women to the dominion of the address. In being “addressab[le]” and thus having to submit to the intrusive call, one’s strangeness (and thus, the contingent dread it is made to invoke) is regulated through these techniques of humiliation (see Butler n.p. *in Rankine 2014*, 65). As one who

is made readily available for examination there is also the demand to answer the intolerable question in a manner that again reveals the body's openness and controllability. That is, one must endure the humiliation of being asked and is expected to submit to the will of the exalted by supplying a response. The alien body is managed. The integrity of white Swedishness is fortified. The act of posing the question in itself serves a purpose. I turn here to excerpts from participants' narratives to exemplify how such queries come-up and are responded to, particularly when they fixate on women's Muslim identities.

Ella, a 31 year old graphic designer and artist whose family originates from Eritrea, remarks that when confronted by questions about Islam, posed by those who can be described to be "ordinary white people" (Essed 1990, 2), she once proffered answers without hesitation by way of countering the "stigma" that often decides dominant perceptions of the religion. However, she came to perceive that these seemingly casual queries into Islam were raised without a genuine desire for information but with the motive of articulating anti-Islam sentiment. In her own words, Ella explains the logic of such encounters: "I realize half way through the discussion that this is just a way for them to spew all of their bullshit [anti-Islam] agenda and I just have to take it.... And that has happened from [white] people I considered to know pretty well and [white] people who just ask because we just happened to be at the same event or we're in the same lunch room." What is pivotal to this reflection are the ways it displays how some white Swedes maximize on Ella's immediate presence as the Muslim subject; because this foreign body is before "us" it is an available object of interrogation. Ella's function in these moments, as she herself asserts, is not to enlighten her discussant on unknown aspects of Islam but to proffer a physical sound board against which the undoubtable evils of the religion can be announced in the face of the self that

symbolizes its living strangeness. The coming up against the Black Muslim body in white Swedish space is witnessed here to be a familiar confrontation with the stranger one has come to know (“people I considered to know pretty well”) or else, a hap-chance encounter (“because we just happened to be at the same event or ... lunch room”) with she who numbers amongst a menacing backwardness, which one can and has already mastered. Again, because this alien body has entered into “our” public space it is managed through oratory techniques thus, ensnaring the Muslim subject.

As Ella tellingly bemoans, she must simply “take it” and endure such instances once underway. The discomfort and offensiveness of Islamophobic sentiments must be, at least momentarily, tolerated as they forcefully arrest her attention in the public terrain. Here we can again turn to Essed (2009), who speculates that people of colour are expected to “take” racism in the form of degrading humour and direct critique by way of evidencing their own capacity for tolerance within self-declared tolerant society (141). Accordingly, the outrage of “even the most deeply hurt[ful] forms of symbolic humiliation” are to be tolerated (141); which can include the shared call for a particular group of outsiders to endure the hurt inflicted by the mortification of their religion, as part of what Essed terms “cultural pain” (134). The sense that she must bear the Islamophobic inquisition once the rhetorical trap is laid therefore begs the question as to whether this “bullshit agenda” — as Ella describes it — aims to test the tolerance of the Muslim Other. That is, exposing her to a critique of Islam through public confrontations in comprising moments (i.e., over lunch at one’s place of employment) to verify her assimilatory capacity to withstand a damning evaluation of her foreign faith. As part of this assessment of tolerance, we can then imagine there to be a subset of queries being posed alongside the overtly humiliating, such as:

Will the Muslim become inflamed or, be(come) civil? Is the Muslim an extremist or, malleable to our secular principles of freedom of speech?

Kate, a 30 year old business developer whose parents migrated to Sweden from Egypt in the late 70s, interprets the prying questions she is met with precisely as an attempt to assess liberality. “‘How religious are you?’ or, ‘How religious are your parents?’” are queries that Kate describes to be thinly veiled religious essentialism, with the overt desire to uncover the degree of repression within the Muslim family. “They want to know how *liberal* are your parents with you” she explains. Going on, Kate imitates the course of dialogue that such encounters take: “‘Oh, so you live by yourself? Oh, so your parents are not that religious.’ I’m like, what does that [living alone] have to do with religion? They [white Swedes] mix between religion and culture, a lot.” Kate further adds that when she wore the hijab this sequence of questions would continue with: ‘So, your parents, do they like, force you to wear the headscarf?’ I’d be like, ‘No, never.’ [In reply] ‘Oh okay, cool. So, are you allowed to go out with your friends?’” Kate explains that this collapsing of religious beliefs (i.e., Islam) with customs or practices considered to be normative to Swedish culture (i.e., independence of youth) has often left her unsure of how to respond. In many ways, her uncertainty over what might be the appropriate answer to the intolerable question aligns with the near insignificance of the reply when it is the query that primarily performs the regulatory work. If the questioning of Kate or, her parents’ religiosity and liberality can be understood as a form of interpellation (through a Butlerian reading of the concept), the aim would not necessarily be to describe the dynamics that exist within *this* Muslim family. What is instead sought after is, arguably, to establish the illiberal truth of *the* Muslim family in Swedish territory. Plausibly, this is done by citing the Islamophobic “conventions” that presently

decide the incivilities of Islam and its unprogressive followers (see Butler 1997, 33). One question propels the next, almost uninterrupted by the actual content of Kate's reply. What can be established is therefore the conviction that this young Muslim woman's life is restrained by religiously zealous parents. In this way, the monstrosity of the illiberal Muslim family and the horror that Islam invokes in white Swedish society are imminent dangers that can be produced as a fact, precisely through the exacting questions.

A fascinating contingency of these presumptuous queries is that, they may be what introduce the prospective assimilability and precarity of this Black Muslim woman. By prying into the oppressive state of the fervently Muslim household Kate's prospective victimhood emerges. It may therefore be here that her answers to the prying questions *do* begin to matter if, what is also being sought are cues of her assimilatory potential. "How religious are you?" might additionally be translatable as, "How alike are you to your religious parents?" And thus, the subtext question of "How *liberal* are your parent with you?" might become "How liberal are *you*?" Hence, by interrogating the constraints of her familial life there is possibly the effort to gage whether Kate can be integrated into the national body. If, that is, she can articulate herself as being under threat by the same danger that threatens the welfare of the white nation (see Chapter 3). Such prying queries then might also search for the kinship "breach" (Spillers 1987, 74) between the illiberal parent and liberalizing child. Does she align herself with the monstrosity of an Islamic difference or, is she a grievable female body held captive by the monstrous (see Halberstam 1995, 3)? It remains unclear, however, whether Kate's responses definitively confirm her as an assimilable or unassimilable subject.

In the effort to avoid the intrusive questions that she is sure will come, Kate explains that she chooses to refrain from disclosing her Muslim identity. Because she speculates that many people in Sweden are unaware that “Black Muslims exist” her Black body can move through public space without being immediately read as Muslim thus, allowing her to withhold this part of herself from inquiry.<sup>64</sup> She correspondingly relays, “I never announce it [Muslim identity]. It depends on the situation... I can’t say I feel very eager to share that I am Muslim. Because it comes [with] a lot of questions that I am just sick and tired of answering. Some people [say], ‘Oh, you don’t *look* Arab.’ Or, ‘You don’t *look* Muslim.’ Or, ‘You’re not like the *other* Muslims.’ And, I’m just like, what does that mean, you know? So, to stay away from that sometimes — I’m just like, ugh, I don’t want to get into that so, I just keep it neutral... I don’t bring it up myself.” Some of the perturbing comments that Kate seeks to avoid, interestingly, target the irregularity of her body with dominant imaginings of the Muslim subject. Yet, it is precisely this irregularity that enables her to pass as non-Muslim and avoid the discomfort of the untoward questions. Considering that queries into her parent’s religiosity come “not [from] complete strangers” but, “Colleagues. Friends. Friends of friends” it could be that these persons are reconfiguring Kate into a Muslim subjectivity once they learn that the Black person they have known (and thought was wholly knowable) also embodies another kind of Otherness. The prying questions potentially inscribe her again into knowability thus, absorbing the surprise of the Muslim disclosure through the interpellative speech acts.

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<sup>64</sup> The narratives of participants such as Leylo and Lina contend that Somalis are presumed to be Muslim (see below). Kate’s speculation that white Swedes do not know “Black Muslims exist” might therefore be a reference to Swedish ignorance of the diversity amongst Black Muslim. Which is to say that, Somalis are not the *only* Black Muslims that exist, either within or outside of Sweden. Kate importantly goes on challenge the conflation often made between being Muslim and being Arab, by way of asserting that not all Muslims are Arab but can also be Black. Such a differentiation is particularly pertinent to her as a non-Arab, Black Muslim whose family originates from Egypt: a Muslim-majority, Arab dominate country.

Even so, Kate might nevertheless remain the slippery subject since she decides when this identity is revealed or concealed. Before the moment of disclosure she perhaps appears as the excavated Black body yet, her Muslimness remains unnamed and therefore beyond the reaches of dominion. Although Kate is arrested by the humiliating questions once her Muslim identity is shared she would likely be able to re-enter into unknowability each time she is newly acquainted with a white Swede. That is, she would be initially read as Black and non-Muslim. Kate of course, would always know that she is Muslim. We must then ask: Is Kate's interpellation by the conventions that decide Muslim illiberality still occurring even without or, before, the moment of humiliating arrest? Reinterpreting Louis Althusser's (1970) conception of interpellation, Butler (1997) proposes that the subject does not necessarily need to respond to the authoritative voice that hails them in order for the fixing into place to nonetheless occur (31). Going even further Butler suggests that "the discourse that inaugurates the subject need not take the form of a voice at all" (31). Because Kate resists disclosing her Muslimness to evade a confrontation with essentialist (if not, Islamophobic) questions that she is "sick and tired of answering," we can presume that she is well aware of the stereotypes that seek to reduce her and her family to a certain brutality. That is, Kate already knows what utterances seek to inscribe her skin. The effort to avoid the queries that one is sure will come can therefore indicate that the subject is indeed fixed into anti-Islamic discourses without the prying questions having to be uttered.

There are, however, notable differences in how violent speech acts attempt to expose and captivate the strange body when it can be visibly read as Muslim, through the presence of the hijab. Kate, who previously wore the hijab, tellingly recalls the following: "I remember before, when I use to wear the head veil, peopled asked me some weird questions. Like, 'So, how does

your hair look?’ And I’m like, well, the whole point of wearing it is that you don’t need to know that... Or, especially during, like, the summer time people would ask, ‘Aren’t you hot? Aren’t you sweaty? Isn’t it really hot?’” The queries Kate was once met with as a hijabi thus leave room neither for a slippery subject nor, for her selective disclosure of Muslimness. Instead, the Other can be immediately located into a familiar sort of strangeness (Ahmed 2004): “the veiled Muslim woman.” Queries into what lays beneath the headscarf perform a rhetorical lifting of the veil. However, unlike ex-Muslims of a dissipated Blackness, such as Mona Walter, who initiate this discursive de-veiling (see Chapter 3), the questions that confront Kate pry into the aspects of her body deliberately kept out of sight. Going even further still, what is being questioned is also the condition of the body — that is, how it responds to its environment, its capacity to withstand the surrounding climate. The veiled subject might then be imagined to be “oppressed” by Islam and the Muslim family<sup>65</sup> and then also, oppressed by the sharp changes in Swedish weather. Just as hijabis are counted amongst the unassimilated (though, not necessarily as the *unassimilable* [see Chapter 2]), the foreign body — swaddled in foreign cloth — is approached as that which is also not prepared to adjust to the natural conditions of the Swedish climate. Wayne Koestenbaum’s (2011) prose asks us to consider humiliation as an essential element of a society wherein it might be employed as “a rite of passage, as a passport to decency and civilization, as a necessary shedding of hubris” (3). Drawing Koestenbaum’s rumination into dialogue with Essed’s (2009) proposal that tolerance demands “ethnic groups” endurance of humiliation (141), we might be tempted to interpret Kate’s removal of her hijab as the appropriate assimilatory act that humiliat-

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<sup>65</sup> All eight participants mentioned that the hijab is dominantly seen as “oppressive” in Sweden. As Jami-lah explains, trying to convince white Swedes that the hijab is not be oppressive is an effort similar to “convincing a KKK that Black people are also people.”

ing questions have instructed her towards.<sup>66</sup> As such, prying questions that seek to look under the veil could be read as necessary, pedagogical violences whereby humiliation become just what Koestenbaum conjectures it to be: “a passport to decency and civilization” that persuades one to discard what cannot be made adaptable to the Swedish environment. Yet, Kate does not allow for this supposition to solidify. Despite the fact that she has removed the hijab she has not relinquish her religious beliefs so that her continued (though, private) identification as a Muslim means for her assimilation to be incomplete.

Although Ella herself has never worn the hijab, she remarks that her mother’s headscarf often becomes the object of queries similar to those described by Kate. Ella empathically explains at length:

This is one thing that I think overall when it comes to white people: they have no impulse control. They don’t *have to ask* every question that comes to mind. They don’t *have to ask* a hijabi if they have hair underneath that. They don’t need to ask how they take showers with their hijab because, they obviously take it off. It’s all of these things that I feel like, of course their sprung from ignorance but they also *lean into* the ignorance.... I think a white crowd will automatically see it [hijab] as an oppression because the woman is supposed to cover-up a part of herself. But, I know that most of the questions and stuff that she’s [Mother] gotten ... is more so about the practicality of it. Like, ‘Isn’t it hot?!’; ‘Do you have hair under that?’; ‘How do you look?’... There’s so much ignorance when it comes to hijab. And it’s mostly about people, especially white people, who don’t have it in their culture.

Even as white Swedes recoil from the threatening and/or incompatible difference of the visibly Muslim hijabi these questions seize the crudest ways inside the Other. As Ella so clearly decries, there are no limits to white desires to know the interiority of veiled outsiders. The discursive attempt to penetrate the veil (see Fanon 1952) through these obscene and obtuse questions discernibly works to also render women either as alien bodies or, as bodies with an alien appendage

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<sup>66</sup> This analysis is presented as a conjecture because Kate explicitly indicated during the interview that she did not wish to discuss her reasons for taking-off the hijab.

— the hijab. Does the skull covered by the strange cloth sprout hair in the way of “our” human bodies? How is the physical self cleaned when burdened by the foreign object that soils the chance of national integration? Ella explicitly identifies these vacuous questions about the hijab — along with those that more broadly target Islam — as exercising a form of violence. She here explains:

It’s not like they [white people] check themselves, they just ask the question. So, I don’t think it’s about *concern* [e.g. whether women feel hot, etc.] and I think it’s: ‘I have this itch and I just have to scratch it.’ So, it is a micro aggression if not anything.... They don’t know that by asking those types of questions you *are* making me different. And, I don’t want to be! ... You [white people] asking me a question that is *basic* and easy to figure-out on your own is a micro-aggression. And, that in itself is a part of your question.

Such questions are meant to hurt. Not only is the Other being rendered malleable to the will of the normative subject that demands that they surrender the self in both body and mind to the tactless query but, there is a lesson of non-belonging in this aggressive act of laying bare.

In the discursive stripping of the foreign subject that, Ella describes, there is evidently a loss of autonomy. Rather, the physical self can be interrogated as the visibly Muslim or otherwise, endures a painful social separation from normative Swedish society. “Easy to figure-out on your own” questions seek to cause injury by reminding these Black Muslim women that they are merely adjunct to the authentic national body (see Walcott 2003). Hereby, such targeted rhetorical violences vigilantly “protect” as well as regulate the racial-cultural borders that shore-up the exalted citizen (Puwar 2004, 49; see also Thobani 2007), while also instructing women on what differences must be relinquished. Given these conditions there is something particularly striking about Ella’s case. Notably, she explains that she presently identifies as a person of “Muslim heritage” who “only believ[es] in God” rather, than as a Muslim. Yet, Ella refuses to disclose her

indefinite Muslimness to those who would readily interpret it as “proof” of the religion’s “negativity”: “I don’t shout it from the rooftops in [white] company that has a clear bias against Islam.” She further elaborates, “I don’t feel that I belong in any religion but, I have this innate feeling that I have to defend Islam because I still carry it with me ... [and] because I feel that there are a lot of misconceptions about it ... and they will ask about it.” Even as Ella would have the ideological means to shed the sense of difference that painfully inscribes her body by publicly rejecting her already uncertain Muslim identity, she spurns exposing the denials that would render her as this type of integrable subject. Instead, she refuses these terms of acceptance by concealing from the white nation that which it would boastfully claim for itself.

## ***ii. Racial Difference & Familial Place of Origin***

For so long you thought the ambition of racist language was to denigrate and erase you as a person. After considering Butler’s [n.p] remarks, you begin to understand yourself as rendered hypervisible in the face of such language acts. Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present. Your alertness, your openness ... actually demand your presence, your looking up, your talking back, and, as insane as it is, saying please (Rankine 2014, 65).

Rankine’s meditations on Butler (n.p.) allow us to consider how speech acts that cause injury do not necessarily seek to eliminate the injurable subject through the hurtful address. That is, the intentions of language that inflict pain cannot be fully reduced to the desire to absolutely eject the “space invader” (Puwar 2004) from its unnatural residence in white normative public space since, part of the work of the speech act is to demand an utterance. It is almost as if in the gaping of the mouth that is called upon to speak racist forces will find a way in. Leylo, a 25 year old visual artist who also works in elder care, relays the ways this exploitation of her presence appears and, just how one can be made to say “please.” When asked whether she believes those in her daily environment (i.e., co-workers, acquaintances) would treat her differently if they were to

learn either of her Muslim identity or, of her family's migrant history Leylo explains that, the possibility of not immediately revealing these aspects of herself does not present itself as a feasible option. There is the persistence of a white demand to know. "I've never had the thought *not to tell*," she states. Expounding further, Leylo relays the following:

The *first thing* I get asked, the *first thing* that I need to explain — and it's a big question mark — and that is, '*Where are you from? Where are your parents [from]? Are you Muslim?*' So, I just answer them. Directly. Sometimes I get shocked [when] its been five days at this new job and they haven't asked! Because, I'm so used to that *first* lunch break ... [where] somebody is like 'So, where are you from, again?' I use to say I'm from Småland like, South East [Sweden]. And then they where like, 'Where are you *really* from?' So, now ... I don't joke around [laughs]. I'm like, [speaking very quickly, reeling off a list]: 'I'm from Somalia! My parents are from Somalia!' Just to get it over with ... because they're still going to ask.

It is not Leylo's erasure that these inquisitions seem to be after. Situating her first as a body *out of place* (see Ahmed 2000; McKittrick 2006) — a Black body not of *this* place, a Black body not of "our" space — Leylo is made to account for her difference. Thus, she must "look up" into the quizzical white face and "talk back" by explaining how, why, and from where, she has found her way into Sweden. Leylo's presence is therefore subject to exploitation because, her difference (which is already established through the hyper-visibility of her Blackness) must be narrated upon demand to the satisfaction of an authoritative whiteness. Silence or refusal do not appear as possibilities when the subject is expected to not merely speak but, to respond in the right way. It is then this compulsion to answer the prying query that partially induces the hurt as her body is rendered open in ways that Leylo does not readily seek. It is this that she particularly bemoans:

You want where you come from and your religion to be something that doesn't *define* you [and] that comes [up] after a while ... Sometimes I wish I could just do it in my own [way] ... that [I could say], "My body isn't your freedom to know ... I don't *owe* you telling you all of this." I don't ask stuff like this to them [white Swedes]. So, I feel like, I feel *owned* actually at my work... Owned. Yeah. And I know it's a really hard word but, I

really do. Because, I feel like ... *if I don't tell* they're already doubting me for not being honest. It's like this double [bind], I don't know where to stand. And I think that my whole presence is doubt. So, I'm just like, real with it [national and religious identities].

Leylo feels the capture and clearly perceives the conditions of this rhetorical restraint. Perhaps because the normative white Swede has not chosen to encounter the outsider (or, maybe resents the national humanitarianism that has precipitated this confrontation), the foreign subject is denied the privilege of keeping the self to or, for themselves. Sara Ahmed (2014a) explains that the Western nation that idealizes multiculturalism consents to accept the difference that comes towards it upon the stipulation that Others do not keep their difference to themselves but, give it back to the nation — by way of displaying their capacity to love the tolerant nation (134). Sweden's refugee policies are what enabled Leylo's family to come to reside in Sweden in the early 1990s, along with many other Somali asylum seekers fleeing civil war. If the white supremacist country has then tolerantly agreed to extend its benevolence to troubled dark bodies from a dangerous exterior, these Others are not permitted to refuse the nation by holding parts of themselves away. Leylo feels “owned” perhaps because she is meant to. Furthermore, the call to say “please” (Rankine 2014, 65) is witnessed in the need to readily divulge personal details to avert the suspicion that she feels to already enwrap her being. Leylo must accordingly be polite, compliant, and courteous in the face of the uncivil question to demonstrate her own civility.

