THE “FACT OF BLACKNESS” DOES NOT EXIST: AN EVOCA TIVE CRITICISM
OF RESISTANCE RHET ORIC IN ACADEMIC POLIC Y DEBATE AND ITS
(MIS)USE OF FRANTZ FANON’S BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS

BY

BRENDON BANKEY

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Communication

August 2013

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Approved By:

Michael J. Hyde, Ph.D., Advisor

Mary M. Dalton, Ph.D., Chair

R. Jarrod Atchison, Ph.D.
Acknowledgements

I would like to take this brief opportunity to thank some folks who have provided me support throughout my time at Wake Forest. First, I am tremendously grateful for my family. Without their assistance and guidance there is no telling where I would be today. Thank you to my mothers Michelle and Susan; my fathers Henry, Jeff, and Robert; my brothers Alex, Gerald, and Malik; my sisters Marisa, Chelsea, Shirley, and Alice; and my Aunt Sharon for your constant encouragement and for making me feel at home in the many houses I have inhabited.

Next, I would like to thank the wonderful people I have worked with in Wake Forest’s Communication Department. I would like to thank Patty, without whom the department would not function. I also am deeply indebted to my advisor, Dr. Michael J. Hyde, for his patience and flexibility during the many directions this project took. I would like to thank my panel chair, Dr. Mary Dalton, for her unique point of view and for always greeting those she encounters with a smile. Likewise, Dr. Louden and Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Von Burg are incredibly warm professors who are deeply committed to the success of their students. Words cannot express my gratitude toward Jarrod. Had it not been for him, I probably never would have studied communication except as a supplement to an undergraduate business major. Who ever thought 2013 would be the year to break the curse?

I would also like to give a shoutout to some of the people in the debate community that have supported me during this project. Thank you to the students of Wake Debate. Thank you to Justin, Len, CT, Aaron, Logan, Cat, Mikaela, Oz, Slatts, Leah, Dan, and Struth for teaching me how to be a better debate coach. Outside of Wake Forest, I would like to extend appreciative snaps to Jamie, Luke, Nick, John, Michael, Alex Moon, Sarah Clemons, Topp Dr., Blumie, Rubaie, Elyse, RJ, Eric, Ryan, Sean, Patrick and Erum for making my time in policy debate so great. Finally, I wish to offer a special thank you to Toya ‘Oh Boya’ for showing me how to be a better human.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iv
Chapter One – Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
  Chapter Notes ......................................................................................................................... 28
Chapter Two – *L’Expérience Vécue du Noir* and Policy Debate ..................................... 40
  Chapter Notes ......................................................................................................................... 62
Chapter Three – The Missing Figure of Sho’ Good Eatin’ .................................................... 66
  Chapter Notes ......................................................................................................................... 107
Chapter Four – Trope-A-Dupe: The Problem Posed by Reid-Brinkley’s Resistance for
  Achieving Disalienation and Positive Voice ........................................................................ 114
  Chapter Notes ......................................................................................................................... 142
Chapter Five – Conclusion .................................................................................................. 146
  Chapter Notes ......................................................................................................................... 155
References ............................................................................................................................. 156
Curriculum Vitae .................................................................................................................... 166
Abstract

Scholars of black/white social relations often cite Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* for its psychological analysis of the “Fact of Blackness.” Attributing this supposed facticity to a fundamental mistranslation of the original French text, this thesis explores the implications of scholar’s adherence to Fanon within elements of resistance rhetoric. Moreover, through evocative criticism, this thesis examines *Black Skin, White Masks* as a phenomenological text whose findings establish communication as a first step to dismantling forms of language that reify social alienation. Alongside rhetorical theories of disalienation, voice, and authentic communication, this thesis applies Fanon’s thought to popular understandings of resistance in the academic policy debate community as forwarded by Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley. In doing so, it challenges her conception of whiteness, black aesthetic performance, and signifyin(g) as antithetical to Fanon’s goal for communication. While examples of resistance rhetoric demonstrated by Reid-Brinkley have achieved increasing competitive success in spaces of policy debate, it remains to be seen these strategies can escape the suffocating reification brought about by our collective adherence to the inhuman voices of the past.
I am going out on a limb. This is a precarious position, but the stakes are high enough to warrant risky business.

(E. Patrick Johnson)

I, a man of color, want but one thing:
May man never be instrumentalized. May the subjugation of man by man—that is to say, of me by another—cease. May I be allowed to discover and desire man wherever he may be.
The black man is not. No more than the white man.
Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born. Before embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation. At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child.
It is through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension with his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.
Superiority? Inferiority?
Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?
Was my freedom not given me to build the world of you, man?
At the end of this book we would like the reader to feel with us the open dimension of every consciousness.
My final prayer:
O my body, always make me a man who questions!

(Frantz Fanon)

The quotation above presents the concluding thoughts of Frantz Fanon’s “iconic text” *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon is acclaimed as “the one francophone critic who has had the greatest impact on American academic postcolonialism.”* Black Skin, White Masks*, published in its original French six decades ago, continues to offer visceral insight into the forms of social alienation faced by colonized peoples in Western society. Its text presents an analysis of the “massive psycho-existential complex” that arose from colonized Antillean peoples’ attempts to embody the likeness of Francophone culture in the first half of the twentieth century. As a psychologist, Fanon’s goal was to stage an examination of “the juxtaposition of the black and white races” as a means “to discover
the various mental attitudes the black man adopts in the face of white civilization.” Among these “mental attitudes,” Fanon found the presence of a “double narcissism” whereby, after centuries of subjection to colonialism, “the black man wants to be white” while, after centuries of propagating dehumanizing colonization, “the white man is desperately trying to achieve the rank of man.” For Fanon, this paradox creates a dilemma that results in white folks “locked in [their] whiteness” and black folks “locked in [their] blackness,” each unable to appreciate the other’s humanity.

Fanon’s immediate goal with *Black Skin, White Masks* was to “break the cycle” of “this double narcissism” by revealing “the affective disorders responsible for [the] network of complexes” that propagated it. In doing so, he provided “a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem” to provide “a mirror with progressive infrastructure where the black man can find the path to disalienation.” Fanon’s focus throughout the text is primarily “psychological.” He nevertheless recognized that “a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities” facing black folks was also necessary to free them from alienation. For Fanon, “true disalienation” required an understanding that the “inferiority complex” of black folks results from a twofold process of alienation. This process is “first, economic.” And second, it is maintained by an “internalization or rather epidermalization of [the] inferiority” colonized people experience through their encounters with white colonizers both at home and abroad.

Although Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks* for the explicit purpose of black folks’ mental liberation, the book also establishes the goal of “[enabling] healthy relations between Blacks and Whites” through reinvigorated practices of communication. In philosopher and ethicist Anthony Kwame Appiah’s Foreword of
Richard Philcox’s recent translation of the text, he concludes by acknowledging the importance of communication for resolving the negative self-concept experienced by black folks through processes of colonization.\(^7\) Appiah writes:

> Yet, though *Black Skin, White Masks* is a searing indictment of colonialism, it is also a hopeful invitation to a new relation between black and white, colonizer and colonized each, he says (on the book’s last page), must “move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born.” That message, alas, is also one that remains relevant today.\(^8\)

Despite Fanon’s proposal for “genuine communication” in response to “the inhuman voices” of history that perpetuate the instrumentalization of humanity, *Black Skin, White Masks* remains relatively unexplored in for its observations concerning communication.\(^9\) Similarly, Fanon’s goal of disalienation is still largely under-theorized as a rhetorical concept.\(^10\) What clearly manifests itself through Fanon’s work, however, is the interrelated, yet unfulfilled, task of “introducing invention into life” and “[creating] the ideal conditions of existence for a human world” through oft-disregarded practices of disalienated communication.\(^11\)

Unfortunately, those scholars who have explored *Black Skin, White Masks* from a communication perspective have been seriously limited by Charles Lam Markmann’s original English interpretation.\(^12\) Specifically, Markmann’s treatment of *Black Skin, White Masks*’ fifth chapter and the French advertising slogan *Y a bon Banania* creates a fundamental distortion in meaning that hinders the message of the text. In its original French, the title of Chapter Five of Fanon’s text reads “L’expérience vécue du noir.” This literally translates to “The Lived Experience of the Black.”\(^13\) Despite this, Markmann
“infamously mistranslates” the title as “The Fact of Blackness.” In so doing, he effaces the role of experience by foregrounding the facticity of blackness. This liberal reading of Fanon’s text as establishing the “Fact of Blackness” continues to plague the field of cultural studies. As a result, countless scholars cite Fanon for his apparent belief in blackness as a universal fact of the human condition and ignore his concluding thoughts on the fundamental importance of communication as a remedy to forms of social death experienced by colonized people.

In an attempt to restore Fanon’s voice from Markmann’s distortion, Philcox interprets Chapter Five’s title as “The Lived Experience of The Black Man.” Although Philcox’s new translation technically exceeds the literal meaning by equating “the Black” to “the Black Man,” his purpose is to adapt Fanon and preserve his thought for a twenty-first century audience. For Philcox, Markmann’s original English translation carries with it the ideological baggage of 1960s “political and social upheaval” from which it originated. He explains the implications of Markmann’s mistranslation in an interview with Celia Britton:

The publication of the English translations of Fanon in the 1960s coincided with a time of extraordinary political and social upheaval, not only for the Black Panthers, but also for the radical student movement in the American universities. It was the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the Cold War, the African independences and the emergence of socialist and anarchist movements of all sorts. The success of a book or film often coincides with a public need. Postcolonial literatures in French and English are a case in point, and today the postcolonial scholar has had a field day with Fanon. For example, most
postcolonial scholars work with the English translation. Charles Lam Markmann’s translation of “L’expérience vécue du noir” as “The Fact of Blackness” completely eradicates Fanon’s use of phenomenology, and instead of linking him to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Jeanson, places him in the black/white relationship of the U.S. South, and the infamous *Ya Bon Banania*, that grinning Senegalese infantryman advertising a breakfast cereal, becomes “Sho’ Good Eatin.”” In fact, most of Markmann’s references, especially in dialogue, refer to the American South.  

Philcox presumes that Markmann’s immersion in the 1960s context distorts the original translation by confining Fanon’s analysis within this unique period of anti-black repression. The implication being that Markmann’s interpretation reflects the oversimplification of ideological struggle present in the period he wrote. Philcox argues, “For the translator of the 1960s, political causes and ideologies were more clear-cut, Communism versus Capitalism, Independence versus Colonialism, Left versus Right, Republican versus Fascist.” Indeed, his justification for providing a new translation hinges on the importance of correcting for Markmann’s fundamental distortions. Accordingly, if we accept Philcox’s criticism, then we should treat those elements of postcolonialism and cultural studies that rely on Markmann’s interpretation with a healthy skepticism lest we end up complicit in his oversimplification of black/white social relations and his unfortunate tendency of effacing contingent experiences by universalizing particular notions of blackness.

For the field of rhetoric, one observable consequence of Markmann’s mistranslation is that critics defer to cultural studies and emphasize Fanon’s
psychoanalytic claims concerning the objectification of the black body over his proposal for the concept of disalienation. For example, in her dissertation supporting the importance of black aesthetic performance in policy debate competitions at the high school and collegiate level, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley borrows excerpts of Markmann’s translation of *Black Skin, White Masks* to argue “the black body signifies a difference from white bodies that makes the colored body significantly more visible in majority white societies. The black body represents dirt or a stain, or … a ‘pollutant,’ on and in the social body, one that must be controlled and contained.” Her scholarship applies this observation alongside other Afro-pessimist thought, specifically that of Hortense Spillers, to theorize the importance of the flesh for “the colored body” within white educational spaces. She observes, “Color is written on the skin, encrusted on the “flesh” of the body … for it is the flesh that signifies … on internal processes of the biological body.” As such, she proposes that communication scholars view resistant performances of colored bodies in predominantly white spaces as acts of resistance in the flesh.18

Reid-Brinkley establishes the importance of competitive policy debate as a site for examining hegemonic educational practices within primarily white spaces. She explains:

Policy debate is considered the "granddaddy" of those activities. It is a highly intellectual game that requires an extensive time commitment in order to be successful. It is research intensive and requires specialized training. Thus, the lack of diversity in one of the oldest and most prestigious academic programs available to American students is a critical space from which to interrogate the parameters of the educational gains achieved since the end of legal segregation. There are
many academic spaces from which minorities remain excluded and it is from these spaces that we might learn the methods by which such exclusions are maintained.\textsuperscript{19} 

Within this perspective, spaces of competitive policy debate express the extent to which racialized and/or female bodies are visibly marked as different in predominantly white educational spaces. She explains “that educational spaces in general tend to eschew the body, to make it absent from intellectual space” because the presence of different bodies threatens the stability of dominant codes that preserve the hegemony of white, straight, economically privileged men in educational spaces. “Despite the fact that significant gains have been made in reducing the social belief in the biological difference between the races,” Reid-Brinkley’s understanding of the flesh leads her to express that “the colored body signifies a biological difference, an inherent difference, from non-colored or white bodies” in white educational spaces. For her, “the combination of cultural values, behavioral practices, and the significance of the flesh” creates “barriers to the inclusion of othered bodies and identities” in spaces of policy debate competition.\textsuperscript{20} 

The use of Fanon in this manner is potentially problematic because of what black performance theorist Fred Moten describes as a psychopathological “flirtation with positivism” that allows critics to universalize their understanding of ‘the black problem’ without adhering to the contingencies necessary to constitute black subjectivity as a ‘problem’ in the first place.\textsuperscript{21} Despite the fact that Fanon explicitly employs psychoanalytic language and observations to pathologize and diagnose colonized Antilleans, readers must also focus on \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} in light of its examination of the “social and economic realities” faced by colonized people in order to appreciate the
magnitude of the text. Moreover, although he “endeavor[s] to assume the universalism inherent in the human condition” through psychoanalytic observations aimed at uncovering the pathology of colonized people, Fanon eventually defers to “subjective experience” with the belief that it “can be understood by all.” As he explains, “In this study I have attempted to touch on the misery of the black man—tactually and affectively. I did not want to be objective. Besides, that would have been dishonest: I found it impossible to be objective.”

Likewise, Appiah appreciates Philcox’s translation precisely because it delivers Fanon’s message in a manner that allows the reader to appreciate the text without adhering to its rigid analytic approach. He explains:

The passion and power of Fanon’s writing comes through forcefully in this new translation. We may no longer find the psychoanalytic framework as useful in understanding racism’s causes and effects as he did. But the vigor of his evocations of the psychological damage wrought on many colonial peoples—and on the colonizers who oppressed them—remains. And if we are no longer completely convinced by his theories, his work remains a powerful reminder of the psychological burdens that colonial racism imposed upon its victims.

Here, Appiah’s use of the term ‘evocations’ is intriguing. “The process of evocation” concerns “a ‘showing-forth’ of what is.” For Appiah, Philcox’s translation is able to ‘show-forth’ the truth of black psychological violence incurred through colonialism despite his application of psychoanalytic methods. What we need then is a reading of _Black Skin, White Masks_ for studies of communication that allows the reader to acknowledge the voice behind “who writes when Fanon writes” without a reliance on the overwhelming “explanatory power” of psychoanalytic positivism.
Statement of Purpose

In this thesis, I put forth an evocative criticism of *Black Skin, White Masks* to demonstrate its capacity as a rhetorical artifact. Communication scholars have thus far failed to appreciate the text for its tropological examination of negative essences imposed on colonized people by their colonizers. I argue specifically that *Black Skin, White Masks* functions as a phenomenological text capable of advancing rhetoricians’ assessments of communication between different social actors. Through this phenomenological understanding, I wish to explicate the concept of disalienation as a method of rhetorical criticism. To accomplish this, I merge Fanon’s explanation with aspects of Michel Foucault’s thought to explain that disalienation functions rhetorically as a process of engaging in authentic speech acts to explicitly challenge negative essentialisms produced by discourses of power. In constructing this rhetorical theory of disalienation, I seek to demonstrate how the concept can contribute to the goal of fashioning a “rhetoric of the Self and for the Other (Self)” for those seeking authentic communication.27

Upon establishing the rhetorical basis for disalienation, I apply the concept to Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance in the flesh within spaces of policy debate. In doing so, I seek to establish the limitations for these resistant practices’ attempts at achieving a “positive voice” for bodies marginalized by traditional debate norms. I argue that certain acts of resistance in the flesh as theorized by Reid-Brinkley and as demonstrated by debaters in policy debate competitions fail at Fanon’s task of genuine communication through their construction of negative tropes of whiteness and their conflation of resistance with verbal retaliation against traditional debaters. As such, Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance can at times inhibit genuine, or authentic, communication between
“traditional debaters” and “movement debaters” by prioritizing individual acts of resistance over the importance of establishing a shared conception of the terms upon which a policy debate should take place. Furthermore, I contend that pessimistic understandings of the body forwarded by Reid-Brinkley and her supporters are particularly harmful for members of the debate community whose personal experiences betray cultural understandings of their skin tone.

**The Role of Evocative Criticism**

Barbara Warnick proposes evocative criticism as a rhetorical method that reaches “out to readers and other critics [to] call forth thought about the issues that rhetoric engages.” Warnick offers this form of criticism to achieve a “turn away from preoccupation with disciplinary identity and toward reading publics and each other.” Evocative criticism views its readers “as participants in a rhetorical process of deliberation rather than as passive admirers of critical prowess” in order to “leave openings for views other than those of the critic and … provoke thought and dislodge habitual ways of thinking about social issues.” In practice, this requires critics to “bring the texts they study into conversation with the larger cultural intertext.” This places the emphasis on constructing discourse that is inclusive of a broad range of texts that play upon a given argument. Warnick explains, “such discourses might include work of other authors pertinent to the studied text, commentaries and reviews of the text, considerations of what the speaker or author said elsewhere, public discussions of the work, personal experiences of the critic and the speaker or the author, surrounding texts and conditions that reveal the limits on and possibilities for what can [be] said, and other discourses.” Moreover, she argues that the confluence of such diverse academic sources “can open an
abode or dwelling place where various orientations can be brought to bear on each other, so that what is unseen or bracketed into one orientation can be illuminated by another.” In this sense, evocative criticism contributes to rhetorical scholarship by illuminating the similarities in arguments across several methodological perspectives.28

Warnick’s purpose for proposing evocative criticism is to reveal a “multivoiced critical practice” that “can be incorporated into rhetorical criticism by revealing the critic’s point of view while at the same time leaving space for other ideas that might qualify the critic’s claims.” The inclusion of multiple voices allows the critic to “view the discursive field as comprised of irruptions of discourse that intervene in that field and as a site of larger formations that condition that discourse and preclude the voicing of what is not, cannot, or “should not” be said.”29 This study accomplishes multivoiced critical practice by adopting the voices of Fanon, Foucault, phenomenologist rhetoricians such as Michael J. Hyde and Eric King Watts, and other critical rhetoricians to theorize disalienation. The combination of these voices suggests a theory of disalienation for rhetorical studies as one that ‘speaks truth’ to cultural understandings that would confine one’s identity to an abstraction or to “the justification of a facial profile.”30 In the sense that it speaks truth to discourses of power, disalienation mirrors Foucault’s understanding of parrhesia, or fearless speech.

Through my use of evocative criticism, I seek to elucidate what ‘cannot be said’ by any critic but myself in regard to disalienation as it applies to resistant rhetoric stemming from Reid-Brinkley’s original scholarship. As Warnick suggests, evocative criticism should “meaningfully engage the substance of what we study” by emphasizing the “content and contexts” of our participation within the discourses we criticize in order
to “bring about meaningful thought about” their purposes and origins. As I am approaching a decade of participation in the policy debate community, I find it necessary to reflect upon my experiences with Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance in order to properly evoke its problematic nature. David J. Sholle writes:

The determinants of practice thus may not be in the large, unitary, global decisions and events of history, but rather, as Foucault (1972, pp.3-17) has shown, in the insignificant and marginal practices of history. By examining the marginal, we discover the discursive and nondiscursive elements of social life in which lie the matrices of power/knowledge that move practice.

Thus, through my criticism of Reid-Brinkley’s model I aim to establish generalizable observations that support the importance of disalienation and identify the problems inherent to resistance in the flesh.

**Measuring Resistance Through Foucault’s Thought**

Similar to those seeking resistance through Fanon, Foucaultian scholar Kendall R. Phillips is conflicted by the illusiveness of a mode of rhetorical invention capable of freeing the individual from the discursive constraints of power. For Phillips, the difficulty in obtaining a space for invention persists because “our utterances are governed by underlying rules of discourse formations, our actions are proscribed and authorized by relations of power, and our very conception of the self is circumscribed by technologies of subjectivity.” Examples of these “technologies of subjectivity” are manifest throughout Fanon’s analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Faced with external pressures to stylize his existence according to traditional anti-colonial forces, Fanon’s work is a
continuous struggle for a stable “space for invention” to accomplish the necessary task that “implies restructuring the world.”

