



"Time Honored Hands" (copyright Jaimie Lyle Gordon, 1990, silver print, 16 x 20 inches)

1
her shape and his hand

3-7
18-22

That life is complicated is a fact of great analytic importance.
PATRICIA WILLIAMS, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*

That life is complicated may seem a banal expression of the obvious, but it is nonetheless a profound theoretical statement—perhaps the most important theoretical statement of our time. Yet despite the best intentions of sociologists and other social analysts, this theoretical statement has not been grasped in its widest significance. There are at least two dimensions to such a theoretical statement. The first is that the power relations that characterize any historically embedded society are never as transparently clear as the names we give to them imply. Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires. It can feel like remote control, it can exhilarate like liberation, it can travel through time, and it can drown you in the present. It is dense and superficial, it can cause bodily injury, and it can harm you without seeming ever to touch you. It is systematic and it is particularistic and it is often both at the same time. It causes dreams to live and dreams to die. We can and must call it by recognizable names, but so too we need to remember that power arrives in forms that can range from blatant white supremacy and state terror to “furniture without memories.”

One day, the students in my undergraduate course on American culture and I made a thorough list of every possible explanation Toni Morrison gives in *The Bluest Eye* (1970) for why dreams die. These ranged

from explicit externally imposed and internalized white supremacist standards of value, *the nature of white man's work*, and the dialectics of violence and hatred to *disappointment*, to *folding up inside*, to *being put outdoors*, to *the weather*, to *deformed feet and lost teeth*, to *nobody pays attention*, to *it's too late*, to *total damage*, to *furniture without memories*, to the *unyielding soil*, and to what Morrison sometimes just calls *the thing*, the sedimented conditions that constitute what is in place in the first place. This turns out to be not a random list at all, but a way of conceptualizing the complicated workings of race, class, and gender, the names we give to the ensemble of social relations that create inequalities, situated interpretive codes, particular kinds of subjects, and the possible and impossible themselves. Such a conceptualization asks that we constantly move within and between *furniture without memories* and Racism and Capitalism. It asks us to move analytically between that sad and sunken couch that sags in just that place where an unrememberable past and an unimaginable future force us to sit day after day and the conceptual abstractions because everything of significance happens there among the inert furniture and the monumental social architecture.

But this list also reminds us that even those who live in the most dire circumstances possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing them as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents. It has always baffled me why those most interested in understanding and changing the barbaric domination that characterizes our modernity often—not always—withhold from the very people they are most concerned with the right to complex personhood. Complex personhood is the second dimension of the theoretical statement that life is complicated. Complex personhood means that all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others. Complex personhood means that people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves. Complex personhood means that even those called "Other" are never never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward. Complex personhood means that people get

Complex personhood

tired and some are just plain lazy. Complex personhood means that groups of people will act together, that they will vehemently disagree with and sometimes harm each other, and that they will do both at the same time and expect the rest of us to figure it out for ourselves, intervening and withdrawing as the situation requires. Complex personhood means that even those who haunt our dominant institutions and their systems of value are haunted too by things they sometimes have names for and sometimes do not. At the very least, complex personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning.

That life is complicated is a theoretical statement that guides efforts to treat race, class, and gender dynamics and consciousness as more dense and delicate than those categorical terms often imply. It is a theoretical statement that might guide a critique of privately purchased rights, of various forms of blindness and sanctioned denial; that might guide an attempt to drive a wedge into lives and visions of freedom ruled by the nexus of market exchange. It is a theoretical statement that invites us to see with portentous clarity into the heart and soul of American life and culture, to track events, stories, anonymous and history-making actions to their density, to the point where we might catch a glimpse of what Patricia Williams calls the "vast networking of our society" and imagine otherwise. You could say this is a folk theoretical statement. We need to know where we live in order to imagine living elsewhere. We need to imagine living elsewhere before we can live there.

The Alchemy of Race and Rights by Patricia Williams (1991) is a book that captured my attention because, among other things, here is a woman who does not know if she is crazy or not, who sees ghosts and polar bears and has conversations with her sister about haunted houses and writes all of it down for us while she is sitting in her bathrobe with disheveled hair. Patricia Williams is a commercial lawyer and a professor of contract and property law. Her great-great grandmother was a slave, property. Her great-great grandmother's owner and the father of her children was Austin Miller, a well-known Tennessee lawyer and jurist. What is Patricia Williams looking for?