And then there also come instances where one must say “thank you.” Leylo recalls working at an elderly health care facility where colleagues were complimenting her style of dress as well as her articulation of the Swedish language. When asked, Leylo shared that she is of Somali descent, only to learn that her colleagues had been competing amongst themselves to guess from which East African country she likely originates. In her own words she explains:

[A] co-worker ... told me they said, “No, of course she can’t be Somalian. She [Leylo] had this really good style and she talked this effortlessly good Swedish.” So, I think Somalianness in Sweden is connected to a lower [status]. Blackness in Sweden ... is in hierarchies. For example, it’s better to be Habesha and that’s being Ethiopian or Eritrean, because, *they’re non-Muslim*. The majority of them in Sweden are *not* Muslim. They’re just Black. And, they *integrate* faster. Like, their women, they don’t have hijab. Their women have pants ... they’re really hard-working. But, Somalian people, first of all, they [Swedish government; refugee settlement bodies] put them in areas where it’s impossible for them to get some jobs. And, then they [white Swedes] discriminate them by the dresscode. So, when they see other Somalians who maybe don’t have the traditional Somalian style — that’s like, hijab — they’re like, “Oh, of course she can’t be [Somali]!” So, that was the argument at my job. They were betting: “Is she...?”

To be read as the more integrable, non-Muslim, East African presents as an expression of praise.

What is being applauded is Leylo’s ability to harmonize her foreign body with Scandinavian aesthetic and to adapt Sweden’s native tongue.

Nonetheless, Leylo is something of an unanticipated subject since, her Somaliness is approached as an unlikely possibility when measured against, what are determined to be, the physical and verbal cues of assimilation. “It’s always a surprise,” Leylo states. Quite clearly her colleagues do not have any qualms about either collectively inspecting Leylo’s person nor in disclosing their wager. The “black figure” who has entered into space ruled by a white “somatic norm” (Puwar 2004, 5) can thus be openly deliberated over. The Black female can become the contested and debated body; the contemplated and scrutinized figure. The “owned.” If these speculations are imagined to be as equally congratulatory as they are invasive, Leylo’s appropriate response is therefore meant to be one of gratitude; that is, thankful for being seen as the more integrated subject. Kate similarly conveys how the prying query can presuppose assimilatory success in a manner that anticipates one’s thankfulness. Here she recalls an experience from when she was in primary school: “Some [white] parent came up to me and was like, ‘Oh, are you

adopted? Because your Swedish is so good.” Kate remembers this encounter as an affront since, as she repetitively exclaims, “I was *born* here!” In this instance, however, the deliberation over Kate body does not necessarily dwell upon which African nation this woman must have come from, but, imagines that she is the cultivated product of the white family. The unfamiliarity of having, what is deemed to be, an inherently Swedish trait (i.e., the language) emit with mastery from the mouth of the Black child is made indicative with white proximity, nurture and possession. To ask a child if they are adopted is not here registered as an inappropriate or, even traumatic question but as a legitimate pursuit of curiosity; which, perhaps re-affirms Swedish familial ownership over the outsider. It is thus appears as a compliment to be informed that one seems as though they have been raised in a family of whiteness and therefore culturally remade in the white Swedish home. The lesson of a prying humiliation nevertheless remains intact: even as one commands the Swedish language they are still subject to the violences of speech.

In other moments the non-veiled, Black Muslim woman who signifies certain qualities of integration is persistently reminded of the ways her body forfeits her national absorption. Herein, queries indicate the strangeness of the Black/African body whereby, it is not the alien appendage of the hijab that renders them strange but the very surface of the skin. Lina, a 28 year old graphic designer who is also of Somali descent, relays that living in Sweden has compelled her to be aware of her Blackness in ways that would be nullified within Somalia. “People around me have forced me... I don’t think about my colour as much as others,” she reflects. Lina is asked about her hair and whether her skin has the ability to tan (“Do you get tanned?”), while other queries fixate on what a body such as hers consumes by probing into the food she brings to work for lunch or, into what is eaten when she is out of white sight: “What do you eat at home?”

While hijabi women are asked whether their covered bodies can endure a changing climate (as metaphor for Swedish culture), Lina is more directly questioned about how her dark skin responds to the elements. It is almost as if to ask: Is the foreigner covered by human flesh? Does the outer tissue of the stranger react to the natural World in the way of the white Swedish body, which is always already at home in the World? Moreover, questions about food seem to search for another way in as they ask what foreign sustenance sustains the foreign body — thus, delving into this woman through her digestive tract. Speech acts thus begin to venture into biological and anatomical, as if these were infallible cues for difference.

The intrusion into the body through questions that reach inwards occurs in more ways than one. Relaying an episode at work Lina explains that a colleague asked her whether she “feels Swedish,” while in the presence of other co-workers during the lunch hour. Firstly, Lina considers this question to be peculiar for the ways it fails to follow Swedish social norms which often dictate politeness and a certain interpersonal guardedness. The failure in itself to adhere to these norms renders the query “even more aggressive,” she explains. Yet at its utmost, the public inquisition into her affective self — whether Lina “feels” as though she belongs to the national body — is experienced as a form of entrance, which shamelessly trespasses into her ontological being. “Does she feel like she [white colleague] can go inside of me and look around? Is there something about me that makes her think she can look inside me over lunch?” There are seemingly so many forms of governmentality operating here at once: 1. Lina is being made explicitly aware of the difference through which she is being physically read since her body does not present as authentically Swedish even as the “feeling” of Swedish may have taken root; 2. Although the Black figure might adequately mime cultural integration there is an interrogation into

its affective sincerity — quizzing if the consumption of foreign cuisine reveals a retention of foreign values in the places out of sight<sup>67</sup>; and, 3. The Black Muslim female subject is, again, ever available for white excavation that makes their most intimate parts public.

## **Humiliation and Ontological Uncertainty**

### ***Am I Human?***

Returning to Essed's (2009) analyses of humiliation we learn that, abstractly, humiliation "pre-supposes the humanity of the person who is humiliated (Margalit 1996 in *Essed 2009*, 134)." Extending the nuance of this argument Essed further writes that, in practice, the person who inflicts the injury fractures a "social contract" by "contest[ing] or den[ying] the dignity and human worth" of the targeted individual (134). While the theory Essed advances here is undoubtedly fascinating for its suggestion that the pain of humiliation witnesses a ruptured social agreement, I ponder whether all humiliated subjects are indeed first considered to be human to then allow for this breach to occur in such a way. To be more precise, what I am asking is whether one must be initially recognized as a human being to be a viable object for humiliation? Is it the worthiness of the human that is being contested through the infliction or, instead the worth of the subject to be counted as human? Moreover, how might humiliation be the abstract pain by which one concretely learns that they are not acknowledged as a member of humanity? Reflecting further on the public encounter with her colleague (as to whether she *feels Swedish*) Lina adds, "Does she [co-worker] see me as a human? Because if she did she would treat me in the way she has been taught to treat another human being," which would mean following Swedish social rules of dis-

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<sup>67</sup> here we can also reflect on Leylo's concern about appearing "honest" in the face of prying

cretion. Notably, such affective interrogations continue with other colleagues who persistently ask Lina if she is “feeling sad.” Commenting, in frustration, on these noticeable differences in how white Swedish co-workers respond to her presence Lina wonders whether “they think they have access to me[?]” Ultimately, she deduces that it is her humanity which is being absented, “They just don’t see me as human. It has to be that.” Going on she speculates that her co-workers are, “Un-used to a Black girl co-existing in a World that they’re used to being all-white.... They are fascinated with me.... They treat me like they think ‘She is not a human like we are. She’s a thing. She’s a robot.’” Part of the humiliating power of the intrusive query that renders the subject’s interior as spectacle is, evidently, also to establish an ontological distinction. Not only are Black Muslim women repeatedly reminded that they do not fully align with the genuine Swedish citizenry but even further, the injury of the degrading speech act also includes a severing of the body from human belonging. More than “contest[ing] or den[y]ing] the dignity and human worth” (Essed 134), the very prospect that there might be a need for or, right to, dignity is eliminated. The rhetorical exposure refuses that the object of inquiry could be of human substance. Describing the trajectory of (what was then) her most recent work, Elizabeth Grosz (1995) writes of exploring how the *processes that socially inscribe the body’s surface* come to erect a “psychical interior” (104). Grosz elaborates, “i.e., looking at the outside of the body from the point of view of the inside, and looking at the inside of the body from the point of view of the outside” (104). How Lina interprets these prying questions seems to suggest that in acknowledging that the “outside” of her Black body is inscribed as non-human, her internal self comes to psychically recognize its displacement from humanity.

What becomes less obvious as we continue to think through such processes of inscription is what distinguishes humiliation from shame. Engaging with Silvan S. Tomkins' conceptions of shame, Ahmed (2014a) emphasizes that as a "primary 'negative affect'" shame is emblematic of "how the self feels about itself" which, can be understood as a negation of the self that is experienced by/against the self and upon the surface of the body (103, 104). How one appears "before and to others" (104-5; see Sartre 1996, 221 in *Ahmed 2014a, 104*) is paramount to the ache or suffering of shame as the shameful subject feels as though they have done something "bad" (Ahmed 103). This sense of oneself thus becomes that which is intensely felt in relation to how one appears in the presence of another (104-5). The feeling of shame is then also to register a failure that is witnessable by those before whom one's body comes. The reading of the body's surface through questions that enact or confirm an interpellative fixing means for Black Muslim women to experience the self — both before the self and before others — as an Other. Yet, what would suggest that the *primary negative affect* here is shame is the sense of failure that some women express wherein, the body's "failure" to be a white Swede means to have also failed to be human.

Lina explains that she had a "phase" where she would attempt to show white Swedes whom she was in conversation with that she was alike to them, which meant accessing or demonstrating her humanity. "Being like them meant being human," Lina explicitly states, going on to add that, if one is white and Swedish "you're treated as a human." Thus, in her own reckoning Black bodies are immediately exiled from this ontology since, "[t]hey [white Swedes] don't see Black people as human." Here is the recognition that the surface of the skin — the sight/site of Blackness — refuses one a place amongst the recognizably human. In the "phase" of

attempting to prove her likeness to the identifiably human white Swede, we can thus read an effort to overcome the body's failure. One becomes apologetic for what the body is not; contrite for what the body does not succeed in being. The prying query humiliates through the public exposure of one's inner parts. Yet, shame may arise through the sense that in not being a white Swede one is "bad" or, one's body is doing something "bad." Humanness thus collapses into Swedishness. What remains uncertain, however, is whether part of one's badness is that they are already not human or, if it is through the shaming laceration of the skin (in punishment for the "badness" of not being white and Swedish) that one is refused a humanity that once or otherwise was recognized, even if only by the self.

In many ways, Lina's reflections echo those of Jamilah. A 35 year old woman of Somali descent who wears the hijab and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in career consulting, Jamilah relays that an intrinsic part of assimilation into Swedish society is learning how to be human. Specifically, she explains that white Swedes draw a definitive correlation between the length of time a foreigner has resided within the nation and their adaptability to genuine human behaviour. "They think that, 'Okay, this one [foreigner] is *more* assimilated than the one who came yesterday'" Jamilah attests. Continuing this line of reasoning she adds, "It's like, the longer you've lived here, 'Okay you know how to act like a proper human being, because we must have influenced you ... since you've lived here so long.'" Considering these terms of evaluation, Jamilah further speculates that to fail to exhibit the appropriate cues of assimilation that are expected to follow long-time Swedish residence is to become, again, a dubious subject. In particular, she states that to have not learned Swedish after an extended occupancy means, "Your intelligence is questioned. Your humanness is questioned." Elements of shame might therefore appear in the

confrontation with one's presumed incivility and human exile. One then might come to understand the self through the (humiliating) readings that determine their integrative proximity.

Hence, if the body has already shamefully failed to be white and thus "proper[ly] human," shame further lacerates the skin of those who have not learned the language. Such subjects instead persist in their badness by not adequately assimilating and demonstrating the qualities of one approaching humanity.

Because her body can be readily exposed to such damning evaluations as a hijabi, the daily act of venturing out into Swedish public spaces (e.g. for work, school, etc.) demands a vigilant psychic preparation. To merely enter into "outer society" Jamilah argues, "means that you're inviting their treatment [of you] ... then it's a survival mode." It is this very need to brace the self for the hostile encounter that, for Jamilah, makes her non-humanity most clear. "There are some days that I go out from home and I feel like I[']m hav[ing] a bad day, you know, I'm not *armed* to defend myself and I'm not *armed* to have a self-esteem that's one hundred percent so I just feel like: Can't I just be human? Can't I just got out without this [racism]?" Jamilah further laments, "When I'm not, you know, *ready*, to defend myself or have my guard up *that's* when I'm so easily a target.... It damages my soul when I get mistreatments that, you know, is based on my colour and my religion." Not only must this Black Muslim woman demonstrate the ways she is learning to be(come) human but, the self who is integrated through a painful pedagogy must learn to be ever on the ready to withstand the degradations that lash the body of the shameful subject. What Jamilah expresses is then the ontological precarity of an unstable place amongst the recognizably human wherein one can feel the tenuousness of this belonging; which

simultaneously reveals the emotional warfare of having to endure the quotidian nature of the debasement.

### *Do I Exist?*

For some, it is not a tenuous or delayed human belonging that is at issue but the feeling of absolute ontological refusal, as they come to ponder the very fact of their existence. Nadia, a 32 year old non-hijabi of Sudanese descent who works for a women's aid organization shares such musings. She states,

When I was young, I had a couple of complexes. My first one was that, I didn't exist. I literally had a period where I was convinced that like, "Maybe, I don't exist".... Obviously people are still talking to me and dah dah dah [etc.]. But also, having grown-up in privileged white places I remember walking to daycare and being like, 'This person on this billboard doesn't look like me. I've never seen someone on a billboard that looks like me. I've seen me in *the mirror*. But, I don't see me out in society.' You know? And it developed into a complex.

Without the affirmation that bodies like one's own can occupy space in a surrounding environment, the actuality of the subjects' existence becomes uncertain. Because one's image is reflected back to them only in the private purview of the mirror while omitted from a white public realm, one's very being is felt as fantastical. All this is occurring in the earliest comprehensions of a Black Muslim child. Nadia's childhood doubts of existence are notably, shared in tandem with her more recent encounters with Black invisibility. Recounting the events at a gathering held to mark a Swedish tradition, Nadia explains that farewells were cheerfully offered to white friends sitting next to her while her own presence was completely overlooked. Narrating the incident Nadia relays the following,

I'm sitting like, *right there*.... They didn't make eye contact and they left.... They didn't say good bye to me! And, I'm like, "We really didn't talk that much but, I know that you didn't necessarily talk that much to my friends either!" But at the end of the day they [white

friends] are recognized as people that exist in this space. And, my existence makes them uncomfortable for some reason. And, that's the part that messes with my sanity. I get to a point where I'm like, "Well, maybe it's me."

Here it is the white body that is always present, always visible, and afforded the courtesy of the good-bye. As white Swedes come together to celebrate the traditions of the white Swedish nation they see and acknowledge one another. White civility is extended to one's fellow white citizen, as fellows of a white citizenry. Because Nadia is so explicitly invisibilized in this gesture of white recognition she understands it as an affirmation of white existence. An interesting shift in her adulthood reflections, however, is that the refusal of eye-contact and the withholding of the good-bye are interpreted not as evidence that she truly does not exist. Instead, Nadia perceives that it is the fact of her existence that elicits white discomfort and is therefore being denied acknowledgement. We can then speculate that the white anxiety provoked by the intrusion of the Black body into the sanctity of the Swedish tradition is managed through the refusal of this type of address. The Black Muslim female that is otherwise subject to the authority of the prying question and thus exposed as the addressable body can, evidently, also be inscribed through silence. That is, the absence of an address indicates the spaces where this body should not be encountered. As she wonders if the denial of parting words is a reaction of discomfort to her presence ("maybe it's me") that is because, it is. It *is* her. Nadia is being coached through her invisibility as whiteness dismisses her presence and sees itself. The subject learns to be ashamed (and to feel responsible for this shame) as the appearance of their body on an occasion of white collectivity becomes the act of doing something "bad" (Ahmed 103). It is useful here to pause over an epithet from Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014):

In line at the drugstore it's finally your turn, and then it's not as he walks in front of you and puts his things on the counter. The cashier says, Sir, she was next. When he turns to you he is truly surprised.

Oh my God, I didn't see you.  
You must be in a hurry, you offer.  
No, no, no, I really didn't see you (Rankine 94).

What Rankine allows us to consider, through the pain and degradation that can so swiftly germinate in the most mundane of settings, is how the Black female body can be made to not be there (i.e., in the drugstore, in line, at the Swedish party) when it needs not to be. In this way, the same subject-object that is laid bare through the violent arrest of the speech act can be rendered unseen when it is in the way, when it dares to place itself before or ahead of whiteness. From Nadia we learn that the prospect of her invisibility also looms as she enters into general public space. She states,

[I'm] just constantly calculating. Literally *every single day*. Navigating public transportation, every time someone bumps into me I'm like, "Is that a result of how they subconsciously value me because we're all products of this racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic society?"... And whenever someone cuts in [front of me] in line, [I wonder] would they have done that if I was this formatively beautiful blond chick? Constantly. Every single day. All the time.

In these deliberations is a question of what racist readings facilitate. The impudent bumping into or stepping ahead of the body of another — an Other — can be assessed for cues of contempt. Such ruminations could speculatively be articulated as: My Black body can be bumped into because it goes unseen in white public space; My Black body can be knocked over because it is being pushed out of white dominant terrain; and, My Black female body is not intended to be here (Sweden) so, it is ejected from there (the line). There is a punishment for one's non-blondness. There are repercussions for one's failure to be white. There are available methods for denying the Other who has the audacity to come before us in the moments we do not immediately seek the pleasures of the excavation.

### *Staring: A Corrective Astonishment*

For Khadra, a twenty-three year old hijabi of Somali origin who works for a non-profit organization, the unwelcome appearance of Black Muslim women in white space compels a kind of seeing that precipitates horror: “They [white Swedes] imagine the horror of having to look at those people [Black Muslims].” Khadra contends that the sense of alarm and aversion to the particular presence of Black women who wear the hijab within Stockholm’s affluent, racially segregated inner city reveals a kind of intrusion that unsettles the routinized happenings of white society. More specifically, Khadra suggests that bodies like her own interfere with the delights of consumption, when the white subject that is attempting to nourish the self must also take-in the distasteful sight of the Black Muslim. Describing what she reads in the gazes of white people who encounter her in restaurants, this young woman relays, “When they see you [they think] ‘I’m just trying to enjoy my meal.... You’re ruining it by existing in my space.’” The Somali woman in hijab renders the food unpalatable by thrusting her existence into places where it is not meant to go. She sullies the experience of relishing a meal as the otherwise consumable foreign body unexpectedly enters segregated white space. Ruining the dish. Provoking a kind of affective indigestion. To further convey this point, Khadra tells of a previous job in a café wherein she registered the displeasure of white Swedes who she served in the early hours of the day. Interpreting their vexation, Khadra surmised that to have to endure the sight of her was “ruining their morning coffee.” The unanticipated confrontation with the Other ruins the routines of whiteness. To have to confront this Otherness in the infancy of the day horrifies by ruining the routinization of such places, as white only spaces. In these instances it is the hostility of the gaze that seeks to regulate the movements of the Black Muslim woman. Yet, rather than indicating that she should

not exist all together, the vexed look orders that she should not make her existence known in the moments when whiteness has not explicitly ordered the public exposure.

What becomes fascinating about these directives of appropriate consumption (i.e., when the already captive body is to reveal itself vs. when the white body seeks nourishment unperturbed) is that, even as women's bodies can be rendered unsightly or unseen they can alternately become hypervisible as objects of fascination. That is, when the white Swedish subject wishes to see the Other, the subject-object of the gaze cannot escape the fixation of the white stare. Although Khadra lives and spends much of her leisure time in a suburb of Stockholm that is dominantly populated by migrants of colour, her job compels regular travel to the inner city. Contemplating the unconcealed looks that she receives when in the white dominant public space (in contrast to its nonexistence in the migrant suburb), Khadra exclaims over, "How *much* people stare." Even as she asks herself whether "the staring is worse" or if she is only "now noticing" its prevalence, Khadra definitively declares that this flagrant gaze is a gesture of "hostil[ity]." Furthermore, she adamantly refuses any reasoning that might suggest that white Swedes are agape at the novelty of the non-white body. To argue that white people in Stockholm stare because they "have not seen Black or Muslim people before," for Khadra, is simply "not true." What can then be said to be happening here? Does the hostility of the unabashed gaze continue as an extension of a prying humiliation? That is, laying the Black Muslim female body bare through the look in a way that is otherwise achieved through the untoward query?

Dienke Hondius (2009) explains that the shocking newness of Black bodies within Western Europe (particularly within The Netherlands) is a wonder that has remained artificially intact throughout colonial time. Describing early modern encounters between Europeans and Africans,

Hondius relates that the astonishment the former expressed upon the initial sighting of dark skin (as recorded in sixteenth and seventeenth-century European travelogues)<sup>68</sup> is a stupefaction that has been allowed to continue into the late twentieth century and extend into our present through what she terms “the repetition of surprise.” In this surprise is the reiteration of the language of “first” — that is, the first sighting, first meeting, first experience, of Blackness (31-2). Hereby the encounter with a Black person within Europe at the cusp of the twenty-first century can repeat the initial shock and wonder of the colonial moment in a dramatization that affectively signifies the continued foreignness of Blackness in European space. By drawing Hondius’ conception of perpetual white astonishment into dialogue with Puwar’s work on invasion we can begin to better understand Khadra’s experiences in Stockholm. Puwar (2004) proposes that when Black bodies enter into spaces where “they are not expected to be” the “claims” such an entry is perceived to make on an institution is continually thwarted through “a look which abnormalises their presence and locates them ... as belonging elsewhere” (41-42). Writing specifically of occupational settings, Puwar further attests that a “racialized episteme is interrupted” and the “white gaze” faces upset when bodies of colour appallingly appear as “‘equal’ members” (42). To rectify this *disorientation* the white subject/institution attempts to batter these “unusual creatures” back into images preserved within, what Puwar calls, “the archive of imperial memory” (44). Khadra thus shows-up in the spaces wherein whiteness has only prepared to meet itself (i.e., in the cafe, in the restaurant, on the train in the inner city). As such, her appearance

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<sup>68</sup> Hondius ultimately proposes that sixteenth and seventeenth-century renditions of this surprise were expressed without “moral weight” or “racial classification” (31). Such a conclusion problematically regurgitates notions of “white innocence” and non-racism that Afro-Dutch scholars have rigorously challenged (see Nimako et al. 2014; Wekker 2016). Even so, I would argue that contemporary permutations of this surprise now make very different gestures than Hondius’ historical apologetics propose and that her analysis of the continuation of this surprise in the late twentieth-century offers us more theoretical nuance.

might then register as a “claim” she is making on the “institution” of white hegemony (as seen in Nadia’s case).