One can imply Fanon’s meaning of “restructuring the world” as providing a substantial challenge to historicized discourses that inhibit human freedom by imposing problematic subjectivities upon individuals. Borrowing from Foucault, Raymie McKerrow explains:

Subjects do not “call the world into being.” Rather, the world pre-exists their participation, and the social practices to which they become conditioned or socialized are not initially of their own making. Prior discourses, coalesced into “discursive formations,” function as the “truth-statements” governing who is empowered within a given historical time to speak, on what subjects, in what voice, and with what impact. This is why it is so easy to see socially constituted power relations as natural, as having a life of their own beyond our reach. Recapturing a sense of one’s own freedom in this context is a matter of recognizing the historical framing of those practices within which we live out our daily lives.

Here we observe Foucault’s premise that there is no universal subject. Rather, subjects exist as subjectivated individuals. Foucault explains, “I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere. I am very [skeptical] of this view of the subject and very hostile to it. I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection … on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment.”

Thus, we must remain vigilant to the historical framing of our daily practices because the
discourses and social practices we take part in precede our participation in them. To presume the independent truth of a discourse makes the mistake of seeing “socially constituted power relations as natural.” Our ability to assess “what is true” of a certain discourse is entirely dependent on the contingent circumstances from which it originates.

Inevitably, discourse formations give way to contradictions. Contradictions then function as “points of productivity” and “possibility” that must precede the “creation of new statements and different discourses.” As Ralph Ellison suggests, “[contradiction] is how the world moves.” Exposing the presence of contradictions in discourse formations allows us to recognize those “antecedent gaps within networks of power” that offer “spaces of invention; spaces within which the possibility of new actions (or utterances or selves) can be imagined.” Resistance to instantiations of power then emerges “within the lines of intelligibility” of these antecedent gaps.

Invention occurs when new “lines of intelligibility” give way to the formation of original resistant discourses that challenge truth-making systems. As new discourses emerge, one shifts between spaces of invention to spaces of dissension. According to Phillips, “spaces of dissension … are places where the incoherence and contingency of the discourse is experienced directly and, therefore, the production of dissenting discourse becomes possible for those who have momentarily recognized the instability.” Through the “temporary usurpation of the regularized discourse,” spaces of dissension disable “the enforced consensus” and provide the possibility that “various new discourses may emerge.”

Freedom emerges within spaces of dissension as a byproduct of the friction created by resistant speech acts. Phillips explains:
The odd term of resistance can be thought of as a kind of friction against which the relations of power must operate to achieve governance. … This ever-present friction creates the possibility of reversals in power relations and transformations of the symbolic and material conditions of social life. Like contradictions within discourse formations, the friction between power and resistance represents the beginning, not the end—the point where tension produces possibility.⁴¹

In line with McKerrow’s explanation of freedom, Phillips states, “Foucault’s notion of freedom … cannot be the reversal of power relations, for such a reversal entails replacing existing power relations with new power relations.” Rather, he argues that freedom functions as “the uncertain point of reversibility … as a stasis point between the relations of power and the forces of resistance” and that it “exists in the fractures within existing relations of power, at the points of contingency within which no clear path can be prescribed.” Ultimately, freedom registers as our “capacity for thought.” This capacity is constantly constrained by discourse formations that emit power and instill techniques of subjectivity. By “experiencing points of uncertainty” such as “the emergence of incoherence or an encounter with the incompatible,” one encounters a situation “where the habitual ways of knowing and doing fail.” This transports the individual into “a space of dissension” that, by definition, functions as “a space of concrete freedom.”⁴²

Viewing Phillips’ description of resistance as the “ever-present friction” that represents “the point where tension produces possibility” in light of Fanon’s goals to “introduce invention into life,” “endlessly create himself,” and maintain a “permanent tension with his freedom” leaves one wondering the role that Foucaultian resistance takes within Fanon’s thought.⁴³ Phillips encourages rhetorical scholars to “contribute to
Foucault’s project” by examining “resistant rhetorics … at the localized point of contingency and transformation” and “attending to the inventional practices involved in these disruptive moments” in order to clarify “the present as problematic and the existence of possibility.” Given Fanon’s primary apprehension to status quo intercultural communication, that humanity is “drowned in contingency” causing subjects to carry with them “the inhuman voices of their ancestors,” it seems fitting to include his thinking on communication in an examination of resistance. Moreover, if we contextualize the “transformation” Phillips seeks as part of the “transformations of the symbolic and material conditions of social life” that emerge through the friction of resistance, then the application of Fanon to resistant rhetoric is more than appropriate. According to Fanon, “What emerges then is a need for combined action on the individual and the group [to become aware of the possibility of existence] and to act along the lines of a change in the social structure.” Indeed, *Black Skin, White Masks* is centered on the need to challenge Western social structures’ abilities to exclude, relegate, and dehumanize colonized people.

Not all resistant rhetoric succeeds in displacing power, however. As such, ‘superficial transformations’ occur when “new discourses emerge without a reversal of power relations, or where practices change without the existence of thought.” According to Phillips, examining these stifled discourses of resistance “can help to answer the question of why some transformations remain superficial while others open deep fractures in our experience of the present.” In accordance with Phillips’ suggestion, I will attend to Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance and its “localized point of contingency and transformation” to examine “the inventional practices” of disruption it employs as a
means of assessing the possibility for her movement to achieve its non-competitive goals. Given recent competitive successes of non-traditional debaters engaging in acts of resistance in the flesh, it seems especially relevant to assess whether this model of resistance can ensure the vitality of black public voice or whether it is simply a competitive strategy that allows marginalized debaters to succeed by reversing power relations to impose new discourses that reinforce racialized essentialisms.

**Preview of Future Chapters**

Chapter Two outlines the relevant elements of Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship for the purposes of this study. It expands on her criticism of white, straight, male, economic privilege in debate and introduces the relevant rhetorical theories to her conception of resistance. Alongside other advocates of resistance movements in the debate community, this chapter establishes the importance of challenging norms in competitive debate that attempt to sanitize the activity of minority perspectives. Moreover, it identifies resistance in the flesh as a model for performance meant disrupt the logic that sustains exclusion.

This chapter also examines the debate between collegiate debate coaches concerning the role of activist strategies within spaces of competition. To do so, I juxtapose Reid-Brinkley and her supporter’s defense of resistance alongside R. Jarrod Atchison, Director of Debate at Wake Forest University, and Edward Panetta’s, Director of the Georgia Debate Union at the University of Georgia, criticism of the “debate as activism” approach to explicate existing theoretical challenges to non-traditional resistance strategies. In doing so, I expand the discussion to include collegiate debate coaches’ online reviews of Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation and Atchison and Panetta’s SAGE publication article.
To further the goal of evocative criticism, I include arguments pertaining to the ongoing discussion within the debate community surrounding Reid-Brinkley and Atchison and Panetta’s scholarship. Specifically, I provide online reviews academic debate scholarship from active debate coaches as expressed in the forums section of the CEDA website (CEDA forums), the often frequented NDTCEDA Traditions Facebook Page (NDTCEDA Traditions), and in debate coaches’ personal websites that express opinions on debate. Although not subject to outsider review, these posts and comments demonstrate the varying sentiments that exist between coaches of traditional and non-traditional coaches over the appropriate means of argument construction in policy debate. Communal gatherings online vastly exceed the attendance of any particular tournament or conference and allows various individuals with a stake in the policy debate community to express their opinion related to issues of debate practice. Therefore, these online discussion boards such as CEDA Forums and NDTCEDA Traditions offer distinct places within cyberspace for a wide range of the debate community to congregate. Reid-Brinkley’s research identifies online discussions as pivotal sites of engagement over pressing issues. Writing on the subject of eDebate, a former listserv for the community, she observes:

eDebate is a significant space for the negotiation of conflicts within the community. The listserv is open to the entire policy debate community…, it offers an opportunity to engage posts from debaters, debate assistants, coaches, judges, directors, and those who have left the community, but still remain connected to it. As such it is one of the most representative and democratic of spaces available for policy debate communication.47
Given that eDebate no longer exists as a space for current community discussions, CEDA Forums and NDT CEDA Traditions have largely replaced its role as spaces that offer members an equal stake to express their views of policy debate communication. Within my examination of these online reviews, I pay specific attention to criticism of Atchison and Panetta that prioritize the importance of the black body in spaces of debate. These arguments, which depend on Fanon, serve as a precursor to the broader discussion of the relationship between Fanon’s theory and rhetorical strategies of resistance that takes place in Chapter Two.  

In Chapter Two, I offer an interpretation of *Black Skin, White Masks* as a phenomenological text rooted in Fanon’s experience as a French colonial subject that can aid rhetoricians in confronting racial essentialisms that plague individuals’ encounters with difference. Marilyn Nissim-Sabat clarifies phenomenology as an academic discipline that “describes consciousness as temporally structured with always given horizons of past (retention and recollection) and future.” Within this vein, I attend to the distinctions between Markmann and Philcox’s English interpretations of *Black Skin, White Masks* to explain how Philcox’s recent translation allows us to understand the function of blackness as a trope sustained by what Moten deems an individual’s culturally-perpetuated “worldview.” In doing so, I seek to distinguish tropes of blackness and whiteness from the fixed identities that universal analytic approaches such as psychoanalysis impose. Furthermore, I employ Michael J. Hyde and Craig R. Smith’s “phenomenological investigation” of rhetoric to establish Fanon’s text as a hermeneutical tool that elucidates the fore-structure of understanding for francophone colonized peoples. Alongside Hyde and Smith, I borrow from Eric King Watts’ study of affect to
demonstrate how *Black Skin, White Masks* treatment of the “affective erethism” of black folks and the “affective ankylosis” of white folks functions phenomenologically.\(^{50}\)

Within my treatment of Fanon’s discussion of the affective disorders experienced by Francophone colonized people, I pay particular attention to his writings on *Y a bon Banania*. As previously described by Philcox, *Y a bon Banania* is a French advertising campaign depicting a grinning Senegalese rifleman enjoying *Banania* which is a chocolate beverage much similar to that of *Nesquik\(^\circ\) in the United States. Francophone ethnographer Ellen M. Schnepel explains:

> English speakers may not be aware that the French cocoa brand Banania has used the image of a Senegalese *tirailleur* or rifleman—a kind of analogue to Aunt Jemima, with thick lips, a wide grin, and a red cap against a yellow background—with the slogan “*Y’a bon*” (“Is good!”) in *petit-nègre* to sell their breakfast product throughout France and its (former) colonies.\(^{51}\)

Considering its pervasiveness in francophone society, recovering the image of *Y a bon Banania* is necessary to grasp the phenomenological elements of Fanon’s text.

I argue that Fanon’s discussions of *Y a bon Banania* articulate it as a trope that sustains the idea amongst colonizers that colonized people enjoy their status as second-class citizens in Western society. Markmann consistently translates *Y a bon Banania* as “sho’ good eatin’” throughout his interpretation. While this perhaps conveys an element of racial essentialism applicable to the U.S. South, it obliterates the paternalist image that coincides with the phrase. As such, Markmann’s translation makes it difficult to appreciate the tropological criticism inherent to *Black Skin, White Masks*. When discussing *Y a bon Banania*, Philcox makes sure to add a translator’s note that states,
“This was the poster of a grinning black colonial infantryman eating a breakfast cereal that was a familiar sight in France in the 1940s and 1950s. The Senegalese poet Leopold Sedar Senghor wanted to rip it down from all the walls of France.”52 Senghor’s public wish to tear the posters down suggests the importance of their role in denying colonized Francophone peoples’ humanity. Sho’ good eatin’ is not the fact of blackness, rather the lived experience of the black (and white folks) in the temporal space of mid-1900s France is that of seeing the proliferation of the sign Y a bon Banania. If anything, Black Skin, White Masks is fundamentally a criticism of that specific sign of colonial paternalism.

Barbara Biesecker suggests, “the task [for critical rhetoricians] is to trace new lines of making sense by taking hold of the sign whose reference had been destabilized by and through those practices of resistance, lines that cut diagonally across and, thus disrupt, the social weave.”53 Thus, upon establishing Black Skin, White Masks as a phenomenological text, I chart a theory of the concept of disalienation based in Fanon’s conclusion that white and black folks “both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that genuine communication can be born. Before embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation.”54 To chart this process, I explain disalienation in terms of Foucault’s turn to the aesthetics of the self and the notion of fearless speech as a challenge to negative essences sustained through rhetorical tropes. Furthermore, I apply Watts’ phenomenological theory of voice as the rhetorical bridge linking disalienation with authentic communication and the acknowledgment of black folks’ inherent humanity. In conjunction with Watts, I invoke Hyde’s reading of Foucault’s aesthetics of the self to demonstrate how disalienation and positive voice function to sustain a method of authentic rhetoric “of the Self and for the
Other (Self).” I propose that rhetorical disalienation occurs when individuals impose their experience on others to challenge power’s ability to constrain what can be said or understood of certain situations and subjects. Doing so furthers the goal of expanding the other’s “potential consciousness” by expressing individual truth that undermines fixed-cultural knowledge. In practical terms, rhetorical disalienation describes a process of challenging tropes that objectify and reduce individuals, cultures, and civilizations to negative essences.55

Chapter Four functions as a criticism of Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance. I argue that, although successful at generating wins for debaters who express their marginalization in competitive spaces, her strategies stifle the acknowledgment of black public voice in the NDTCEDA community and prevent the emergence of authentic and genuine engagement between traditional and non-traditional perspectives. I begin by identifying methodological errors within Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation that make it difficult to assess the implications of the discursive theories she employs. First, I attend to Reid-Brinkley’s failure to define the term “whiteness” at any point in her text. Employing Bryant Keith Alexander’s criticism of White Studies, I argue that this failure to clarify the meaning of whiteness projects a subjective understanding of the term into any encounter between white and non-white individuals, thus making the problem substantially more difficult to confront.56

Second, given Reid-Brinkley’s narrow reading of Fanon, I question the efficacy of her psychoanalytic assumptions concerning the black body in white academic spaces. Borrowing from Watts’ criticism of essentialist understandings of black aesthetic performance, I argue that her model of resistance fails to generate a vision of policy
debate “freed from” what Fanon describes as “the springboard of embodying resistance of others” because it requires those who resist to dig “into [their] flesh in order to find self-meaning.” Accordingly, her conception of black aesthetic performance as a response to whiteness fails Fanon’s task of disalienation because it relies on projecting whiteness onto the bodies of traditional debaters. This “paradox of purity” offers an explanation of why a true space for freedom is impossible within the analytic assumptions of her movement.

Finally, I seek to problematize Reid-Brinkley’s writings on signifyin(g) and genre violation. Her model of resistance endorses signifyin(g) as an example of black public expression. She borrows from Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s *Figures in Black* to describe signifyin(g) as “marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, playing the dozens, and so on.” The difficulty with signifyin(g) for public argument, however, is that the theory is expressly opposed to “information giving” and instead hinges on linguistic strategies of tricking white audiences. In her articulation of signifyin(g), Reid-Brinkley omits entirely a discussion the problems signifyin(g) presents for genuine communication.

Upon establishing the methodological errors of Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation, I conclude by revisiting the debate between supporters of resistance and Atchison and Panetta regarding the appropriate methods of evaluating competition. Using the arguments presented in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I challenge Reid-Brinkley’s position that debaters should disclose their privilege in order to authentically engage in competitive debates centered on difference. My purpose is to express that locating competitive debates as the site for individuals to do work on the self disincentivizes
debaters from that vital process by attaching it to wins and losses. Moreover, I seek to express that this model for debate “sacrifices the ‘community’ portion” of the debate community by reducing our understanding of debate and its participants to what occurs during individual debates.⁶⁰

Addressing the Issue of White Privilege

There exists a strong consensus among black scholars that white scholars theorizing about issues of the black body and resistance in the flesh must recognize their role in perpetuating white privilege before engaging in any act of criticism. Even Bryant Keith Alexander, who is skeptical of criticisms of whiteness, finds that “white people must present themselves in their true skin, they cannot renounce their racial reality as much as engage in new performances that seek to subvert social perceptions of a specified racial identity.”⁶¹ Furthermore, E. Patrick Johnson explains the necessary obligation for the white academic attempting to theorize about black and queer identities. He writes:

[Failing to recognize one’s ‘position within an oppressive system’] would, as Ruth Goldman argues, “[leave] the burden of dealing with difference on the people who are themselves different, while simultaneously allowing white academics to construct a discourse of silence around race and other queer perspectives” (173). One’s “experience” within that system, however discursively mediated, is also materially conditioned. A critic cannot ethically and responsibly speak from a privileged place … and not own up to that privilege. To do so is to maintain the force of hegemonic whiteness.⁶²
Although I acknowledge why Alexander, Johnson, and other scholars establish this necessity, I find it very difficult to clarify my position of privilege. Despite the meaning my body conveys, it would be a mistake to read my existence as a “white academic” within common understandings of white, straight, male economic privilege. My experiences certainly defy that interpretation. Moreover, the assumption of the universality of white privilege inherent in the demand for white folks to own their white privilege seems to ignore the inevitable modes of contingency Fanon argues emerge through childhood development and define individual’s perspectives on difference.

That I agree with Fanon’s assessment of contingency does not mean I accept every conclusion he renders about the nature of black/white social relations, however. Within his criticism of white paternalism aimed at black folks, for instance, he finds that “the white man behaves toward the black man like an older brother reacting to the birth of a younger sibling.”\(^{63}\) Although I reject white paternalism, my experience complicates (or confirms) this particular observation (depending on your perspective). Rather than excavate my past searching for forms of privilege (as I am sure anyone reading this thesis could accomplish) I would much prefer to offer my self as it relates to the “fact of blackness” before continuing with this study.

I met the first black woman I know when I was four. She is my younger sister. I met the first black man I know when I was five. He also happens to be my younger brother. And though we do not share the same biological parents or skin tone, we have shared the same name for almost twenty years. Here I am reminded of a passage from Stuart Hall’s *Minimal Selves*: 
It wasn’t a joke when I said that I migrated in order to get away from my family. I did. The problem, one discovers, is that since one’s family is always already “in here,” there is no way in which you can actually leave them. Of course, sooner or later, they recede in memory, or even life. But these are not the “burials” that really matter. I wish they were still around, so that I didn’t have to carry them around, locked up somewhere in my head, from which there is no migration. So from the first, in relation to them, and then to all symbolic “others,” I certainly was always aware of the self as only constituted in that kind of absent-present contestation with something else, with some other “real me,” which is and isn’t there.  

What some would call my privilege then, or my participation in whiteness rather, is the simple fact that in the immediate moment of self/other encounter the contingency of my experience is disguised by the projection of white, straight, male, economic privilege that my body emits. So, in writing this thesis I am uniquely interested in the discursive implications of Reid-Brinkley’s resistance strategies for children of biracial households who encounter her scholarship in debate competitions at the high school or collegiate level.

To clarify, the perspective from which this thesis is written is that of an off kilter individual who Malcolm X would deem a “blue-eyed devil” and who Paul Mooney would diagnose as having the “complexion for the protection” but who experienced childhood development in multiple black and/or white households due to a series of divorces and remarriages. I am the younger of my biological parents’ two white sons, an older brother of adopted black siblings and a white half-sister, a step-brother of three
similarly aged black siblings (one older brother and two younger sisters), and consider myself the son of two other white men from Texas and a black woman from Las Vegas. Although to my knowledge all of my parents are straight, I unflinchingly refer to two men as “Dad” and have done so for over twenty years. From this queer rendering of The Brady Bunch, I believe my uniquely situated familial experience offers me the necessary insight to problematize certain assumptions that take place about and along the black/white color line.

Although I am writing on behalf of my unique familial relations, I acknowledge my inability to speak for the elements of blackness that I cannot separate from my experience or for those individuals whose skin emits a tone that traps them somewhere between notions of blackness and whiteness. Within that logic, this thesis is also limited when concerning questions of identity for those whose skin tone renders them entirely invisible by the black/white dialectic. Similarly, this thesis is particularly weak in regard to issues of the female body. This is not to dismiss the importance of rectifying the invisibility of non-black bodies of color and female bodies in traditionally white academic spaces. Rather, any attempt of mine to clarify the experiences of those individuals would serve only as conjecture. I do, however, still believe that my assessment of Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship calls into question the efficacy of her movement for those whose racial and sexual experiences defy attempts to interpret their bodies.
Chapter Notes


3 For more on how *Black Skin, White Masks* is an iconic text, see: Bryant Keith Alexander, “Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (With Apologies to Frantz Fanon),” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (2004): 663. For more on Fanon’s role within the field of postcolonialism, see: Doris L. Garraway, “‘What Is Mine’: Césairean Negritude between the Particular and the Universal,” *Research in African Literatures* 41, no 1 (2010): 74.


5 Fanon, 2008: xii-xiv; 161; xiv-xv.


7 Appiah describes this negative self-concept as an “anxiety, in the presence of whites, about revealing one’s “natural” Negro inferiority; in a pathological hypersensitivity that
Fanon dubbed ‘affective erethism’; in an existential dread; and in a neurotic refusal to face up to the fact of one’s own blackness” see: Anthony Kwame Appiah, “Foreword,” Black Skin, White Masks Translated from the French by Richard Philcox (New York City: Grove Press, 2008): ix.