I track meticulously the dimension of meaning in my great-great-grandmother as chattel: the meaning of money; the power of consumerist world view, the deaths of those we label the unassertive and the inefficient. I try to imagine where and who she would be today. I am engaged in a long-

term project of tracking his [Austin Miller's] words—through his letters and opinions—and those of his sons who were also lawyers and judges, of finding the shape described by her absence in all this.

I see her shape and his hand in the vast networking of our society, and in the evils and oversights that plague our lives and laws. The control he had over her body. The force he was in her life, in the shape of my life today. The power he exercised in the choice to breed her or not. The choice to breed slaves in his image, to choose her mate and be that mate. In his attempt to own what no man can own, the habit of his power and the absence of her choice.

I look for her shape and his hand. (19)

I look for her shape and his hand; this is a massive project, very treacherous, very fragile. This is a project in which haunting and phantoms play a central part. This is a project where *finding the shape described by her absence* captures perfectly the paradox of tracking through time and across all those forces that which makes its mark by being there and not there at the same time. Cajoling us to reconsider (if only to get some peace), and because cajoling is in the nature of the ghost, the very distinctions between there and not there, past and present, force and shape. From force to hand to her ghostly presence in the register of history and back again, this is a particular kind of social alchemy that eludes us as often as it makes us look for it. Patricia Williams is not alone in the search for the shape of force and lost hands; there is company for the keeping. Wahneema Lubiano (1992, 1993), too, is looking for the haunting presence of the state in the cultural zones where it seemingly excuses itself. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) is trying to raise the specter of the ghostly violence of law's regime of objects, its objectivity. Catherine Clément has for some time been trying to "remember today" the "zone" that "somewhere every culture has . . . for what it excludes" (Cixous and Clément 1986). Norma Alarcón (1990) is following the barely visible tracks of the Native Woman across the U.S.-Mexico border, as she shadows the making of the liberal citizen-subject. Hortense Spillers (1987a) is reconstructing the American grammatology that lost some subjects in one passage and found others in a phantasmatic family of bad mothers and absent fathers. Maxine Hong Kingston (1977) is mapping the trans-Pacific travel of ghostly ancestors and their incessant demands on the living. Gayatri Spivak (1987, 1989a, 1993) keeps vigilant watch over the dialectic of presence and absence that characterizes "our" benevolent metropolitan

relationship to the subaltern women "over there."¹ *I look for her shape and his hand*.

Ghostly Matters is about haunting, a paradigmatic way in which life is more complicated than those of us who study it have usually granted. Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great import. To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it. This confrontation requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production. *Ghostly Matters* is a theoretical and conceptual book that I hope demonstrates the utter significance of well-placed (as opposed to misplaced) concreteness and conveys the relevance of ghostly matters to the sociological enterprise, an enterprise at once in sociology and eagerly willing to make it into something entirely different. *Ghostly Matters* is an interdisciplinary work and in this sense representative of our times and needs. But it is Roland Barthes's notion of interdisciplinarity that it strives to instantiate: "Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a 'subject' (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one" (quoted in Clifford and Marcus 1986: 1). Not owned by anyone yet, this interdisciplinarity is in the public domain, which does not guarantee anything except that there is still some room to claim rather than discipline its meaning into existence. *Ghostly Matters* looks for a language for identifying hauntings and for writing with the ghosts any haunting inevitably throws up.

Ghosts are a somewhat unusual topic of inquiry for a social analyst (much less a degreed sociologist). It may seem foreign and alien, marginal to the field that conventionally counts as living social reality, the field we observe, measure, and interpret, the field that takes the measure of us as much as we take the measure of it.² And foreign and alien it is, for reasons that are both obvious and stubbornly oblique. There is a long story of how I came to write a book about ghostly matters, much of which is relevant to an engaged sociology of knowledge and some of which is even perhaps interesting, but a good deal of it is not what my colleague Harvey Molotch would call news.

I came to write about ghostly matters not because I was interested in

Read to here

with holographic scanners, they cannot decode the secret of every item, infallibly. Indeed, what is at stake here is the political status and function of systematic hauntings.

If the ghost is a crucible for political mediation and historical memory, the ghost story has no other choice than to refuse the logic of the unreconstructed spectacle, whether of the modern or postmodern variety. *White Noise* might bring us to the brink of establishing the necessity of reckoning with the instrumentality of hauntings. But because it does not invite us to make contact with haunting, to engage the shadows and what is living there, it does not help us to develop a form of historical accounting distinct from the diagnostics of postmodern hypervisibility. The purpose of an alternative diagnostics is to link the politics of accounting, in all its intricate political-economic, institutional, and affective dimensions, to a potent imagination of what has been done and what is to be done otherwise.