For white Swedes to stare at this woman when she dares to move out of the migrant suburb and into the regular sites of white life performs a rendition of Hondius’ “repetition of surprise.” That is, openly gawking at the Black hijabi in “our” midst enacts a kind of astonishment which can be repeated each and every time she becomes visible. In this way, her appearance is also made into an arrival: always new, always a first, perpetually from elsewhere. The wonder in the “look” that follows Khadra’s body “abnormalises” her presence by re-entrenching her strangeness. White stares can thus also be understood to stage a corrective that challenges Khadra’s presumption that she can equally participate in the public sphere (a presumption witnessed by her physical presence). The gaze that surveils and marvels at her movements through Stockholm ensures that this woman can feel the nature of her trespass through an insistent watchfulness. Not dissimilar from the regulatory work of prying queries, unabashed staring also lashes the surface of the skin in a manner that informs the foreigner what claims are intolerable within tolerant society. It is thus through this corrective astonishment that we can interpret the looks Khadra receives in the restaurant and the café. A white Swedish subject/nation rectifies the disorientation caused by the irregular appearance of the Black Muslim body in the regularly white terrain through a looking which tells her that, in these moments she is not permitted to be amongst “us.”

## Becoming the Assimilating Subject

As usual you drive straight through the moment with the expected backing off of what was previously said. It is not only that confrontation is headache-producing; it is also that you have a destination that doesn't include acting like this moment isn't inhabitable (Rankine 2014, 17-18)

How might the humiliated subject (and her shamed body) acquiesce to her persistent denigra-

tion? In what ways does the repetition of the violence mean for the subjugated to grow accus-

tomed to the humiliation, accepting it as a condition of living within the white Swedish nation?

Echoing Rankine, Leylo similarly articulates a “backing off” in the face of humiliation. Specifi-

cally, Leylo speaks of cultivating a lack of awareness. In willfully choosing not to register or op-

pose the racist mortifications one is unwillfully subjected to therefore appears to allow otherwise

uninhabitable moments to become inhabitable. As she states,

I don't want to fight for it too much because it's going to take my energy... So now I don't even see it. And also, I'm so use to getting doors shut right in front of me. So, when I do get a door shut in front of me, or somebody takes my space [in line], or an [food/drink] order goes before me, or a job application that I didn't get for obvious reasons [racism] — I'm almost like, “Ah, that didn't happen” [said in light airy voice]. And I just move on and I don't see it. Or, I *do* see it but, I don't wanna.... You see abuse happening to you but, you're like “I didn't see that!”

We are compelled through these words to consider how one contends with the regularity of vio-

lence. Leylo's reflections reveal the choice not to respond to familiar and reoccurring hostilities

that initiate in the most commonplace of instances so that the everyday is not insufferable. In this

section, I would like further consider how the desire for some form of habitable life might lead

Afro-Swedish Muslim women to not only choose to avoid directly contesting their humiliations

but, in other instances, to conform the body to assimilatory requirements by way of evading the

moment of injury.

### ***“I Just Wanted to be White”***

We can here turn once again to Ahmed’s reflections on shame. Ahmed suggests that shame can operate as a “deterrent” whereby in the effort to avert shame the subject is obliged to “enter the ‘contract’ of the social bond, by seeking to approximate a social ideal” (107). Accordingly, the infliction of shame can be the consequence (or “affective cost” [107]) for the subject’s failure to conform to “normative existence” (107). This normative conformity, as Ahmed describes it, entails approximating “an ideal” of a community of belonging (106). By exposing the subject’s failure to align with (and thus “love”) a normative “we” shame can work to “reintegrate” the subject (106). Supposing that, as I have proposed above, the shameful subject feels as though it is the difference of their body that is doing something “bad” it becomes meaningful to consider the ways this same subject might seek to correct this failure or badness. If the “social ideal” a collective “we” unites under is to be Swedish so that “normative existence” means to be a white Swede, I ponder how Black Muslim women might enter into this “social contract” and “reintegrate” their bodies by attempting to become white. To illuminate how these effects might take shape I present snippets from Ella and Nadia’s narratives in tandem.

Ella:

For me, it’s not about being in a white context so much as it is being in a white context without *any* form of representation. For every fifty white people, there’s one Black person ... living in Sweden, for me, I just wanted to be white [when younger].... I don’t think I knew that it would be easier. I don’t think I knew that I would be considered more beautiful. I just wanted the simplicity of it... I did spend a proper half of my life hoping that I would just not have to seem Black. Or, not look too African or, act too African or, just deviate from the norm. That has been a huge part [of my life] and that’s a trauma and I have to process that ... I just pretended that I wasn’t Black and hoped that nobody would notice [laughs]. Which is weird because, of course they do. Especially when you’re one of the few.... I tried to speak

perfect Swedish. I *never* spoke Arabic.... When people would talk to me in Arabic I would answer them in Swedish.... I would hide the fact that my Mom prays five times a day.... I would never talk about my culture, I would make my Mom cook Swedish food. Just all these things! To make it look as if it was just this, *normalness* and we weren't *weird*.

Nadia:

Very early on ... I understood that there was a hierarchy in regards to race. I felt it obviously, before I could verbalize it. I remember being in fourth grade ... and being confused and just feeling like, I'm drowning in self-contempt and I'm trying to understand what the *source* of it is... I remember a blond white blue-eyed kid joined our class and everybody is so excited, including the teachers.... I literally had this dialogue with myself where I'm like, "What can I do? Okay, I can dye my hair [blond]" Literally! Like, "My skin colour: I could do that Michael Jackson thing, but I don't like that.... Eye [colour].... I'm sure technology will have a solution for that in the future" I was literally going through that thing... Then I realized "But, *I don't* have a problem with these features. *I don't* necessarily feel that blond hair is more beautiful. I just feel like I'm not given the same opportunity as the *blond kids*. That has been something I have carried with me from *so* early on and ... has become some form of an obsession.

Here is the desire to re-make the body into what it is not: learning to detest the non-normativity of Blackness ("not have to seem Black. ...not look too African or, act too African"; "there was a hierarchy in regards to race.... I'm drowning in self-contempt"); thus, imagining what must be altered for its reintegration (e.g. skin, eyes, hair). Here is the longing to step out of the scorned and overlooked Black body into the body of Swedishness (i.e., white, blond). Here is a shame, derision, and secreting of the parts of the self that have failed to conform to the social ideals of Swedish dominant culture. Shame thus deters one from partaking in that which does not approximate a "we" (e.g. speaking Arabic, eating non-Swedish food). Here is a yearning for the rewards of simplicity and opportunity extended to those of a normative existence. Part of what is curious about these two women's accounts of their past experiences is that, even as children they were aware of the social costs of not physically and culturally aligning with the qualities of this ideal. Although they did not necessarily locate beauty in these normative traits of Swedish whiteness

they felt the “affective costs” of not being white through the shame that riddled their young bodies.

### ***Stylizing the Self as Swedish***

Grosz’s (1995) reading of Foucault on the “docility” of the “pliable body” puts forth the claim that docility ceases to operate by the primary force of “external regulation, supervision and constraint” as its intensity is propelled by “self-regulation, self-management, and self-control” (Foucault 1997 in Grosz 2). As part of contemplating Black Muslim women’s childhood longings to enter into the whiteness they have failed to be, I take-up the ways — in adulthood— the external regulations of shame that once sanctioned these white desires appear in the form of self-regulation. Yet, it is not the entering into the white body through a corporeal remolding that I suggest women now seek as adults. Instead, the physical self is regulated through careful gestures such as, style of dress, restraint of physical posture, and controlled comportment when in white dominate public space. In these ways, women self-manage their bodies so that it complies or, becomes docile to, the external regulations of Swedish social norms and the anticipated behaviours of the assimilated foreigner. Here I turn to extended extracts from Nadia and Leylo’s narratives to illustrate this point.

Nadia:

I’m definitely read as, I would say, a Swede.... Especially after people speak with me and hear my Swedish. They will presumptively ask, “You’re born here, right?”... I know that I fit because, I’m very aware of how I move, how I sit, how I take-up space.... I give myself to permission fully *indulge* in my Blackness in safe spaces ... but I don’t force myself to do so in spaces where I don’t feel as safe. I give myself permission to go under the radar or, whatever.... *I know* who *I assume* to be newly arrived migrants.... I know what to wear and what not to wear.... My husband came [from Sudan] and I was like, “We’re burning that jacket.” Partly because, it’s ugly as hell, but also because ... I have the language and the cultural capital, etcetera, etcetera.... So, I thought a lot about what he could and couldn’t wear and I

wanted him to dress in a way that was proper.... I was very defensive, if he picked-up something [I would say]: “No, no, somebody will read you for what you are [a recent migrant].”

Leylo:

I think they [white Swedes in public] see somebody actually *quite* Swedish by the way I talk and my body language. So, I would consider myself *really* integrated. Sometimes I really want to be more relaxed but, I’m not. I can’t do that. Because, maybe if my body language is sloppy or, if it’s like, not proper Swedish, like Nordic which is really cold, then maybe I would be portrayed as a refugee or, as somebody who lived here for lesser years. And that would be a journey more down, even though I don’t want to think like that, it would be going down... I think I pass as really *unweaponized*. Like, a cute girl, with a cute face, with a small body that would never harm [others].... Hiding my Blackness, I think I do a lot, unconsciously, for example, with my style.... I think my body is being more exotified so I really don’t want to show curves. I really dress, I wouldn’t say “dress white” or “non-Black” but, I try to dress less the stereotype that Sweden people have of a Black woman.... So, I have really dark clean colours, clean cuts ... because I don’t want [them] to be, like “Oh, you look really beautiful in flower prints.” This kind of stereotype, I don’t want it. So, I dress Scandinavian. Sometimes.

Because of what they read to be their successful performance or acquisition of culturally integrated behaviour both women believe that they are read as Swedish. Second to having an expert command of the Swedish language, they understand that their integration into normative society is displayed through their conscious and highly manipulated movements of the body. We see this in Nadia’s assertion that she is “very aware of how I move, how I sit, how I take-up space” and Leylo’s insistence that if she were to relax into “sloppy” body language (rather than that of a “proper” Swede) when in public spaces she might forfeit her integrative hold. A condition of passing as a Swedish subject — amidst cues to foreignness read upon the skin — evidently entails a continuous bodily restraint and surveillance. Hence, as blatant white stares in other instances abnormalize these women’s public presence, Leylo and Nadia have learned to reduce the body’s strangeness under the very glare of these looks. One’s movements are made to conform to Swedish social ideals, arguably, in compensation for what cannot be changed about the skin. In-

terestingly, what is utmost in these efforts of self-management is the desire to not be read as a recently arrived migrant and therefore, lose the cultural capital of years old integration. In both cases, a Swedish upbringing or extended residency is indicated through clothing. For Nadia this endeavour notably extends to her husband. Because she knows what forms of dress are normative and thus “proper[ly]” Swedish (or, improperly signify the foreigner) she can clothe her Black Muslim male partner in the garb of the naturalized subject — presumably as she also does for herself. The social exile of non-belonging is then warded-off through the sartorial shield of assimilatory style. What we can see here is then not the solitary wish to become (or, be seen as) Swedish but, (also) a self-regulation that attempts to escape the enmity directed towards those Others that still visibly references an alignment with an elsewhere. That is, those who have not yet properly succumb to the lessons of humiliation by submitting to the ideals of Swedish culture.

Leylo, in turn, expresses the wish to allay a fear of Blackness through an alluring physicality that shrouds what otherwise is dominantly understood to promise violence and threaten harm. A cultivated cuteness that is accessed through the body’s soft, adorable surface and unimposing circumference renders endearing a self that would be responded to with alarm. Part of the work of docility thus involves presenting (or being able to inhabit) a tamed body — an “un-weaponized” Black womanhood. The adorable subject can more readily be imagined to be she who can properly adore the nation. As Nadia utilizes normative forms of dress to avoid her and her husband’s displacement from the more inhabitable sphere of the integrated outsider, Leylo also conveys that Nordic fashion offers a kind of cultural camouflage. While it is the unrelenting control of her physical posture that reinforces the longevity of her place within the nation, Leylo

speculates that it is clothing that permits her to extricate from the racial stereotypes that seek to engrave her Blackness. Even as prying questions and insistent stares attempt to capture and expose her conceived differences, the familiarity and cultural compatibility of “dark clean colours, clean cuts” quiets the exclamations that wait to enfold the Black female back into the florals of the African jungle out of which she can be imagined to have come.

### ***Not Scaring White People: Demonstrating Goodness***

David Ikard’s (2017) analysis of the trope of a “loveable racist” contends that when Black and brown people express affection for racist persons this fondness offers the trope “cultural legitimacy” (9). People of colour’s affection for the racist sanctions an “embodied validation” that demonstrates that the racism (of the loveable racist) is “largely harmless” (9). Allowing that one of the ways Black people are expected to demonstrate their allegiance and assimilation to the white supremacist nation is through their witnessable love for the nation (see Ahmed 2014; Chapter Two), it could be that this display of (obligatory) affection can be used as an embodied signifier for the virtues of the nation. That is, the white Western liberal nation cannot be legitimately accused of racism if people of colour continue to communicate a fond devotion. Considering the disciplinary tactics of humiliation proposed thus far, however, it becomes probable that in the case of Sweden — as the loveable racist nation — there may be less of a need to prove that moments of racist degradation are “harmless” and more of an inclination to confirm that harm has served the right purpose: assimilation. One of the ways the disciplinary successes of rhetorical hurt or, an unnerving gaze might be displayed is through some women’s desires to sooth the anxieties of white Swedes. While Leylo speculates that her cuteness enables her to “pass” as an

“unweaponized” non-white body, other Afro-Swedish women — particularly those who wear the hijab — comprehend that the appearance of their visibly Black and Muslim bodies into dominate space is enough to trigger white fear. Because their physical selves are perceived to initiate such forms of white vulnerability, they instead endeavour to put white people at ease by demonstrating their own goodness. Jamilah and Khadra relay the following,

Jamilah:

You always grew-up with, you know, [thinking] “I have to adapt” ... and always work extra hard to prove yourself... And sometimes calm them [white Swedes] down, like, “I’m a nice person. I’m a good person,” you know? You have to always prove yourself because it’s not given [i.e., goodness]... You always battle the stereotypes, you know, against both your Blackness and then, now being being Muslim is *really* not popular. It’s like two struggles.

Khadra:

I try to smile and be kind since looking the way I do is hostile. I try to tone down my personality so not to scare them [white Swedes]... I’m a person who talks loud and a person who laughs loudly but I try to be quieter in public.... I try to be a good person all the time to not frighten [white] people ... trying extra hard to show, “Okay I’m not one of those people.... I’m one of the good ones.... I’m not going to try to rob you.”

In such efforts we can speculate that these Black Muslim women have stepped into the interpellation and thus internalized the racist inscriptions that decide the terror of an unintegrated Blackness and Muslimness. Again, it would be the painful lash of humiliation that has incited this reckoning and dictates the terms for its rectification. Put simply, some women have accepted that they are scary and have come to believe it is their responsibility to reduce the terror that their bodies are perceived to cause. In their own way Jamilah and Khadra attempt to “unweaponize” their veiled bodies by manipulating their comportment through an observable kindness and/or a subdued manner. An exaggerated display of goodness seeks pardon for the *hostility* that the mere sight of these Black hijabis is presumably made to induce. Goodness is thought to offset fear.

Self-regulation of one's behaviour once again, does what the body can not (i.e., become white). And, the harm of racist humiliation serves the right purpose. That is, teaching these women that they must not be "one of those [unassimilating] people" who "rob" the white nation of the verifiable love that is its due.

### **The Futility of Acceptance: Refusing Acts of Assimilation**

"Would you ever say you're Swedish?" I ask Hani — a sixteen year old high school sophomore who wears a jilbab<sup>69</sup> — after she explains that while she identifies racially as Black she usually locates herself through her family's Somali origins. "Um, well yeah. I guess? Well technically, I am [Swedish] because it says so in my passport" Hani indefinitely offers. Going further, she shares that her Swedishness is something she states when crossing international borders and finds that this identity sticks even when in Somalia: "It's kind of funny. We're [sisters] called the Swedish girls." I further prob, "But, when you're here [Stockholm], people wouldn't immediately call you 'the Swedish girls'?" Laughing, Hani responds conclusively: "I'm not." One of the most curious aspects of Hani's narrative (both here and below) is her resignation to non-belonging within a dominant conception of Swedishness. Even as she has access to and makes use of the benefits of Western European citizenship she understands that she is not numbered amongst what normatively defines a Swede and even more specifically, a Swedish girl. It is this recognition of the cultural and often, bodily contingencies of a full national belonging that repeats throughout the narratives of a number of women, as we see in the following snippets of dialogue:

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<sup>69</sup> loose, full coat worn by some Muslim women

Kate:

Here in Sweden, if your colour is different you are never *actually* going to be Swedish... We have third and fourth generations here and *still*. You have the *grandparents* fluent in Swedish and still [you're asked] "So, where are you from?"

Jamilah:

They don't see me as Swedish because I don't look like [it]. I have *everything* a real Swedish shouldn't have. I'm Black. I'm a Muslim. I'm covered. So, how the hell are they going to see me as Swedish if they are not open-minded. They assume you are a refugee that recently came because *you look like one*...It's exhausting... The *minute* you say a wrong word [in Swedish language] they're very fast [snaps fingers] at pointing that out ... and in a condescending way where they repeat that you're wrong... Every chance they get they will remind you that, "You know what? You are lower than me and I am higher than you because, I'm the original and you're the copy."

While Leylo and Nadia's narratives convey that their flawless articulation of Swedish, in part, means to be read as integrated Swedish subjects, the point that Kate and Jamilah expressly lament, however, is that even amidst witnessable signs of assimilation non-belonging can pervade. Herein, signifiers for an unamalgamated foreignness (seen upon the skin) can nonetheless, refuse the authenticity of one's place within the Swedish nation. Although the failure to master the Swedish language has already been revealed as a deficiency swiftly punished through humiliation's assimilatory pedagogy, the longevity or legitimacy of one's national hold can still be put to question if the language is spoken fluently yet, articulated from the wrong body. What I aim to explore in this final section is, how Afro-Swedish Muslim women reckon with these deceptions in assimilation's promise.

As examined thus far, the hurt of humiliation seems to assure relief from injury if/when the body submits to: the exposure of capture; properly acquiesces to shame and the social ideals of normative existence; and, proves its docility through a vigilant self-regulation. Thus, what

happens when this masochism is perceived to work solely for the pleasures of a dominant whiteness? Put simply: If they will not be accepted as Swedish anyway, do women give-up the effort of continuing to try for this? If so, what does this look like? Tina Campt (2017) proposes that the quotidian can be understood as a form of practice whereby “the dispossessed” vie to generate possibility from the sites of everyday constraint (4; see also Hartman 1997). Campt goes on to state that, “[f]or blacks in diaspora, both quiet and the quotidian are mobilized as everyday practices of refusal” (4). I then ask: How might women who have once properly learned to recoil in shame from their Blackness and Muslimness through the quotidian violences imbricated in the Stockholm’s everyday, potentially, become numb to the sting of this unrelenting blow? Thus, how might the very places of a quotidian restraint be re-mobilized as zones of refusal whereby, women possibly choose to re-occupy difference in unexpected, confusing and assimilatory inappropriate ways?

### ***Assimilating or Unassimilable?: Being a Confusing Subject***

One is not simply fixed by the name that one is called. In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence... Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response (Butler 1997, 2)

What this quote from Butler allows us to consider here are the ways Afro-Swedish Muslim women who have been fixed by violent speech acts might comprehend what the painful rhetoric demands of them but may choose to answer in an unanticipated manner. In response to the continuous prying query “Where are you from?”, which aims to dislocate the non-white body that disconcertingly shows-up in “naturally” white spaces (Puwar 2004 5, 32), Kate replies to the rhetorical laceration with a retort that often baffles the inquisitor. “I like to mess with people’s

heads sometimes” Kate says with a grin, going on to explain that she at times declares that she is from *Pangaea*. “It’s how the earth was a long time ago when it was just one big continent [we both laugh].” Further adding, “because for me nation or ethnicity is not what defines me, to be honest. I don’t go around saying I’m Swedish or I’m Egyptian because, it’s not what defines me, at all. I’m taking the good in both worlds and making my own.” There is, of course, something unsettling about the foreign subject who declines to locate themselves within a familiar spectrum of the elsewhere. Further still, there is something disquieting about the should-be assimilating subject that does not definitively align themselves with Sweden as part of learning to be ashamed of the foreign place from which they have come. To choose that which is neither of the white nation nor, the alien outside is nonsensical to both the terms of assimilatory capture and to that which allows the stranger to be discarded as the unassimilable. Turning again to Butler we learn that, “[i]f to be addressed is to be interpellated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call” (2). The trickery and confusion of Kate’s response to the voice of authority (Butler 1997) thus, upsets the sequence of call-and-response whereby the prying query (which cares less for the actual answer) works to describe and fix this Black Muslim woman into the strangeness she is already understood to occupy. Kate changes this moment ever so slightly through the unanticipated, dislocated utterance. This woman chooses not to reference the border as she instead situates herself within a once singular land mass. The repetition of the alienating question — “Where are you from?” — inadvertently *inaugurates a subject* who answers in a way that troubles the call.

