

No End

Curtin 108

Panel Chair: Ann Mattis

William Paris (Penn State University)

“Refusing the Progress of Time: Black Grief and Critical Consciousness”

To refuse the time of the political from the position of Blackness is to put the archive of progress into question and bring into relief the current constitutions of anti-Blackness within the body politic. By engaging with the works of Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, and Calvin Warren I will show that “black grief” articulates a paradigm of analysis which refuses the notion of past/future progress and the healthy subject who is thankful for this narrative. Along these lines Calvin Warren argues that our conception of politics and time rests on metaphysical presupposition that one can just “get over” slavery by pinpointing when slavery “began” and when it “ended.” So long as we assume the nature of the wrong of the Middle Passage was the whips, the chains, the illegal enforcement of labor then we will not understand “black grief.” What if the nature of the wrong is time itself? A time that always seeks to move through and away from Blackness? From this position “black grief” becomes the indication of a painful and unending choice: one can either be an “healthy” subject in the time of the political or one can be “black.” To *be* (Black) in the *wake* of the Middle Passage *disaster* is “to occupy and be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery’s as yet unresolved unfolding...one might approach Black being in the wake as a form of *consciousness*.” “Black grief” connects to the “wake” as an apprehension of the dead, consciousness of lost time.

Sam Law (University of Chicago)

“Narco-State’s Scandalous Secret: Ayotzinapa and the Refusal of Death”

Following the forced disappearance of 43 students in September 2014, hundreds of thousands of people across Mexico took part in one of the largest national outpourings of anger and rage in recent memory. Amidst the ongoing counterinsurgency carried out against the population of Mexico in the name of “the War on Drugs”, a conflict that masks the collusion between the militarized neoliberal state and the cartels, the student’s disappearance became a metonym for the ubiquitous forms of occult violence which undergirded the contemporary form of governance. Unified by the slogan “¡Vivos se los llevaron, Vivos los Queremos!” (“They were taken alive, we want them back alive!”), the movement for the return of the 43 students continually refused attempts by the state to reveal the secret of what happened through established juridical mechanisms, demanding instead that the state use the same occult powers by which the students were disappeared to return them. This paper takes this demand as a starting point to underscore how the movement for of the 43 students called into question the very legitimacy of the occult powers of the state, challenging the very organization of secrecy, the epistemological conditions and contradictions, that lay at the heart of the narco-state. This movement thus provides a lesson in how refusal can overcome the epistemic conditions of governance by which the constitutive violence of the state-form is continually figured as exceptional.