"Guardian Angel" (copyright Jaimie Lyle Gordon, 1992, silver print, 30 x 40 inches)

START
HERE → How do we reckon with what modern history has rendered ghostly? How do we develop a critical language to describe and analyze the affective, historical, and mnemonic structures of such hauntings? These questions have guided my desire to articulate, however insufficiently, a sense of the ghostly and its social and political effects. I use the word *sense* here deliberately to evoke what Raymond Williams called a structure of feeling—perhaps the most appropriate description of how hauntings are transmitted and received. I have not endeavored to estab-

lish transhistorical or universal laws of haunting per se⁶ but rather to represent the structure of feeling that is something akin to what it feels like to be the object of a social totality vexed by the phantoms of modernity's violence. What does this mean? It means following the insights that come to those who see all these forces operating at once. Such a way of seeing can make you a bit crazy and imprecise and wary of shorthands. While it may be true that the constellation of social forces all collide in various ways, that social life's complication is, to use an often overused phrase, overdetermined, the obvious task of the critic or analyst is to designate the precise contours of experience and causality in particular instances. It is not a matter of accepting or rejecting any of a range of notions of social totality, and, academic common sense to the contrary, Marxists do not have a lock on this concept (Gordon 1992). Rather, it is a matter of exploring here the particular mediation that is haunting. As a concept, mediation describes the process that links an institution and an individual, a social structure and a subject, and history and a biography. In haunting, organized forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us make their impact felt in everyday life in a way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds the social separations themselves. Paying attention to the disjuncture between identifying a social structure (or declaring its determinate existence) and its articulation in everyday life and thought, I have hoped that working at understanding these gaps, the kinds of visions they produce, and the afflictions they harbor would enable us not to eradicate the gap—it is inevitable—but to fill in the content differently. Could it be that analyzing hauntings might lead to a more complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism? Perhaps. If so, the result will not be a more tidy world, but one that might be less damaging.

It was in such a spirit that Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1987) wrote a two-page note, appended to *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, entitled "On The Theory of Ghosts." Despairing at the loss of historical perspective, at our "disturbed relationship with the dead—forgotten and embalmed," they believed we needed some kind of theory of ghosts, or at least a way of both mourning modernity's "wound in civilization" (216) and eliminating the destructive forces that open it up over and over again: "Only the conscious horror of destruction creates the correct relationship with the dead: unity with them because we, like

them, are the victims of the same condition and the same disappointed hope" (215). One wonders what a completed theory of ghosts would have looked like had Horkheimer and Adorno actually written more than the note.⁷ I have not written the Theory of Ghosts, a far too singular proposal for my purposes, but *Ghostly Matters* does attempt to describe, in homage to the viability of a Marxist concept of haunting, the ghostly haunt as a form of social figuration that treats as a major problem the reduction of individuals "to a mere sequence of instantaneous experiences which leave no trace, or rather whose trace is hated as irrational, superfluous, and 'overtaken'" (216).

And a problem it remains despite all that we can claim now to understand in the wake of what are, without doubt, major changes in who is permitted to make public knowledge and in the assumptions that direct and underwrite much contemporary inquiry. We have taken the legs out from under that fateful and deceptive Archimedean standpoint, substituting the view from somewhere for the old view from nowhere. We have become adept at discovering the construction of social realities and deconstructing their architecture, confounding some of the distinctions between culture and science, the factual and the artificial. We have rethought the relationship between knowledge and power, between text and context, highlighting the relationship between authorization and modes of authority. And we have made considerable representational reparations for past exclusions and silencings, making the previously unknown known, telling new stories, correcting the official records.

These are major accomplishments for work in universities, which change slowly and which, despite their ideology of invention, do not like too much of it. Yet I have wondered sometimes whether, for example, we have truly taken seriously that the intricate web of connections that characterizes any event or problem *is the story*. Warnings about relativism to the contrary, truth is still what most of us strive for. Partial and insecure surely, and something slightly different from "the facts," but truth nonetheless: the capacity to say "This is so." But truth is a subtle shifting entity not simply because philosophy says so or because evidentiary rules of validation are always inadequate, but because the very nature of the things whose truth is sought possesses these qualities. To tell the partial deconstructive truth of the thing that is the complex relation between subjection and subjectivity requires making common cause with the thing, requires what Michael Taussig calls sympathetic magic, that is, "granting . . . the representation the power of the repre-

sented" (1993a: xviii). Particularly for those who believe in the progressive quality of modernity's secularity, this is a somewhat remarkable claim. But a kind of sympathetic magic is necessary because in the world and between us as analysts and the worlds we encounter to translate into world-making words are hauntings, ghosts and gaps, seething absences, and muted presences. The political and affective modalities by which we gain access to the facticity of constructed power either reckons with or displaces these ghostly matters and the matter of the ghost, with consequences either way.