Nadia describes a succession of shifts in how she has conceived of her national identities. Having once vigorously proclaimed pride in being of Sudanese descent (“as a *reaction* to the

racism I felt because being Sudanese and Africanness was frowned upon”), being able to actively claim Swedishness later appeared for her as a critical political act (“it became very important for me to claim that... I have *the right* to be Swedish ... [and] a right to the comfort that comes with the lifelong experience of this country”). In both instances, these declarations of belonging respond to an authoritative voice that maintains that this Black woman is alien to normative Swedish existence. Yet, what appears as most fascinating is the current evolution in Nadia’s conceptions of nation. She thus explicates, “my latest phase is giving myself permission to claim both or, either [Swedish and/or Sudanese] *whenever* and *however* I want. I can switch. I can step in and out. And, I don’t owe anybody a commitment or loyalty. So I can be Swedish *when I feel like it*. And, *not*, when I don’t feel like it.” Here is a willfully fluid subject that steps “in and out” of national identities in a manner that disrupts assimilation’s work of fixing. Nadia rebukes stillness or national loyalty as she instead adds movement, variability and unpredictability to the places she chooses to claim — irrespective of when or, if these places choose to claim her. Considering that Nadia also feels the finickiness of her Swedishness through a demand for diligent self-regulation (see above), it becomes particularly curious that the Swedish belonging that she otherwise assiduously seeks is that which, she also allows herself to step away from and out of. The tentative and always incomplete belonging that white nationalism maintains is perhaps what inadvertently creates room for a flexible sense of nation that comes to be dictated by the whims and needs of they who are Othered. “I can be Swedish *when I feel like it*.”

A sense of being able to claim space also transpires for Nadia within the quotidian places of Stockholm, wherein she anticipates her exclusions. She thus attests that, “If I’m in a public setting, I’m consciously communicating in whatever way I can that, I have the *right* to be here

and take up this space and *I know it.*” From her conspicuous Black body Nadia would likely be an object of the incisive white gaze that surveils she who has dared to venture into areas of Stockholm reserved for whiteness (see Puwar 2004, 49). It is precisely by returning the gaze (“feel[ing] comfortable making eye contact or, what you communicate with your eye contact”) and invoking bold, visible ways of moving her body, however, that Nadia allows herself to expand when in the public spaces that would command her constraint. To relay this point, it is useful to quote Nadia at length,

when I was younger, this was me trying to walk down the street [makes wide veering motions with hand]. Because non-white people are not supposed to walk in the middle of the street [sidewalk]. The street is not for you. “You are *blessed* to have been given the opportunity to come here [Sweden] and you should be *grateful*. You walk on the sides or, you navigate around us white people.” And I did that for so long... [Until] *very recently*, like two years ago ... I snapped. And I realized, like ... it’s going to take so much energy and time just to get there because I can’t walk straight and I walk around and I’m tense and I’m clenched... This shit is going to give me cancer... So, I was like, “You know what? I’m just going to walk straight and let’s see what they’ll do!” ... And sure enough, the friggin’ sea parted. You know? That’s when I realized it’s all about how aggressive and determined you are when you walk down the street. And, when you look them in the eye and just keep walking, that’s when they realize *you’re not going to move*.

Nadia’s body becomes disobedient as it reflects not the docility of the grateful foreigner but, rebelliously strides through white society as a self that can legitimately occupy her surroundings. The humiliations from which the body cringes is initially conveyed through the attempt to make itself small. In the effort to become unassuming the Other accepts that its presence is always that of racial trespass or white benevolence. The subject is disciplined into treading the edges of the sidewalk and then, only in the moments when white Swedish bodies do not immediately demand that same space. Yet, the weight of the self-regulation becomes too much to bear. The humiliation of the shrinking self begins to hurt in ways that appears, at last, as insufferable and uninhabitable

(see Rankine 2014). Nadia becomes “aggressive and determined” in her movements, commanding space as she also meets a white gaze with an order of her own: *I’m not going to move*.

Additionally, Nadia explains that part of what protects her from overt racist violences is what she calls her “masculine energy” which, she “tap[s] into more in public space.” Because she understands that Black masculinity is dominantly read as threatening, Nadia utilizes this particular fear of Blackness by consciously cultivating her masculine energy when in public. In this way, she endeavours to dissuade white Swedish expressions of racist hostility that would readily target a more feminine Black subject. “I feel that it has been a protection from aggression. Because, I feel like when people expect some kind of a reaction ... they’re less likely to trigger that reaction if it’s a reaction they don’t want,” she offers. By performing Black masculinity through the movements of her body Nadia furthers the disturbance that her already fluid national identity would invoke through this stepping into and out of forms of gender presentation. If the assimilating subject is supposed to manipulate their bodies into submission, the Black female subject that willfully embodies more threat and induces more white terror is incomprehensible. Yet, Nadia surmises that part of what is compromised with donning the armour of Black masculinity to access public space is, her Black womanhood.

Alternately, Leylo reveals how the body can become menacing in undetectable ways. Herein, the subject appears as the properly assimilated yet covertly enacts the gestures considered to belong to the unassimilated. Returning to the stylizations of her body through sartorial choices that familiarly reference Scandinavian culture, Leylo conveys that this camouflage serves a double purpose. Even as her Nordic dress is invoked to obscure the foreignness attributed to the Black female body, the androgyny of loose-fitting and fully covered Swedish

clothing secretly twins, for Leylo, as “modest” Muslim attire. Elsewhere she states in exasperation, “in Sweden it’s all or nothing. You need to be one of them but, then, you can’t be the other thing. That’s the thing with being a Swedish person.” A dominant gaze that enforces such absolutist terms of Swedish belonging merely sees in her mimed Nordic aesthetic the figure that its authoritative eye expects: the self-regulating outsider whose body is appropriately yielding to social norms. Yet, the same clothes that reference assimilation also represent a means of being religiously observant. Leylo explains that without the presence of the hijab white peers only see her as “fashionable” and thus “would never know” that she is Muslim and dressing as a Muslim. In this way, Leylo can continue to display the signifiers for the assimilated subject (void of both Blackness’ dangerous exoticism and Islam’s cultural incompatibility) as she undetectably dons the garb of a Muslim. As such, Leylo is not the fully captivated or knowable subject since she continues to be what she should not and can inconspicuously do so in the presence of those who would demand otherwise. Here is thus another practice of the quotidian.

## **Conclusion**

The narratives of these eight Afro-Swedish Muslim women allow for meditations on the affective and rhetorical violences through which the forces of white nation-making at once seek to exile threateningly incompatible Others and yet, invoke a brutal pedagogy to teach these very same subjects how to be re-made into what they are not. In the humiliating face of a national tolerance that operates on white supremacist overtones, women meet these contradictory edicts through the instability and inconsistency of their (un)assimilatory gestures. Even as we recognize the ways women interrupt their integrative capture through their own quotidian speech acts or movements

of confusion, it remains important to attend to the nuances of ambiguity. While the Swedish nation cycles between the denial of Black Muslim belongings, only to demand witnessable forms of integration and then once again, decline national acceptance — Afro-Swedish Muslim women also oscillate between an assimilatory yearning and refusal. Yet, as part of retrieving the mutilated Black female body that has been methodically lacerated by humiliation and shame, this chapter aims to convey how unanticipated and unpredictable responses might be spoken and enacted; even as women otherwise or, simultaneously acknowledge the authoritative call and adhere to terms of the painful pedagogy.

## **Chapter Five:** **Willful Art in Canada: Embracing the Alien; Becoming the Monster**

Part of the very problem of contemporary political life is that not everyone counts as a subject. Multiculturalism tends to presuppose already constituted communities, already established subjects, when what is at stake are communities not quite recognized as such, subjects who are living, but not yet regarded as “lives”. (Butler 2010, 32)

“Black” bodies are known as belonging to other places, outside civil places. Once they enter these realms of the “civilised”, they represent the unknown and the potentially monstrous. (Puwar 2004, 49)

Black Canadian media and performance artist, Camille Turner’s project “The Final Frontier” is described, by the artist,<sup>70</sup> as a chronicle of “the voyage of African Astronauts” who are the progeny of the Dogon peoples of Mali, West Africa; having thus, “returned to earth” following a ten thousand year hiatus, they have come to “save the planet” (Turner n.p.). Intermittently performed in various locations across Canada since 2007, Turner’s piece not only situates this mission of planetary rescue from within the borders of Canada but also locates the art project as an exploration of, what she relays to be, “the coded terrain of the mythic Canadian landscape” (Turner n.p.). Putting the overtly Afrofuturistic elements of this performance momentarily aside, what is immediately compelling about Turner’s work — and which I would like to engage with here — are the signifiers for the alien that appear in the trailer that accompanies the piece. Performed by Sobaz Benjamin, Karen Turner, Lee Turner as well as Camille Turner herself, “The Final Frontier Trailer Version 2” opens with the recently earth-bound African astronauts’ slow trek across an expansive grassy plain, as towering windmills — the only manufactured objects in sight — spin in the background. Eyes concealed behind the reflective blue-tinted surface of 90s-esque sunglasses, and with torsos cloaked in chestnut brown ponchos that swish from side-to-side with every step, the head of each Afro-astronaut is adorned with a canvas coloured headwrap that

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<sup>70</sup> Taken from the artist’s website, <http://camilleturner.com/project/the-final-frontier/> (retrieved March 14, 2019).

variably turbans, twists, or drapes about the head and continues around the neck. Accompanying the protagonists' solemn traverse is Turner's narration of, what we are led to understand is, her non-fictional story of migration. What we learn is that Turner migrated to Canada from Jamaica at the age of nine. As she lyrically remarks that she "left the land of sea and sun for the great white north," Turner goes on to state that although Canada is self-gratifyingly multicultural and thus boasts of its capacity to "accept everyone," the simple act of leaving her home to enter into Toronto society is enough to feel as though she is an alien. In a statement of both recognition and confrontation with this sense of her alienness, Turner explains that she has thus decided to traverse across Canada "with some other aliens to see how people respond" (n.p.). Herein we can deduce that to encounter Blackness within the places where whiteness reigns as supreme can be made synonymous with an alien encounter.

Combining futuristic figures of the African Diaspora with her past and present confrontations with Canada's myth of racial tolerance, Turner acknowledges and accepts the alien subjectivity into which she is read. However, Turner not only inhabits this alien Blackness but also employs an aesthetic through the use of cloth and clothing that visibly thrusts her racial peculiarity into a national *terrain* "coded" by whiteness. Turner emphatically presents her alien body as the spectacle that it is already taken to be and thus proffers herself as a strange object to be seen and "respond[ed]" to by a looking Canadian public. Even so, rather than one's alienness being a space of utter alienation — amidst the refusal from national and racial norms — Turner generates possibility in this subject-objecthood. That is, alien Blackness is not only presented as a site of assented exhibition but also as one of, communion. The artist joins in kinship "with some other aliens" whereby they can unify in the non-normativity of Blackness. Alienness is revealed as a

place of collectivity. In a sense, Turner and her astronaut companions go further than merely acquiescing to their alien status as they heighten the strangeness of their outsider presence through a garb that is alien to the white frontier. Adorned in clothing that references the non-Western and the African continent, the astronauts also signify the Muslim through the ways the headwrap can collapse into the familiarly strange symbol of the headscarf. The recognizable cue for the foreignness of Islam, however, becomes unusual when worn by the Afrofuturistic astronauts. The headscarf mingles the strangeness of Islam with an extraterrestrial Blackness in a way that does not adhere to the Orientalist tropes or the gender norms that surround the Muslim veil (see Chapter 2). That is, the astronauts either display that the veil is worn by the Black alien irrespective of gender or, that the Black alien *is* or appears as the veiled Black Muslim woman. Through the oddity and confusion of their aesthetic, these Black bodies are conspicuous against the landscape of green pastures, where even the natural terrain cannot accommodate or amalgamate their compounded differences.

Following a scene in outer space where the astronauts spot and then steer their spaceship towards the earth, we witness the response invoked by their appearance amongst the residents of, what appears to be, a white-majority community somewhere in rural Canada. The interviewed townspeople readily comment on the difference of the African astronauts' "skin colour"; while others remark on the benefit the appearance of these outsiders is sure to offer their (white) children in allowing them to "experience different things"; and still others, openly relay their feel-

ings of curiosity and a sense of being “drawn” to these strangers,<sup>71</sup> as we also glimpse an older white woman nonchalantly snapping pictures of the Black visitors. What is most clear in these testimonials is the rippling effect that the arrival of Blackness is catalyzing at the frontier of an “exalted” Canada whiteness (Thobani 2007). The strangeness and sudden appearance of these aliens, fascinates: triggering curiosity and enticing the desire to come near, to get a closer look.

Even further, the astronauts’ alien Blackness is swiftly figured as that which can be of service: a “thing” of difference to educate white rural children, likely, on diversity or other idealized tropes of multiculturalism; which then becomes, a strangeness to be captured in the photo — a souvenir of the rare alien encounter. Blackness becomes a keepsake; a memento for the outsider that turns up in “our” tolerant midst. Yet, again, Turner and her astronaut fellows submit themselves as spectacles to be looked at and reacted to. Hence, they create the conditions for the inquisitive gaze, although they do not decide the terms of anti-Blackness that originate the strangeness of Blackness. Rather, they perceive that their presence is understood as alien within the “Canadian landscape” and thus proffer the self to be scrutinized, while they in turn scrutinize the tenor of the stare. The trailer closes with the reflection that the astronauts have, “travel[ed] across the country to encounter the Other and find ourselves.” We can variably interpret the meaning of this final line as: the self has been found or, confirmed to be the Other; or, in acknowledging the alienness of the self before the (white) Other, one locates a means to come into the self, as a self. I begin this chapter with an extended analysis of Turner’s work as a helpful

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<sup>71</sup> Notably, a South Asian couple, the only townspeople who are not white, figure the presence of the African astronauts in relation to capital and perhaps, destitution — asking if they have come because they are in need of money. Here Blackness shows-up in the territory of whiteness to seek that which it lacks and is maybe unable to obtain in the manner conventional to the capitalist liberal democracy. Blackness is needy. Blackness is peddling. It would be “curious” to consider how these South Asian residents understand their own non-white presence in the white frontier.

preamble to my broader query into how and why one might come to accept the alienness into which they are read.

I am neither an art historian nor formally trained in art critique. Even so, art has found its ways into the first and third chapters of this dissertation and appears again here with this fifth. I experiment with art analyses as a medium for grasping the possibilities for Black Muslim women's disobediences through the visual display of disobedience's inhabitancies. I thus approach the work of Black Canadian artists as a visual reference for affective and ontological complexities that perhaps cannot be so viscerally rendered through the techniques of qualitative narrative or theory alone. In this experimental effort I am most directly influenced by Christina Sharpe's earlier work, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (2010), where she takes up what she calls *visual texts* by Black artists from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries (3). For instance, Sharpe examines the quotidian brutalities of Black life through artwork that helps to reveal how forms of discipline are wielded against Black bodies, resisted by them, and what this says about "the politics and aesthetics" of representing Black suffering and Blackness at large (24).<sup>72</sup> By engaging with the possibilities that abound in the realms of visual art and performance, I now question what it might mean for Black people who figure as alien arrivals or monstrous invaders within a white supremacist Canada to not only accept their non-acceptability (i.e. as authentic citizen, as resident rather than visitor, as human) but also, willfully, adopt even more alienness or monstrosity than an anti-Black national imaginary would have reckoned. How does art visualize these refusals? Furthermore, how can these forms of monstrous or alien inhabitation be interpreted when the art represents the heightened strangeness of the Black Muslim fe-

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<sup>72</sup> Here Sharpe specifically refers to the seminal work of Black British queer artist and film maker, Isaac Julien.

male body in Canada? I hypothesize that the representations of Black Muslim women available through Black Canadian art helps us to imagine the agentic potential available to those who resolutely embody a non-human difference. Hence, I propose that, the exacerbated alienness or monstrosity of women who forfeit the desire for human and national recognition visualizes an ontological and affective rebellion against normative identities that do not acknowledge the subjectivity of Black Muslim female figure in Canada.

### *The Nation as “Object of Desire”: Cruel Optimism and a Willful Strangeness*

Throughout this dissertation central themes that I have repeatedly returned to — although in different permutations — have been that of white national belongings, assimilation, and human recognition. It is through these recurring topics that I have sought to examine the social, ontological, and affective factors that facilitate or impede Black Muslim women’s acceptance into the legitimate body of the white liberal Swedish or Canadian nations. I now ponder what might inspire women, in Canada, to forfeit the labours of assimilation and to instead embrace the self as alien or monstrous. I would like to turn to Lauren Berlant’s work as a useful theoretical starting point to think through what precedes this non-human turn and why such non-assimilatory desires would first arise. In her influential text, *Cruel Optimism* (2011), Berlant engages with the ways that the things we want can hurt. Herein, one strives towards an “object of desire” (23) that we have come to attach to through the “force” of optimism (1) and seek to “bring closer” for the “satisfying *something*” it promises and which we are unable to produce *on our own* (2). The actual feeling of optimism might not be a pleasurable sensation, Berlant explains, since this ambitious desire can take immediate affective form as “dread, anxiety, hunger” (2) and, so on. Yet,

one still reaches towards the object because optimism offers the “ordinary pleasur[e]” of fantasy, wherein one idealizes and aspires for the “good-life” (2). Where optimism slips into cruelty, to become “cruel optimism,” is when the “something” that we yearn for actually impedes our “flourishing” (1). The object that we so desire is then also that which is not particularly good for us, even as we attach to it as a source or promise of a future goodness; that is, the good “things” of the “good-life.” Despite the probability that the object of our wishful attachment can “threate[n] [our] well-being” (24), Berlant contends that if it were to be lost this would also mean to lose the sense of continuity the attachment allows for (24). Specifically, one would lose their hold on “what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (24) — a devastating state that Berlant argues to be too great for the subject to bear well (24). Rather, we have a sense of “*endurance in the object*” since mere proximity to it also ensures our continued nearness to the things that the object first promises and which we relentlessly and, masochistically strive for (23). Notably, Berlant proposes that the cruelty of attachments that are both fruitless and harmful can help us to examine the complexities of precarity, subjectivity as well as the sub-variables of citizenship and race (2). Directly taking-up Berlant I then question what cruel optimism can tell us about nationalism or, national attachment and the politics of non-belonging in Canada particularly as we consider Black Muslim women’s banishment from the realms of the recognizable citizen and in conjunction, the recognizably human.

Firstly, I suggest that Canada can figure as the “object of desire” around which the promises of national acceptance and human recognition “cluster” (23). The “optimism” that prompts Black Muslim women to attach to the object of the nation could then be a hopefulness of one day obtaining the *satisfaction* of being a legitimized Canadian citizen and thus being rec-

ognized as a fellow human subject. Acts of assimilation and investments in practices of integration are therefore performed as part of the effort to bring the object of the nation closer. Herein, subordinating to the racial-cultural values of Canada is how these optimistic subjects can maintain their “proximity” to the promise of national and human acceptance.<sup>73</sup> Of course, this acceptance is not something that the outsider can “produce on their own” (2) and so, their devotion to the object/nation would *endure* since this nearness keeps them near to the promise. In line with Berlant’s thinking, however, I have argued in the previous chapters that an attachment to the nation as “object of desire” neither feels good nor, is good for the “well-being” of the assimilating subject. Instead, non-Black Muslim women must die by murder (see Chapter 2); ex-Muslim/ex-Black women must die by suicide (see Chapter 3); and, Swedish Black Muslim women are pummelled by humiliation’s painful pedagogy (see Chapter 4). Even so, when we consider the forms of exile that existentially expunge Blackness and Black womanhood as well as Muslimness and the unassimilable/still-veiled Muslim woman from the sites of national life (see Chapter 2 & 3) what also becomes evident is that to absolutely relinquish this attachment might be too much to bear for those who already have an unstable (or, non-existent) hold on the world. As I have shown, Black Muslim women are not exempt from these racial logics.<sup>74</sup> The loss of attachment to the prospect of Canadian belonging would perhaps do much more than interrupt the continuity of a sense of what it means “to keep on living” (Berlant 24). Here it is not a question of continuity in the sense of what it means to live, but one of germination: to at last come into the

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<sup>73</sup> Here we can, again, consider Ahmed’s analyses of “multicultural love” whereby the yearning migrant is meant to adopt the nation as an object of love in anticipation of one day being accepted as/amongst a normative “we” (2014).