8 Ibid: ix.

Bill Yousman quotes Black Skin, White Masks to indict psychoanalytic “attempts to paint a definitive picture without surveying the whole landscape.” (14) Borrowing from Fanon, he argues “social and economic realities of African American history” (14) are necessary to evaluate the experiences of African Americans. see: (Bill Yousman, “Who owns identity? Malcolm X, representation, and the struggle over meaning,” Communication Quarterly 49, no 1 (2001): 1-18.)

Darrel Wanzer quotes from Black Skin, White Masks to establish the roles of speech and listening within decolonizing rhetoric, see: (Darrel Allan Wanzer, “Delinking Rhetoric, or Revisiting McGee’s Fragmentation Thesis through Decoloniality,” Rhetoric & Public Affairs 15, no. 4 (2012): 647-657.)

Bryant Alexander, a communication scholar, employs Black Skin, White Masks as a metonymic trope for his criticism of Whiteness studies. He also explores the relationship between Fanon’s theory of “disalienation” and theories of “disarticulation,” see: (Bryant Keith Alexander, “Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (With Apologies to Frantz Fanon),” Qualitative Inquiry 10 (2004): 647-672.)

Ghassan Hage, a social theorist, examines Black Skin, White Masks and distinguishes between traditional forms of interpellation and the unique form of “mis-interpellation”
that befalls colonized people in processes of identification, see: (Ghassan Hage, “The Affective Politics of Racial Mis-interpellation,” *Theory Culture Society* 27, (2010): 112-129.)

Marilyn Nissim-Sabat briefly references Fanon but does not examine *Black Skin, White Masks* in her study, see: (Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, “Radical Theory and Theory of Communication: Lewis Gordon’s Phenomenological Critique of the New World Consciousness,” *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 19, (2011): 28-42.)


11 Fanon, 2008: 204; 206.

12 Ghassan Hage’s “The Affective Politics of Racial Mis-Interpellation” is the only article in Ebsco Host’s Communication & Mass Media Complete database that analayzes *Black Skin, White Masks* through Richard Philcox’s translation.


Numerous references to “The Fact of Blackness” occur throughout cultural studies’ interpretations of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Most notably, Alan Read’s *The fact of blackness: Frantz Fanon and visual representation* presents a collection of essays from different authors within cultural studies who analyze the implications of Fanon’s findings for images of the black body. (See: Alan Read, *The fact of blackness: Frantz Fanon and visual representation* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1996).) This interpretation has slowly crept into rhetoric as well. Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship (which misspells Fanon’s first name as ‘Franz’), for instance, solely relies on a four page excerpt from “The Fact of Blackness” present in a cultural studies reader for her analysis of Fanon. See: Frantz Fanon, ”The Fact of Blackness,“ in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1999).

Fanon, 2008: 89.

Frank B. Wilderson III describes Afro-pessimism as a sub-discipline within Black Cultural Studies that “explores the meaning of Blackness not—in the first instance—as a variously and unconsciously interpellated identity or as a conscious social actor, but as a structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions; this meaning is noncommunicable because, again, as a position, Blackness is predicated on modalities of accumulation and fungibility, not exploitation and alienation.” He identifies Afro-pessimist theorists such as “Hortense Spillers, Ronald Judy, David Marriott, Saidiya Hartman, Achille Mbembe, Frantz Fanon, Kara Keeling, Jared Sexton, Joy James, Lewis Gordon, George Yancy, and Orlando Patterson” as theorists of Black “structural positionality.” See: Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010): 58-59.

Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 63.

For more observations on colored and sexed bodies marked as different, see: Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 14-18. For exact quotations, see: 121; 15; 15-16; 68.

Fred Moten characterizes the psychoanalytic approach to Fanon as the “psychopathologist” reading. He describes scholars who criticize Markmann’s Fanon for his overuse of psychopathology as accusing Fanon of a “flirtation with positivism” for his inability to respect contingent experiences of blackness. See: Moten, 2008: 180.
As previously discussed, Fanon’s original study is conducted through psychoanalysis. He makes numerous references to uncovering “the black problem” through psychoanalysis. See: Fanon, 2008: xiv; 67; 178.

Similarly, Hortense Spillers “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” from which Reid-Brinkley draws on her scholarship, hinges on psychoanalytic concepts such as signification and the symbolic order to explain the way in which black flesh, specifically female black flesh, is rendered object in American society resulting from the violence of the Middle Passage. See: Hortense J. Spillers. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003): 203-229. Moreover, she observes that one “cannot decipher [one’s female narrative from the other’s] without tripping over the other. In that sense, these “threads cable-strong” of an incestuous, interracial genealogy uncover slavery in the United States as one of the richest displays of the psychoanalytic dimensions of culture before the science of European psychoanalysis takes hold.” See: Spillers, 2003: 223.

Bill Yousman challenges the role of psychoanalysis in discussions of Fanon’s work. In his criticism of Bruce Perry’s biography of Malcolm X, he indicts Perry’s overreliance on psychoanalytic methods for their failure to capture the entirety of Malcolm X’s situation. He writes: “Perry's work attempts to paint a definitive picture without surveying the whole landscape. As Fanon points out in reflecting on his own psychoanalytic work: ‘The analysis I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and

23 Fanon, 2008: xiv; 67.

24 Appiah’s indict of Fanon’s psychoanalysis largely applies to his second chapter “The Woman of Color and the White Man” and his third chapter “The Man of Color and the White Woman” for his treatment of interracial attraction as a form of psychosis. See: Appiah, 2008: ix.


26 In Judith Butler’s assessment of Fanon’s statement that “a black is not a man” she poses the question “who writes when Fanon writes?” See: Judith Butler, Undoing Gender (New York City: Routledge, 2004): 13.

Karl Popper indicts psychoanalytic methods as a form of pseudo-science that undermine scientific verification because of their ability to find proof in any circumstances. He writes: “Once your eyes were opened you saw confirming circumstances everywhere: the world was full of verifications of the theory. Whatever happened always confirmed it. Thus its truth appeared manifest; and unbelievers were clearly people who did not want to see the manifest truth; who refused to see it, either because … their repressions which were still ‘un-analysed’ and crying out for treatment. Italics appear in the original. See:
Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*


30 Fanon, 2008: 203.


34 Fanon, 2008: 63.


Phillips explains that resistance occurs “within the lines of intelligibility” rather than “relations of intelligibility” because to commit to “relations of intelligibility” requires “articulating a political agenda” which inevitably becomes “enmeshed within relations of power, see: *Ibid*: 332-33; 334.


See: Fanon, 2008: 203-204.


Fanon, 2008: 80.


50 “Affective erethism” describes the neurosis of colonized peoples who desire to be white. See: Fanon, 2008: 41. Ankylosis, which is a medical term for the stiffening of the joints resulting from a surgical procedure, is applied by Fanon to describe the fixity of white racism. In context, affective ankylosis describes the white supremacist’s announcement, “You have come too late, much too late. There will always be a world—a white world—between you and us: that impossibility on either side to obliterate the past once and for all.” See: Fanon, 2008: 100-101.


55 Hyde and Smith describe “potential consciousness” as “the maximum possible awareness of the audience, the impact of the society’s understanding of its historic
destiny, and the society’s highest achievements in the arts.” See: Hyde and Smith, 1979: 358.

56 Bryant Keith Alexander, “Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (With Apologies to Frantz Fanon),” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (2004): 647-672.

57 Fanon, 2008: xiii.


61 Alexander: 664.


63 Fanon, 2008: 135.

Chapter Two – L'Expérience Vécue du Noir and Policy Debate

Good intention makes a person think that everything is settled by a resolution. But if anyone allows himself to be nourished by good intentions, the resolution itself becomes a seducer and deceiver instead of a trustworthy guide.

(Søren Kierkegaard)

This gives the lie to all that has been said about the pointlessness of these questions that had been debated over the past ten or fifteen years; all that has been said about the non-existence of a left-wing logic in the way a government is run; all that has been said about how, in the first measures to be taken by the new government, it had given into popular feeling. On nuclear weapons, the immigrants, and the law, the government has anchored its decision in problems that really have been seen in reference to a logic that went against majority opinion. And I’m sure the majority approves this way of proceeding, if not the measures themselves.

(Michel Foucault)

Shanara Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship continues to play a pivotal role in the cultivation of critical thought among high school and college-aged students throughout the nation. The 2012-2013 debate season was truly unique for intercollegiate policy debate and demonstrates the importance of her work for young people today seeking to engage in styles of debate that facilitate the expression of personal identity in a competitive spaces. For the first time in history, the final round of the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) National Championship Tournament featured four debaters who self-identify as black and began debating in high school Urban Debate Leagues (UDLs). Emporia State University defeated the University of West Georgia in the final round on a 5-4 decision. A week later, alongside a team from the University of Oklahoma that avidly cites Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship in competitions, West Georgia and Emporia debated their way into the Quarterfinals of the National Debate Tournament (NDT). The team representing Emporia would eventually go on to win their second national
championship by defeating Northwestern University on a 3-2 decision in the final round. In doing so, they became the first pair of black debaters to ever make it past the Quarterfinal round of the NDT and the first team to ever win both the CEDA championship and the NDT.

One watching the final round of either of the previously mentioned tournaments will notice that before every constructive speech the debaters from Emporia and West Georgia thank Reid-Brinkley for contributing to a method for debate that preserves their ability to perform their arguments. Some of these debaters also attribute part of their success at the highest levels of policy debate competition to Reid-Brinkley’s continued insight and personal support. Given the vast nature of its current use by debaters at the high school and college level, observers of policy debate should consider Reid-Brinkley’s work as vitally important for students across the nation seeking to argue critically through methods of performance. Her scholarship affects so many precisely because it reflects the truth many non-masculine, non-white, and/or non-male individuals experience as participants in the debate community who are constantly subjected to norms out of touch with their identity.³

Before the final debates, assistant coach to Emporia and former CEDA champion Rashad Evans, J.D., received similar appreciation on behalf of the debaters from West Georgia and Emporia. Evans is also an ardent supporter of Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship. In his personal writings, he identifies “the fundamental problem with all debate: it’s too white, too male and too straight.”⁴ Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation serves as the academic foundation for this claim. She writes:
If the image of the successful, national level debater is signified by a white, [straight], male, and economically privileged body, then the stylistic practices of those bodies become the standard by which all other bodies are evaluated. Their practices, their behaviors, their identities become the models or thrones upon which others must sacrifice their identities in the pursuit of ‘the ballot’ or the win.\(^5\)

Upon establishing this claim, her dissertation describes how bodies marginalized within debate engage in strategies of resistance to overcome the activity’s structural barriers that competitively favor white, male, economically privileged students.

In this chapter, I will introduce Reid-Brinkley’s argumentative method for debaters seeking to resist traditional norms of evaluation in policy debate spaces. To do so, I describe her dissertation’s proposal for the “three-tier process” of argumentation and its accompanying styles of signifyin(g) and genre violation. After establishing the theoretical components of Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance, I examine the implicit dispute between Reid-Brinkley’s theory of resistance and Atchison and Panetta’s criticism of the “debate as activism” perspective regarding the appropriate means of pursuing the ballot in competitive policy debate. To facilitate the next chapter’s discussion of Fanon, I pay specific attention to Evans’ objection toward Atchison and Panetta’s scholarship and the implication he draws from it for black bodies participating in competitive debate. I conclude with a series of questions that inform the course of the following chapters.
Introducing Reid-Brinkley’s Resistance

Reid-Brinkley’s theory of resistance in policy debate argues that the presence of colored and sexed bodies allows dominant members of the debate community to mark debaters of alternate identity categories “as other” unless those individuals agree to perform their arguments within dominant “stylistic and identity-based norms.” These norms include but are not limited to: technical procedures and jargon that routinize stylistic presentation; fast rates of speech delivery; exclusive focus on the United States federal government as an agent of action and reform; standards for appropriate evidence that exclude non-traditional forms of scholarship; and reliance on a neutral-objective method for evaluating high-magnitude, low-probability scenarios that separates the individual from her lived perspective. Anti-racism activist Tim Wise presents a similar understanding of the problems with policy debate in its current form. Reflecting on his experience as a high school debater, he writes:

Though one can theoretically learn quite a bit from debate, especially during the research phase of the operation, the fact remains that superficiality, speed, and mass extinction scenarios typically take the place of nuanced policy analysis, such that one has to wonder how much the debaters really come to know about the issues they debate at the end of the day.

For Wise, students participating at the highest levels of policy debate “have the luxury of looking at life or death issues of war, peace, famine, unemployment, or criminal justice as a game, as a mere exercise in intellectual and rhetorical banter.” He finds that traditional norms for debate separate students from the policies they debate and encourage students to “think of serious issues as abstractions.” Because “folks of color” generally lack the
luxury to think of issues such as unemployment, criminal justice, or racial profiling as mere abstraction, Wise believes that the stylistic routinization of debate “[reinforces] whiteness and affluence as normative conditions” and makes the activity “far more attractive to affluent white students.”

In response to this stylistic routinization of academic policy debate, Reid-Brinkley, and later Evans, encourage a three-tier process, or method, for public advocacy. The three-tier process, as popularized by the University of Malcolm X debate program in the early 2000s in what its creators deemed the “Louisville Project,” states that competition debaters should employ a consistent advocacy based in three types of evidence: “personal experience, organic intellectuals, and academic intellectuals.” The method offers a means for debaters to “validate [their] claims” without forcing “singular perspectives that privilege those with institutional and economic power.” Moreover, the three-tier process provides debaters a method to resist the “brutal cost-benefit analysis” often present in policy debate that “rarely prioritizes the needs and interests of society’s less powerful.”

Reid-Brinkley’s understanding of the three-tier process is concomitant with specific Afro-American discursive strategies of resistance. For example, she emphasizes the importance of black aesthetic performance alongside “the African American practice of signifyin’” as examples of these discursive strategies that accompany unique forms of genre violation. Her dissertation offers Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s definition of signifyin(g) “as ‘the trope of revision, of repetition and difference, which’ he derives ‘from the Afro-American idiom’” and the Yoruba tradition. She explains its function in debate as follows:
Signifyin' is ‘often characterized by pastiche, and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences.’ Signifyin' may ‘include marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, playing the dozens, and so on.’ The Louisville debaters repeat traditional practices and engage in a strategic reversal of those practices in an effort to create new meanings and norms. Through this process, the debaters critically analyze the race, class, and gender ideologies critical to the normative practices and procedures of the community.\(^9\)

Moreover, Reid-Brinkley identifies four specific tactics of genre violation that occur alongside signifyin(g): creating “sonic disturbance and displacing spatial privilege” through the use of “black cultural artifacts” such as “the loud bass beats of hip hop music, or the sultry, spiritual sounds of African-American gospel music” that “infiltrate and disturb the pure space of learning, and in terms of debate, competition”; abandoning the “strategic norms of policy debate speech making” such as “the use of excessive speed in debate speeches, the commitment to ‘line by line’ refutation, and the significance of the debate note-taking practice of ‘flowing’; engaging the question of the resolution without proposing a specific plan, or course of action, in order to “[create] a competitive obstacle to negative teams [by changing] the framework within which they were prepared to debate”; and abandoning the role of the “policymaker as impersonal” in favor of justifying change through a “rhetoric of personal experience.”\(^10\)

Alongside the three-tier process, the tactics of signifyin(g) and genre violation constitute a method of performance that accomplishes resistance in the flesh. Considering the unique situatedness of black bodies in predominantly white spaces, resistance in the
flesh “is an example of social protest designed to disrupt, to create critical irruptions in the normative process of a social systemic reality.” Reid-Brinkley proposes that the three-tier process, signifyin(g) and genre violation, as demonstrated by the Louisville Project, serve as “strategies of confrontation” representing social movement rhetoric “designed to disrupt normative practices in order to highlight the social practices that maintain dominance and subjugation.” Accordingly she equates resistance in the flesh in policy debate with a movement to undermine hegemonic debate norms. Among the goals of the movement is that of imposing traditionally excluded bodies into spaces of policy debate and forcing competitors to acknowledge those bodies’ presence.11

Since its inception in her dissertation, Reid-Brinkley has broadened her understanding of resistance in the flesh to include quare perspectives.12 Indeed, what is truly unique about Emporia State’s victories at the two more prestigious of the three end-of-year national championship tournaments is that the debaters identify as quare as well as black. Quare Theory, established by E. Patrick Johnson within the field of Black Queer Studies, proposes that the “dominant and more conventional usage of ‘queer,’ particularly in its most recent theoretical reappropriation in the academy” renders absent the “culture-specific positionality” of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) persons of color. Johnson states, “the term [queer] is not necessarily embraced by [GLBT] people of color. … [T]he label often displaces and rarely addresses their concerns.” He employs the term “quare,” a play on the term “queer” learned through his grandmother’s southern dialect, as a culturally specific utterance that preserves GLBT persons of color unique experiences and offers an avenue for resistance that escapes the homogenizing tendencies of the term “queer.” As a “theory in the flesh,” Quare Studies explicitly rejects cultural
understandings of race in order to preserve a focus on the material conditions that oppress quare bodies. Johnson explains:

Theories in the flesh emphasize the diversity within and among gays, bisexuals, lesbians and transgendered people of color while simultaneously accounting for how racism and classicism affect how we experience the world. Theories in the flesh also conjoin theory and practice through an embodied politics of resistance. This politics of resistance is manifest in vernacular traditions such as performance, folklore, literature, and verbal art.\textsuperscript{13}

The purpose of Quare Studies, then, is to expand our “ways of knowing” contingent forms of “racialized [sexualities]” by viewing them “as discursively mediated and as historically situated and materially conditioned.”\textsuperscript{14}

In actual debate competitions, traditional debaters often respond to arguments inspired by the three-tier process through a procedural position that defends that both sides in a debate should exclusively focus on the merits of the given resolution. Reid-Brinkley describes this approach as an “excessively detailed … cost-benefit analysis stance of policy-based competition” that “discourage[s] the inclusion of emotion and aesthetics as a part of debate.” Members of the debate community commonly refer to this procedural position simply as “Framework.”\textsuperscript{15} Evans identifies Framework as one of the primary vehicles for enforcing harmful normative practices on marginalized bodies in academic policy debate. His private writings borrow from afro-pessimist scholarship and Quare theory to explain how imposing standards and styles of competition exclusive of aesthetic consideration and personal experience devalues “the importance that color, sex and gender have in structuring” the lives and actions of debaters.\textsuperscript{16} The stated implication
is that Framework perpetuates anti-blackness through the regulation or outright dismissal of black perspectives in competition.

In this respect, Framework silences the voices of debaters whose styles of advocacy fit outside “stylistic and identity-based norms.” Placing himself in the position of a black debater, Evans explains, “Letting you control how I speak is no different than letting you control what I speak. If I can’t speak in my voice I can’t speak at all.” Moreover, he finds Framework insidious precisely because traditional teams adept at the position rarely have to listen to the arguments made by their opponents. Rather, in their rush to deploy Framework, traditional debaters often ignore the intricacies of the non-traditional team’s performance. Thus, for Evans, Framework complicates the ability for black debaters to realize public voice because it provides privileged debaters a mechanism to control what discourse is considered valuable. It also constructs a barrier that allows traditional teams to win without ever acknowledging their opponent’s arguments.¹⁷

Emporia defeated Northwestern in a Framework debate to win the NDT. The method they offered the final round panel for evaluating the debate reflected several elements of Johnson’s theory. One element of that method important to this study is Johnson’s notion of quare disidentification. Through their use of disidentification, Emporia argued that their affirmative could ensure bodies marginalized by debate the ability to affirm the topic through modes of performance while also maintaining policy debate for those who wish to affirm the resolution through traditional means. Disidentification, originally theorized by Jose Esteban Muñoz, offers a “both/and” approach that allows quare bodies to put “hegemonic discourses…in the service of
resistance.” Lisa Weems explains the emergence of disidentification as a concept within queer studies:

Jose Esteban Muñoz suggests that queers of color (and other marginalized identities) have three modes of negotiating dominant ideology. The first mode he terms identification, where the queer of color takes up dominant ideological positions through “proper interpellation” of racist heteronormativity. Identification, according to Muñoz, seeks to assimilate and reproduce dominant constructions of the “good Subject”/self. The second mode of negotiation is called “counter-identification,” where “the bad Subject” resists dominant ideological positions.... “Disidentification is the third mode of negotiating dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology.”

In the context of the final round debate, Emporia argued that their affirmative presented a challenge to ideological constraints imposed on policy debate by dominant norms. Voting affirmative offered a vision of debate that both ensured the preservation of intercollegiate debate as a site for quare self-reflexivity and allowed technical policy debates to exist as long as they allow marginalized identities to resist hegemonic ideology in spaces of competition.