Bloodless categories, narrow notions of the visible and the empirical, professional standards of indifference, institutional rules of distance and control, barely speakable fears of losing the footing that enables us to speak authoritatively and with greater value than anyone else who might . . . Our methods have thus far been less than satisfactory for addressing the very nature of the things and the problems it is our responsibility to address, leaving us not yet making something new enough out of what are arguably many new ideas and novel conditions. A different way of knowing and writing about the social world, an entirely different mode of production, still awaits our invention. Such a mode of production would not reject the value of empirical observation per se, but might, to use Taussig's words, be more "surprised" by social construction, the making and making up of social worlds, thereby giving it the "respect" it "deserves" (1993a: xv-xvi). Indeed, we might expand the domain of the empirical considerably to include not only haunting and ghostly matters but also our own relations to social analysis. We might make common cause with our objects and subjects of analysis. Making common cause with our objects and subjects of analysis involves "understanding . . . the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as suspended above and distant from the represented" (Taussig 1992: 10). Making common cause with our objects and subjects of analysis, which *is* to take social determination quite seriously, means "that one has to see oneself and one's shared modes of understanding and communication included in that determining. To claim otherwise, to claim the rhetoric of systematicity's determinisms and yet except oneself, is an authoritarian deceit, a magical wonder" (ibid.). Making common cause means that our encounters must strive to go beyond the fundamental alienation of turning social relations into just the things we know and toward our

Mimesis
ineffable

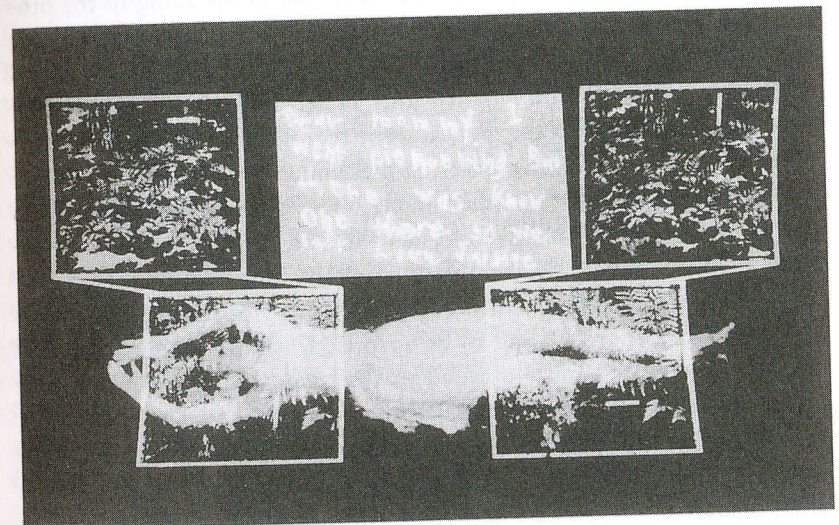
own reckoning with how we are in these stories, with how they change us, with our own ghosts.

Doing so is not easy because, among other things, knowing ghosts often shows up not as professional success, but as failure: the one whose writing/not writing only came together as she came together with the object, with the reality of fictions and the unrealities of the facts; the slightly mad one who kept saying, "There's something in the room with us," as those bloodless reified categories became animated through wonder and vexation. But it is also true that ghosts are never innocent: the unhallowed dead of the modern project drag in the pathos of their loss and the violence of the force that made them, their sheets and chains. To be haunted and to write from that location, to take on the condition of what you study, is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindnesses. Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a counter-memory, for the future. *STBL*