<sup>74</sup> Although they have ways of accessing belonging that are less available to Black persons who are not Muslim.

life of the world as a human being, which is first sanctioned by entering into the life of the nation. In this vein, Canada is indeed a “significantly problematic object” (24) for the forms of pain, humiliation and literal or figurative death Black Muslim women must endure as they await the pleasure of citizenry and humanity. The existential costs of relinquishing this avenue to recognition might nonetheless, mean to hold fast to this *cruel attachment*.

I ended the previous chapter with an examination into what emerges when the “satisfying *something*” that is national acceptance appears to never arrive, despite the best assimilatory efforts of Afro-Swedish Muslim women. By asking if, and in what fashion, women who recognize the deception imbedded in assimilation’s promise (i.e., they will not be fully accepted as Swedish) might cease to strive for national belonging, I considered how participants come to embody difference in assimilatory inappropriate ways. Revealed through this analysis includes the following observations: the trickery of the nationally dislocated utterance whereby the subject unexpectedly claims neither the white nation nor the alien place of origin; the incoherent fluidity of the should-be fixed subject that willfully moves “in and out” of national identifications; and, the menacing body that gestures towards a submission to assimilation but sneakily adorns the dress of the unassimilable. Through an engagement with Berlant we could thus read these inappropriate acts as examples of the subject’s capacity to in fact detach from the object of the nation once they come to terms with the reality that the tenets of the object itself “actively impeded[e]” (Berlant 1) and thus resists the promise’s realization. In part, it is this moment of giving-up and the kind of (non-)subjectivity that follows that this present chapter revolves around. Yet, I seek to go a bit further than the kinds of refusal examined up until this point. It does appear as though Afro-Swedish Muslim women release some of their optimism for national belong-

ing by performing disruptive gestures that contradict the regulatory demands of assimilation. However, the very ability to move back and forth between assimilating and non-assimilating gestures or, to covertly enact unassimilability while miming assimilatory expectations might still retain elements of the original desire. To put it simply, as women slide between the cues of assimilating/non-assimilating subject, they can still and always choose to not slide back. Rather, they can decide to remain in the realm of the properly assimilating subject. The fluidity that otherwise enables Black Muslim women to disrupt their knowability might be the very thing that allows them to once again strive for that *satisfying something* that will likely never come. Intrigued by these complexities I now question how Black Muslim women in Canada may also interrupt the knowable. However, inspired by artistic works that visualize Black Muslim female bodies as troubling Canadian racial matrixes, I query into how these interruptions appear not through fluidity but with an unanticipated fixity. That is, as women consistently inhabit the alienness or monstrosity that already inscribes their surface. The troubling movement of being the sometimes alien and other times, integrating subject would be a slipperiness that ceases (see Chapter 4) as women deliberately and unwaveringly occupy the place of the non-human. What does it mean for these persons to forfeit<sup>75</sup> an attachment to nation in a way that appears both irrevocable and ontological? Furthermore, I ask: How does one's alienness become disobedient through the presence of choice and excess? How can one embody a monstrous disobedience that menaces the directives of assimilation in Canada? And then, how does strangeness become willful?

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<sup>75</sup> or, perhaps, to never first have access to

Part of what I have sought to relay thus far is that, pivotal to the optimism of the cruel attachment to the white nation is the hope to come into subjectivity through the human recognition afforded to legitimate citizens. If Black selves are refused the status of “being” (Warren 2018), however, we have to entertain that those who are not considered to be subjects can still desire human subjectivity.<sup>76</sup> As for Black Muslim women, in particular, we have seen that this desire for national and human affirmation must be paired with a will, by which women attempt to fulfill the conditions of recognition (see Chapter 3). That is, the Black Muslim woman who attaches to the white nation as “object of desire” must possess some form of will to initiate and sustain this cruel longing. Nevertheless, this desire does not necessarily reflect the independence of the will since the facets of the promise (i.e., national belonging) are not determined by the Black Muslim woman that yearns for this satisfaction. Rather, the tolerant national imaginary that stylizes the nation (i.e., the object) decides both the conditions and the features of the promise; these women do not decide how or when recognition is achieved.

Building on these logics, what I propose in this chapter is that Black Muslim women’s non-fluid and exacerbated alienness appears as a willful disobedience in Canada because she should not be able to will in this way.<sup>77</sup> Turning to Ahmed’s *Willful Subjects* (2014b) we learn that for some, “any act of will would be designated as willfulness: any will is too much will when you are not supposed to have a will of your own” (139). Any will exhibited by Black Muslim women, in regard to their national positionality, should be directed towards and regulated by

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<sup>76</sup> We are most likely compelled here to reflect on Hegel and the master-slave dialectic, wherein there is the mortal battle to obtain consciousness (Hegel 1967; 1977).

<sup>77</sup> Nor should any other Black person. Yet, what this chapter seeks to emphasize are the particular ways Black Muslim women embody a disobedient alienness and what such a willful embodiment accomplishes for these persons within a Canadian racial-national context.

what the national object of desire presents as possible: the “good-life” of Canadian kinship and “cultural membership” (Zine 2012). As such, for women to will otherwise is an incomprehensible act of willing that exceeds the permissible. Black Muslim women who then orient their desires away from national and human recognitions and towards the alien therefore aggravate this unintelligible excess of will. Not only is this inappropriate and non-compliant direction of will “too much,” women’s strangeness also becomes “too much” through its seemingly immutable inhabitation. From here, Turner’s performance pieces “The Final Frontier” as well as “The Final Frontier Trailer Version 2” become even more intriguing for the kinds of questions that they allow us to ask in relation to the redirection of desire and the willfulness that can be found in the alien.

Viscerally noting the contradiction in the multicultural promise (i.e., her Black female body is alien even within Toronto space), Turner’s performance art at once registers her physical and social annexation from the dominant subject (i.e., despite living in Canada’s most conspicuously diverse city) and releases her hold on the attachment. Turner becomes the alien. That is, she does not attempt to remake the body in ways that would facilitate her nearness to the promise of national acceptance, but instead becomes weirder by performing the racial strangeness of the immortal, Afrofuturistic astronaut. Again, because Turner’s excessive alienness also sartorially symbolizes the Muslim, as the artist moves within white Canadian space with her astronaut companions, we can imagine that part of their collective strangeness includes a Muslim identity. As part of my Master’s thesis in Religious Studies I explored the ways Blackness can be rendered as disparate from Muslim identity within the popular racial imagination. Specifically, the narratives of the Black convert and “born” Muslim women I interviewed between 2010-2011 revealed that

within the public spaces of Toronto their hijabs would at times be read as Afrocentric headwraps rather than as Muslim veils. In other moments, women relayed that they would be read as South Asian or Arab — a misidentification which only then allowed their hijabs to be interpreted as a symbol for an adherent of the Islamic faith, even as it temporarily “forfeits” their Black identity (Mendes 2011, 116). Participants thus suggested that the most recognizable and comprehensible Muslim female is the Middle Eastern or South Asian subject so that the hijab and Muslimness at large, become irreconcilable with their Blackness (Mendes 2011). I refer to these earlier research findings here to contextualize why the astronauts’ aesthetic signification of Muslim identity would compound the oddity of the African Diasporic figure. It is, in part, the unanticipated coupling of difference that heightens the alien qualities of these racially alienated figures. There is very well a willfulness in the body that amplifies its oddities and neither seeks to emulate a normative “us” nor, the normative human.

However, there is much that is less certainly willful or, disobediently alien about Turner’s performance. As previously mentioned, whiteness always remains as the officiating subject. Hence, those who have an unwavering hold on national belonging (and, can dictate its perimeters) are also those whose querying gazes are to witness and acknowledge the strangeness of these Afro-Muslim aliens. Yes, Turner and her companions know that they are strange. However, they seek out the authoritative white gaze to mirror this strangeness back to them — affirming that they are, indeed, strange to and before a Canadian whiteness. The attachment to the national object of desire is seemingly released; and yet still, verification of this detachment is to come from those who police the relinquished desire. Much of this, of course, is what makes willfulness so fascinating. Ahmed’s text on this very topic — willfulness — emphasizes that her book is less

so seeking an answer to the question, “what is willfulness?” so much as it is pursuing an examination of what “willfulness [is] doing” (3). Hereby, she encourages us to consider which selves become read as willful and *when* (3). Understanding Ahmed to mean not only the acts (the “doing”) that renders us as willful (3) but also what willfulness gets done, I am inquiring into what a willful alienness or monstrosity manifests. That is, I question what this accomplishes for the willfully strange. Even as I critique the seemingly less disobedient aspects of Turner’s performance pieces, I nonetheless remain deeply intrigued by what an alien embrace can *do* and what possibilities it presents for Black Muslim women in Canada. Ahmed further proposes that, “[t]he project of becoming unwilling to bear can be thought through the lens of willfulness” (139). How then might Turner’s magnified alienness represent an “unwilling[ness] to bear” the struggle for Canadian belonging and thus recognized humanity? It is willful to not aspire towards the promise of national and ontological acceptance regardless of its structural impossibility. Willfulness can thus appear as one’s unwillingness to keep on willing. It is also willful to become weirder by enhancing and then displaying that which references the extraterrestrial. How might Black Canadian art help to visualize the ways (other) Black Muslim women are also unwilling to bear this interminable longing by embodying the alien?

Situating her analyses of willfulness around the Grimm brothers’ characteristically brutal tale, *The Willful Child* (1884), Ahmed relays that the penalty for the disobedience of the will is “a passive willing of death, an allowing of death ... [even as] willfulness is also that which persists even after death: displaced onto an arm, from a body onto a body part” (1). Considering Ahmed here I speculate that a form of punishment that may emerge for Black Muslim women who will in non-compliant ways is a barring of these disobedient subjects from finding their way out of

unmournable death. As women withdraw their investment in the nation's cruel attachment and choose the non-human (i.e., the alien) the penalty for such insubordination may be a foreclosing of the possibility of a re-birth into the life of the white nation, that is otherwise available to the assimilating subject (see Chapter 3). Rather, those who remain steadfast in their strangeness might also be compelled to irrevocably remain as the dead and amongst the dead. Hence, the retribution for Black Muslim women's mutinous desires would indeed appear as a "passive willing of death." If Black persons already figure as the dead or as those in proximity to death (see Chapter 3) and unassimilable Muslim women's liberal treason renders them as deserving of death (see Chapter 2), however, the sanction of death that follows Black Muslim women's willfulness would have no effect on those presently located outside of life. Instead, the capacity to exacerbate, spectacularize, and determine the scope of one's alienness emerges as one of the agentic techniques available to those exiled from normative life. A resolute strangeness can therefore be revealed as a willfulness accessible to Black Muslim women who are already oriented towards death. Hereby willful bodies continue to show-up beyond the grave. Unabashedly walking amongst a Canadian "we," even as the dead. This is where the alienness of the Afro-astronaut begins to merge with the monstrous. This is where the bodies of the unassimilating, veiled Black Muslim women become something of a cyborg or zombie in "our" midst, as non-humans with quasi-human parts.<sup>78</sup>

Contemplating the violences of slavery Sharpe (2010) comments on the "often unacknowledged" monstrosity of "known and unknown performances," "inhabited horrors" as well as the monstrosity of "desires and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted" (3).

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<sup>78</sup> I.e., having a familiarly human shape, although Blackness nullifies the prospect of humanity.

Herein Sharpe is calling us to understand the familiarity and tolerability of violence that enabled the monstrous acts of slavery and its contingent histories of subjugation to fall outside of perceptions of what indeed comprises the monstrous (3). Invoking Sharpe, I thus conjecture that the un-writing of Black people from humanity is the first quotidianly monstrous act. It is then in the residue of this violence that I propose Black Muslim women are simply “inhabit[ing] [the] horro[r]” into which they have first been monstrously placed. That is, these Black selves have been subjugated by white supremacy’s monstrous acts and subjected to anti-Black racism’s monstrous human/ontological banishments. And so, they do not initiate monstrosity but step into it. Rather than seeking an answer to how Black Muslim women in Canada can find a way into humanity (as I self-consciously attend to Warren’s [2018] adamant insistence against such a fixation) I am questioning what a non-humanity can “do” for these persons as its inhabitation becomes willful. Returning to my dialogue with Berlant, we can once again make note of her proposal that the “optimism” of attachment and desire is linked with one’s devotion to “continuity” — that is, the continuity of the self or, of “the world” (13). Hence, if women come to attach to their monstrosity this in itself proffers a form of continuity both with the self and the racial logics of the world that initially render them as monstrous. Although, this type of continuity in itself might not be enough to be useful. Instead, I ponder whether monstrosity “promises” another kind of “satisfying *something*” so that the self that has detached from the Canadian nation as an object of desire, attaches to monstrosity as a different kind of optimistic object. Thus, we must inquire: What does the embrace of one’s monstrosity — or even still, one’s *alienness* — promise Black Muslim women in Canada?

## **Black (Muslim) Art: Representing Strangeness**

I begin this section with two pivotal questions: Can a Black Muslim woman ever hope to declare she is Canadian with any degree of legitimacy if she is not first considered to be human? Can one be a national subject, if they are not initially recognized within subjectivity? As part of developing a response to these queries, we can first remind ourselves of Hannah Arendt's (1979) analyses of the "paradox" that emits with the emergence of the refugee. Herein with the loss of state citizenship "the rights of man" plummets into "crisis" since all "qualities" are forfeited aside from that of being "still human" (Arendt 299 in *Agamben 1998, 126*). In conflict with Arendt, what I have been arguing alongside my intellectual forbearers, is that Black selves do not retain humanness despite the dissolution of national citizenship. Rather, the non-humanity of Blackness that continues from slavery already figures as the "crisis" of rights since Black people hold legitimate claim to neither nation nor human membership (see Hartman 1997). Such an existential state of refugeeness can thus be imagined to be that which incites Turner's African astronauts' ten thousand year recess into space. Making note of this Arendtian contention, I thus ponder what a public display of an insistent non-identification (i.e., with nation, with human subjectivity) would look like. Warren's quite versatile text takes us from an analysis of Blackness as metaphysical "nothing" and thus forever outside humanity, to an examination of art. Critically Warren asks: "how do you represent the immaterial, the nothing that haunts a metaphysical world? How do you give a material form to what is most formless? How do we visualize black as nothing?" (144). Notably, Warren poses these queries as part of his deliberation into the ways illustrations from the late 1800s sought to visualize as well as eliminate the nothingness of Blackness through the "fantas[ies]" of racist representation (144, 151). Deterring slightly from

Warren's particular line of reasoning here, I am also considering how Muslim identity takes visual form by contemplating Black (Muslim) women in Canada as the producers of art that "represents the immaterial" by depicting the monstrous or alien forms of the hauntingly non-human. Thus, by specifically visualizing the non-subjectivity of Black Muslim womanhood — *giving material form to the formless* — I read these artists as visibly and visually refusing normative identification.

### ***Art in Toronto: Willfulness, Disobedience and the Monster***

Willfulness could be thought of as political art, a practical craft that is acquired through involvement in political struggle, whether that struggle is a struggle to exist or to transform an existence. Willfulness might be thought of as becoming crafty (Ahmed 2014, 133)

In *Black*, Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist, Sandra Brewster's three piece drawing collection "Visitor" (2007),<sup>79</sup> we encounter the bodies of Black women whose faces are alternately turned away from us or completely absented from view — as the head exceeds the edges of the greyish page. Using charcoal and pen on paper, Brewster's "Visitor 2" and "Visitor 3" give us detailed close-ups of the roundness of asses, the sprawl of hips, the thickness of arms, the bulge of stomachs and the muscled curvature of exposed backs. In many ways, the artist presents the very aspects of the Black female body most familiar to a racist-sexist gaze that presumes her sexual availability through her knowable and exposed intimate parts. Even as "we" shudder at the death that can germinate from the nationally parasitic Black womb (see Chapter 3), her fuck-ability nonetheless remains visually potent through the image.<sup>80</sup> Yet, how might there be forms of willfulness in what otherwise appears to be obedient forms of exploitable exposure of the captured

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<sup>79</sup> <http://sandrabrewster.com/visitor/>

<sup>80</sup> Not too far away from these images is also that of the un-veiling Muslim woman who reveals her penetrability through her compliant availability to the voyeuristic gaze (see Chapter 2)

and disposable Black female subject (see Chapter 4)? bell hooks' (1995) analysis of Lorna Simpson's artwork (1986) makes much of Simpson's depiction of black female bodies from a rear view (94-95, 96, 98). Although, as viewers, our gaze can indeed dwell upon the shapeliness of the represented figure's<sup>81</sup> back(side) hooks emphasizes the ways the figure interrupts what she describes as, "conventional ways seeing and understanding black womanhood" (98). In the absence of a frontal view we can still indeed look. However, much is obscured from sight as the black female figure also determines the direction of her own gaze — that is, as she willfully, does not meet ours' (94-95). Returning to Brewster's headless or rear-facing Black female figures we can thus consider the elements of refusal and/or disobedience that are in operation. The faceless women in "Visitor 2" and "Visitor 3," respectively, reveal the shared intimacy of caressing figures or the curvature of the fat body. Nonetheless, these women that Brewster depicts hold themselves away from full exposure to a scrutinizing gaze as parts of them decisively remain beyond analysis. We are left without any degree of certainty of the heads that rest upon these shoulders as we are barred access to the contours or expressions of the face. This particular type of intimate knowing is possessed by the women alone, as they retain these parts of the self, for a self; thus, troubling "conventional," racist presumptions of the absolute knowability of "black womanhood" (hook 98; see also McKittrick 2006).

Notably, both drawings include a lone figure in the background who is either walking away from us or again, offering only a rearview. Interestingly, Brewster now permits us a glimpse of these black female figures' heads, however, it is shrouded in the cloth of a headwrap or obscured by the folds of a burka. Turned away and thus still faceless, these figures continue to

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<sup>81</sup> hooks applies this analysis specifically to Simpson's piece "The Waterbearer" (1986). Silver Print.

control what is seeable; thus, intolerably obstructing the pleasures of looking in the way of the veiled, presumptively Muslim woman who can gaze at the other at will but is inappropriately and frustratingly shrouded from view (Doane 1991; Fanon 1965; Yegenoglu 1998; see Chapter 2). Further, we are left to ponder (yet, without the satisfaction of knowing) whether these figures are indeed Muslim. The headwrap might slip into the headscarf amidst the companion presence of the burka. Brewster however leaves us uncertain, as do the women. Thus, they cannot with definiteness be located within either the familiar badness of the insistent veiled Muslim woman (see Chapter 2) nor within the anticipated danger of the over-reproducing, welfare scheming Somali Muslim woman (see Chapter 3). If these are Black Muslim women, they elude such knowability. Either way, the artist compels us to contemplate the forms of disturbance active in poses of seeming passivity and compliance. From here we can consider Ahmed's suggestion that "disobedience" can appear as an "unwilling obedience," whereby the subject complies with an ordinance but, performs a "withdrawal from the right of the command as they complete it" through the body (140). As such, Brewster's Black female figures obediently comply with racist-sexist commands that stipulate her availability to the gaze. However, even as they obey the demand of exposure, they withdraw aspects of the body away from view — disobeying the principles of the directive. I thus ponder: What else could the Black Muslim female figure, be turning her back on, through her facelessness, averted gaze, or unconventional bodily inhabitance?

Somali-Canadian artist and storyteller, Riya Jama, explicitly experiments with unconventional and interruptive representation of, specifically, Black Muslim womanhood. The faces of

Jama's subjects<sup>82</sup> frequently reference the alien or extraterrestrial, the cyborg, or the monster and thus in this way, can be understood to be turning their backs on the human. Often presenting women and girls wearing a headscarf or chador,<sup>83</sup> Jama at times visualizes the Black Muslim female through the strangeness of: green, turquoise, or purple skin; eyes in unnatural hues of red and orange that sometimes have a cat-like shape or, otherwise where the pupil completely overwhelms the sclera's circumference. With or without the combination of outlandishly tinted skin and eyes, Jama's characters can also be found to have the animal-like traits of furry tails and pointed ears; or else, reference the dead or, what is not wholly human through the presence of skeletal faces or android features. Notably, Jama also depicts women who are rear-facing and thus can be read as refusing the commanding terms of knowability. Varying slightly from hooks' analyses however, the veiled and backwards-facing women of Jama's artwork not only "creat[e] by [their] own gaze an alternative space" (hooks 94-95) but as these Black Muslims turn away from the viewer's gaze the "alternative space" that Jama illustrates is very often, outer-space. Women disobey the full demands of seeing even as their backs are passively and compliantly available to be seen. Furthermore, women turn away from both the authoritative gaze of the normative human and face away from the world. Rather than seeking to be a part of the world or, attaching to what Berlant describes as the continuity of "look[ing] forward to being in the world" (24), Jama's subjects look out into an infinite elsewhere. A sense of place thus, necessarily reaches beyond the Canadian nation as Black Muslim women are situated before or within the expanse

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<sup>82</sup> Here I am referencing the artwork that was publicly available on Jama's now de-activated instagram page (@hausofriya), <https://www.instagram.com/hausofriya/> (retrieved March 12, 2019). The images are alternately available via Jama's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Hausofriya/posts/> (as of July 4, 2019); and Redbubble page: <https://www.redbubble.com/people/hausofriya>

<sup>83</sup> a full-bodied veil or cloak

of the galaxies. In other renditions Jama figures women *as* the galaxy. That is, in full-frontal views of hijabi women we are presented with images of constellations in the very hollow where we would expect find a face. The folds of the headscarf harbour fragments of the universe — perhaps rendering women as incompletely knowable as the cosmos is. Hence, these Black Muslim women embody that which reaches beyond the purview of the human but is still contained within human form (e.g. the shape of heads, shoulders). In this way, Jama can be interpreted to be taking on the task of giving visibility to the immateriality of an impossible black humanity, as introduced by Warren (2018).

