

Introduction

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The essays in this special issue unfold at the dynamic intersections of race and diaspora in a global context. A concerted attention to entanglement brings these texts together, where *entanglement* refers to woven histories, synchronicities of experience, untimely failures, and fierce departures, fugitive and rebellious, as well as the slow and reverberating motions of diasporic time. These cross-temporal flows erupt in divergent trajectories that constitute the raced subject in unexpected ways. Each essay is preoccupied with how race—as an ontological category born of violence—produces edges, wounds, or incisions that nurture opportunities for further ontological transgressions with possible liberatory potentials. What is more, the authors in this special issue demonstrate a shared commitment to transgression as method as they question dominant modes of historiography, hierarchies of memory, and forms of power (ontological, structural, and narrative). Cutting across temporal and spatial terrains, each essay contributes to an expanding critical horizon of studies on race and diaspora and on the entangled histories of slavery, indentured servitude, and anticolonial resistance.

In her book *Physics of Blackness* Michelle M. Wright questions the linear space-time of scholarship in critical race and Black studies. She asks, How does this work try to fit blackness into a progressive narrative, one in which the Middle Passage serves as the commanding site of origin?¹ In the essay that begins this special issue, Wright thoughtfully expands on this argument by turning to the productive links that quantum physics offers for thinking about the entanglement of diaspora and history and how it is reflected in literary form. In unanticipated ways, Parisa Vaziri's work responds to Wright's critique of the limiting scholarly frame imposed on blackness and diaspora by turning to the lesser-known experience of Indian Ocean slavery, particularly to the failures of translation and historiography to address blackness in the Indian Ocean context. Where Vaziri considers the points of contact between Atlantic and Indian Ocean forms of slavery, Vilashini Cooppan wrestles with the legacy of Indian migrants and indentured servants in present-day South Africa to examine the historical-diasporic textures of Indian memory that emerge from wearing a sari. In a recollection of her family's history of migration to South Africa, Cooppan's essay invites readers to think through the gaps, absences, and excesses involved in the materiality of weaving to consider the textural and networked forms of memory that might offer a "beyond" to the melancholic space of unreconciled trauma. Cooppan's genealogical weaving of family history with national and global tissues of memory points readers to the inherited memory of diasporic identity, allowing an approach to historical violence and its temporal unfoldings through entangled pasts, presents, and futures, rather than through competitive or hierarchical models.

The essays in this issue recast the progressivist impulse of thinking the experience of diaspora in linear phases (from the Middle Passage to putting past traumas to rest and, finally, to a state of closure through assimilation). Instead, the historical moments reflected here resist a narrative of continuity and reveal discontinuous, disjointed, and rupturous experiences of time, many of which exist outside history's fixed archive. Thus, while the authors in this issue have in some cases focused on elided histories, they also turn to historical moments that have not yet materialized as "events" per se, questioning the formal determinations of such assertions. What forms of

knowledge can emerge from a historiographical engagement with moments in history that did not culminate in or transpire into legible moments at all? Poulomi Saha takes up this question to explore the transcolonial circuits and radical kinships between anticolonial revolt in East Bengal and the 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland. Saha's poignant reading of these (non)events sits with the possibilities enclosed in these "failed" rebellions and with what can be learned from these untimely attempts at beginning and then beginning again. Rather than surrender to the tired fantasies of repetitive revolutionary narratives, Saha's critical appreciation of failed (or unfinished) rebellions attends to the imaginative and political possibilities that lie dormant in the crypt, an act of waiting for what it does not see coming.

The entanglement of imperial structures and racial taxonomies continues to reproduce oppressive forms that dispossess and destroy racialized subjects as well as the modes of resistance such entanglement has historically determined outside its hegemonic categorizations as "disorder," "unstable," or "mistake." The authors in this issue transgress these violently constructed bounds and attend instead to the vital excesses that spill out and continue to undulate. Alexis Pauline Gumbs's essay is a poetic invocation of the imaginative and epistemological power in the belly of the ocean. In the ocean Gumbs identifies an ancestral sound: a humming that brings to bear resonances of the unconscious, a reminder of past and ongoing mistakes, geological and humanitarian. Both in its style and its content, Gumbs's piece challenges readers to engage what is at the "bottom" not as peripheral, or as what is to be forgotten, but as a generative form that grounds, to be honored, held, and grappled with. The ocean as praxis invites diasporic relationality; its fluid and repetitive rhythm tasks us with listening to past hauntings and future signs.

In *Poetics of Relation* Édouard Glissant discusses the immense friction that emerges from the standardization of oppressive orders, but at "every node of relation," he writes, "we will find callouses of resistance."² As many of the essays in this issue display, it is precisely from this violent standardization that a rebellious consciousness emerges. In a theoretically transgressive gesture, Calvin Warren

contemplates the violence enacted by “pure form” and the ways in which it sutures phenomenology and mathematics to reproduce other structures of violence. Warren turns to black feminist poethics and considers the critical possibilities that might burst from the pressure points of forms. He considers the entanglement of phenomenology and ontology and examines how the archive and the neutralization of mathematics produce an epidermalized limit to blackness, thereby reproducing structures of antiblackness within the social world. As Saha turns to the crypt, Warren settles into the realm of catastrophe. This radical gesture undoes the illusion of pure forms: a structure that situates blackness without value in an antiblack world. Yielding instead to catastrophe bears an indeterminate result and in so doing produces critical possibilities untethered from the violent structures of form and its entanglement with violent racial and ontological categories.

The converging archives of these six essays indicate the shared conversations and commitments that ground this special issue. Each author demonstrates the tremendous theoretical challenges and the argumentative force of thinking race and diaspora with relation to entangled histories, critical memories, and the transgressive political movements that generate emancipatory ways of being in the world. Together the authors in this issue give life to an itinerary of diasporic affinity, but not with the aim of establishing sameness or historical congruity. Rather, in speaking to each other, they explore the multiple material and theoretical vectors that arise and break through the seams in the many critical trajectories of studies in race and diaspora.

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Notes

1. Wright, *Physics of Blackness*, 17.
2. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 138–39.

References

- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- Wright, Michelle M. *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.