Sociology, in particular, has an extraordinary mandate as far as academic disciplines go: to conjure up social life. Conjuring is a particular form of calling up and calling out the forces that make things what they are in order to fix and transform a troubling situation. As a mode of apprehension and reformation, conjuring merges the analytical, the procedural, the imaginative, and the effervescent. But we have more to learn about how to conjure in an evocative and compelling way. If haunting is a constitutive feature of social life, then we will need to be able to describe, analyze, and bring to life that aspect of social life, to be less fearful of animation. We ought to do this not only because it is more exact, but also because to the extent that we want our writing to change minds, to convince others that what we know is important and ought to matter, we need to be more in touch with the nature of how "the pieces of a world . . . littered all over a sociological landscape" (D. Smith 1987: 99) affect people. And we do not usually experience things, nor are affects produced, in the rational and objective ways our terms tend to portray them. The counterpart to reification, the conjur-

ing trick, might be better captured by Walter Benjamin's profane illumination or Marx's sensuous knowledge. Of course, the tricky thing is that scholars too are subject to these same dynamics of haunting: ghosts get in our matters just as well. This means that we will have to learn to talk to and listen to ghosts, rather than banish them, as the precondition for establishing our scientific or humanistic knowledge.

Ghostly Matters is thus, on the one hand, a modest book and, on the other hand, quite ambitious. Its modesty lies in its very simple point. Ghostly matters are part of social life. If we want to study social life well, and if in addition we want to contribute, in however small a measure, to changing it, we must learn how to identify hauntings and reckon with ghosts, must learn how to make contact with what is without doubt often painful, difficult, and unsettling. The book's ambition lies in asserting that in order to do this, we will have to change the way we have been doing things.



"I went pioneering" (copyright Jaimie Lyle Gordon, 1993, silver print, 16 x 20 inches)

I have many more questions than answers, a potentially disappointing feature of this book, but endemic to the enterprise. In the chapters that follow, I have tried to explore three broad questions. First, what are the alternative stories we ought to and can write about the relationship among power, knowledge, and experience? I have been particularly troubled by the contrast between conceptual or analytical descriptions

we have to grasp the fullness of its life world, its desires and its standpoint. When a ghost appears, it is making contact with you; all its forceful if perplexing enunciations are for you. Offer it a hospitable reception we must, but the victorious reckoning with the ghost always requires a partiality to the living. Because ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of a life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation. In this necessarily collective undertaking, the end, which is not an ending at all, belongs to everyone.

Notes

1. her shape and his hand

1. This list is not complete. Others who could be added include Felman and Laub (1992), Haraway (1989), Minh-ha (1989, 1991), and M. B. Pratt (1984). If we were to include Silko (1977, 1991) or Wideman's recent work (1994) or Baldwin (1985) or Du Bois ([1940] 1984, [1903] 1989) or Ellison ([1952] 1981, 1964) or . . . well, then, a whole field begins to emerge whose broad expanse is cause for a serious analytic pause.

2. See Charles Lemert's recent book *Sociology after the Crisis* (1995), especially chapters 5 and 8, for a wonderfully thoughtful discussion of taking the measure of the social world.

3. My focus on social practices is written in the spirit of a crucially important point Harvey Molotch makes in his excellent article on the state of sociology, "Going Out" (1994: 222, 224): "One of the things wrong with sociology, in our country, is that we need a better country. . . . We really have to change America to change us."

4. There is a certain degree of repetition to this sentiment, even if one takes a fairly short historical perspective. Here is C. Wright Mills, in 1959: "We are at the ending of what is called The Modern Age . . . so now The Modern Age is being succeeded by a post-modern period. Perhaps we may call it: The Fourth Epoch.

"The ending of one epoch and the beginning of another is, to be sure, a matter of definition. But definitions, like everything social, are historically specific. And now our basic definitions of society and of self are being overtaken by new realities. I do not mean merely that we *feel* we are in an epochal kind of transition. I mean that too many of our explanations are derived from the great historical transition from the Medieval to the Modern Age; and that when they are generalized for use today, they become unwieldy, irrelevant, not convincing" (236).

That Mills's statement was written at the height of the New American Century is not without a certain significance since one persuasive periodization of

postmodernity links it to the end of the century, most usually indicated by the OPEC oil crisis of 1973. Mills's statement should be read in the context of then current debates on postindustrialism, to which he contributed significantly with his seminal work on class, *White Collar* (1951), and that bear a striking resemblance to current attempts to define the contours of a late capitalism. It should also be read in the context of the 1950s version of the politically motivated claim, most prominently made by Daniel Bell in *The End of Ideology* (1960) and repeated in the 1990s by Francis Fukuyama (1992), that history had ended and ideology become bankrupt, the proof being the preeminence of worldwide U.S. hegemony. Mills's most direct and pointedly acerbic response to Daniel Bell was "The New Left" (1960 [1963]).