From here, I would like to focus on two pieces shown in Jama's 2018 solo exhibition "Riyadii Farxiyo" held at *Gallery 44* in Toronto (July 13-September 1): "Fanged Gabar" and "Hidden Gabar Yar."<sup>84</sup> "Fanged Gabar" is a portrait-like image of a Black Muslim girl (no older than ten years old) in outer-space. With her head and shoulders loosely covered by a visibly soiled brown scarf that is irregularly adorned with blue and pink embroidery, the girl smiles broadly with all of her facial features directly in view. There is, however, much that is startling about this image. For one, the girl's skin is a rich and vibrant turquoise; her eye's shine in a devilish red, with the whites of the sclera replaced by a solid black. Additionally, the smiling mouth — which reveals that she has not yet lost her baby teeth — captures the title of the artwork: vampirish fangs hang down from where her incisors should be. Overall, this little girl offers a striking if not simply, frightening, portrait. In an interview for *Toronto Life* magazine that ran in conjunction with her exhibition, Jama describes "Fanged Gabar" as an expression of her search

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<sup>84</sup> Images of these artistic works are made publicly available as part of Jama's July 16, 2018 interview with *Toronto Life* magazine. <https://torontolife.com/culture/toronto-artist-uses-sci-fi-space-tell-story-growing-somali/>

for self amidst a sense of being in a state of “limbo” between her Black and Muslim identities (Baker 2018, n.p.). Specifically, Jama explains that because she does not wear the hijab, her Muslimness fails to garner attention when in Black (non-Muslim) company, while her Blackness is unacknowledged in Muslim (non-Black) community (Baker n.p.). It is not immediately clear how or why the red-eyed, fanged-tooth hijabi child stands in for Jama’s feelings of suspension. We can however contemplate the ways this image might represent a dual monstrous inhabitation; that is, as the monstrosity of Blackness and Muslimness take alarming harbour in a single body. Again, this multiple monstrous figure is not of the human, but references the human. The incomprehensibility or disregardability of the Black Muslim female may also then be the allusive figure that threatens harm to the fully human, through the proximity its quasi-human anatomy might allow for. It thus appears as fitting that the child signals the vampiric: a historically manipulative and conniving creature that resembles the human but, instinctually nurses predatory aims. The strange qualities of the limboed figure also reveals its propensity for violence through its gaping grin. It is in this form that Jama telling locates herself.

Jack Halberstam’s meditations on monstrosity in his seminal work *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995) interrogates the ways the monstrous renders the familiar facets of existence strange. Hereby, the categories that “we still cling to” such as “beauty, humanity and identity” collapse into the horrifying when they are made to take form on those monstrous beings that we fear (6). Specifically Halberstam reflects on the tragic figure of the nameless monster in Mary Shelley’s 1818 classic, *Frankenstein* as well as, the murderous gender-fluid character Buffalo Bill in Jonathan Demme’s film *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Halberstam notes that the former character incites horror through his physical repulsiveness, “status as

anomaly,” as well as his “essential foreignness” (6). While the later’s danger rests in an “identity crisis” that seeks rectification through homicidally obtained “female flesh” (6). How might these monstrous variables apply to Jama’s monster and to her sense of her own monstrousness? As a representation of her indecipherable Black Muslim identity, “Fanged Gabar” possibly illustrates how the anomalous Black Muslim women — who is already “essential[ly] foreign[n]” in a Canadian context — signifies the physically repulsive. Put simply, it is somatically repugnant and thus, monstrous, to simultaneously embody more than one form of monstrosity. Although, as I have argued elsewhere, Blackness or Muslimness are familiarly strange and dependably frightening (see Chapter 1; see also Ahmed 2000), the collision of strangeness in the Black Muslim female subject becomes a *crisis of identity* through her incomprehensibility, as Jama’s expression of “limbo” conveys. Thus, as Victor Frankenstein’s monster is, in part, horrifying because he is the unnatural amalgamation of decayed, misshapen, and borrowed human parts (Halberstam 38), Jama’s fanged child references the peculiar merging of the questionably human Muslim with the non-human “black corpse” (Rankine 2015). Jama thus also scavenges from the graveyard of the dead — in a way not wholly dissimilar from Frankenstein — by graphically fusing together the traits of the socially dead/living-dead Black and the uncertainly human Muslim to generate the inscrutable figure of the Black Muslim girl.

Moreover, Jama’s work infuses additional horror into the horrifying figure by depicting monstrosity in-excess. Even as we recognize that Blackness is ejected from humanity and Muslimness holds only conditional place, Jama’s art plays with human anatomy. The fanged character is not human and yet, physically signifies attributes of the human body. However, Jama does this in a way that explicitly distorts features familiar to the human form. Rather than seeking to

assert the normative possibilities of Black Muslim females (like “Fanged Gabar” and like, Jama herself) the artist represents this identity through an exacerbated and seemingly, elated strangeness. Not only does Black Muslimness then mark a dual monstrous inhabitation but, Jama ensures that the frightfulness of this figure can be plainly interpreted. The artist is, evidently, not trying to find a way into the promise of recognizable humanity that is, arguably, open to the fatally assimilating Muslim female subject (see Chapters 2 & 3). Instead, Jama rips any integrative “female flesh” asunder through the menace of red eyes, turquoise skin, and fangs that the gleeful child displays, amidst the unassimilable flourish of a sullied hijab. “Fanged Gabar” might then be another willful child following in the Grimm tradition, although one whose entire body stands in for the willful limb that continues to disturb even from the site of the social grave (see Ahmed 2014, 1).

The second work from Jama’s exhibition, “Hidden Gabar Yar,” similarly engages with the disquietude ignited by the non-human with human attributes. In this piece, Jama depicts a young girl comfortably wedged in-between the bodies of robed women standing in file. The girl’s right cheek nestles against the back of a woman wearing a long purple veil, while the young back softly meets the deeply violet torso of another woman whose hand gently rests a-top the child’s head. Aside from the placidly laid hand of this woman and the single arm of the other (adorned in henna-like floral swirls), we are refused access to anything above the shoulders of these adults. We can identify them as Black Muslims only because we know that to be the subject focus of Jama’s art. Thus, similar to Brewster’s work, these Black women exceed the edges of the page. Even as the viewer can presume they are Muslim women through the presence of the veil and therefore capture them through this form of knowability, we are withheld from any other type of knowing.

Furthermore, the artist eliminates pigment from the limbs that are visible thus, as we expect tones of melanin from the foreigner's hand and arm we encounter a ghostly white. Wearing an evergreen tinted chador combined with a close-fitting black cap, the Black Muslim girl in this image, however, meets our gaze as she looks directly at the viewer with her mouth slightly agape. Yet, akin to "Fanged Gabar" there is also something strange about the face of this "limboed" figure. Although partially obscured by the shadow cast by her companion's rear, the right side of the girl's face nonetheless reveals dark brown skin and the familiar assemblage of (human) facial features (i.e., nose, mouth, eye). The most pronounced attributes of this little hijabi's visage however, are its robotic characteristics. The cool glaze of corrugated metal smooth over much of her forehead, cradle around the bridge of the nose and continue its downward descent from the left cheekbone. Staring steadily and penetratively outwards is a vibrantly red eye that seems to glow with the mechanical power of the cyborg's inner electrical source.

Playing on the title of his text, Halberstam explains that the Gothic novel performs something of a "skin show" since it is through this outer layer of the body — the skin — that we find that which alternately symbolizes the essence of the human or, the irregularities that signify the monstrous (7). In Halberstam's interpretation of the work that skin enacts, the monster is revealed in the collapsing of the organic boundary that keeps the interior distinct from the exterior. The monster thus emerges when the body's most natural partition no longer segregates but instead, in Halberstam's words, "the outside becomes the inside and the hide no longer conceals or contains, it offers itself up as text, as body, as monster" (7). The cyborg hijabi of Jama's "Hidden Gabar Yar" does not inhabit the same register of the monstrous as we find in the child of "Fanged Gabar[s]" technicolour skin and threatening incisors. The latter's treacherous, doubled identity

fully impresses upon the surface of the skin and thus has long since broken passed the interior boundary. Instead, what we see in the mechanical face of the girl cradled between the trunk of her elders is another kind of explicit perversion of the familiarly non-human. Again, as Warren (2018) empathically relates, Black persons are non-human, in human form. Following this reasoning, we can surmise that the dark brown half of the child's face marks her human form in a manner that signifies the organic essence of the human (i.e., the skin) but more directly contains the terror of Blackness. It is not that the Black Muslim girl is, in essence, human. Rather, the exterior of brown skin both reveals and restrains (through containment) the fright and danger of Black non-subjectivity. Jama's art takes these logics still yet, a step further. Not only does the non-human interior escape out onto the body's exterior plane but, the artist renders Black non-humanity in the most literal of forms: the machine, the robot, the cyborg. However, as the cyborg this young hijabi would figure as that which extends beyond the limits of the human, rather than embodying a Blackness that signifies a lack of humanity.<sup>85</sup> Here again, the Black Muslim female inhabits strangeness in unanticipated ways. In a sense, she visibly witnesses an ontological rebellion against assimilatory desires for acceptance into a recognizable humanity since her android features elucidate the subject-object's physical assimilation into the non-human. The skin is assimilated into or, unifying with the machine. Or, alternately, we can understand this as, the outer layer of "human" flesh succumbing to the inner condition of ontological alienation. If we assess the subject of "Hidden Gabar Yar" in relation to the white supremacist demands of the Canadian nation (the national context in which Jama creates), this cyborg child is then "saying

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<sup>85</sup> *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines "cyborg" as, "a fictional or hypothetical person whose physical abilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by mechanical elements built into the body."

yes” (Ahmed 2014, 141) to the commands that decide her denials from an “exalted” humanity (see Thobani 2007). Even so, the metallic portion of the girl’s face is, in another sense, willfully enunciating a “no” (Ahmed 141) since it is monstrous in its distortion of the human-like skin of the necessary non-human figure (see Warren 2018).

When we consider the structural refusal of Black persons from the realm of the human alongside the ways Muslim humanity can be denied or made uncertain we might be led to concede that Jama does not appear to be conceiving anything new or, particularly radical by merely depicting her subjects as the non-humans that they socially are. What makes Jama’s artwork compelling, however, are the forms of willfulness reflected in the marking of bodies as strange. Returning to Ahmed (2014b), we learn that “willfulness can be ... willingly performed” when the body’s “striking” (and thus, “obstructi[ve]”) appearance is perceived as willful and one embraces this mark of somatic obstruction. (161). Thus, even as the body is already marked by stigma one might willfully “double that inheritance” of stigmatization through an embossment that further, visibly signifies the body’s taintedness (161). Reflecting on how stigma is utilized as a “communicative and performative strategy” platformed by “visibility politics” Ahmed asserts that, “[t]o mark the body becomes a willed and willful act” (161).<sup>86</sup> Thinking alongside Ahmed we can therefore contemplate how one’s Otherness can be deliberately intensified on the physical surface. Hereby, the monstrous subject would not be seeking a way out of the stigmatized body or, attempting to temper the taint. In Jama’s art the observable cues for Black Muslim female strangeness are then escalated — “doubl[ing] that inheritance” — so that the body is almost

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<sup>86</sup> Here Ahmed is referring specifically to Dan Brouwer’s analysis of HIV/AIDS activism that used tattooing of the body as political practice: “[a] willful marking of oneself as ‘tainted’” (Brouwer 1998, 115 in *Ahmed 2014, 161*).

boastful in its willful inhabitation of that which is contrary to the human. Notably, Jama's figures appear at ease with their strangeness and/or in strange company, as they present a willfully heightened monstrosity to the normative viewer who demands to look but, is not wholly in control of the (strategic or political) strangeness that they see.

### **Leaky Subjects: Subversion and the Fallibility of the Frame**

The artwork of Turner, Brewster and Jama bring us directly into conversation with Butler's (2010) theories of "the frame" and "recognizability." Writing on the frames that attempt to regulate what counts as normative existence, Butler suggests that those "living figure[s]" that are situated outside of what the frame determines to be "the norms of life" are of an uncertain ontology since they can be apprehended as "living" but are not "'recognized' as a life" (8, 12).

Conflictually, the "living figure" that is not contained within the realm of "life" is both a "problem" that normativity attempts to handle and an ontological anomaly that, Butler argues, is "normatively ... bound to reproduce" (8). Even as frames determine the recognizability of life, the frame can nonetheless be compromised by forms of "leakage or contamination" whereby that which should be relegated to the perimeters of the norm begin to exceed this limit (9,10). As that "something" or someone "exceeds the frame" the initial method of containment is revealed for its flaws since the frame that conveys normative life fails, as Butler puts it, to make that something "conform to our established understanding of things" (10). The Afrofuturist alien astronauts of Turner's work; the obscured spectacle of un/knowable Black Muslim women in Brewster's; as well as the monster hijabis in Jama's, all present examples of figures that trouble the frame. Not recognized within the racial or national frames that define normative life and yet, re-

produced as normatively Other these depictions of Black and Black Muslim women reflect the anti-Black and Islamophobic realities of being apprehended as (unassimilable or assimilable) strangers in “exalted” space. Yet, it is through the exacerbation of their strangeness and the willful disobedience of the racist terms of seeing that these subjects come to leak out of the frames that decide the dimensions of their Otherness. That is, they contaminate the familiar profile of Black, Muslim, and Black Muslim non-humanity by sliding into versions of monstrosity or physical forms of noncompliance not imagined to come even from those of a tainted physiology and unverifiable ontology.

However, amidst the disruption these forms of disobedient leakage catalyze we must also take into account Butler’s assertion that the frame is that which is already conducive to collapse. What Butler argues, as I understand it, is that the frame undergoes processes of “self-breaking” whereby it comes apart in the effort to define the content “it does not quite contain” (10). Herein, it breaks in order to reassemble around the slippery matter it seeks to control (10). The frame is then already open to “reversal” and accommodative of “subversion” (10). The subversive representation of Black Muslim women through art does plausibly trouble the frames that define their non-humanity or, decide the assimilatory content of the “object of desire” (Berlant 23). We must nevertheless acknowledge that the frame is prepared to reckon with and subsume these variations of ontology and/or desire. Following Butler’s logic, the frame would be ready to absorb the impact of these female figures unanticipated inhabitation by breaking apart in order to reintegrate the leaky figure. As these figures attempt to redefine their strangeness, the frame would simply reassemble around these subversions — that is, merging around this expanded strangeness to again contain it as a content of the frame. Returning to Ahmed’s query into what willfulness

*does*, however, I propose that even as the frame is able to manage the leakiness of subversion by collecting once and again around the changing figure, for Black Muslim women to be able to enact that which incites the frame's fracture and necessitates its re-joining might, in itself, witness willfulness' potential and thus mark a kind of "doing." To put it slightly differently, it perhaps becomes less important that Black Muslim women's augmented monstrosity is disciplined by its inevitable reintegration into the frame because the monstrosity that they disobediently embody is what triggers the frame's collapse. Here it is not the undoing of the mechanics of the frame that is sought out so much as a chance to reveal the fallibility of racial norms, despite their regenerative capacities. This might be enough of a "doing" for the willful subject. That is, in this moment of breakage, the Black Muslim female figure can harness the truth that the frames that decide the normativity of her exclusions from humanity and the white nation are porous. Each monstrous transgression will be reabsorbed into the frame that attempts to determine Black non-humanity and non-belonging. And yet, women can play at exhausting the frame by compelling its penetration and observing the fragmentation — even while noting the impermanence of this collapse. By provoking the frame's breakage through an ever increasing monstrosity, these Black Muslim female figures would also demonstrate an investment in their alien non-subjectivity. What I mean by this is that, in revealing the penetrability of the norms of recognition (i.e., racial, human, nation) the Black female artist/art subject does not seem to aspire for a form of redress that would eventually render them as recognizable (see Butler 2010, 6). Instead, as I have sought to convey throughout this chapter, the monster invests in their own monstrosity. In this, I ponder if the Black Muslim female figure can be read as enacting an extermination of her human and national potential?

In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) Agamben engages with Karl Binding's theorizations on suicide through the concept of "the annihilation of life unworthy of being lived" (137). Although Binding's thinking proves to be highly problematic for its correlation with eugenics and "National Socialism's biopolitics" (140), Agamben explains that Binding proposed that suicide is "unpunishabl[e]" since it is an "expression of man's sovereignty over his existence" (136). Alternately, Binding suggests that those persons who do not necessarily find their lives "intolerable" but, whose existence is "devoid of value" are subjects whose lives can be justly terminated (139). That is, because these persons burden society (through the social "costs" of maintaining their valueless lives) and induce fright as the "reverse image ... of authentic humanity" (139). Here we can note that regardless of whether or not Black or Muslim persons find their lives intolerable, their existence can be defensibly and mournlessly brought to a brutal end, in defence of a white society that faces both the threat and burden of the inauthentically human. We can then understand a contemporary Black and Muslim non-humanity and non-grievability in Canada to align with the historical system of eugenics that Binding's theory distastefully accommodates. Yet, more than this, I'm drawn to Binding's notion of the sovereignty of suicide. The Black female figure does not begin as the sovereign subject since she is already displaced from recognizable life and dismissed as one "devoid of value" and thus, open to slaughter; while, Muslim woman can hope to enter into valuable life only through what is figured as a shift from one form of possession into another and always within the purview of her slaughter. What I question then is how the embrace of her monstrosity and further exaggeration of her intolerability performs a kind of suicide. Hereby she does not kill the unassimilable Blackness and Muslimness in the way of the integrating suicidal subject (see Chapter 3). I argue instead that she termi-

nates the parts of herself that hold the prospect or, “promise” (Berlant 2011, 23) of being one-day assimilated into valuable human life and national membership. The sovereign act therefore becomes the act of destroying the possibility for recognition by enhancing one’s monstrosity and terminating their human potential. The prospect of the human is devoured by the monster. At the same time, this monstrous embrace annihilates the fruitless yearning for “the object of desire” (Berlant 2011, 23) by deciding that this type of Black Muslim life is “unworthy of being lived.”

### ***Cultivating Pain? Attaching to Oppression?***

If you are used to having to struggle to exist, if you become used to having others oppose your existence, if you are used even to being thought of as oppositional, then these experiences are wearing and directive... You can even become somewhat oddly invested in the continuation of what you are up against. This is not to say you “really” want what opposes you... [but] an opposition can become part of you (Ahmed 2014, 169)

Even with these subversive and agentic prospects of inhabiting the monster, we are left to ponder if the artists’ and their Black Muslim female figures do not merely invest in their non-subjectivity but, actually come to attach to their own subjugation? Thus I ask: Is it only that desires for recognition are refused because of the futility of this promise or, does the figure of an exaggerated monstrosity also depend upon their oppressions and cultivate the pain of human/national denial? Such queries are directly inspired by Wendy Brown’s contemplation of the im/possibilities of emancipatory democratic projects in her influential text, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995). Taking up Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1989) logic of *ressentiment* — which he describes as “the triumph of the weak as weak” (67) — Brown examines the more contemporary “paradoxes of liberalism” (1995, 67) and its effects on the psyche of the liberal subject.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Brown theorizes from within and in relation to a U.S. national context.

Put here briefly, Brown suggests that the individualist premise of liberalism maintains that the liberal subject is “self-reliant and self-made” in a manner that at once omits the liberal subject’s dependence upon “social relations and forces” and thus, refuses to acknowledge that these subjects are “produc[ed] by” and situate[d] within power” (67). Because the subject is not in actuality “self-made” they inevitably fail to fulfill whatever it is that the discourses of “self-making” suppose that they should be able to naturally accomplish, in the given context (67). In the face of this failure, the liberal subject must either identify itself as failure’s catalyst or, locate “a site of external blame” against which *hurt* can be “aveng[ed]” and *pain* “redistribute[d]” (67). Thus emerges *ressentiment* as the now vengeful subject searches for they/that whom can be made “responsible for their hurt” (68). It is to this sequence of failure, hurt, and revenge that Browne argues all liberal subjects are susceptible (67).

What makes Brown’s Nietzschean analyses pertinent to our discussion is her proposal that the subject who has come to organize their identity through *ressentiment* also comes to, “inves[t] in its own subjection” (70). Specifically contemplating the complexities of “politicized identity” Brown elaborates that the subject acquires a form of “recognition” based on “it history of subjection” (74) — which, presumptively, liberalism’s “blaming structure” (70) has orchestrated. In this way, the subject finds “a site of blame” that harbours and explains their suffering so that the corresponding political identity surfaces as a refusal of its “marginalization or subordination” within liberal society (74). Yet, the primary issue with this affective sequence, for Brown, is that this vengeful subject not only “redistributes the injur[y]” but then also, “ceaselessly react[s]” suffering (70) and situates a relentless (and historically unresolved) pain at the centre of its claims for recognition (74). Hence, rather than waging a critique of liberalism’s “sov-

ereign subject,” its “blaming structure,” or its methods of inclusion/exclusion, such subjects simply “reverse without subverting” these systems (70). In this way, “politicized identity” that is shaped through *ressentiment* claims a capacity for “self-affirmation” (likely through the externalization of blame) is sprouted from and depends upon its continued rejection by “a hostile external world” (70).

