

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been thinking about the themes of melancholy, remembrance, and trauma for a while. Part of my investment can be traced back to personal experiences and losses; another source of this interest is my immersion in African American literature and culture and my passion for critical and literary theory. This book is motivated by a suspicion that many of our influential narratives, images, and cultural symbols minimize the intensity of loss and injury in our world. More specifically, this project is animated by the dangers and limitations of interpreting black freedom struggles and the legacy of racism within logics of progress and national exceptionalism. My sense is that a different kind of hope and set of possibilities emerge through melancholy, remembrance, and a heightened understanding of history's tragic features.

I completed the penultimate draft of this book a month before the Ferguson uprising and the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement. While time and space did not permit me to write about this insurgent set of practices, struggles, and aspirations, much of my analysis resonates with the concerns and overall energy of this movement. This book is also

very much concerned about the ways in which black death and suffering have become normalized and widely acceptable.

While writing (and academic life more generally) often seems like a solitary practice, this project would not have been possible without the support, love, friendship, and interventions of others. At the same time, an acknowledgments or “shout out” section cannot do justice to one’s indebtedness to other people. But I will make an attempt. First, I am very grateful to the editors of the *Religious Cultures of African and African Diaspora People* series—Dianne Diakité, Terrence Johnson, and Jacob Olupona—for their welcoming embrace of my project. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Terrence Johnson, who initially had more faith in this book project than I did. I want to also thank my editor, Miriam Angress, and the staff at DUP (especially Susan Albury) for their support, hard work, and patience throughout this process. Miriam Angress’s generous encouragement throughout the editing process was invaluable.

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