**Atchison and Panetta’s Criticism of “Debate as Activism”**

It remains in question whether Emporia’s success at CEDA and the NDT will successfully disrupt the staunchest supporters of traditional policy debate. If the responses to the previous successes of the University of Louisville (first black women to
reach the Quarterfinals of the NDT) and Towson University (2008 CEDA Champions, 2009 CEDA Finalists, 2009 NDT Quarterfinalists) serve as any indicator, however, it does not appear that Emporia’s competitive success will cause a drastic shift in the way traditional debate teams approach the activity. While it is likely that Emporia’s success will encourage future debaters to engage in their own acts of resistance, as Louisville’s success encouraged them, it is unlikely that the policy debate community will come to a consensus on the necessity of reforming traditional styles of presentation. The simplest explanation for the community’s stubbornness in response to the concerns of resistance is the belief that doing so would undermine the competitive format for debate.

Atchison and Panetta’s scholarship investigates the general stubbornness to respond to forms of activism within policy debate, challenging the notion that “any individual debate” can affect the capacity “to generate community change.” They “attribute this ineffectiveness” of focusing on individual debates as a site of activism “to the structural problems inherent in individual debates and the collective forgetfulness of the debate community.” From a structural perspective, individual debates generally lack the necessary audience to attract attention to coalesce community opinion toward a certain team’s criticism of marginalizing debate practices. While this observation is called into question by the efforts made to record debates at the 2013 NDT, the majority of “elimination debates do not provide for a much better audience because debates still occur simultaneously, and travel schedules dictate that most of the participants have left by the later elimination rounds.” Because of the sheer number of debates that occur throughout a given season and the lack of efforts to transcribe them, Atchison and Panetta propose a model for creating community change that requires public argument striving
toward “a larger community dialogue that is recorded and/or transcribed” as an alternative to strategies of resistance “premised on winning individual debates” to resolve “a community problem.” Their proposal recognizes the importance of reinvigorating methods of accessible public argument often disregarded in competitive debate. At the same time, however, they remain concerned that individual “debate competitions do not represent the best environment for community change.”

For Atchison and Panetta, “the ballot” a judge casts at the conclusion of a debate should signify nothing more or less than that person’s decision “to vote for the team that does the best debating.” This understanding encourages judges to limit their analysis of a debate to the arguments presented within each team’s allotted times to speak. It would exclude decisions focused on resolving external abuses such as: determining the appropriateness of statements or events between a team or program that occurred outside of the immediate debate; challenging a school’s success at “recruiting minority participants”; criticizing the civil rights legacy of participants’ academic institutions; or increasing the presence of underrepresented bodies in elimination debates. By contrast, some non-traditional teams interested in challenging the marginalizing effects of policy debate formats have begun to advocate what I call a “ballot as currency” model for judges to evaluate debates. While the specific terminology is not universally employed, the “ballot as currency” approach establishes that a judge’s ballot signifies what bodies and practices she deems appropriate for policy debate. Within this model, a non-traditional team’s ability to accumulate wins is a referendum on the perceived acceptableness of their bodies for academic spaces.
Beyond the structural factors that limit the visibility of any individual debate, Atchison and Panetta identify two problems with the “ballot as currency” method for evaluating debates. First, the “ballot as currency” approach presents the dilemma of “asking a judge to vote to solve a community problem” with very “few participants” (generally the other people in the room) allowed to take a stake in the process. This places the course of community change on the shoulders of those who judge debates between traditional and non-traditional teams and excludes those “coaches and directors who are not preferred judges and, therefore, do not have access to many debates.” Furthermore, it excludes those “who might want to contribute to community conversation, but are not directly involved in competition.” Prioritizing the “ballot as currency” approach fails to recognize that “debate community is broader than the individual participants” of a given debate and risks the creation of “an insulated community that has all the answers” without ever engaging those concerned individuals who do not attend every competition. The result is that a very narrow set of judges, usually those that often judge Framework debates, are granted the authority to determine the outcome of communal change.21

The larger problem Atchison and Panetta find endemic to strategies of resistance that treat the “ballot as currency” for the success of their movement is that those activist approaches undermine the competitive element of policy debate and eliminate the role for the opposing team to assist in resolving the community problem. According to Atchison and Panetta, “If each individual debate is a decision about how the debate community should approach a problem, then the losing debaters become collateral damage in the activist strategy dedicated toward creating community change.” Treating the judge’s
ballot as the barometer for the importance of a given strategy of resistance creates a model of debate evaluation whereby “the losing team serves as a sacrificial lamb on the altar of community change.” This is not to say that all teams engaging in forms of resistance present advocacies that dismiss the presence of the opponent. Rather, in those instances when movement teams ask judges to adjudicate over community problems within individual debates, they dismiss the importance of competitive engagement with the given controversy and instill a model of debate that “[increases] the profile of the winning team and the community problem” by “treating opponents as scapegoats for the failures of the community.”

Policy debate is, above other considerations, a competition between academic institutions. And while some schools consider the educational benefits debate provides to be more important than an evaluation of wins and losses, it is difficult to dismiss the role competition plays in the activity. Reid-Brinkley acknowledges this role in her discussion of genre violation when she discusses the “competitive obstacle” the Louisville Project created for their opponents by choosing to engage in alternative styles of affirming the resolution. Note the importance of the resolution in her analysis:

Traditionally in policy debate, the affirmative must argue in support of the resolution that has been chosen for that year’s debate competition. In the first affirmative speech of the debate, the affirmative provides a structured nine minute speech in support of a specific policy idea that provides a justification for the correctness of the resolutinal statement. The speech normally contains three observations or contentions that argue 1) that the status quo of a political situation provides a barrier to solving a problem and the affirmative suggests a course of
action to rectify the problem; 2) they outline the potential advantages to their suggested course of action; and 3) they argue that their suggested course of action will solve the identified problem and result in the external advantages.24

Granted, it would be a tremendous disservice to those in support of Reid-Brinkley’s movement to state that their sole purpose for resistance is to win debates. That said, one cannot deny the strategic advantage afforded to movement teams that choose to shift the terms of the debate to a discussion of whether or not marginalized bodies should be included in the activity.

Atchison and Panetta’s concern with the “debate as activism” approach highlights the competitive nature of debate as one of the primary reasons locating resistance in individual debates creates a barrier to community change. Debaters, traditional or otherwise, that “have spent countless hours preparing for” a “proposed resolution” will likely be unwilling to agree with the premise that they should lose a debate because of a wider community problem whose outcome their present debate cannot control. Creating “the ballot” as the nexus for resistance “does little to generate the critical coalitions necessary to address the community problem, because the competitive focus encourages teams to concentrate on how to beat the strategy with little regard for addressing the community problem.” Moreover, as Atchison and Panetta observe:

When a team loses a debate because the judge decides that it is better for the community for the other team to win, then they have sacrificed two potential advocates for change within the community. Creating change through wins generates backlash through losses.25
Michael Antonucci, former debate coach at Georgetown University, demonstrates this perspective on behalf of traditional debaters in his personal correspondence with Reid-Brinkley. Antonucci’s correspondence stems from a common concern traditional debaters express toward certain movement teams who advocate methods of debate evaluation that require judges to assess the role of personal experience in argument construction. Reid-Brinkley paraphrases his comments as follows:

“This perception is that even if they know the authors inside and out, they can’t use certain authors to argue from their own experience. If a standard for winning is advancing a compelling narrative that questions privilege, in some way, they can’t win.” These students feel “They’re dealt out of the game from the outset.”

Although Reid-Brinkley argues this “perception is incorrect” because “many authors in the area of race and ethnic studies…are members of dominant identity categories,” her position does little to resolve felt violation experienced by teams that lose debates because their experiences do not correspond to forms of oppression within the debate community. Given the competitive nature of policy debate, teams that lose individual debates to arguments about community problems outside of their control are more likely to engage in forms of counter-resistance focused on defeating the team advocating community change than agree that they should lose a debate because their bodies are more privileged than their opponents. In this sense, “the ballot as currency” model undermines the purpose of resistance by encouraging teams to orient their research toward defeating arguments about the importance of recognizing individual privilege through arguments such as Framework in order to win debates.
Responses to Atchison and Panetta

Atchison and Panetta’s perspective on the appropriate role a judge’s ballot should serve in competition debates is hardly shared by other coaches in the policy debate community. In response to Atchison’s belief that “that competition debates are the wrong method for creating meaningful change in the debate community,” Stephen Davis, Head Debate Coach at Towson University, argues that the “competitive viability” of debate strategies focused on the role of race in spaces of debate is the “essential ingredient in moving this conversation forward.” Winning with these strategies creates the attention necessary for the debate community to discuss “the problem that precipitates them.” Moreover, he argues, “traditional debate practices, in as much as they crowd out difference are their own downfall precisely because they create the condition of possibility for the rise of strategies of resistance to [their] hegemony.” For Davis, “the ballot” is what ensures “the sheer numbers of black folks (and [Latino] folks etc.)” at the highest levels of competition. Moreover, he identifies “making the ‘inclusion’ of difference a strategic concern” through arguments about the purpose of the ballot as “hugely successful in getting people of color involved in debate” when compared to the fleeting forms of inclusion offered by “forums or conferences” that take place “outside of the [debate] round.”

Reid-Brinkley confirms Davis’ objections to Atchison’s thoughts on the purpose of the ballot in policy debate. In her words, “Without the pressure created by students in competition there would be no rhetorical exigency.” She deems it “Rhetorical theory 101.” Moreover, her dissertation anticipates objections such as Atchison and Panetta’s with the simple statement: “progress hurts.” She posits that “everyone involved” in
academic debate must experience a “deep, internal discomfort” for “racial change” to occur. For her, “confronting privilege and committing one’s self to real social and systemic change will require a sacrifice.” Reid-Brinkley expresses similar reasoning in her response to Antonucci’s question concerning the role of personal experience in debate. She writes:

I think your question speaks to a deeper issue. They’re reaction is exactly what the movement teams are citing as the problem. White privilege allows those privileged by whiteness to not have to engage the issue of race directly. As the white, male heterosexual body stands as the definitive norm that which is the universal space of subjectivity offers them the choice to turn their backs on the conversation. One can recognize their privilege, but refuse to confront it. That refusal to do so is privilege itself. For those who are required to confront the socio-political significance of their race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexuality, disability, et al., on a daily basis there is very little space for refusal to acknowledge what is a material condition that signifies in American public discourse.\(^{29}\)

For Reid-Brinkley, the most immediate opportunity for movement debaters to inspire the discomfort necessary to challenge normative traditions is through winning debates and forcing their opponents to confront the truth of their experience.\(^{30}\)

Evans adopts a more direct criticism of Atchison and Panetta’s method for achieving community change. Within his review of communication scholarship produced by members of Wake Forest University’s debate program, he accuses Atchison and Panetta of participating in “anti-blackness within the debate community and
communications theory” for their scholarship’s treatment of the role of personal experience in debate. Moreover, he argues that the evidence read in Framework debates from Atchison and Panetta’s scholarship causes “psychic damage” to non-white bodies by devaluing their stylistic approaches to affirmation. As such, he identifies Atchison and Panetta and the institutions that support them, Wake Forest and the University of Georgia, as some of the main “circulators of anti-black thought in debate.”

The dismissal of personal experience in Atchison and Panetta is difficult to locate. At no point do they deny the role of personal experience in debate. Instead, they acknowledge, “Forcing teams to consider their purpose in debating, their style in debates, and their approach to evidence are all critical aspects of being participants in the community.” While they recognize the role of self-reflexiveness for debaters as members of a larger community, they object to methods that dismiss the topic for discussion to enforce self-reflexiveness. Moreover, they identify the tension resulting from strategies that view individual debates as a the site to enforce a reexamination of debate as “rarely productive” precisely because “the vast majority of teams” subjected to these strategies “not promoting community change are very interested in winning debates.” Their assumption is that the tension experienced by teams who lose debates to strategies that shift the purpose of the ballot will feel inclined to dismiss the importance of community change. Within this view, the discomfort Reid-Brinkley discusses as necessary to create change is more likely to generate resentment than reflexiveness.

Despite the limited treatment of personal experience in Atchison and Panetta, Evans identifies the application of their scholarship by traditional debaters as the primary problem. He argues the two represent some of the “main authors read against Black
debaters in debates” whose work is used by traditional debaters “to exclude [Black debaters] from the activity.” The problem then arises traditional debaters deploy Atchison and Panetta’s claims in spaces of competition. Accordingly, Evans finds it particularly harmful that, in situations when he watches “Black debaters [choosing to] speak about their Blackness” against traditional debaters, he commonly encounters traditional debaters citing Atchison and Panetta as a justification for their Framework positions instead of actually engaging the claims of their opponents.33

To ameliorate Evans’ concern, Atchison suggests that the problem could be easily resolved if traditional debaters simply stopped using his scholarship in Framework debates. He writes:

As I have said at every turn…, no one needs the Atchison/Panetta [evidence] since we don’t make any arguments that are based on anything more than our observations about the debate community. It sounds like parts of our arguments are being used in bad framework debates and I will reiterate again that I think many times debaters would have more success just making the argument.34

This solution fails to satisfy Evans because Atchison and Panetta omit a specific discussion of blackness throughout their assessment of policy debate. According to Evans, “[It is the] lack of attention to blackness that participates in anti-black thought.”35 Thus, he finds that Atchison and Panetta contribute to anti-blackness in debate by demonstrating a model of debate scholarship irrespective of the presence of blackness in the activity.

Evans’ assessment of the Atchison and Panetta article’s contribution to anti-blackness, that it perpetuates anti-blackness through its omission of blackness, hinges on
psychopathological assumptions reminiscent of afro-pessimists’ treatment of Fanon. The lack of attention to the specificities of blackness in debate thus expresses an innate desire on behalf of Wake Forest and University of Georgia’s debate programs to avoid and/or ignore discussions of difference in policy debate. Accordingly, these traditional programs’ “ideas regarding debate and racism are antiquated and anti-Black.” This antiquated approach is “incredibly violent and ill advised” because it demonstrates a “color blind approach that seeks to take what was once an almost exclusively white activity and impose it and the norms it developed over time on a group of Black people despite their repeated complaints.” Without any specific knowledge of the internal dynamics of either program, Evans attributes the cause of this anti-blackness to the model of “debate training” they impose on their students.

The devaluing of black scholarship is, under Evans’ interpretation, one of the core tenets of the debate training that takes place at Wake Forest and the University of Georgia. This devaluation of black thought teaches students “personal experiences are irrelevant to politics” and allows them to “ignore the sharp racial divide that exists along the lines of style.” Moreover, it allows debaters to respect Atchison and Panetta’s claims over Reid-Brinkley’s “insight regarding race in debate.” Here he ascribes anti-black motives to these programs’ debate training. Accordingly, these institutions have “failed to engage the literature base regarding the factness of Blackness because it’s not within [their] resolution or framework (emphasis added).” For Evans, these programs are content to impose “social death” on black participants in as much as it serves the purpose of winning more debates.36
This line of specious reasoning is important for the broader purpose of this study. It reflects an inductive attempt to pathologize individuals and institutions as anti-black based on an omission of scholarship about blackness in Atchison and Panetta’s proposal to promote community change. Accordingly, Evans *knows* the truth of their existence based on his encounter with their article as cited in competitive debates by students from different institutions. Thus, he blames Wake Forest and the University of Georgia for the alienation and disaffection felt by black students in policy debate.

Ironically, in his attempt to “speak out and speak loud” against traditional debate programs’ collective failure to engage black scholarship, he invokes Markmann’s distortion of Fanon’s pivotal text when signifyin(g) on “The Fact of Blackness.” The title of Chapter Five is, of course, one of the few aspects of *Black Skin, White Masks* that does not immediately correspond to Fanon’s thought. With this in mind, Evans’ accusation that academics responsible for defending the competitive format of policy debate skirt the important literature surrounding the “factness of Blackness” raises a series of questions: Is it appropriate for scholars to invoke Markmann’s mistranslation as an accurate representation of blackness? What are the implications this mistranslation presents for the task of speaking truth? Can one observe Atchison and Panetta’s claims within examples of black scholarship? And does Reid-Brinkley’s model for resistance in the flesh offer a space for freedom capable of alleviating the social death and disaffection many non-masculine, non-white bodies experience as participants in policy debate? The following chapters pursue these questions in depth.
Chapter Notes


5 Although the term “straight” does not originally appear in this quote, it is deployed in similar clusters in this line of argument, see: Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 68.


7 *Ibid*: 68-70; 84.

8 Wise, *White Like Me*: 35.


10 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 96-98; 103, 108-110; 117.


15 Ibid: 106-107; 84

16 Evans offers this perspective in an online debate with Casey Harrigan, Director of Debate at Michigan State University, regarding switch-side debate. ‘Switch-side debate’ is a term that describes a model for debate competitions that requires competitors to defend both sides of a controversial issue throughout the course of the tournament. See: RW, “THE 1NC.”


23 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 111.


29 Reid-Brinkley, “Privilege, Personal Experience and the Research Burden.”


31 Rashad Evans, NDTCEDA Traditions (November 15, 2012, 6:31 pm) https://www.facebook.com/groups/318979761518379/?fref=ts (accessed: April 30,


33 Rashad Evans, NDTCEDA Traditions (November 15, 2012, 2:03 pm)


34 Jarrod Atchison, NDTCEDA Traditions (November 19, 2012, 1:35am).

35 Rashad Evans, NDTCEDA Traditions (November 15, 2012, 6:31 pm).

36 RW, “More on Debate & Anti-Blackness.”

37 Ibid.
Chapter Three – The Missing Figure of Sho’ Good Eatin’

Vertical scale images, which project desirable objects above the listener and undesirable objects below, often seem to express symbolically man’s quest for power. Such basic motivations appear to cluster naturally about prominent features of experience and to find in them symbolic expression. Thus, when a rhetorical subject is related to an archetypal metaphor, a kind of double-association occurs. The subject is associated with a prominent feature of experience, which has already become associated with basic human motivations.

(Michael Osborn)¹

I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning Y a bon Banania.

Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body. Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together.

(Frantz Fanon)²

For forty-one years prior to the release of Richard Philcox’s English translation of Black Skin, White Masks, Charles Lam Markmann’s interpretation remained the primary translation available to American audiences.³ Attending to the subtle distinctions between Markmann and Philcox’s interpretations of Black Skin, White Masks yields intriguing findings for one seeking to grasp Fanon’s task of disalienation. Chief among these findings, Philcox’s interpretation provides a new lens by which we can appreciate Fanon as a phenomenological observer of interracial communication. Moreover, recognizing the context behind those portions of Fanon’s original French that Philcox preserves reveals the importance of archetypal imagery that operated in the fore-structure of Francophone colonized peoples. Grasping the significance of these distinctions moves us toward a
rhetorical understanding of *Black Skin, White Masks* from which we can examine the concept of disalienation freed from the constraints of psychoanalysis.

In this chapter I seek to explicate the differences in Markmann and Philcox’s translations of *Black Skin, White Masks* to provide a phenomenological reading of the text. Specifically, I focus on Markmann’s mistranslation of the title of Chapter Five as “The Fact of Blackness” and his choice to translate the phrase “*Y a bon Banania*” to “sho’ good eatin.’” These re-interpretations of Fanon erect barriers to a hermeneutical understanding of his text. Placing *L’Expérience Vécue du Noir* and *Y a bon Banania* in their proper context lends credence to a reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* findings as temporally and culturally bound rather than fixed in the human psyche. Furthermore, I argue that appreciating the text for its phenomenological approach allows rhetoricians to understand Fanon’s treatment of affect in Aristotelian rather than Lacanian terms. As such, the phenomenological components of *Black Skin, White Masks* provide the possibility of placing Fanon’s findings in a rhetorical context.

Upon identifying *Black Skin, White Masks*’ phenomenological context, I purport disalienation as a rhetorical orientation that challenges the presence of negative essences embedded in discourses of power. By placing Fanon’s understanding in conversation with Foucaultian understandings of the aesthetics of the self, I argue that disalienation is a necessary component to the critical rhetorician’s task of fashioning “a rhetoric of the Self and for the Other (Self)” that allows individuals to “speak a rhetoric rather than merely allowing themselves, as subjects of the ‘herd’…to be spoken by” negative discourses that interfere with self-consciousness by imposing essentializing subjectivities upon individuals. Furthermore, I observe the relationship between disalienation and
voice to qualify Fanon’s conclusion that authentic communication can provide a way for individuals to achieve “the real leap” of “introducing invention into life.”

By attending to this rhetorical understanding of Black Skin, White Masks as a text seeking a space for invention and freedom for colonized black subjects, I argue that it serves as a guide for critical rhetoricians seeking to evaluate discourses that challenge the objectification of the black body.

L’Expérience Vécue du Noir

Chapter Five of Black Skin, White Masks is famous primarily for its observations concerning the function of the black body in space of the self/other encounter. In the preceding chapter, Fanon establishes, “alterity for the black man is not the black but the white man.” Alterity in Chapter Five, however, takes immediate form in a young boy Fanon encounters on a train. He reflects on the young boy’s reaction to his presence:

“Look! A Negro!” It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.

“Look! A Negro!” Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.

“Look! A Negro!” The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.

“Maman, look, a Negro; I’m scared!” Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.