Applying Brown’s analyses to a Canadian liberal context we can quickly locate Black and Black Muslim subjectivity as forms of politicized identity that emerge from the “paradoxes of liberalism.” The determinate factors for accessing national belonging and human recognition are regulated by social-political structures of power that both construct and exceed the Black (non-)subject. Even so, as we again consider Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism” alongside Ahmed’s (2014) probe into “multicultural love” (see Chapter 1 & 4), the Black subject would still be expected to attach to as well as aspire for the forms of “satisfact[ion]” embedded in the promises of nationalism and humanity (see Berlant 2011, 2). But then, of course, they would be made fully responsible for their failure to fulfill the stipulations for these forms of recognition as should-be “self-made and self-reliant” subjects — although this failure is anticipated and structurally orchestrated (see Ahmed 2014). The rageful panic of *ressentiment* would feasibly appear as Black persons and Black Muslim women attempt to externalize the source of their pain, whether or not they perceive that the very conditions of the attachment (i.e., to recognition as “object of desire”) incites the hurt and “threate[ns] well-being” (Berlant 2011, 24). What is curious about the monstrosity of the Black Muslim female figure, as I argue, is that she has moved passed the attachment to national and human recognition through refusal and likely would not imagine herself as having to obtain the individualist triumphs of liberalism’s beleaguered sub-

jects; especially since she already figures as a non-subject. Approaching this argument from a slightly different angle, however, we can read the Black Muslim female figure's acceptance and heightening of her monstrosity as an illustration of a resigning of herself to this failure. By inhabiting and enhancing her non-humanity/non-"exalted" attributes the figure might absorb the failure for recognition into the body so that it becomes the body. The monstrous figure is thus the embodiment of the failure.

At the same time, the urgent need to externalize blame might also be discerned. Through the willful exaggeration of her strangeness the monstrous or alien Black Muslim female figure enacts a somatic disobedience that triggers white national anxieties and potentially displaces the pain of her marginalization and non-recognition through the angst unleashed in the white normative subject/nation. Yet, the initial capacity for subversion and a displacement of hurt depends upon being the monster. Monstrosity becomes a "politicized identity" that is initiated by Black and Muslim marginalization and relies upon the continuation of these subjugations for its existence. Hence, the disobedience of this strangeness might not be so disobedient after all since, it works neither to critique nor dismantle the oppressions that precipitate their identity but instead invokes the perpetuation of Black Muslim subjection in order to manifest one's increasing strangeness.

Here we are also called upon to consider Brown contention that "empowerment" is not necessarily contrary to the operations of domination but can form — in Brown's words — "a highly adaptive and harmonious relationship" to regimes of control (22). By emphasizing the individual's sense of itself through what can be identified as, positive feelings, aspirations and "self-esteem," Brown argues that the individual can "feel free" without any material alteration to

their conditions of subjugation (22). Affect thus allows the subject to acquire a “sense of worth and capacity” through a register of feeling that is located beyond their immediate social and political contexts — operating on an “otherworldly plane” (22). Hence, one’s feeling of empowerment can take hold even as the systems of power that determine the subject’s restraint remains unchallenged in its legitimacy due to this “mask” of feeling (22, 23). It could very well be that this is precisely what is happening in the process of generating Black art and in the capacities attributed to the Black Muslim female figures within the artwork. By representing alien and monstrous figures (particularly those represented in outer-space) or, Black women that exceed the page and thus knowability, the artists and their subjects are plausibly able to access feelings of freedom on an imaginative or “otherworldly” level. Yet, these creative forms of empowerment which, in principle persists on the plane of fantasy, might be said to have no concrete impact on the actual conditions of anti-Black and Islamophobic oppressions that living subjects are made to endure.

***The limits of Brown’s critique: afro-pessimism***

Yet, does any of this tangibly matter in the face of Black, Muslim, and Black Muslim persons’ efforts to simply claim existence in the midst of racial onslaught? Or, more specifically, is Brown’s call for the divestment from politicized identity and a relinquishing of “unredeemable injury” (73) less applicable — and perhaps even, tactless — when we reckon with the relentlessness of living in what Sharpe (2016) calls, “the wake” of slavery and Black non-grievability? Brown, rightly, acknowledges that for some identities Nietzsche’s suggestion of harnessing “the virtues of ‘forgetting’” might indeed be — as she puts it — “inappropriate if not cruel” (74).

That is, eliminating the memory of pain might in fact offer an avenue out of *ressentiment*'s cycle of "resubjugat[ion]." However, it is the very erasure of history that composes the pain of so many oppressed subjects (74). Even with this concession to the limits of releasing pain and its historical memory for subjugated identities, Brown's insights possibly still fall short when attempting to grasp the existential and ontological states of Blackness, particularly within the liberal democratic terrain of Canada. Brown ultimately asks how a "radically democratic and emancipatory political culture" might work to reshape investments away from subjugating identities (75); which draws us back to Berlant's critical query into the contemporary conditions that produce attachments that compromise "flourishing" within Western democracies (13).<sup>88</sup> I recognize the importance of these questions for conceiving critical, political alternatives to so-called "democratic" regimes of dominion. However, what I have sought to explore throughout the length of this chapter and ask again here, is: What would it mean to refuse these forms of (radically) democratic optimisms and turn away from aspirations of flourishing by seeking other forms of embodied existence? Is this always and only a "mask" of feeling? Does fantasy not have radically liberatory possibilities? To fully answer these probing questions would take us beyond the scope of this chapter and likely, too far outside of the objectives of this manuscript. Even so, some of the theories coming out of afro-pessimistic thought offers us points for consideration when contemplating the critical potential of Canadian Black art and the strangeness of the Black Muslim female figure.

Most specifically, I am thinking here of Jared Sexton's (2011) account of how afro-pessimism's treatment of Black social death can be interpreted as a form of "black optimism" (37).

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<sup>88</sup> Berlant specifically refers to the U.S and Europe (2011, 2)

Intermittently engaging with Lewis Gordon's notion of Black pathology — or, "blacks [as] pathology" (Gordon 2000, 87 *in* Sexton 2011, 27) — Sexton explains that in afro-pessimism we find the active "acceptance or affirmation" of the pathological definition ascribed to Black being (27). Hereby the self interpellated into a pathogenic existence and thus social death by an anti-Black world "willing[ly]" assumes this position (27). Contrary to deductive reasoning, Sexton argues that this acceptance is "not an accommodation to the dictates of the antiblack world" (27) but rather, an "affirmation of blackness" since the self willfully inhabits blackness despite all "social costs" (27). One rejects a letting go of Blackness despite the influences of a world order that is organized by Black degradations and ontological denials (28). The self attached to "being black" therefore spurns even those idealized attributes that might increase proximity to "life" or "sociality" (27) because these would demand a withdrawal from Blackness. In this way, an imposed pathology can be occupied "without pathos" (28) as afro-pessimism at once, identifies the anti-Black world and its capitalist, neo-colonial systems as the genuine pathogen (31). Further, this school of thought, as Sexton interprets it, allows that Black "social life" exists exterior to this world (28) so that there is indeed a living of "black life" amidst "social death" (28-29). Something similar could therefore also be said for Muslim identity by reading the persistence of its visual cues (e.g. the veil) as an unwillingness to relinquish. Such logics are plausibly those that Brown and her contemporaries would readily contest. Despite this probability, what Sexton's description of afro-pessimism allows us to consider is how the monstrous, alien or headless Black Muslim female figure might be an imaginative representation of the acceptance of the pathological interpellation as part of the willful embrace of Blackness. The artists and their strange figures are not necessarily proclaiming that Blackness is inherently monstrous, alien or dismembered.

Rather, in recognition of an anti-Black world order that situates Blackness as non-human, the figures convey a refusal to relinquish Black being in spite of the “social costs.” Thus they fully inhabit and visually heighten this site of social death instead of aspiring for the elements of recognition that (deceptively) promise to bring them into human and national life. In this there does not have to appear the vengeful desire to redistribute pain yet, neither must there be the effort to “triumph” over regimes of power and escape hurt through a form of “flourishing.” Most clearly, the art examined in this chapter can be understood to be acknowledging the directives of an anti-Black world, the degradations of Islamophobia and in turn, depicting the refusal to denounce one’s being by illustrating a resistant Black Muslim womanhood.

## **Conclusion**

Extending my examination into how and why Black Muslim women disrupt or disobey the directives of assimilation this chapter explores what it means to release desires for national and human belonging by choosing to embody the alien or the monster. By engaging with representations of Black Muslim female figures in performance and visual art created by Black Canadian woman artists, I explore how Black Muslim women might not only accept the alienness or monstrosity which inscribes their bodies but can decide to exacerbate their strangeness as a willful act. In this way, Black Muslim women in Canada are visually displayed as not aspiring for the human recognition — that is promised to follow national assimilation and belonging — since they willfully inhabit the non-human, in a manner that is at once excessive and irrevocable. By visually exceeding the racial perimeters that seek to decide and regulate her difference the Black Muslim female represented in art reveals the porous nature of the frames that decide the norma-

tivity of her non-acceptance as human and as Canadian. Even as these women can be disciplined for their insubordinate desires and bodies and thus, reintegrated back into the anti-Black and Islamophobic logics of the frame their monstrous or alien inhabitancies have the capacity to incite the disruption and reveal the fallibility of racist norms.

## Concluding the Dissertation

The expulsion or exclusion of Blackness, Muslimness, and Black womanhood from humanity and thus grievability has shaped much of the analysis of this dissertation. Most focally, I have been occupied with the ways human recognition can be entangled with the privileges of citizenship and its specific implications for the meaning given to Black Muslim women's lives and deaths. In asking how Black Muslim women become grievable — largely through the conditions of assimilation and the dominion of knowability — I have been simultaneously questioning how they can be acknowledged within the forms of humanity normatively reserved for the white citizenry of Canada and Sweden. Thus, as part of contemplating the stipulations that potentially draw Black Muslim women's lives out of the terror, disposability and social death of Blackness that white nation-making relies upon and into the vulnerability and mournability that national belongings warrant, grasping what it means to be situated as the human or non-human is pivotal. It is then with theoretical reflections on the human and the proximity of Blackness, Black womanhood, and Black Muslim women to this marker for valuable life that this dissertation concludes.

In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999) Giorgio Agamben introduces us to the *Muselmann*: those perishing of malnutrition in the concentration camp and rendered prostrate by starvation — as if “Arabs” bent in prayer. Muslims. In this state of “liv[ing] towards their death” and in “proximity to death” (70) one can only with uncertainty “call their death death” (70). Rather, these anonymous subjects indicate the threshold between the living and the dead, as the “living-dead.” Contemplating the system of ethics that allow for the production of the *Muselmann* — and thus, the excavation of dignity and respect (63) — Agamben asks

how the human becomes the non-human, amidst this indignity and degradation of death (70). More precisely, we are to understand that even as the living-dead the Muselmann remains a human being, in so far as they are included within a “biological humanity.” Yet, occupying a different “zone of humanity” (63, 64) the Muselmann is a “human being” but, ceases to be “human.” In this way, they are the “in-human” or “non-human.” It is therefore in this exclusion from a part of humanity that Auschwitz’s wreckage of the “ethics of dignity” becomes most clear since the “bare life” of the human being is “the only norm” so that, to be counted as one who “belong[s] to the species” cannot be a form of dignity, when it is that which is/should already be absolute (69). Appealing to Agamben is first useful as an opportunity to cite Mbembe’s challenge in *Necropolitics* (2003) that the Trans Atlantic Slave trade and the shadowed existence of the enslaved witnesses the first “state of exception” and ruination of dignity’s ethics with the ejection of the human being from the human. It is from this history that Black bodies would initially figure as the “living-dead”; although it is not always clear that Black selves remain within the domain of either a “biological humanity” or the norm of *belonging to the species* (see Chapters 3 & 5). Nonetheless, the expulsion or exclusion of Black womanhood from humanity is precisely what has shaped much of the analysis of this dissertation. Hence, I refer to Agamben’s query into how the human becomes the non-human as another framework for understanding how the Black Muslim female figure (see Chapter 5) is refused a place within the realm of the human and how such a refusal serves the ends of white nation-making in Canada and Sweden.

Locating slavery as the foremost degenerative state, Holland (2000) argues that Black female bodies in particular, function as the “passage between humanity and nonhumanity” (41-41), which directly extends Spillers’ (1987) theory of Black women’s liminal-

ity. Notably, Spillers proposes that even above the myth of her insatiable sexuality, slavery transformed the Black female body into the principle route by which the dividing line between “humanity and the ‘other’” could be drawn across her visual, psychological and ontological differences (Spillers 1987 in *Holland* 41-42). Going further, Holland accordingly suggests that it is within this passage — that is the Black female body — that we also find “the terrain between the living and the dead” (42). What I take from this is that, unlike the Muselmann who was once of the fully human and becomes otherwise in the camp (entering into another “zone of humanity”), slavery’s degraded ethic has not propelled Black women from one form of humanity into another. That is, Black women neither shift from the human into the non-human nor, from the living into the living-dead but rather, into a state that is merely a passage between degrees of recognizable existence. She is thus not of existence but signifies the route that divides life from death. As such, the “bare life” of the human being that Agamben refuses to be reducible to dignity, is the very norm that she is both excluded from *and* invoked in order to define. The concepts of the “black corpse” (Rankine 2015) and “metaphysical nothingness” (Warren 2018) examined in chapter three make explicit how Black bodies are denied their humanity and yet are relied upon to affirm the sentience of white national subjects. The power of this human and non-human juxtaposition is in part what I show as informing the responses to Somali Muslim women’s reproduction (see Chapter 3) and then what prompts Black Muslim women to visually embrace their ontologically refusals by embodying the alien (see Chapter 5). Returning to the query regularly posed throughout this dissertation, I ponder: How are we to comprehend the potential for Black Muslim women’s mournability if it is even from the norm of a “biological humanity” that these selves are being denied their existence?

The discomfiting correlation between visuality, death and humanity that Agamben alludes to enables us to think a bit more deeply on this ontological dilemma. As those who represent a “new phenomenon” (at the ruination of ethics), the sight of the non-human Muselmann is suggested to be unbearable to human eyes. Hence, the gaze of the other Jews in the camp (who are still of the human, although from the indignity of life rather than death), the SS officer, and later the English film camera, all veer away from the “disfigured face” of the living-dead that they cannot bear to see. It is because one “recognizes himself” in this face — in the Muselmann — that they must turn away. If it is indeed across Black women’s visual and ontological differences that the human is distinguished from the non-human, as Spillers and Holland indicate, the Black female body would perhaps most radically represent what the fully human cannot withstand to behold. The non-human is in itself already unbearable to withhold for the degradations that the human wishes not to imagine themselves to be — thus, they turn away from what the self must not become. Yet, if the Black female figure is wholly liminal to existence she is also absolutely intolerable. That is, intolerable because she persists not merely in a state that the fully human wishes not to enter into but rather, one that is impossible to ontologically reconcile with. Of course, the greatest contradiction in this would be that the human needs to draw upon the visuality of these women’s difference in order to reach and affirm their own ontological condition. Here we can once more consider how the white Swedish subject gazes upon the body of the Black Muslim woman in mock astonishment in order to ascertain the normativity of their own subjectivity (see Chapter 4). The figure that is unbearable to human eyes is nonetheless intently stared at to confirm the human. Further, we can be reminded of the disruptions incited by artistic representations of the Black Muslim woman or girl that exacerbate her strangeness in a manner

that is at once confusing and in contradiction to the dominion of anti-Black racist frames (see Chapter 5). One thus needs to remain familiar in their difference but is not meant to aspire for unregulated and excessive adaptations of this Otherness.

Even so, Agamben notes that it is upon the scene of aborted and massacred life that the gaze can comfortably linger. The British camera that enters into the camp swiftly moves away from the image of the Muselmann and yet, dwells on the spectacle of piled corpses. Here is thus a familiar depiction of death. Not a “new phenomenon,” in the way of the living-dead, but a reassuring site of morbidity. The piled bodies of the dead would presumptively be horrifying for the ways they reflect the deathliness of the camp and the monstrosity of the extermination of life. And, yet. This would nevertheless be a familiar horror: the brutally extinguished are apprehensible in the absoluteness of their deadness. From here I wonder: Would there not likely be those who died as the Muselmann numbered amongst the piled corpses? If in the camp’s “fabrication of corpses” (71) the non-human does not die (in the way death could be spoken of before the horror of Auschwitz) but is “produced” as a corpse (72), can the figure of the non-human be distinguished within the anonymity of extermination? Put simply, can the Muselmann/non-human and Jew/human be differentiated when they both appear as the cadaver? Or, do they each become one lifeless body among many in the pile of the dead? What I am attempting to suggest here is that, in the equalizing effect of mass death the Muselmann might have (re)entered into the fully human. In this way, they are not distinguishable as the in-human since the spectator responds with a uniform horror to the image of the dead, whether they were “produced” as corpses or died as humans. What then does this mean for the Black female who perishes? Of course, Black women can and do die. But, are their deaths recognized as deaths? Can this liminal figure who routes life

and death, the human and the non-human, also be she who enters into a full humanity through death? Or, as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation in relation to Black Muslim women, does she not first need to be perceived as human for her destruction to be able incite horror and thus locate her as mournable? Such queries as these have been at the centre of my analyses.

If the unassimilating or unassimilable Black Muslim woman represents the threat of death to the white nation/subject and is denied recognition as a grievable human life then in many ways her demise already comes with anonymity. That is to say, the death of those whose lives are refused human value would not be notable as a loss of life and would be anonymous simply through its unremarkability. Blackness (as well as an unassimilable Muslimness) already equates to a mass of indistinguishable corpses that do not inspire an empathic upset which is why I contemplate the ways Black Muslim women might seek to differentiate themselves from this unmournable collective. What I propose is this: Black Muslim women who bring both their Muslimness and Blackness to slaughter in the way of the assimilating suicidal subject (see Chapter 3), attempt to make their way out of unmournability so that they can become the kind of corpse that triggers outrage and is counted amongst the human. In killing the aspects of the self that operate as an ontological passage — and thus negates that there can even be a “self” — the ex-Black and ex-Muslim woman aims to enter into: the generality of grievability and, the horror prompted by the death of the full human. As such, the fantastical elements of the verbal suicide — self-extermimating through the enunciation that she is no longer what “we” cannot bear to see — is no longer enough. The regression into the liminal is perhaps too great a threat since, as I proposed in chapter three, the skin continues to insistently show-up and come-up as the visual

reminder for her ontological difference. “We” would keep remembering what her body is meant for (i.e., the passage); and, she would incessantly slip out of sight as her image intermittently begins to blur again with those others, like her, that “we” cannot withstand to see. To be the fully human and counted within familiarly mournable life, the once Black Muslim woman might then need to be irrevocably, physically dead.

### ***The Insufferability of Terror: The Torment of Symbolizing Death***

When “living” is something to be *achieved* and not *experienced*, and figurative and literal death are very much a part of the social landscape, how do people of color gain a sense of empowerment? (Holland 16, original emphasis)

Stressing the integral correlation between conceptions of death and ideas of “nationhood and nationality ... belonging and disenfranchisement” (23), Holland enjoins us to consider the ways the dead inhabit territory; noting that the disenfranchised often come to join the dead as “menace(s) to society” (23). For Holland, death is then not to be read merely as the state of expired life (thus, rendering the lifeless as “the dead”) but, is also interrogated as: “a cultural and national phenomenon or discourse, as a figurative silencing or process of erasure, and as an embodied entity or subject capable of transgression” (5). In these figurings of death appears the figure of the Black subject that I have explored throughout much of this dissertation. As both the entity that embodies death and as the transgressive subject-object that threatens death — to the Western liberal nations’ populace and to “the stability of the working nation” — Blackness haunts through terror (23). Here we have those who are in league with death (i.e., as death’s partnered menace or, those silenced as the socially dead) and/or, whom bring death close (i.e., to the life of the nation). In either rendering, Black selves are at once “disembodied” as phantoms that torment the nation even as they are invisibilized from imaginings of what bodies are contained within the

national space (23). Yet, seemingly at odds with the invisibility of the spectre, the Black body is nevertheless steadfastly recognizable as the fearsome subject, which state powers can then be enacted against (31). If we were to transpose the liminal Black female figure onto this reading, we might then speculate that she is not only the intolerable yet necessary entity that occupies the ontologically devoid domain between life and death. That is, she also signifies the possibility of death for those who seek to maintain their hold on (white national) life. We are, again, reminded here of the terror of the Black womb as *death machine*. Once more we can imagine the tremor of an “exalted” whiteness (Thobani 2007) in the wake of the violence of the over-reproducing Black uterus that promises to deplete the resources of the Northern welfare nation and the value of citizenship, as it brings forth more death — bearing those born as the living-dead, the “black corpse” (see Chapter 3; Rankine 2015). Furthermore, this terror is heightened when the Black womb also multiplies a Muslim threat. Hereby the scheming Somali Muslim woman conceals the warmongering, virile Somali Muslim man in the harbour of her immoral vagina in the plot to burden Canada with the greedy fruits of their illiberal coupling. Such persons who seek to brutalize the nation are not to be saved from a brutal death. Because Black Muslim women threaten to spawn more barbarism and evacuate Sweden’s liberal values through the backwardness of Islam, she becomes accountable for the mutilation of her already treacherous genitalia and at fault for her own maternal death.