5. Taussig (1993a: 98–99) and Pietz (1993: 141–43) offer intriguing speculations on "communist fetishism" and postcapitalist animism that have potentially interesting implications for haunting's future. To quote Taussig, "Post-capitalist animism means that although the socioeconomic exploitative function of fetishism . . . will supposedly disappear with the overcoming of capitalism, fetishism as an active social force inherent in objects will remain. Indeed, it must not disappear, for it is the animate quality of things in post-capitalist society without the 'banking' mode of perception that ensures what the young Marx envisaged as the humanization of the world" (1993a: 99). See also T. Keenan (1993) on commodity fetishism and ghosts.

6. In this respect, *Ghostly Matters* differs from the important work by James C. Scott (1990) on domination and resistance. But his very potent notion of the "hidden transcript" that "helps us understand those rare moments of political electricity when, often for the first time in memory, the hidden transcript is spoken directly and publicly in the teeth of power" (xiii) is clearly necessary to understand haunting. Indeed, one could argue that the ghost mediates between the public and hidden transcripts, producing a particular kind of valence to the operation of and "study of power that uncovers contradictions, tensions, and immanent possibilities" (xii).

7. Jacques Derrida has now written a theory of the specter in direct engagement with Marx's texts in a moving and beautiful book about Marx's ambivalent yet obsessive relationship to ghosts. *Specters of Marx* (1994) is a very significant book of philosophy and a crucial political intervention by perhaps the most influential European philosopher living today. But it is not, I think, despite its similarly motivated distress at the claim of history's end, quite the theory of ghosts Horkheimer and Adorno would have written. See Jameson's (1995) generous and learned review essay of Derrida's book.

8. The history of the origins of American sociology (see Ross 1991; M. Smith 1994) could be reconceived such that what I am here calling the fictive would be more central to our historic mission. Acknowledging and incorporating the foundational role of W. E. B. Du Bois would be a first step (see the virtually unparalleled efforts of Lemert 1993, 1994, and 1995, especially chapters 6 and 8). Although this is not the place for an extended review of Du Bois, which in any event would have to account for the developments and refinements in his thought subsequent to his early and heavily emphasized work, *The Souls of*

Black Folk, suffice it to say that the profession might have developed otherwise had Du Bois's notion of double consciousness become sociology's common sense, rather than its suppressed history. Double consciousness is a sociological imagination, in the most profound sense in which Mills deployed the term. It is an imagination bound to a dialectics of shadows and acts, approaching our gravest social problems from the "second sight" of "being" the problem itself and thereby confounding, in that very moment, the boundary between subject and object (see the especially astute conclusion to chapter 5, "The Concept of Race," in *Dusk of Dawn* [1940] 1984). Double consciousness is a sociological imagination that fixes its sight on that very remainder of the tangible or the factual that haunting signifies and that an attention to its sign-work captures: "But after all that has been said on these more tangible matters of human contact, there still remains a part essential to a proper description of the South which it is difficult to describe or fix in terms easily understood by strangers. It is, in fine, the atmosphere of the land, the thought and feeling, the thousand and one little actions which go to make up life. In any community or nation it is these little things which are most elusive to the grasp and yet most essential to any clear conception of the group life taken as a whole. What is thus true of all communities is peculiarly true of the South, where, outside of written history and outside of printed law, there has been going on for a generation as deep a storm and stress of human souls, as intense a ferment of feeling, as intricate a writhing of spirit, as ever a people experienced. Within and without the sombre veil of color vast social forces have been at work,—efforts for human betterment, movements toward disintegration and despair, tragedies and comedies in social and economic life, and a swaying and lifting and sinking of human hearts which have made this land a land of mingled sorrow and joy, of change and excitement and unrest. . . . But if he lingers long enough there comes the awakening: perhaps in a sudden whirl of passion which leaves him gasping at its bitter intensity; more likely in a gradually dawning sense of things he had not at first noticed. Slowly but surely his eyes begin to catch the shadows of the color line" ([1903] 1989: 127–28).

2. distractions

1. Freud 1919: 242–43. All further references to Freud's essay "The Uncanny," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, London: Hogarth Press, 1919, will be given in parentheses as U.

2. See Freud's extended discussion (U 220–26) of the meaning of the word *heimlich*, homely, "a place free from ghostly influences" (225) and how its "meaning . . . develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*" (226), "'seeming quite . . . ghostly to him'" (224).

3. On "phantom objectivity," see Georg Lukács (1971: 83, 100) and Karl Marx (1976: 128).

GHOSTLY MATTERS

*Haunting and the
Sociological Imagination*

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