By observing the young boy’s transition from fascination to revulsion, Fanon establishes the observations that immediately precede this chapter. As an outcome of the young boy’s mis-interpellating gaze Fanon finds himself “an object among other objects,” represented by the Y a bon Banania figure, incapable of “[uncovering] the meaning of
things” in “this world.” Accordingly, the young boy locks Fanon into a “suffocating reification” whereby he determines the truth of Fanon’s existence based on the appearance of blackness. Fanon describes, “As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.” Thus, Fanon’s experience of encountering the “white gaze” is that of being reduced to a “historical-racial schema” that inhibits his ability to participate in the world.8

Whereas traditional interpellation calls subjects into being, cultural theorist Ghassan Hage argues that Fanon’s encounter on the train demonstrates the process of “mis-interpellation” endemic to racism. Hage explains through Fanon’s anecdote:

Fanon hops on the train and takes his seat (on the way to universality, as it were), lured to believe for a time that he was as he has always desired to be, like everyone else… Yet he is not allowed to settle comfortably into his ‘abstract universal’ persona. The symbolic order, through the voice of a child, brings him back down to his racial particularity: ‘Look, a Negro.’ What is terrible about this particularity is its reality. This was not someone imagining the black person to be anything other than he was. It was not removing someone from the reality of universality and dragging them into a domain of illusion and mystification. Being black, like being a universal, was a reality. It was one reality used to batter another one: “‘Look, a Negro!’ says the boy. It was true’, notes Fanon with a touch of lamentation (2008: 84). And with the return of the particularity comes the negative interpellation. That is, not only does the subject fall from being a universal to being a particular: ‘I discovered my blackness, my ethnic
characteristics’, they also fall into becoming a bad racialized particular: ‘‘Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened.’’

Within this reading, Hage identifies mis-interpellation as “a racism of a different order” that functions as a “drama in two acts: in the first instance the racialized person is interpellated as belonging to a collectivity ‘like everybody else’. S/he is hailed by the cultural group or the nation, or even by modernity which claims to be addressing ‘everyone’.” When the “yet-to-be-racialized” person responds to the hail, believing its call serves “everyone,” they are rebuked through racial essentialism. As such, “the symbolic order brutally reminds them that they are not part of everyone.”

The question that remains is whether we should consider this reality of Fanon’s experience with the symbolic order a la the young boy as the fact of blackness. Like Philcox, Fred Moten challenges Markmann’s mistranslation of Chapter Five of Black Skin, White Masks for displacing the importance of phenomenology in the text. Moten writes:

“The lived experience of the black” is more literal—“experience” bears a German trace…and thereby places Fanon within a group of postwar Francophone thinkers encountering phenomenology that includes Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Tran Duc Thao. The phrasing indicates Fanon’s veering off from an analytic engagement with the world as a set of facts that are available to the natural scientific attitude.

For Moten, approaches to Fanon that emphasize psychoanalytic, or psychopathological, conclusions collapse the distinction between lived experience and fact. Despite this, he does not seek to disprove in their entirety those observations that result from analytic
approaches. The emotional content of those observations is still valuable for analyzing the constraints imposed on black subjectivity. Rather, Moten proposes the “case of blackness” as a term to describe the “broken bridge or cut suspension” over “the gap between fact and lived experience (180).” Through an investigation of the case of blackness, Moten believes that critics can discover how lived experience of black oppression comes to constitute fact in certain instances.

Moten faults analytic approaches for their misreading of Fanon’s principal experience of the self/other encounter. From their reading of the encounter on the train, theorists Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland establish the black body as inhabiting a universal objecthood in the presence of whites that force it into “the domain of non-existence.” Furthermore, they consider the black body “the thing against which all other subjects take their bearing (Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland, cited by Moten 180).” Similarly, Afro-pessimist Frank B. Wilderson takes from this passage to establish the universality of the black position. He posits that “the essence of being for the White and non-Black position: ontology scaled down to a global common denominator” is that the non-Black position is not subjected to mis-interpellation based in appearance. He further argues that the appearance of “the Black” forces black folks into a subservient positionality in social spaces compared to non-Black bodies. Based in Fanon’s writing “I am a slave not of an idea others have of me but of my own appearance,” Wilderson establishes that the presence of the black body introduces a unique ontological phenomenon within civil society. Furthermore, he argues that “the Black” occupies a “(non)ontological status” because “the visual field, ‘my own appearance,’ is the cut, the mechanism that elaborates the division…between the living and the dead.” He concludes
from his observations of Fanon’s experience on the train that ‘the Black’ is a-priori socially dead and a permanent junior partner within civil society.\textsuperscript{11}

Interestingly enough, Wilderson’s Lacanian account of the black body acknowledges Markmann’s mistranslation of the title on the same page that he establishes the universal \textit{essence} for the non-Black social position. Despite his recognition of the title of the chapter as indicating lived experience, Wilderson maintains that appearance supercedes personal experiences of oppression. He somehow bases this claim in Fanon, finding, “Fanon refuses to let the lived experience of oppression dictate the terms of his meditations on suffering.” Accordingly, “the Black” will continue to be socially dead based upon “its” appearance in relation to “the non-Black.” He solidifies this pessimistic understanding of the ‘(non)ontological status’ of ‘the Black’ by refusing to “[offer]—or even [hint] at—a roadmap to freedom so extensive it would free us from the epistemic air we breathe.” Indeed, the fact of blackness weighs so heavily on Wilderson that all he believes he can accomplish is “to say we \textit{must} be free of air, while admitting to knowing no other source of breath.”\textsuperscript{12}

Hage’s examination of the train can assist us in reading Wilderson’s assessment of the fact of ‘the Black’s’ ‘(non)ontological status.’ He explains, “For Fanon, at the core of colonial racism was the attempt to rob the racialized individual of their aspiration to the universal. It did so either by particularizing them … or by objectifying them.”\textsuperscript{13} Thus, Fanon’s observation “any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and acculturated society” demonstrates his permanent frustration at attempts by colonizers to particularize him. In a subtle reversal, however, Fanon follows this observation by reasoning “ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the
lived experience.”¹⁴ This reversal seemingly complicates Wilderson’s assessment of Fanon. To bear any form of accuracy, Wilderson must demonstrate that Fanon’s lived experience is the universal experience of all black persons.

It appears what Wilderson actually suggests is that because the ‘terms of [Fanon’s] meditations on suffering’ occur in a psychoanalytic framework scholars should look past Fanon’s ‘lived experience of oppression’ in assessments of his scholarship. Accordingly, Wilderson determines that alienation “comes to appear, by way of psychoanalytic encounter, as the essential matrix of existence.”¹⁵ The problem with this assessment is that it overstates the role of “Fanon’s imaginary of the racist interaction” in attributing such overwhelming universalism. Hage identifies serious limitations for such universal understandings. If “the powerful understanding of the experience of racism that Fanon gives us … speaks to so many, it is because many share this imaginary.” The failure to situate Fanon’s explanation within his own imaginary challenge our capacity to understand exactly “why this particular experience is nonetheless shared by so many.” Moreover, the impulse to maintain a universal understanding of blackness seems to undermine the task of correcting for those particularities that perpetuate anti-blackness.

Hage attributes this dilemma to cultural theorists whose scholarship often devalues the role of particularity. He explains:

Fanon’s exasperation is specific to racialized people with high cultural cosmopolitan capital, people who, by the very nature of their cultural capital, value universality over particularity. What I want to argue now is that such people also have a particular affective experience of racism that marks the way they end up aspiring for universality.¹⁶
Perhaps then, the continued popularity of “The Fact of Blackness” is maintained because certain cultural theorists are simply unwilling to entertain Fanon’s particular criticisms of Francophone culture. Wilderson certainly fits this bill. One needs look no further than his methodology to grasp his fixation on the universal. Wilderson writes:

Like Lacan, who mobilizes the psychoanalytic encounter to make claims about the structure of relations writ large, and like Marx, who mobilizes the English manufacturer to make claims about the structure of economic relations writ large, I am mobilizing three races, four films, and one subcontinent to make equally generalizable claims and argue that the antagonism between Black and Human supersedes the “antagonism” between worker and capitalist in political economy, as well as the gendered “antagonism” in libidinal economy.  

Nowhere in Wilderson’s extensive analysis of film studies based in Fanon’s thought, however, can we find any discussion of *Y a bon Banania*. This is startling considering Fanon’s 60-year-old observation, “Most of the American films dubbed in French reproduce the grinning stereotype *Y a bon Banania*.” One would think Wilderson would bother to discuss this within his three-hundred and forty page volume that hinges on Fanon’s theory of *L’Expérience Vécue du Noir* to establish its superstructure for human antagonism that purports that blackness is ontologically separate from humanity. Granted, Wilderson makes brief reference to sho’ good eatin’, but, as Philcox establishes, that term lacks the magnitude of *Y a bon Banania*’s visual referent. *Y a bon Banania*, however, is the literal sign as depicted on cereal boxes and street posters throughout Francophone territories that established the backdrop of Fanon’s particular symbolic order, or fore-structure, and sustained Fanon as an ‘object among other objects.’ Wilderson’s
assessment thus fails to grasp that Fanon’s ‘lived experience of oppression’, i.e. *Y a bon Banania*, is indistinguishable from the ‘terms of [Fanon’s] meditations.’ Sho’ good eatin’ is neither an experience nor a term that appears within *Peau noire, masques blancs*—*Black Skin, White Masks* in its original form. The failure to attend to Fanon’s particular writings on *Y a bon Banania* calls into question any scholar’s attempt to draw universal conclusions from *Black Skin, White Masks*, especially when that scholar incorrectly suggests the impossibility of a roadmap to freedom.

**Y a bon Banania and Phenomenology**

French cultural theorist Anne Donadey’s analysis of *Peau noire, masques blancs* establishes the fundamental importance of *Y a bon Banania* in Fanon’s thought. The perpetuation of the slogan through French advertising campaigns functions as a form of “commodity racism” sustained through the “domesticated otherness” of black colonized subjects. She argues that these images “mystify social relations and reinforce white supremacy through a process of objectification and silencing.” Furthermore, “epistemic violence is encapsulated in these images” because, as Fanon suggests, “they explicitly participate in a white supremacist ideology denying Black people subjectivity and self-definition.”

This section investigates the rhetorical ramifications of *Y a bon Banania* for interpretations of *Black Skin, White Masks*. According to Donadey, “‘*Y’a bon*’ has become a master trope” of French discourses of commodity racism since its inception in the early twentieth century.” She establishes the importance examining the slogan as a trope that produces affects “because racism is an irrational emotion that is justified after the fact by false logic.” Thus, “an analysis of controlling images of Africans in French
ads can only fall short if their emotional appeal is not dissected in great detail.” Furthermore, she celebrates “Fanon’s work” as “truly exceptional” for its “extraordinary power and insight” regarding how “our ways of knowing can be deepened when they are informed by emotions.” Similarly, Hage’s assessment of Fanon’s experience on the train sought to elevate the importance “of the ramifications of the affective dimension of Fanon’s writing.” He finds that Fanon fuses “the analytical and the emotional in such a way that his text is often an expression of both an analysis of a given social-psychological situation and an affective articulation of that same situation.” Accordingly, for Hage, “if one is to make use of Fanon’s work today one cannot separate the intellectual and the affective that are so intertwined in his analytical work.”

The analysis that follows adheres to an emotional, or affective, reading of Fanon, arguing that an appreciation of Y a bon Banania’s role in Black Skin, White Masks allows us to read Fanon’s account of his affective alienation phenomenologically as the outcome of being subjected to Y a bon Banania by French structural forces. The goal of this section is to demonstrate the importance of rhetoric for the production and maintenance of anti-blackness. By developing a rhetorical understanding of Black Skin, White Masks, it becomes readily apparent that the fact of blackness, or whiteness for that matter, does not exist in some abstract universal capacity. Hence, Fanon concludes with the idea “The black man is not. No more than the white man.” This suggests that we cannot look to race to develop a universal interpretation of an individual’s existence. Within this thinking, a rhetorical understanding reveals that anti-blackness is a phenomena maintained through particular, culturally bound discourses of racism that impose negative essences upon individuals.
From a cultural perspective, *Y a bon Banania* advertisements function as mirrors that reflect the “unbearable colonial violence the images both point to and deny.” The advertising slogan is insidious precisely because of its subtlety. As Donadey observes, “Although most other images of the time are much more blatantly racist than Banania ads, the ‘milder’ stereotypes played as much of a part in ideologically consolidating the French empire in its violence through their naturalization of colonialism as the more blatant ones.”

Likewise, within Philcox’s translation *Y a bon Banania* is always described as ‘grinning.’ Observe the following passage:

The black man aims for the universal, but on-screen his black essence, his black “nature” is kept intact:

- Always at your service
- Always deferential and smiling
- Me never steal, me never lie,
- Eternally grinning *y a bon Banania.*

The essence that Fanon captures here is the colonial presumption that black colonized peoples are somehow pleased with their alienated social position and exist in their natural state as subservient to whiteness.

Donadey expands on this reading. She argues the “image is also appropriated to objectify them and to uphold the colonial idea that ‘natives’ are happy to be individually exploited and consumed, to have their land incorporated into French territory and their people subsumed into the French body politic…Taken together, Banania images and their slogan foster the colonial fantasy of Africans enjoying colonization and offering
themselves up to be consumed.” Furthermore, the perpetuation of these images occurs at a unique time and space in French imperial history. Donadey explains:

There are socio-historical reasons for the appearance of Banania images. … The increased use of stereotypical images of Africans in French ads corresponds to the periods of colonial conquest at the end of the nineteenth century, the presence of colonial troops in France during World War I, and the development of French colonial propaganda until World War II. … [The] influence of Banania images has been both long-standing and extensive because of the popularity, longevity, and ubiquity of the product and its advertising campaign.

While French colonialism sustained itself structurally through military and economic power, it sustained itself discursively, or linguistically, through *Y a bon Banania*. Attending to the image in its particular context reveals its role as the literal sign that sustained the symbolic order of whiteness in Francophone culture at the time of Fanon’s writing.

In his conclusion Fanon repeats his continued observation, “The misfortune of man is that he was once a child.” Likewise, the true significance of *Y a bon Banania* is that it dominates the worldview of Francophone peoples from the time that they are children. This occurs in the public sphere through advertisements and in the private sphere through consumption of the product. Donadey attributes fundamental importance to the slogan precisely “because Banania was a product intended for private consumption, [it] was to be kept in one of the most private spaces of the home (the kitchen, a space earmarked for women as well), and was targeting children as its main market, Banania images of *tirailleurs* could only be the most peaceful, asexual and non-threatening of
representations. What Markmann’s sho’ good eatin’ fails to grasp then, is the uniqueness of Y a bon Banania for Fanon as he progressed through French culture from childhood to adulthood.

Pierre Etienne Cudmore’s personal reflections confirm Donadey’s observations concerning the pivotal role Y a bon Banania plays in French childhood development. He recalls:

Present on my breakfast table for the first eight years of my life, however, was the smiling face of the Senegalese infantryman who adorned the boxes of Banania. Condescendingly nicknamed Y’a bon for the way in which he expressed his enthusiasm for the product (the French idea of how an African says “C’est bon!”), this French Aunt Jemima helped shape my conception of the world beyond the borders of France. … My first impressions of the “other,” that is the non French, came in part from the products of the racialist discourse that justified the colonial enterprise.30

Cudmore’s recounting of his childhood experience makes explicit Y a bon Banania’s role the development of his cultural assumptions towards difference. It demonstrates the problem language presents for the space of the self/other encounter. Having first experienced blackness through Banania packaging, Cudmore’s linguistic possibilities for interpersonal engagement were constrained to what he later problematizes as “a politics and an aesthetic of acceptance: a submission to the status quo; the reassuring smile of Y’a bon, for ‘after all, he’s just one of us, just a bit more exotic.’”31 In this sense, Cudmore reveals Y a bon Banania as fundamental to his linguistic fore-structure.
Fanon observes “an extraordinary power in the possession of a language.” He finds that “a man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language.” This understanding of language is inherently phenomenological and implies that language carries with it a fore-structure of interpretation. In their phenomenological assessment of rhetoric, Michael J. Hyde and Craig R. Smith explain the fore-structure as “the structure of understanding as it appears in and through interpretation” that shape an individual’s consciousness. Combined of “three fundamental and interdependent modes: a ‘fore-having,’ a ‘fore-sight,’ and a ‘fore-conception,’” it determines “those linguistic possibilities (fore-having) the reader possesses (fore-sight) and uses in a certain way (fore-conception) when comprehending [a] text.”

In the Francophone context from which *Y a bon Banania* emerges, the fore-having is the French language. It is inherently “intersubjective” in that it is bound to those particular utterances “that may be performed by any member of the culture” and in doing so erects a “way of life” for the culture. The fore-sight manifests itself “when members of a culture appropriate the culture’s fore-having” and establish “specific ‘points of view,’” or worldviews, that determine how individuals within that culture should interpret “a certain object.” The fore-sight functions as the culturally-bound “orientations” or “points of view” one brings with them “‘in advance’ of any particular act of interpretation.” Here, *Y a bon Banania* establishes a specific rendering of blackness as the grinning colonized figure. Lastly, the fore-conception describes “the way by which one structures the linguistic possibilities of one’s fore-sight,” or culturally-bound points of view, “in
advance’ of an act of interpretation.” The fore-conception derived from *Y a bon Banania* is that the colonized subject delights in their subservience.34

According to Hyde and Smith, “Understanding, defined ontologically, is the *universe of linguistic possibilities that history “projects” towards human beings* in their futural development. A person’s understanding of existence always takes its experiential form from the linguistic possibilities present in a given culture’s hermeneutical situation.” When interpreting language, “understanding shows itself in both a synchronic and diachronic form.” The synchronic form is “situationally bound” and occurs “at a specific moment in time.” Furthermore, it is horizontal and “constrained by a given culture’s inter-subjectivity.” The diachronic form, by contrast, “goes beyond the particular interpretation and forms the historical tradition moving language through time.” It operates vertically as a form of “sedimented understanding” that marks “the historical growth of the culture’s inter-subjective knowledge, but also the historical growth of human knowledge in general.”35 Fanon’s description of language corresponds to this phenomenological interpretation. For him, synchronic meaning represents the world expressed by language while diachronic meaning signifies the world implied by language.

“*Y’a bon!*” synchronically conveys the Senegalese rifleman’s use of pidgin to express his pleasure in the taste of *Banania*. Hence, we find ourselves with the English translation “sho’ good eatin.’” Diachronically, however, “*Y’a bon!*” expresses the Senegalese rifleman’s child-like excitement towards his opportunity to protect the French homeland that was never his home. Markmann’s decision to alter the slogan to sho’ good eatin’ in his interpretation suggests a decision to amend the text in a way that reflects the
inter-subjectivity of race relations in the 1960’s U.S. South. Sho’ good eatin’ represents a racist colloquialism expressed psychoanalytically as white Americans’ belief in the unintelligence of black folks. And while this attempts at expressing the universal meaning behind Fanon’s use of the term, it erases the importance of Fanon’s inter-subjective use of the term. Specifically, it ignores that Y a bon Banania is temporally bound within Fanon’s experience and corresponds directly to a physical object, or sign. By translating the term to establish a universal understanding for American audiences, Markmann erases the particular meaning of the term. In so doing, he obliterates the physical sign that Fanon feels he corresponds to in the space of the self/other encounter. Hage writes, if one is to make use of Fanon’s work today one cannot separate the intellectual and the affective that are so intertwined in his analytical work.”

Thus, Markmann’s translation captures a portion of the universal, analytic meaning at the expense of the particular, affective meaning and stifles his readers’ abilities to grasp its purpose. When Fanon writes, “I am fighting for the birth of a human world, in other words, a world of reciprocal recognitions” he means he is striving for a world in which he is not mistaken in the space of the self/other encounter for the grinning Senegalese rifleman who is pleased in his state of alienation.

**The Trope of Blackness**

The reaction Fanon provides to experiencing Y a bon Banania allows us to understand Black Skin, White Masks treatment of affect rhetorically rather than psychoanalytically. On the subject of affect within rhetorical studies, Eric King Watts argues, “Part of the task of rhetoric, then, is to map and assess how discourses cohere, dissolve, or explode in social and political life in rhythm with the currents of affect.
Complementing studies of persuasion, we need to theorize how we may become magnetized to forms of speech or performance of bodies, and how we may be repelled and disgusted.” “The way into the affective dimensions of speech” emerges through an examination of the particular. Moreover, “to sense the resonance of energy” emitted by a given utterance requires the critic “to account for its discursive and material relations, the when, where, how, and among whom of its transmissions.” Fanon’s reflection on being “repelled and disgusted” by *Y a bon Banania* is fundamentally rhetorical because it reflects primarily his emotional reaction to the particular sign.