Butler offers us yet another means for understanding why violence can thus be wielded with impunity in the struggle against those who promise the violence of death. Theorizing through the affective reasonings that sanctioned the brutal beating of Rodney King by white po-

lice officers,<sup>89</sup> Butler (1993) argues that the pummelling of King's often prone body was perceived to be justifiably wielded — that is, as anticipatory strikes. Each merciless thump of the club is landed in defence from the blows that the Black body is “always about to deliver” (19). Even as it is ultimately the Black body that is left writhing from the pain of the attack, the white body — of the police, and that of the white populace the police are intended to protect — claims this physical vulnerability away from a brutalized Blackness and makes it into whiteness' own (19). In what Butler terms “the circuit of paranoia,” we can thus identify something of an affective theft: pain (and, precarity) are stolen away from the assaulted Black figure in a manner that re-fortifies “him as the threat” and reinforces white vulnerabilities (19). If the Black female body in turn represents the (necessary) unease of the ontological threshold and the terror of death, she too can be pummelled into stupefaction. Any pain she could feel has already been re-claimed by a quaking whiteness. Although, as I have sought to convey throughout this text, unlike the beating dealt to King, the anticipatory strike does not always seek the physical thrashing of the Black female figure — particularly when she is also Muslim. Instead, pummelling can be launched from the inside out. It is not the Black Muslim fetus or, the life of the Black Muslim mother that are conceived to be vulnerable to death as those exposed to forms of racial contempt that already decides that their lives are unviable. Rather, the vulnerable whiteness of Sweden or Canada must defend against the blow “always about to [be] deliver[ed]” from the womb by ordering its mutilation. Hence, in the case of the ex-Black and ex-Muslim woman who invokes the suicide to enter into grievability (e.g. Mona Walter), she is the one who guides the club into the chamber of

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<sup>89</sup> Which at the time of the beating's occurrence, the officers' ultimate acquittal, and in the decades since has become an infamous cultural moment indicative of U.S. racial tensions, white supremacy, and the criminalization of Blackness.

the dead. She delivers each tearing, sterilizing strike. With her hand on and as the instrument of extermination, she helps to police the nation, protecting a vulnerable whiteness from threat that she once could have, but now ensures never will be, unleashed. In this way she can become a part of the vulnerable nation: both through this patriotic abortion and as she who must also defend herself against threat. She too was terrorized by that which kept her from a mournable life.

Going further still, I ask: What more could the blow be that the Black female figure and Black Muslim women are always in the imminence of delivering, other than a radically unbearable ontological difference and the reproduction of death, and the dead? Considering that the work of, what I am calling, *affective theft*, entails forms of projection for Butler's "circuit of paranoia" to operate, what else is purloined for white vulnerability to regenerate? As has been repeatedly argued within this manuscript, the Black and Muslim self is refused their humanity (biological and otherwise) while the former are also made into the living-dead, in part, to affirm the full humanity of the white normative human/national subject and to relieve their fear of death (or, of *metaphysical nothingness*, as Warren [2018] would have it). How might this denial of one's humanity and casting into the existential abyss of the dead, be the very violences that white supremacist forces seizes as its own source of vulnerability even as it is inflicted against Blackness? Does a paranoid Swedish whiteness tremble at the prospect of becoming the living-dead as they reluctantly stare up into the "disfigured faces" of a non-human Black object-subject that their resentful wish for racial homogeneity has engendered? Does a Canadian whiteness that vigilantly patrols the borders against the sneaky terror it imagines Black life to be, panic at the thought of being transposed with the Black fetus? Is there therefore a fear of being drawn into the Black Muslim womb and thus, becoming subject to all the forms of death and ungrievability

that have been figured for these Others? I pose these questions not so much with the intention of here finding their answer. Rather, I meditate on these difficult, contradictory and very often, painful perceptions of Black and Muslim existence, partly, as a way to query into what these forms of debasement do to Black Muslim women in particular. It is difficult to read and write these things, but it is much more distressing to live them. When does it become intolerable to be the intolerable subject? How might it be both bitterly tiresome as well as deeply traumatic, to persistently figure as the incarnation of terror? Can the exile from human recognition be felt as a form of torture?

Contemplating the globalization of extreme violence (along with “globalized” *processes of extermination*) Étienne Balibar (2004) suggests that the globalized world has come to be divided into, what he terms, “*life zones* and *death zones*” (126). It is within the latter — *death zones* — that the exposure of some to mass elimination (via the effects of “natural” catastrophe, war, economic destitution, and so on) is produced as an overdetermined subjection to extermination, violence and cruelty (126, 128). Notably, Balibar allows that these zones of death and life can at once be erected within the geographic terrain of the very same country (126). It is here that we find the “superborder” that exists between these spaces, operating — as Balibar would have it — as a “global and local ‘enmity line’,” which solicits unease over what may divide or unify humanity (126). Amidst such a division of the living from those predisposed to and thus persisting within a zone of death, I ask: Can we not think of Blackness? Of Muslimness? If those who are rendered more susceptible to the forces of elimination can occupy the selfsame national space as those have a sure hold on life, are we not drawn to consider the deathly plight of the Black female figure or still-veiled Muslim woman in contrast to the assured extant state of an

exalted Canadian or Swedish whiteness? What of the enmity line (between mournability and unmournability; national belonging and non-belonging) that only a suicidal Black Muslim woman can hope to cross? Is this not then a mortal traverse from the zone of death towards that of life? Hereby would her rhetorical slaughter not simply be a hastening of the processes of extermination her Black femaleness is already predisposed to? Thus, enabling her to shift from the death zone inhabited by an adjunct national subject into the human precarity of a recognized citizenry?

What is it, however, to remain in the zone of peril? What cruelties are anticipated for a pre-suicidal subject? Again, as our mantra goes: What is she expected to endure and for what ends? For Balibar, *death zones* reveal that the forms of extreme violence that subject masses to methods of extermination must, alas, also be understood as introducing a modality of “*production for elimination*” (128). Herein populations which are “always already *superfluous*” for the ways they lack any explicitly useful forms of exploitability are rendered destructible — and thus, destroyed through methods of extermination made “political[ly]” or “natural[ly]” available (128). In this manner, the superfluous subjects of *death zones* become “‘garbage humans’ to be ‘thrown away, out of the global city’” (128). As I expect that I have since made clear, Black life is the “always already *superfluous*” as: the rubbish piling-up at the national border; the trash collecting in the Black womb; the litter soiling the streets of the Swedish metropolis and the racial harmony of its homogenous citizenry who are compelled to gaze upon they who do not belong; and, the waste of the Somali Muslim family that compromises the Canadian welfare system through an immoral virility and its warmongering stratagem. Promising both terror and an incessant drain of the humanitarian gifts and privileges of a tolerant Canada or Sweden the exploitably

useless Black Muslim fetus is, again, “thrown away” ahead of even being able to enter into the “global city.” Yet, of course, the Black subject is not always only at the juncture between gestation and still-birth. There are those who are already apparitions in “our” midst — at once, *of* the death zone, promising national death, and assured to die through methods of political-social extermination. The unassimilating or unassimilable Black Muslim women can be readily located as this figure, as I have conveyed. However, what I have been seeking to suggest throughout this work is that even with the stench these “garbage [non]humans” emit into white national space, I am not convinced that they are absolutely disposed of. It would not be advantageous to completely empty the site of the *death zone* if those “under permanent threat of elimination” (129) are necessary to affirm that a normative national subject is, by contrast, insulated from the fatalities that it is imagined Blackness, Muslimness and Black Muslim women will eventually succumb to.

Of extermination, Balibar deduces that the destruction of “bare life” through such techniques of mass violence is simultaneously “irrational” in an economic sense (i.e. reducing the mechanisms for accumulation) and yet, “politically rational” (i.e. refusing “political and social citizenship” to they whose claims to these very assets is “a threat for ‘civilization’”) (128, 129). Although I contest whether the forms of existential exile to which Black selves or Black women in general and Black Muslim women in particular are subjected allow for them to be counted within “bare life” (see above, Agamben 1999), Balibar’s engagement with the rationality/irrationality of elimination is nonetheless helpful. However, our speculations likely remain on the level of the political. What we can conjecture is thus: it is *rational* to deny existence and social citizenship to those who jeopardize the vitality of the white nation; even so, it is *irrational* to

wholly eliminate they whose deathliness “we” need to bolster the local (national) enmity line between zones of life and death. If all Black female figures were to be destroyed the route between life and death and the human and non-human which depends upon her form for passage (see above, Spillers 1987; Holland 2000) would also, as such, be demolished. If every Black or Black Muslim fetus is aborted or “thrown away” ahead of delivery, there will inevitably come a time when there is no further accumulation of the threat. Too much would therefore be lost if mass extermination were to be undertaken; the violent logics of white nation-making would lose what reinforces its vulnerabilities (see above, Butler 1993). “Garbage [non]humans” are not so superfluous, after all. Because, as I argue, it is imperative that *death zones* are not absolutely emptied I further propose that despite the mortal terms of national assimilation, not all “veiled Muslim women” are to enter into the zone of the living by being mourned on the altar to white nationalism. We see precisely this in the case of Canadian Muslim women who seek repatriation after following Muslim husbands or boyfriends to ISIS occupied Syria. By stubbornly holding onto the veil and withholding their repentance for venturing into the dominion of the so-called Islamic State, these women demonstrate their unassimilability and become at fault for their own deaths. The deaths that follow from such acts of liberal treason and the unwillingness to repent are not to be mourned (see Chapter 2). Additionally, not every Black Muslim woman is encouraged to perform the patriotic suicide to enter into a recognizable and thus, grievable humanity. There must continue to be those who reliably live towards death and as the dead.

From here we are again left to question the possible intolerability of being the perpetually intolerable subject. If both the assimilatory death of the un-veiled, “honour killed” Muslim woman and the rhetorical suicide of the ex-Black/ex-Muslim woman witnesses a form of em-

brace of death (in the effort to move past the agony of being the unremarkably dead or living-dead), what does the compulsion to persist in the zone of death mean for women? That is, when one is irretrievably instilled as an object of death (as they who cause death and live under the imminence of their demise) does one recognize their own ungrievability and non-humanity? And, if so, what are the affective effects of such a grim reckoning? Reflecting on the refusal of Emmett Till's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, to conceal the mutilation of her son's lynched body, Rankine (2015) comments on how the deliberate display of the maimed Black corpse can transform a violated corporeal state into an act of dissent. Herein, what is being refused or, "disidentified" with through the public pageantry of the brutalized and disfigured body of the dead Black child is, for Rankine, the white supremacists' threat of (more) death that the lynch victim is intended to symbolize (n.p.). This returns us to our previous deduction that, even as the Black body is meant to figure death, it is also of white supremacist design that the Black self is subdued by the "permanent threat of [its own] elimination" (Balibar 129). Hence, what is disruptive in Mobley's insistent display of a wretched death is that she denies the privacy of mourning, *publicizes injustice*, and ultimately, "reframe[s] mourning as a method of acknowledgment" (Rankine 2015, n.p.). Until now, I have argued for a brutal death to be a means of recognition, however, this has been done through what might figure as a crude reversal of Mobley's use of spectacle. The public display of the corpse has neither appeared here as the spurning of injustice nor as a refusal of the disciplinary unmournability of non-white life. Instead, the acknowledgment that the patriotically dead Muslim woman has been calculated to seek is to come precisely from the very same white nationalist/white supremacist forces that sanction her mutilation and institute her ontological banishment. Yet, a further possibility that I have not explored through this dissertation — per-

haps to its disservice — is how the germination of the Black (Muslim) fetus and thus the bringing forth of the Black (Muslim) child figures not only as a source of white national terror but as a refusal of the elimination of Black (Muslim) life. Herein women’s “relentless” reproduction and ungovernable wombs could be understood to witness the willful insistence of Black (Muslim) existence despite the assimilatory demands for her symbolic sterilization, the dread of the fetus, as well as the anticipation of Black and Muslim death. Hereby the Black Muslim uterus can become something other than the *death machine*.

Examining the assimilatory humiliations of Afro-Swedish Muslim women has offered an alternative means for comprehending both the techniques by which white nationalist forces discipline such foreign bodies as well as the contradictions imbedded in this violent process. Accordingly, we can surmise that the rhetorical assault that lashes the flesh — rendering women as self-disciplining subjects — invokes a brutal pedagogy that is seemingly meant to restrain, possess, and re-make these Others. Even so, the requirement for a passage between the human and non-human (and thus, the Swede and the non-Swede) predestines that not all women (and perhaps, none of those that I have interviewed) are meant to enter into the full life of the nation. In spite of the dogged demand that they assimilate into the white Swedish body<sup>90</sup> (shamed by the body’s failure to be white) some subjects are nevertheless, never meant to cross the enmity line and join the mournable citizenry of the *life zone*. Nicole Fleetwood (2011) introduces the term “excess flesh” to contemplate how “black female corporeality” is at once subject to “excessive overdetermination” and is dominantly regarded as “excess” and thus overdetermined in this disposability (9). As counter to this overdetermination, Fleetwood’s analyses attempt to go beyond

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<sup>90</sup> or, be definitively dismissible as the unassimilable, “bad,” “veiled Muslim woman” (see Chapter 2)

the ways the black female is represented within visual culture by examining how women engage with images of their excess (109) and at times, strategically choose to station the self within a frame of hyper-visibility (9). By examining the quotidian acts through which some Afro-Swedish Muslim women, at times, become confusing or menacing subjects (see Chapter 4) I have in a sense taken up this probe into overdetermination's covert confrontations, along with its conditions.

In thinking through the forms of assimilatory refusals present in these Black Muslim women's unpredictable physical movements or inappropriate (but, undetectable) bodily adornments, however, it is not most clearly a strategic embrace of hyper-visibility that these quotidian gestures appear to be after. Rather, in conceding to the fact of their hyper-visibility within a white normative terrain that is constantly seeking out their bodies (i.e., as objects of discomfort, surveillance, wonder, and rebuke), I believe that it is more apt to suggest that women find ways to move *sideways* within their hyper-visibility. By playing with what can be seen when the regulatory gaze surveils their bodies in white public space women slide between visibility's points of tension. Herein, Afro-Swedish Muslim women do not necessarily escape the gaze (and the contingent disciplinary rhetoric) but locate ways to move around within, what Hartman (1997) has called, a "zones of freedom" (50) — yet, with varying effects. As such, I have suggested that women shift between, appeasing the demands of assimilatory capture which orders their submissive knowability (as one form of "excessive overdetermination"); thus, avoiding their disposal as "overdetermined excess" by self-managing the body to align with the cues of "normative existence" (Ahmed 2014); and then also, slipping away from knowability through confusing speech acts, insubordinate public movements, and imperceptible (sartorial) performances of difference.

Even as women at times accept and thus attempt to satisfy the terms of their capture, we are also made aware of how one's overdetermination as the arrestable or discardable object-subject can be infused with a sort of "wobble room" (Ahmed 2017, 219, 247). That is, the space or sideways motion accessed through the hypervisible self's enactment of certain disobedient or sneaky gestures. We thus see how women come to terms with the grim reckoning of a refused humanity, ontological exclusions, and the futility of full national belonging. In the midst of these conditions, what has become evident is that some of those held away from human/national recognition make choices other than an assimilatory suicide.

Writing of the indignation that follows women's decision to don the hijab in France, Afshaneh Najmabadi (2006) explains that it is intolerable that the liberal "choosing subject" would choose the illiberal religious expression of the veil (240-241). Herein, the Western European republic encourages a freely willing subject yet, for this subject to choose that which is understood to both inhibit their will and to run in contradistinction to the liberal national imaginary, emerges as the wrong kind of choice. The intolerability of choosing the veil (along with other "backwards" Islamic or Islamist practices) has been examined here in relation to the "bad" Muslim woman (see Chapter 2) and, the integrating subject of a dissipated Blackness (see Chapter 3). Further still, we have reflected upon the intolerability of the slippery subject as Afro-Swedish Muslim women seemingly choose liberal integration (and, assimilatory acquiescence) but then, incomprehensibly, re-possess their strangeness. Yet, is making the illiberal choice all that renders the act as insufferable? Is willing away from the liberal imaginary enough to precipitate one's unintelligibility? More specifically, I ask that we contemplate the following: if Muslim women's goodness is contingent on witnessable acts (i.e., of possession, of rescue-ability, of assimilation,

of national accumulation), would the liberal outrage truly rest in the unassimilated and still presumably “bad” Muslim woman making more unassimilable choices? If Black woman perpetually figure as deathly (or, as the passage between death) would it indeed be startling for those who signify the dead to choose to embrace more death by donning the Muslim veil? I introduce these queries, as theoretical interruptions, in order to continue to suggest that white nation-making allows for and often compels the exiled subject to persist in their state of human and national banishment. Unassimilability in itself is not incomprehensible. To remain as the alien outsider is not all that signals the intolerable. Rather, what I have sought to propose is that the confusing, or impossible choice — the *wrong* kind of choice — can emerge when one seizes hold of both life and death; at once grasping that which affirms sentience and that which hurtles one further into the zone of the dead. Here is thus the menacing will and the liberal outrage: to choose what brings one proximal to recognizable life (assimilation) but then, to betray nascent loyalties to the living nation by choosing to again clutch what promises only an unmournable death (non-assimilation). Is there thus liberty in the illiberal act? Is there a reprieve from dominion when one becomes the confusing subject? Or, does one’s incomprehensibility introduce other forms of injury? Does one’s incomplete belongings continue to painfully lacerate the skin, even when one wills aspects of the fragmentation? Furthermore, in what ways are we compelled to understand that even these disobedient and disruptive choices as still constrained by matrices of power? I have explored these possibilities in chapter five by contemplating how Black Muslim women in Canada might choose to willfully embody the non-human in the form of the alien or monster. Artistic representations of women’s unassimilable bodies therefore convey how relinquishing the longing for national and human recognition can offer imaginative ways to transgress racist norms. Although

these women's disobediences can be punished and their strange bodies re-subsumed by power I do not suggest that they endeavour to triumph over such regimes so much as to reveal the fallibility of the oppressive norm.

Critically reflecting upon Foucault's writings on the nineteenth century French intersex person, Herculine Barbin, Butler argues that Foucault at once romanticizes Herculine's sexuality (419) and thus, contradictorily fails to recognize the operatives of power that he otherwise argues to regulate sexuality (406).<sup>91</sup> In particular, Butler cites a collapse of Foucault's critique of "the power regime of sexuality" as he entertains an "unacknowledged emancipatory ideal" (405) in the figuring of Herculine's state of identification excess as a sort of non-binary, unregulated site of pleasure (407, 418). As such, Foucault, according to Butler, "radically misread[s]" (419) the dictation of pleasures by the laws of power (419) by interpreting Herculine's state as a "happy limbo of a non-identity" (Foucault xiii in *Butler 2009, 407*). That is, in his appropriation of Herculine's predicament Foucault conceptualizes pleasure to come from a world that can emancipatorily exceed "categories of sex and of identity" (407). However, this (mis)reading is put forth even as Herculine h/er-self (or, "s/he"-self) articulates their own condition as one of "metaphysical homelessness ... insatiable desire, and a radical solitariness" (417). Notably, Herculine ultimately commits suicide, not as a liberatory act but as an expression of rage directed against the world (417). Where Foucault allows himself to perceive "utopian" sexual pleasure (419) and an unrestrained embodiment that precedes the restraints of categorization (418), Herculine enunciates pain and distress. In refuting Foucault's analysis as both erroneous and quixotic, Butler's counter argument stresses that the pleasures that are imagined to emerge from a non-identity are

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<sup>91</sup> Butler refers here to Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as well as the introduction published in accompaniment to his journals on Barbin.

nonetheless engendered by “the very law they are said to defy” (419). What we are prompted to then consider — salvaging aspects of Foucault from himself in the midst of this analytical blunder — is how subjects that are subjugated by power (and its attendant regulations) are also produced by it (419).

I contemplate Butler’s intellectual reprimand of Foucault here as part of bringing my own work under check. If what I have proposed thus far allows us to understand Black Muslim women as occupying a state of limbo, non-identity or unintelligibility as they inappropriately shift between assimilation and unassimilability, it is important to ask: Can we read this slipperiness, this fluid movement between identities, as an emancipatory state? How can the (temporary?) reprieve that one’s ontological disobedience and unknowability proffers be grasped along side fluidity’s potential for unleashing a sense of “metaphysical homelessness” or “radical solitariness” without the stability of an embodied subjectivity? To what degree can inhabiting the alien or monster be a choice if Black Muslim women are first situated within the non-human (see Chapter 5)? Returning to a question posed in the introduction to this dissertation I once again ask: is forfeiting one’s humanity (prospective or otherwise) a choice one can truly make beyond the visuality of the canvas or performance art piece? Is this a choice women would want to make and at what metaphysical or psychic cost? Furthermore, how might rhetorical suicide be enacted as a rage against the “life zone” rather than an effort to find one’s way in? And finally, applying Butler’s lesson we should question how the powers that regulate the social-ontological borders of the white nation might already anticipate and perhaps, generate these purportedly “unintelligible” or confusing subjects. The answers to these queries exceeds the scope of this dissertation. Even so, that such questions can begin to appear as pertinent has been a central aim of this dissertation,

which has sought to reflect on the often violent relationship that exists between: white nation making in Canada and Sweden, the politics of assimilation, human recognition, and the contingencies of death and mourning — as they each relate to Blackness, Muslim identity and most pertinently, to Black Muslim women.

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