Let us revisit Donadey’s observation that *Y a bon Banania* serves as a master trope within Francophone culture. According to Watts:

Tropes of race have the capacity to draw and transmit intense affects. This observation leads to an explanation as to why we often feel like we are stunned by talk of race. It also opens up for us an accounting of the “failure” of post-structuralists to deconstruct race, to disable it and deliver it to a time and space where we may look back at it and wonder how we were ever that naïve and stupid about our humanity. Treating race like a social construction misses a crucial facet of its nature; the power of tropes of race emanates through a different order.

Marjolein Oele qualifies this reading of affect. Based in her reading of Aristotle’s *pathé*, she understands “affective qualities” as resulting from or through “an affection.” Accordingly, “a quality such as being pale or being dark” can be read as “the effect of a *pathos*.” Individual qualities such as complexion that “have their origin in affections that are hard to change and permanent” come to define individuals because they become conflated with the “natural make-up” of individuals. Attempts to read problems like race
as mere social construction thus fail because they ignore a reading of how individuals internalize understandings of their complexion.

According to Martin Heidegger, from whom Watts draws his phenomenological observations, affect is foundationally a rhetorical happening. Attempts to express affective determinations within the realm of psychology, such as those in *Black Skin, White Masks*, take their root in Aristotelian analysis. According to Heidegger:

It is not an accident that the earliest systematic Interpretation of affects that has come down to us is not treated in the framework of ‘psychology.’ Aristotle investigates the *pathé* [affects] in the second book of his *Rhetoric*. Contrary to the traditional orientation, this work of Aristotle must be taken as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another. Publicness, as the kind of Being which belongs to the ‘they’ not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and ‘makes’ them for itself. It is into such a mood and out of such a mood that the orator speaks.\(^41\)

In his analysis of this passage, Brian Ogren argues that wholly logical assessments of affect, such as those that take place within psychological assessments, fail because affect functions a-rationally and occurs through subjective processes of perception, or interpretation. There can be no complete, rational account of affect because perception occurs both *per se*, or synchronically, as “an object of perception in itself” and *per accidens*, or diachronically, as “an object of perception through the medium of associative ordering.” Ogren explains further, “Different people seeing the same thing *per se* may see different things *per accidens*. What is seen *per accidens* depends on purely subjective experience, expectation and associative ordering; any logic that might
be involved is not intrinsic but is by the allowance of experience and association alone."

Reading affect as inherently subjective elevates the importance of rhetoric for *Black Skin, White Masks*. Any analytic explanation of Fanon’s affective complexes must first give way to the emotional quality rooted in the discursive experience of alienation brought about by *Y a bon Banania*.

Fanon locates the problem of blackness in European culture as one of arbitrary archetypal construction. He writes, “In Europe, i.e., in all the civilized and civilizing countries, the black man symbolizes sin” as well as “evil…wretchedness, death, war, and famine.” Thus, “the archetype of inferior values is represented by the black man.” Elsewhere, in his criticism of Francophone culture, he finds that “the black man has to be portrayed in a certain way” and expresses the goal of “teaching the black man not to be a slave of their archetypes.”

*Y a bon Banania* serves throughout as the sign that corresponds to this archetype.

This treatment of archetype coincides with Michael Osborn’s landmark piece “Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family.” According to Osborn, the use of “a light or darkness association” by public speakers is such a common trope in public speaking that it is “immune to changes wrought by time” such that rhetoricians can observe the trope “from one generation to the other.” Moreover, the archetypal metaphor of light and darkness is observable across early European cultures as a trope with sustained diachronic meaning enforcing darkness as negativity. Osborn writes, “when Dante conceives of God as a light blindingly bright, and of Hades as a place of gloomy darkness, or when Demosthenes speaks of troubled Athens as launched upon a stormy sea, the meaning comes to us clearly across the barriers raised by time and cultural
change.” Moreover, we recognize the significance of this diachronic meaning because “archetypal metaphors are grounded in prominent features of experience, in objects, actions, or conditions which are inescapably salient in human consciousness.” Thus, archetypal metaphors of blackness function within the light/dark dialectic as cross-cultural tropes that express diachronic, or vertical, meaning in the fore-structure of European influenced audiences. Similarly, Moten writes, “Darkness turns the would-be melodramatic subject not only into an object but also into a sign (Moten 181).” Hence, Fanon’s being is transformed into both object and the sign *Y a bon Banania*.

The Osborn passage that begins this chapter speaks of the importance of producing archetypical signs through “vertical scale images.” This generates what Osborn deems a “double-association” because the viewer must interpret the image in its immediate, synchronic context as well as its intersubjective, diachronic context. Osborn explains that the “peculiar double-association” carried within archetypical signs assist in “establishing a mood (117)” for audiences “because a certain universality of appeal provided by their attachment to basic, commonly shared motives.” Thus, the double-association carried within *Y a bon Banania* produces intense affects because its imagery is able to “activate basic motivational energies (Osborn 116)” among its observers.

Osborn’s explication of lightness and darkness offers further insight into Watts’ observation that tropes of race emanate through “a different order.” This different order exists as the “a-rational (Ogren)” interpretation that functions through cultural understandings of difference implanted in the fore-structure. For the colonized subjects of Fanon’s study, each encounter with *Y a bon Banania* is a stark reminder of their lived experience with colonial racism. Racialized tropes thus produce intense affects because
“the metaphoric combination creates and strengthens” negative feelings of alienation “by associating possible controversial assertions concerning the inevitability of a particular process with a general, unquestionably determined cycle of nature.”

It is this troubling sense of inevitability that Fanon seeks to eradicate in his discussion of archetypes. He writes:

The problem considered here is located in temporality. Disalienation will be for those Whites and Blacks who have refused to let themselves be locked in the substantialized “tower of the past.” For many other black men disalienation will come from refusing to consider their reality as definitive.

Thus, disalienation appears here as a rhetorical task for those seeking to challenge the ‘tower of the past,’ i.e. negative diachronic assumptions of blackness, as it emerges in temporal space.

**Attending to Disalienation Rhetorically**

Fanon’s conclusion to *Black Skin, White Masks* suggests a way out of structures of discourse that facilitate oppression through disalienation. For Fanon, engaging in disalienation serves as a prerequisite for the emergence of an authentic communication capable of challenging the presence of negative tropes that deny the humanity of colonized peoples. This emergence requires an effort at disalienation in the space of the self/other encounter so that positive voice may occur. Fanon’s thinking here is strikingly similar to the poststructuralist trend, most notably the turn Foucault takes thirty years later in his later writings on the aesthetics of the self. Indeed, Stuart Hall once observed “Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* ‘anticipates poststructuralism in a startling way.’” As Phillips reading of Foucault suggests, freedom occurs in those antecedent gaps that
challenge power’s ability to define the individual. Employing Foucault’s thinking on the aesthetics of the self, the remainder of this chapter seeks to explicate an understanding of disalienation in line with Foucault’s understanding of parrhesia, or fearless speech. Upon employing alternate readings of the concept of disalienation, this section applies phenomenological readings of concepts of voice and authentic rhetoric to establish a rhetorical understanding of disalienation as what Hyde describes as an individual’s choice to “speak a rhetoric rather than merely allowing themselves to be spoken by a rhetoric.”^49 As such, disalienation functions rhetorically as a challenge to commonly accepted cultural worldviews propagated by discourses of power.

Recall from the previous chapter Fanon’s observation that the alienation of colonized people has two functions; the first economic and the second an internalization of inferiority brought about by the colonizer. This reading of alienation demonstrates an adherence to the material and social components that stifle black consciousness within his psychological analysis. Continental philosopher Erick Heroux’s scholarship historicizes the concept of disalienation along similar intellectual lines. His work seeks to develop an appreciation of the concepts of alienation and disalienation from the original Marxist perspective. He finds that evolutions in Marxist thought have misinterpreted Marx’s original writings on alienation, the implication being that structuralists have abandoned the secondary aspect of social alienation and instead only focus on the concept through a strictly material lens.

Heroux’s article, “The Returns of Alienation,” establishes a Marxist understanding of alienation that mirrors Fanon’s articulation of the term. Citing a key mistranslation among English structural Marxists, he establishes alienation as having two
separate functions while explaining that common uses of alienation in reviews of Marx are “fraught with misdirection” and “etymological contra-dictions.” Misdirection and contradiction occurs because “translation into English often dissolves the two” distinct German terms Entäusserung and Entfremdung into the unified term ‘alienation.’ The distinction is necessary to appreciate the former term Entäusserung as connoting a form of economic exclusion and the latter term Entfremdung as conveying an idea of social estrangement.

Similar to Fanon, Heroux proposes that we understand the idea of alienation as having two meanings: structural divestment and intrapersonal disaffection. He explains:

In order to avoid this all-too-easy confusion, I want to recompose the term into two related concepts. … I will translate “alienation” as *divestment.*38 And for the second sense of alienation as “estrangement” I will use *disaffection.* The former is a structural concept, a position in the relations of production. … The capitalist who controls the means of production…is *invested* in production in every sense of the word. Conversely, the worker and consumer, separated from the means of production, are *divested.* … This is a structural term since … Divestment need not be conscious nor felt. It is a placeholder in the political economy; it is a subaltern position in the socioeconomic relations of production. In the usual sense of power, divestment also effectively separates one from creative participation in self-management and decision-making. … On a more everyday basis…divestment often enough leads to discontent. When this discontent becomes felt and conscious, those who are divested become disaffected. “Disaffection” is therefore
a term for the kind of alienation that has been personally realized, not just economically lived.\(^5\)

By applying this reading of alienation to the earlier discussion of \textit{Y a bon Banania} we can observe Fanon’s description of economic alienation as divestment rooted in forms of economic colonialism. Similarly, we can read what he deems the “internalization or rather epidermalization that inferiority” as disaffection infecting consciousness as a result of colonial social relations.

Appreciating the distinction between divestment and disaffection is necessary to understand the role individuals play in disalienation. Fanon observes, “Genuine disalienation will have been achieved only when things, in the most materialist sense, have resumed their rightful place.” In this sense, complete disalienation requires an elimination of colonial economic structures that divest colonized persons from their natural resources and labor. Despite this, Fanon still characterizes \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} as offering a “path to disalienation” for colonized people seeking to reverse their “affective disorders” and offers the cure through “genuine communication.” Although facilitating communication between colonizer and colonized has little guarantee of ensuring structural divestment, Fanon’s description of disalienation suggests that recovery from disaffection occurs through the acknowledgement of alterity’s voice within the temporal space of the self/other encounter.\(^5\)

Fanon’s statement “if the white man challenges my humanity I will show him by weighing down on his life with all my weight of a man that I am not this grinning \textit{Y a bon Banania} figure that he persists in imagining I am” is intriguing for this reading. He seems to suggest that our commitment to genuine communication with the other also requires an
ethical challenge to those negative discourses that certain worldviews would impose upon the individual. Heroux’s assessment of disalienation qualifies Fanon’s statement. He argues that disalienation as critical *praxis* aligns itself “with ‘contingency’ and a ‘distrust of all foundations, essences, and absolutes.’”52 Thus, disalienation for both Fanon and Heroux requires that individuals seeking to invent a space of freedom challenge those negative essences and flawed historical assessments that culture imposes upon certain bodies.

It is this discussion of essences that anticipates post-structuralism and the work of Foucault so startlingly. In his examination of Foucault’s thought, rhetorical critic Dave Tell establishes Foucault’s challenge to discourses of power as resistance to the imposition of artificial essences that subjectivate individuals. From Tell’s understanding, we can read Foucault’s work on discourse through a fundamentally Nietzschean critique of metonymy and the abstractions it produces to define and limit the possibilities of the human condition. He writes, “Nietzsche defined metonymy as the substitution of an abstract cause for concrete appearances. It is by metonymy that abstract concepts, ‘which owe their origin only to our experiences, are proposed *a priori* to be the intrinsic essences of the things: we attribute to the appearances as their cause that which still is only an effect.’” As *Black Skin, White Masks* demonstrates, *Ya bon Banania*—and the diachronic meaning of the colonized person grinning in their subservience it carries with it—represents the literal abstraction black folks were reduced to in mid-twentieth century Francophone territories. For Fanon, fostering a space for freedom necessitates a challenge to that abstract reading of the black body. Likewise, “Foucault’s entire critique of power and resistance was grounded in a rhetorical mode of thought” because “modern power
works metonymically—it intensifies its effects by substituting origins for events.” Resistance to power thus requires challenging those discourses that reduce individuals to negative metonymic essences.53

Heroux’s work, when read alongside Fanon’s, allows us to consider discursive challenges to negative essences such as *Y a bon Banania* as acts of fostering self-consciousness. In his analysis of disalienation, Heroux explains “the invention of a ‘radical subjectivity’ was not some individual withdrawal into inner free-play… but was discussed only in relation to a collective front in which consciousness-raising was the recognition of oneself in others who were also attempting to find something beyond their identification with roles.”54 Likewise, Fanon’s assumption of the importance of “self-consciousness and renunciation” within disalienation implies that engagement with alterity also functions critically as a form of work on the self.55 Disalienation as a concept then requires that an individual pursuing self-consciousness outside of discourses of power must attempt to do so with both the self and the other in mind.

Here I will borrow from Markmann’s translation to expand on this notion of self-consciousness through challenging discourses of power. Markmann translates Fanon’s final passage on disalienation as follows:

The Negro is not. Any more than the white man.
Both must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible. Before it can adopt a positive voice, freedom requires an effort at disalienation. At the beginning of his life a man is always clotted, he is drowned in contingency. The tragedy of the man is that he was once a child.
It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world. Markmann’s interpretation provides subtle distinctions that qualify Philcox’s interpretation. First, the two translations imply that readers of Fanon may interpret the ideas of genuine communication and authentic communication concomitantly. Second, whereas Philcox translates Fanon’s explanation of disalienation as beginning with “self-consciousness and renunciation” Markmann interprets disalienation as beginning through “the effort to recapture the self.” Both, however, use the language of “permanent tension” with freedom. We can therefore observe Fanon’s understanding of self-consciousness along the lines of recapture of the self from discourses of power. Moreover, freedom is always in permanent tension because of the prevalence and reemergence of inhuman voices of the past that repeat and play upon negative archetypes of humanity.

This notion of recapturing the self from discourses that circulate negative essences is similarly present in Foucault’s later work concerning the aesthetics of existence, specifically his understanding of *parrhesia*. G. Thomas Goodnight describes *parrhesia* as a unique “figure of thought associated with speaking truth to power.” *Parrhesia* occurs when “the speaker” risks her personal security to offer forth “a complete and exact account” of an event that refuses traditional abstractions. Foucault expands on this definition:

*Parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia*, the speaker
uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of flattery, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.

One who engages in *parrhesia* may only proclaim her personal opinion. Foucault explains, “The parrhesiastes is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true.” The process of *parrhesia* is rooted in the ethical practices of the self. The parrhesiast “prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself.” Parrhesiastes are unique in the sense that they reject external pressures to truth and refuse the essences that render individuals into subjects.  

Heroux identifies Foucault’s turn to *parrhesia* as emblematic of disalienation because it seeks a “non-discursive” mode of existence that undermines the “a priori essence” of traditional forms of representation. Disalienation in this sense functions as resistance by changing “the balance of power relations” and undermining “the powers of ‘normalization’” through speech acts that contradict those essences written on the individual. Tell argues, “By refusing the insertion of origins, by exposing them as arbitrary constructions and thus literally undoing” the metonymies that interpellate individuals, *parrhesia* functions “as a point of resistance to a power that operates only in depth.”  

Similarly, Nancy Luxon finds that Foucault’s lectures and writings on *parrhesia* “offer a model of ‘expressive subjectivity’ composed of practices of ethical self-governance that would prepare individuals for ethical subjectivity, prompt them towards political action, and find them in their relations to others rather than founding them on
claims to knowledge.” Of fundamental importance here is the distinction between knowledge and truth. Knowledge, or *episteme*, suggests a complete understanding of world events that is ultimately fleeting. Foucault’s understanding of truth, or *alethia*, elevates the importance of subjective experience in defining our ability to understand our given surroundings. Writing on the limiting effects of knowledge, Tell observes it as “a product of metonymically substituting an abstract concept for a tangible example” which “so constructed blinds the knowledgeable from the particularities of the given.” The implication of this metonymic substitution, or double-association, is that it divides an individual between her experience and the “usual codes” of language necessary to express it. According to Tell, “A metonymically constructed knowledge of the self separates the knower from his body: it has turned ‘man’ into ‘mere abstractis.” This division between the individual and the abstractions imposed on her is fundamental to the experience of alienation described throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*. As Fanon observes from his encounter on the train, “Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by ‘the remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature’ but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories.” Hence, discourse captures certain bodies and imposes upon them an *episteme* generated through abstraction that divides them from the truth of their existence.

As Fanon’s encounter on the train suggests, the sense of division occurs through experiences of encountering discourses that undermine an individual’s attempt at self-
definition. *Parrhesia* is essentially a personal challenge to those discourses that facilitate division. Luxon writes:

our experience of the world leaves us divided—whether we characterize this division as one of misrecognition (Hegel), alienation (Marx), *resentiment* (Nietzsche), neurosis (Freud), or bad faith (Sartre), the division is present, is variously constitutive of individuals, and is on many accounts what impels moderns towards political and ethical responsibility. What remains, then, is the challenge of living with, overcoming, or transforming these divisions.68

Luxon’s reading is interesting because the philosophers she employs are all present throughout Fanon’s discussion of the affective disorders facing colonized persons in *Black Skin, White Masks*. It appears then that both Fanon and Foucault are primarily concerning with overcoming this division, or double-association. Accordingly, Luxon assesses Foucault’s shift to theorizing *parrhesia* as his attempt to reclaim the individual by “moving away from the ‘doubled’ subject” and the “‘epistemological grammar’ of humanism” that forces individuals into universal abstractions.69

Fanon’s charting of disalienation abides by Foucault’s characterization of *parrhesia*. He articulates his authorial role as “[undertaking] to risk annihilation so that two or three truths can cast their essential light on the world.” The essential light he describes is the importance of rejecting universal assumptions of humanity based on a reading of the other’s skin tone. Risk taking through speech acts is similarly essential to Fanon’s task of disalienation. As he states, “Only conflict and the risk it implies can, therefore, make human reality, in-itself-for-itself, come true. This risk implies that I go beyond life toward an ideal which is the transformation of subjective certainty of my own
worth into a universally valid objective truth.” From this sense, disalienation challenges cultural knowledge with the objective truth of his personal experience.

The rejection of “scientific objectivity” present in Fanon’s attempt to speak the truth of his experience occurs precisely because “the alienated and the neurotic were [his] brother, [his] sister, and [his] father” and applying some measure of scientific positivism would fail to capture the unique nature of his personal experience. The scientific measure merely describes how “the past, along the lines of an inauthentic mode, catches on and ‘takes’ en masse, and, once solidly structure, then gives form to the individual” into a thing. And while it can explain how “the past [has] transmuted” black life “into a thing of value,” it fails to recognize Fanon’s wish to “revise [his] past, prize it, or condemn it, depending on what [he chooses].” Fanon speaks this truth in his writing, “It is not the black world that governs my behavior. My black skin is not a repository for specific values.” Black Skin, White Masks is as much a criticism of colonized people who disaffect, or “abnormalize,” themselves by donning a white mask to hide their black skin as it is a criticism of abstracting identity through one’s skin.70

What Fanon describes as “birth of a human world, in other words, a world of reciprocal recognitions” becomes possible through speech acts of disalienation and parrhesia. As Judith Butler writes:

If there are norms of recognition by which the “human” is constituted, and these norms encode operations of power, then it follows that the contest over the future of the “human” will be a contest over the power that works in and through such norms. That power emerges in language in a restrictive way or, indeed, in other modes of articulation as that which tries to stop the articulation as it nevertheless
moves forward. That double movement is found in the utterance, the image, the action that articulates the struggle with the norm. Those deemed illegible, unrecognizable, or impossible nevertheless speak in the terms of the “human,” opening the term to a history not fully constrained by the existing differentials of power.  

Likewise, Foucault’s “goal” with his shift to *parrhesia* and the aesthetics of the self “is to offer not an ethics of absolute values, but a set of expressive practices independent of any appeal to the absolute values offered by nature, religion, tradition, sexual identity, or the human.”  

Reading disalienation along these lines affords us an understanding of how to challenge representations such as *Y a bon Banania* and the reduction of black, or similarly colonized, bodies to negative tropes. Thus, we can read Fanon’s disalienating promise to impose his self on those who would reduce his humanity to *Y a bon Banania* as an act of speaking truth to power that recaptures and his humanity from discourses of metonymy. In this sense, *parrhesia* seeks “the negation of the negation” (i.e., it challenges the disaffection that occurs through alienation) and attempts what Orlando Patterson describes as “the need for disenslavement, for disalienation, for negation of social death, for recognition of [black folks] inherent dignity.”

**Relating Disalienation to Positive Voice**

Heroux ultimately characterizes “Foucault’s method” as “[joining] in with that voice from below that is already trying to speak.” Here we find a similar observation to Fanon’s conclusion that an effort at disalienation is necessary to recognize positive voice. Watts devotes much attention to voice as a rhetorical phenomenon. He defines voice as:
a particular kind of speech phenomenon that pronounces the ethical problems and obligations incumbent in community building and arouses in persons and groups the frustrations, sufferings, and joys of such commitments. Rhetorical “voice” is not a unitary thing that inhabits texts or persons either singly or collectively. It is itself a happening that is invigorated by a public awareness of the ethical and emotional concerns of discourse.\(^7\)

Watts’ theory of voice seeks to resurrect it from its status as “an ambiguous and redundant concept” that represents either “a unidirectional, primordial and autonomous projection out of the body” or a “semiotic project” that corresponds to “a subject position that we, in turn, take up” or an “identity across history and can be recollected from within a Diaspora.” A key component of Watts’ reconceptualization is that voice occurs in temporal space as “a function of a public acknowledgment of the ethics of speaking and the emotions of others” and corresponds to an individual or group seeking recognition outside of imposed subjectivities. As a “relational phenomenon occurring in discourse,” voice represents the “sound of specific experiential encounters” that foster acknowledgement of individuals.\(^6\)

As Heroux’s statement suggests, Foucault’s turn to the aesthetics of the self facilitates the voice from below trying to speak by limiting available forms of knowledge and allowing subjects to reveal themselves as individuals in communal encounters. Borrowing from Hyde and Smith, Watts argues that voice occurs in a “shared affective space” and varies in resonance based in the “emotional intensity and tone” that “heighten one’s perceived proximity and empathy toward persons.” It principally “concerns itself with the material or symbolic conditions of ‘speaking’ and ‘hearing’” and is “constitutive
of an ethical and emotional event.” The focus on specific events is similarly important for Foucault. As Tell argues, “resistance to power requires countering the claims of metonymy with the irreducibility of the event.” In that moment of disalienation, or resistance, “voice announces the felt experience of one’s immediate relation to and inseparability from the world and others.” Freedom is thus felt in that moment that voice announces the limitations of power’s ability to subject individuals through negative discourses.

“Embarking on a positive voice,” then, requires freedom “to make an effort at disalienation” in order to raise awareness to the ethical implications of discourse within a given community or culture. According to Watts, “The audibleness of voice can be ‘conceived of … as coinciding with the very process of enunciation,’ the emergence of subjectivity during sensemaking. Hence, voice does not occupy the private body for very long; it seeks a hearing and often “dies” before receiving one. A condition for voice, thus, is social.” Granted, “voice ‘exists’ without an Other to recognize its emanation; but this conception is poverty” because positive voice requires a recognition of the original utterance to foster acknowledgement. Watts explains:

The richness of voice is endowed as a function of the social body. This is so because when “I” speak, voice is situated between my “experience and representation of [my] experience.” It lives (momentarily) at the junction of my body’s nature and our shared culture. The fact that “I” am writing these words refers to the instability of the emerging subject making sense and to the very opening through which affect takes off. The signifier “I” is in motion, always
opening up; everything “I” say is at once a regimented signification—a placeholder for meaning—and a mobile morphology alive with alterity.\textsuperscript{81} Voice is thus the sound of disalienation that challenges abstractions imposed on the body. The “I” who speaks “is not detachable from a body” but is also “always in excess of the body presumed to contain it.”\textsuperscript{82} Disalienation challenges power by announcing the “I” denied by the essences it produces. Voice is positive when that “I” is understood and acknowledged by the social body.

Within the specific context of black and white social relations, Watts establishes the “transfixion” of “the black body” through “the white gaze as an event that prohibits mutual understanding between the races” by freezing the “black body as an object of ‘amused contempt and pity.’”\textsuperscript{83} Mirroring Fanon’s experience on the train, Watts explains that the white gaze holds the black body “actionless” and “muted; [the black body] thus, does not constitute a being to which one must answer.” “White supremacist thinking” thus contributes to social death by “[creating] a fantasy of complete knowledge about the ‘objective’ world of which the black body is a part.” Positive voice is “actualized” as a challenge to this social death through a “phenomenon of public hearing” whereby white folks acknowledge “the articulation of the ethical problems of black speech and the love and frustrations Americans share regarding their common dwelling place.” The emergence of positive voice in this context occurs when white folks favor “the actual act of seeing” the truth of the black body’s experiences in place of the “knowledge” of the black body’s essences imparted through their fore-structure.\textsuperscript{83}

Not all voice is positive voice, however. “Voice is uncontrollable and signals the undecidability of affect’s aliveness, it also announces a statement-in-the-making” that the
“social body” can respond to positively through acknowledgment or negatively through backlash or denial. As Watts observes, “voice provokes evasions of responsibility as much as it might bring about acts of love and care. One does not necessarily embrace intensity.” Continuing that thought, one need look no further than the 1960s context from which Markmann translates *Black Skin, White Masks* to demonstrate this claim. Evasions of responsibility on behalf of white folks are not limited to ignoring the ethical problems posed by black speech. Evasions also exist as fire hoses, “lynch mobs,” detentions of political prisoners, and assassinations. The challenge for disalienation, then, is establishing a strategy for resistance that resonates across lines of racial division and forces white folks to reconsider their “knowledge” of the lived experience of black folks.\(^84\)

By itself, however, voice does not necessarily constitute speech. Rather, “Voice carries being-in-the-event but refuses to make sense of the event. It ‘enables speech phenomena’ but does not make a statement.” In this sense, it makes the sound that corresponds to what Hyde deems “the call of conscience.”\(^85\) Hyde’s understanding of the call of conscience is rooted in the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, whom Moten attributes as one of Fanon’s phenomenological influences. The call of conscience is a happening that presents itself in the space of the self/other encounter. For Hyde, “The self could not exist without the Other.” Voice announces the other’s presence as a challenge to the self’s composition and knowledge of existence. The sound voice makes emits a call that resonates intrapersonally and forces the question: “Are you being just in all that you say and do?”\(^86\) Warnick describes the call as “a sense of what is correct, right, and proper that has been internalized from the deliberator’s culture and from an internal deliberation with
oneself.” Voice emits positively when the self reconsiders its cultural understanding of the other and respects the other’s capacity to define him or her own self.

**The Goal of Authentic Communication**

Authentic, or genuine, communication results from the acknowledgment of positive voice. “Acknowledgment of the affective and ethical dimensions of speech” forces us to interrogate how “we are made to be as ‘subjects’ of and for the ‘crowd’ and the ‘herd.’” Authentic communication thus emerges between those “selves who, at least for the moment, have moved beyond the depersonalizing tendencies of the ‘they’ and who would have us do the same for the sake of our own authenticity as well as for the purpose of engaging other selves.” Borrowing from Foucault, Hyde explains authentic communication as a means of challenging those “regimes of truth” that “rhetorically and ideologically” subject “its members to certain ways of seeing, speaking, and writing about themselves to further *empower* the body of which they are a part.” Voice, then, is the spark that sets in motion the self’s “potential for becoming more than the herd-influenced creature that it typically is conditioned to be by the restrictive communal and moral codes of social, political, and religious institutions.”

In this instance, freedom presents itself when the self actualizes its “potentiality-for-Being” as the “condition of being open to (and free for) the possibilities” of existence. This emerges discursively through authentic rhetoric, or “a rhetoric of the Self and for the Other (Self).” Although Foucault understands his aesthetics of the self as antithetical to rhetoric’s persuasive functions, Hyde’s model of authentic rhetoric demonstrates a compatibility with Foucault’s thought by presenting a mode of rhetorical invention “constantly against the spector of ‘subjectivity’ because … the ‘self,’ in its historical
being, is always a function of the discourse of others.” From this, a space for freedom emerges through rhetoric that challenges the subjectivating function of cultural discourses.91

Fanon’s concluding chapter demonstrates a similar notion of freedom. Within it, he writes:

I find myself, me, a man, in a world where words are fringed with silence; in a world where the other hardens endlessly….

Here is my life caught in the noose of existence. Here is my freedom, which sends back to me my own reflection. No, I have not the right to be black.

It is not my duty to be this or that.

If the white man challenges my humanity I will show him by weighing down on his life with all my weight of a man that I am not this grinning Y a bon Banania figure that he persists in imagining I am.

I find myself one day in the world, and I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other.

And one duty: the duty never to let my decisions renounce my freedom.

I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction.

I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life.

In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself.92

Freedom, for Fanon, occurs through the invention of new discourses that do not adhere to cultural or social relations of historical forms of oppression. In this sense, he is seeking a
language unconstrained by traditional understandings of the black/white dialectic that make individuals with those complexions inaccessible to the other. This does not mean, however, some form of retreat into colorblindness. Rather, in acknowledging his right to “demand human behavior from the other” Fanon establishes his obligation to impose his self on the other who would deny him freedom by locating him in negative cultural understandings of black humanity. Authentic communication emerges here through the aesthetics of the self as a challenge to those negative tropes that confine the truth of individual existence.

The ultimate aim of Foucault’s thought is to establish “a use of philosophy which may enable us to limit the areas of knowledge.”93 Authentic rhetoric accomplishes that task by “trying to say something more about [an individual’s] history than what others are presently saying or not saying about it.” Moreover, when “the individual puts her self on the line and announces something about the world that, in this particular self’s opinion, has yet to be revealed in the vernacular of a community or audience that the individual has chosen to address,” she is injecting a form of doxa that restricts episteme and leaves alethia in its place. Despite its analytic origins, Black Skin, White Masks is principally concerned with this task of limiting current forms of knowledge. Recall Appiah’s foreword to the book; Fanon is still revered within postcolonial studies precisely because of his decisive willingness to challenge and re-theorize historical assumptions about francophone colonial relations. By challenging the objective standard of psychology through his subjective telling of personal experience, he engages in the critical act of “[speaking] a rhetoric rather than merely allowing [his self] to be spoken by a rhetoric” dictated by French representations of Y a bon Banania.94
Let us revisit the final words of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon writes, “At the end of this book we would like the reader to feel with us the open dimension of every consciousness. My final prayer: O my body, always make me a man who questions!” To feel the open dimension of every consciousness, as he describes, necessitates our ability “touch the other” through practices of disalienation and acknowledgment of positive voice. As Hyde writes:

The ethical requirement of authenticity calls the Self toward the Other. In struggling to live out the chosen possibilities of an authentic existence, I must be open to the possibilities of others; I must be willing to test my selfhood for others so that it can in turn be tested by others. This ability to “be a ‘voice of conscience’ for the Other” and to allow the other to act as our voice of conscience depends on the art of rhetoric and its meaning making function. Fanon presents himself as this voice of conscience throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*. In doing so, he seeks to expand the “actual consciousness” of his readership by revealing the extent to which it lacks complete knowledge of colonial relations. In doing so, he seeks to tap into the “‘potential’ consciousness,” or “maximum possible awareness,” of his readership to develop the understanding that although we cannot (and should not) divorce ourselves from our complexion, we must not allow it to prescribe our existence.
Chapter Notes


2 Fanon, 2008: 92.


5 Fanon, 2008: 204.

6 Ibid: 77.

7 Ibid: 91.


10 Moten, 2008 :179.

11 Wilderson: 37; 55-56; 37-38.

12 Ibid: 37, 338.

13 Hage: 115.

14 Fanon, 2008: 89-90.

15 Wilderson: 84.

16 Hage: 120-121.

17 Wilderson: 25.
18 Fanon, 2008: 17.


22 Fanon, 2008: 206.

23 Donadey: 11.

24 Fanon, 2008: 17; 35; 92; 163; 203.


26 Donadey: 23.


28 Fanon, 2008: 206.

29 Donadey: 14.


32 Fanon, 2008: 2.


36 Hage: 113.
37 Fanon, 2008: 193.
39 Hyde and Smith argue, “Rhetoric’s function shows itself originally in a person’s thinking about existence, in a person’s *intrapersonal* domain, wherein reality is brought first to the person’s attention and where the person’s practical mastery of understanding is a fundamental presupposition of interpersonal communication. Within this intrapersonal domain a person’s thinking about existence is never isolated in a subjective void; rather, it always is conditioned by the existing hermeneutical situation such that what rhetoric determines an object’s “as” to be is the result of the person’s communication with the internalized other of that person’s fore-structure.” (See: Hyde and Smith: 354).
42 Ogren: 8-9.
43 Fanon, 2008: 166-167; 18.

Ibid: 118-119

Fanon, 2008: 201.


Fanon, 2008: xv; 161, xii, 206.


Heroux.

Fanon, 2008: 204-206.

Fanon, 1967: 231.

Note that Philcox admits to transitioning away from the crude, medical language that Fanon originally employs in an attempt to make the text more palatable to a modern audience. See: Celia Britton and Richard Philcox, “Frantz Fanon: Retrieving A Lost Voice” Translation Review 71(2006): 4-5.

59 Michel Foucault. *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 2001): 12; 19-20; 14; 17

60 Heroux.

61 Tell: 112.


63 Raymie McKerrow’s reading of Foucault emphasizes this point. He seeks a doxastic understanding of rhetoric that views opinion in dialectical tension with individual truths. He writes, “This interpretation repositions *doxa*: it is no longer contrasted with *episteme*, but rather with *alethia*, truth (literally ‘unhiddenness’) … Rather than focusing on questions of “truth” or “falsity,” a view of rhetoric as doxastic allows the focus to shift to how the symbols come to possess power—what they ‘do’ in society as contrasted to what they ‘are.’” See: Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91-111.

64 Tell: 99.


66 Tell: 100.
67 Fanon, 2008: 91.

68 Luxon: 378.

69 Ibid: 381; 379.

70 Fanon, 2008: 193; 201-202.


72 Luxon: 384.


74 Heroux.


76 Ibid: 184-185.

77 Watts, 2001: 188; 192.

78 Tell: 112.


80 The quotations reflect the language of Fanon’s concluding observations, see: Fanon, 2008: 206.

81 Watts, 2012: 16.


83 Ibid: 196.

85 Watts, 2012: 16.


87 Warnick: 70.


90 Hyde, 2001: 5.


92 Fanon, 2008: 203-204


95 Watts, 2001: 188.


97 Hyde and Smith describe the ideal rhetorical critic as one capable of activating the potential consciousness of his or her audience. See: Hyde and Smith, 1979: 358.
Chapter Four – Trope-A-Dupe: The Problem Posed by Reid-Brinkley’s Resistance for Achieving Disalienation and Positive Voice

This movement/these alternative styles of debate centered around difference aren’t going anywhere, in fact they have proliferated well beyond the Louisville Project. So, people can stick their heads in the mud if they want to, but the movement will continue to see you in the outrounds at national high school and college tournaments. (Shanara Rose Reid-Brinkley)¹

Unless debate is fundamentally transformed—and at this point the only forces for real change are the squads from Urban Debate Leagues and a few college squads of color who are clamoring for different styles of argumentation and different evidentiary standards—it will continue to serve as a staging ground for those whose interests are mostly the interests of the powerful. Until the voices of economically and racially marginalized persons are given equal weight with those of affluent white experts (whose expertise is only presumed because other whites published what they had to say in the first place), the ideas that shape our world will continue to be those of the elite, no matter how destructive these ideas have proven to be for the vast majority of the planet’s inhabitants. (Tim Wise)²

The previous chapter explores the importance of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* as a phenomenological and rhetorical text. It outlines the importance of Fanon’s concept of disalienation for rhetorical strategies of resistance seeking freedom from discourses and structures that impose alienation on individuals. Rhetorically, disalienation is a precursor to the positive acknowledgment of voice and the resulting possibility of an authentic communication capable of challenging structural disaffection and social alienation. Despite Fanon’s concluding support of disalienation in the final words of *Black Skin, White Masks*, current rhetorical analyses employing Fanon’s thought largely overlook the role he establishes for communication in dismantling forms of disaffection rooted in complexion that perpetuate social death.

Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation concerning strategies of bodily resistance, or resistance in the flesh, in high school and intercollegiate policy debate provides an
example of rhetorical scholarship that appropriates Fanon’s “fact of blackness”—that the black body takes anti-human form as “an object among other objects” in social spaces—absent a discussion of disalienation. In this chapter, I apply my reading of Fanon to Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship as a means of illuminating the extent to which her method for resistance in policy debate undermines Fanon’s goal of disalienation. Through this criticism, I argue that Reid-Brinkley’s resistance fails to generate a vision of policy debate “freed from” what Fanon describes as “the springboard of embodying resistance of others” because, by prioritizing the importance of the body in order to distinguish her movement from traditional forms of debate, it requires those who resist to dig “into [their] flesh in order to find self-meaning.” Because of this dependency on the ‘biological difference’ that the skin signifies, the specific inventional strategies Reid-Brinkley offers for marginalized bodies to resist fail to unlock the “suffocating reification” that Fanon attributes his objectification to in *L’Expérience Vécue du Noir*. The unfortunate result of this reification is the construction of a rhetorical barrier that hinders the ability of traditional debaters to acknowledge the styles and voices of those engaging in resistance.

This chapter addresses specific rhetorical tactics Reid-Brinkley forwards in her model of resistance that are counterproductive to Fanon’s goal of making an effort at disalienation so that authentic communication may emerge. I question Reid-Brinkley’s terminology, specifically the function of the term “whiteness” in her dissertation. The term itself is difficult to clarify because whiteness is a logic sustained by aesthetic value. Despite this, her application undermines the term by conflating whiteness with skin tone. Combined with her conception of black aesthetic performance as a challenge to whiteness, this understanding makes the practice of resistance unsustainable and reliant
on complete segregation for a space of freedom to emerge. Furthermore, I challenge Reid-Brinkley’s reading of signifyin(g) for its shallow reading of Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s theory. In her explanation of the Louisville Project and its use of signifyin(g) as a rhetorical strategy, Reid-Brinkley fails to mention the role it plays in “tricking” opponents through the manipulation of traditional white vernaculars of speech. As such, I challenge her support of a theory designed to produce distortions and miscommunication when presented to white audiences.

Readers should not interpret this chapter as a dismissal of confrontational rhetoric or alternate styles of debate that challenge the normative assumptions of policy debate. As Reid-Brinkley notes, confrontational tactics are necessary at times “to bring to light the ways in which racial oppression is re-inscribed” in educational systems. Moreover, alternate styles of debate are necessary for enhancing the potential of policy debate as a unique space of education for young people. While normative styles of debate contribute significantly to important skills such as research, time management, and decision-making, they often fall short at teaching young people the benefits of intercultural communication and how to accommodate difference. An exclusive adherence to normative styles of debate runs the risk of producing brilliant analytical thinkers unequipped as citizens in a diverse population. As Wise states:

Until debate is substantially diversified, so that previously ignored voices will have a chance to be heard on their own terms, and in their own styles, little will change. What debate needs most is an infusion of persons who because of their life experiences are almost guaranteed to be less naïve; people who know full well that the system is anything but fair. Such persons have a right to be heard, and
white, upper-middle-class, and affluent debaters need to hear them. They need to know how power works, and they will never gain an understanding of that by listening over and over to the voices of others like themselves. The question that remains, however, is whether Reid-Brinkley’s model of resistance ensures the kind of discomfort necessary to produce the acknowledgement of voice, specifically black public voice, in spaces of policy debate or whether its reversal of power relations simply displaces the disaffection experienced by non-traditional debaters onto those identified as ‘privileged.’ She observes that “the anger produced” by alternative styles of debate “is less a justification for its rejection and more an argument for turning the critical gaze of debate intellectualism on debate itself.” Accordingly, this chapter turns the critical gaze onto resistance and challenges whether it can achieve its non-competitive goals.

According to Warnick, “Without the risk of self, neither the critic nor her readers can really be positioned to consider the grounds of judgment.” Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship largely accomplishes this task. At the conclusion of her dissertation, she makes clear her role as a “participant observer” of the debate community. As such, she occupies the role of a “stakeholder” in “maintaining spaces of resistance for urban students of color” in policy debate to subvert “racial domination within that space.” In more recent writings, she notes, “I occupy a borderland space between various communities, including the academy, the [Urban Debate League], college debate, and the black community in which I was raised, where all or part of my subjectivity can be rejected or vilified at any moment.” In the same vein, my unique position is inseparable from the observations present here. Indeed, this chapter stems from my interest in
exploring the implications of Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation for black/white intercultural communication because of my unique familial background.

Johnson assesses the critical importance for scholars of black performance to “focus on interracial dating and the identity politics such couplings invoke.” What I find so intriguing about Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation and the views toward policy debate that it has inspired, then, is the absence of perspectives that occupy borderland spaces between traditional notions of blackness and whiteness. The insights offered in this chapter thus originate from my experience as a product of both black and white culture. I seek to express that rhetorical strategies seeking to erect the boundary between blackness and whiteness perpetuate the “inhuman voices” of our ancestors by imposing abstractions onto the body before giving the body a chance to speak.

**Clarifying Whiteness in Reid-Brinkley’s Resistance**

The lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the term “whiteness” is a primary obstacle to disalienation in Reid-Brinkley’s dissertation. Reid-Brinkley relies on “whiteness” as a catch-all term to articulate hegemonic practices that stifle blackness. Neglecting to define the term, her dissertation employs “whiteness” as a general referent for the individual participants, practices, places, and methods of decision-making that compose high school and intercollegiate debate. As a consequence, Reid-Brinkley’s mapping of resistance attaches itself in what Bryant Keith Alexander identifies as the confliction inherent in “the project of White Studies.” By elevating the omnipresence of whiteness without explicating its origins, her criticism “is trapped between owning and disowning history, between decentering Whiteness in racial debates while centering Whiteness as an object of study and critique.”
In context, Reid-Brinkley applies the abstraction both logically and visually. She begins discussing whiteness in her analysis of high school academic performance standards. Whiteness here represents an organizing logic pervasive throughout school systems. As she explains, “educational spaces” are “marked and mediated by whiteness.” Accordingly, a group of students interviewed from majority black high schools “associate academic achievement in schools with whiteness.” Whiteness thus operates in educational spaces as “a controlling social ideology” that stifles black participation and causes disenfranchised students to reject “schooling and academic achievement.” Moreover, it defines academic success through “stringent performative patterns” that reflect the interest of “those with institutional power,” creating structural barriers to the equality of marginalized bodies.

Whiteness also carries an explicitly visual component in Reid-Brinkley’s work. She argues that it is signified by “the phrase ‘upscale art’” as a contrast to art which depicts situations of poverty. Moreover, it establishes racial contrast enabling one to visually distinguish between Urban Debate League (UDL) students and “the sea of whiteness” formed by “suburban students.” Thus, “in spaces dominated by whiteness, blackness exceeds the edges of propriety.” This is true for Reid-Brinkley because whiteness operates through ideologies “that actively maintain the dominant, normative order of debate” that favors white bodies. Thus, whiteness exists as both ideology and “visual normativity” and functions to attach “normative representations” of itself “to successful debate participation.” It also constitutes a “hostile space” through “language and performative practices” and requires “a strategy of resistance” to combat its “normative projection … onto successful debate participation.” This is so because
“debates are held in spaces marked by whiteness” that sanitize individual identity and render the body absent.\textsuperscript{10}

Reid-Brinkley’s application of the term derives from Gillborn’s study of “Education Policy as an Act of White Supremacy.” Gillborn relies on Leonardo’s definition of “whiteness” as “a racial discourse.” This is distinct from “the category ‘white people,’” which “represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color. Whereas the term “white people” signifies “a culture,” “whiteness” signifies “a social concept.” Further borrowing from Leonardo, Gillborn identifies several characteristics of whiteness. These characteristics include: “an unwillingness to name the contours of racism,” “the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group,” and the “the minimization of racist legacy.” Moreover, Gillborn emphasizes the role of performative ignorance in propagating whiteness. He writes, “It is this performative constitution of particular identities and roles that lends whiteness its deep-rooted, almost invisible status. One of the key points about whiteness as a performatively constituted identity is that those who are implicated in whiteness rarely even realize its existence – let alone their own role in its repeated iteration and re-signification.” In this respect, whiteness is the performative ignorance of racial difference expressed through “a taken-for-granted experience” whereby the individual assumes her opinions and experience as normative instances of the broader culture to which she is a part.\textsuperscript{11}

Gillborn’s interpretation should cause one to question the extent to which Reid-Brinkley emphasizes the visual component of whiteness. For instance, what are the qualities that constitute whiteness in the suburban students she mentions? The “sea of whiteness” she describes was “overwhelming” precisely because her high school
population was “98% black” and she “saw only two or three other Blacks at the
tournament.” Her writings then suggest that the physical complexion of white skin also
constitutes whiteness. Moreover, the assumption of privilege in white, male bodies
implies a reading of whiteness onto those bodies at the moment of encounter. This
conflation of whiteness with white people imposes whiteness as an abstraction that limits
the possibility of white folks to ever recognize and overcome its particular applications.

Alexander cautions us against this reading of whiteness. He observes that
“although … White bodies and the performance of Whiteness might suggest each other,
they are not inherently dependent on the other—as much as having the acknowledgment
of the other’s existential presence in the world.” Moreover, “the shift from ‘White
people’ to ‘Whiteness’” erects a barrier to disalienation and acknowledgment by
imposing a negative understanding of white existence onto white bodies prior to the act
of engagement. Fanon writes:

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose himself on another
man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively
recognized by the other, it is this other who remains the focus of his actions. His
human worth and reality depend on this other and on his recognition by the other.
It is in this other that the meaning of his life is condensed.

It is when I go beyond my immediate existential being that I apprehend the being
of the other as a natural reality, and more than that. If I shut off the circuit, if I
make the two-way movement unachievable, I keep the other within himself. In an
extreme degree, I deprive him even of this being-for-self.
Reading whiteness onto the body prior to interaction, as Reid-Brinkley’s writing suggests, condenses the meaning of their existence as an example of dominant societal norms. This “[shuts] off the circuit” of communication and sustains the suffocating reification of alterity that produces disaffection. Understanding whiteness in social situations as the absence of persons of color, as Reid-Brinkley suggests, sustains an interpretation of the term that prevents mutual recognition because the white body is always at fault prior to the moment of encounter.

Reid-Brinkley’s use of the term equally problematic when applied to non-white bodies performing whiteness. The assumption throughout her dissertation is that non-white bodies who choose to debate through traditional forms of policy analysis are choosing to perform whiteness. Similarly, Wise demonstrates this sentiment when he confuses technical discourse with whiteness. Alexander “[resists] the accusation of “acting White” on the grounds of its vindictive and derogatory intention and that it is culturally/racially alienating.” He identifies a fundamental tension with those who accuse non-white bodies of “acting White” or performing whiteness. Namely, the reality of certain performances signifying whiteness “might be the perceptual truth for those who cast those stones.” That said, those bodies accused of “acting White” are “far from living Whiteness.” Accusations of “acting White” thus overlook the “disconnect between the performative act and the embodied presence” and deny the experiences of non-white bodies who choose to debate traditionally.¹⁴

As a policy debater, I was once told by an opponent that my decision to forward an argument that problematized his partner’s use of a term for its implicit racial connotation was disingenuous because I was a “rich white kid from Trinity University
with no relation to black people.” While this degree of mis-interpellation is miniscule compared to the psychic violence non-masculine, non-white bodies attest to experiencing in their participation in policy debate, it calls into question the efficacy of reading identity onto the body and demonstrates how forms of resistance often overlook their participation in the construction of negative essences. As problematic as it is for traditional debaters to ignore their opponents’ alternative styles in favor of a Framework position, we should also consider the implications of understanding participants as performing white, straight, male, economic privilege simply because they participate in traditional policy analysis. “The assessment” that these debaters are “‘passing for White’ works in alignment with the limited performative range of what it means to be a” privileged body participating in competitive policy debate.\(^{15}\)

This problem applies equally to those that criticize non-white coaches for their support of traditional policy debate. Observe Alexander’s frustration with being mis-interpellated as “acting White”:

The cultural critique of “acting White” has often come from urban Blacks who consider themselves to be authentic, down, and real. Or worse yet, it comes from some of my Black colleagues, those who have ghettoized themselves within the White ivory tower and see my refusal to further politicize my Black presence as a betrayal.\(^{16}\)

Alexander further questions the “performative sustainability of Whiteness” and attempts by scholars to locate whiteness as a visual performance. For him, the accusation mirror’s Fanon’s sense of alienation toward being confined as \textit{Y a bon Banania}. “Like ‘the protean N-word,’” the “acting White” hypothesis “invokes and denies a history at the
same time, it coalesces the critical intention within any description … [and] signals a collision between history, race, and expectations of cultural performance.” Thus, Alexander “[resists] the accusation of ‘acting White’ on the grounds of its vindictive and derogatory intention and that it is culturally/racially alienating.” To accuse someone of performing whiteness is to assume a universal understanding of their existence, which operates counterintuitive to the goal of disalienation. This does not limit the importance of challenging white supremacist logic or attempts by white folks to deny structural realities that favor their position in society. Rather, speaking truth to power recognizes that “intervening in the present is more important…than describing the past.”17 This necessitates rhetorical competence capable of recognizing and challenging the presence white supremacist and/or racist ideology as it presents itself in unique situations.

**Fanon and Black Aesthetic Performance**

Reid-Brinkley’s writings on black aesthetic performance further complicate an understanding of whiteness and how to confront it. She writes, “The use of African-American and hip hop music and aesthetic styles in the traditional spaces of academic policy debate may operate to combat the ideologies of whiteness that actively maintain the dominant, normative order of debate.” Moreover, she identifies the need for creating an “aesthetic community of resistance” through cultural methods such as hip hop because they “serve as a call to resistance for African-Americans.” Through musical elements, which have historically “been a critical tool in maintaining hope and resistance to the tyranny of white racism in black communities around the world,” non-traditional debaters can create “an aesthetic place or home from which they might gain strength in their confrontation with [hostile spaces of] the predominantly white debate community.” Thus,
for Reid-Brinkley, “black cultural performative aesthetics [function] as a rhetorical strategy” that “[disturbs] the aesthetic environment of debate competitions” and constitute “argumentative support for [non-traditional debaters’] interpretations and advocacy.”\textsuperscript{18} From this description, one is left wondering whether a form of black aesthetic performance exists independent of the whiteness it resists.

Black aesthetic performance in Reid-Brinkley corresponds to a form of resistance whereby the black body stylistically violates the norms and spaces that traditionally uphold whiteness. This reading of black aesthetic performance, including its treatment of Fanon, is reminiscent of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). Eric King Watts’ research on the BAM investigates the role of black aesthetic performance crafted for the purpose of resisting whiteness. He finds that the black aesthetic functions as “an ideological system constitutive of a distinct ‘black perspective’ on the beauty and on the cruelty of black social life” that allows its performers to “make sense of the world and convey that sense to black people.” A universal understanding of the black aesthetic is impossible. Rather, the black aesthetic manifests itself in different forms throughout American history as a response to the contingent constraints imposed upon black folk by social reality. Watts argues “making sense of the world” through black aesthetic practices “has historically enabled black folk in America to cultivate a ‘dwelling place.’” He believes that attending to the unique qualities of a given black aesthetic performance can reveal how “varying conceptions of a black aesthetic index significant development in black American public expression and creativity” and shape “the character of a black rhetorical voice.”\textsuperscript{19}

In this instance, The BAM presents a cogent example of the problem posed by inventional practices of resistance rooted in misappropriations of Fanon. Watts ultimately
faults the BAM for its “reinvention of a black aesthetic” fixated on rationalizing “the ‘purification’ of ‘blackness’ by characterizing the ‘proper’ relations between ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ as fundamentally oppositional and antagonistic.” He understands the BAM as principally “inspired by the works of Frantz Fanon and enamored with the concept of an African American colonial subjectivity.” Because of this admiration for Fanon, the BAM reinterprets “the black self” as “a historically oppressed and purely objectified body” and as “separated and fixed as not white.”

This orientation is easily observable in Reid-Brinkley’s conception of the black aesthetic. She calls upon black aesthetic performance as a means of connecting individual argument with the larger diaspora of African-American oppression and defines it in opposition to a majority white community of policy debate.

The interpretive logic present in this understanding of black aesthetic performance ultimately fails to generate a space for freedom because it relies on a “paradox of purity” that can never rid itself of the black/white dialectic. Watts explains how “this paradox is doubly present in the black aesthetic.” He writes:

As artists assume the ethos of the oppressed, they appropriate this dialectic and enact it in two revised modes. The first mode posits the “purity” of whiteness but transposes its valence. Rather than synthesizing white goodness, the reinterpreted white/not white pair articulates the wrongness of whiteness and specifies why black folk are (fortunately) “not white.” But as artists simultaneously turn inward, toward the black community and work to “affirm ourselves—each other[,] … affirm the kingdom of heaven within us,” the dialectic is translated into its opposite: black/not black. This dialectic demonstrates the “purity” and beauty of
blackness by isolating and purging (white) substances that do not properly belong to it; in short, it identifies values and ideas that are “not black.”²¹

The black aesthetic fails to escape the white/black dialectic because “the two structures” of “whiteness” and “blackness” are “mutually reinforcing” of each other. Under this interpretive logic of black aesthetic performance “whiteness is understood as responsible for the ills of the world while blackness is defined in terms that reclaim a sense of moral agency for black folk in a corrupt world.” Employing Burke’s concept of the negative, Watts explains that the “paradox of purity” arises from this understanding of “whiteness” and “blackness” because each dialectical structure implies the existence of the other “like a disease intimates its cure.” Within this dialectical entanglement, there can be no authentic expression of blackness without the negation of the impurity of whiteness. ²²

This paradox ultimately turns manic as artists require the “‘destruction’ of whiteness” as a precondition to forms of black self-expression. The result is that “the dwelling place arising out of” the black aesthetic “becomes increasingly inhospitable and hostile toward all signs of ‘difference.’” Observing Larry Neal’s participation in the BAM, Watts writes, “Neal’s hermeneutical rhetoric was conditioned by an aesthetic praxis that produced a sense of claustrophobia as he was suffocated by the pressures of locating that which is ‘not black.’” In this sense, black aesthetic performance has no way out of Fanon’s ‘suffocating reification’ because of its dependence on purging whiteness for its vitality. As greater steps are taken to ensure the separation from white people, this “worldview” ultimately requires a turn inward, creating the problem Alexander endures whereby members of the black community attempt to sever off those members guilty of “acting White.”²³
The desire for Black Nationalism that undergirds aesthetic opposition to whiteness demonstrates the uniquely unsustainable nature of Reid-Brinkley’s conception of black aesthetic performance. The presumption that black aesthetic performances are necessary to create a ‘home from which they might gain strength’ to confront white hostility in debate ignores that “one’s home is part of a neighborhood.” Moreover, it makes structural disaffection a permanent reality because its proponents identify themselves as outsiders in the presence of white neighbors. This is antithetical to the goal of disalienation. Fanon writes:

What’s all this about black people and a black nationality? I am French. I am interested in French culture, French civilization, and the French. We refuse to be outsiders; we are well and truly part of French history and its drama. In the context of policy debate, to propose separatism or nationalism through movements of aesthetic performance creates a form of self-imposed alienation whereby those moving within and against the debate refuse to acknowledge the ways they participates in it. As Watts describes of the BAM, this type of perspective is always “habituated by the threat of nihilism” because it refuses to identify its owner’s stake in the development and continuation of the activity.

This form of “intellectual alienation is,” for Fanon, “a creation of bourgeois society…that becomes ossified in a predetermined mold, stifling any development, progress, or discovery.” The rigid positivism accompanying this worldview imposes a “philosophical dogma” that “desensitizes us to the lived experiences and feelings of others” and diagnoses anything in violation of the new ideal aesthetic as an object of whiteness that the community must resist. This manifests itself from an anxiety toward
being with others that limits our ability to recognize the voice of difference. In his acknowledgment of the limitations of the BAM, Larry Neal writes:

Insecurity frequently leads us to conclude falsely, that all of our problems would be solved if the Black masses would only convert to some specific ideological or theological tenets—namely, the ones we adhere to. But in reality, the problem is far more complex than any one ideological position because life itself is essentially fluid and changing.\(^{26}\)

In Fanon’s words, this type of worldview creates “a closed society where it’s not good to be alive, where the air is rotten and ideas and people are putrefying.” A conception of freedom within this space of self-alienation would require one to eliminate difference from the community or leave it entirely.\(^{27}\)

The problem of ideological rigidity is particularly problematic given Reid-Brinkley’s assumptions of the black body. She understands black aesthetic performance as resistance in the flesh and encourages the “‘liberated’ bodies of contemporary African-Americans” to bear the “historical markings of the flesh produced from the horrors of slavery.” Resistance in the flesh accomplishes the “contemporary embodiment of historical oppressions faced by Blacks in America.” According to Reid-Brinkley, this measure of performance allows debaters to inscribe the “cultural text” of America’s colonial legacy onto the flesh; resistance in this manner supposedly confronts “white America’s” insistence on ignoring the history of violence perpetuated on the black body in the United States.

Here we observe the literal attempt to dig into the flesh to determine the meaning of black suffering in modern society. One is left wondering whether this attempt to locate
the marks of slavery on the body has any chance of producing a form of politics that can liberate black folks from the self-imposed understanding that they continue to materially represent the slave. According to Spillers, whom Reid-Brinkley cites for her theory of the flesh, this conception of the black body requires an understanding of the “Human body as a metonymic figure for an entire repertoire of human and social arrangements.”28 Thus, to appreciate this form of black aesthetic performance is to accept the black body as a metonymy for the history of black oppression.

Fanon is explicitly opposed to this reading of the body. He writes, “I am a black man, and tons of chains, squalls of lashes, and rivers of spit stream over my shoulders. But I have not the right to put down roots. … I have not the right to become mired by the determinations of the past. I am not a slave to the slavery that dehumanized my ancestors.” His criticism of allowing the body to serve as a metonymy for the violence of slavery argues that to do so would allow how society and culture have constituted him, his thingness, to determine the course of his existence. Such a move would allow culture to impose meaning on his body and prevent his ability to invent and endlessly create himself. In his words, “I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. … I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further.” For Fanon, to agree this metonymy of the black body as slavery prevents black folks from ever escaping the suffering reification that perpetuates the inhuman voices of history.29

Like Fanon, Moten finds these methods of black performance problematic because they fail to generate a response that attends to the causes of black suffering. As he states, “Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the
demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and terrible.” For Moten, resistance in this fashion either produces an affect so overwhelming that it stifles action or it encourages the performer to lock themselves into cycles of alienation by embracing their role as the tortured body. He finds that attempts to perform the marks of slavery create a “narcissistic identification” with the suffering body that exacerbates black folks “indifference to suffering that” often results from the “benumbing spectacle.” This style of resistance in the flesh functionally “obliterates the other” by holding non-black bodies accountable to the violence of slavery.  

This measure of performance raises the question whether its purpose is to confront white folks in policy debate with the truth of black oppression or whether those engaging in resistance are content to trap white opponents into cycles of disaffection as they attempt to comprehend the violence their assumed ancestors perpetuated on the black body during the United States formation. The first dilemma fails to escape the metonymy of slavery. Rather than challenge the Y a bon Banania essence, this style of performance determines the impossibility of ridding the self of its “innate complex” and asserts the self as a “BLACK MAN” and a visual stand in for the history of black/white social relations. The second dilemma carries this self-assessed blackness into encounters with white folks and deploys black personal experience as a metonymic weapon used to cut into the psyche of whiteness. Challenging the assumptions present in either strategy, Fanon writes:

Haven’t I got better things to do on this earth than avenge the Blacks of the seventeenth century?
Is it my duty to confront the problem of black truth on this earth, this earth which is already trying to sneak away?

Must I confine myself to the justification of a facial profile?

I have not the right as a man of color to research why my race is superior or inferior to another.

I have not the right as a man of color to wish for a guilt complex to crystallize in the white man regarding the past of my race.

I have not the right as a man of color to be preoccupied with ways of trampling on the arrogance of my former master.\(^\text{32}\)

From this reading of Fanon, the solution to the black body’s supposed presence as a pollutant in white spaces should not serve as a justification to impose the history of black/white colonialism and slavery on the next available white body. Rather, we should caution resistance in the flesh that limits young black bodies’ available means of rhetorical invention to their facial profile. Kelly E. Happe writes:

Performative enactments of race foreclose opportunities for disrupting race, namely, by securing the consent of those who play a crucial role in sustaining a racialized social order. … A rhetorical phenomenon that is possible not only because the body is called upon to produce racial truths (what I describe as the synecdochical collapse between genotype and phenotype) but because the presumed behavior, or culture, of racialized groups becomes part of the scene of address.\(^\text{33}\)

Locating resistance in the body contains a limited ability to challenge racial essentialisms because it preserves essentialisms of blackness and whiteness as tropes to be deployed in
debate competition. Resistance in this manner fails to disrupt negative racial essentialisms because each challenge to white supremacy instills a new universal meaning of the injurious history blackness and the evils of whiteness in its place.

**The Limits of Signifyin(g) for Black Public Voice**

Although skeptical of the BAM’s goals, Watts recognizes the importance of studying variations in styles of black aesthetic performance. He argues that rhetoricians can examine these modes of “public expression” to observe “the black aesthetic’s capacity to function as a mode of interpretive understanding and rhetorical invention.”

In what is left of this chapter, I explore the limits of signifyin(g) for the realization of black public voice in academic policy debate. I argue that Reid-Brinkley’s defense of signifyin(g) as an inventional tactic in policy debate limits black public voice by concealing the meaning of argument in modes of interpretation unavailable to white opponents. While this theory is competitively successful, its dependence on incomprehension stifles white debaters’ ability to acknowledge the ethical components of black public argument.

Reid-Brinkley defends signifyin(g) as a rhetorical strategy that allows the black body to extend the discursive African-American tradition into public argument. In doing so, however, she omits a fundamental element of the theory—that signifyin(g) extends the African tradition of the “trickster figure” in public spaces. She borrows from page 237 of Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s *Figures in Black* to describe signifyin(g) as “marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, playing the dozens, and so on.” The paragraph immediately following this sentence explains that signifyin(g) is impossible to separate from “black mythology's archetypal signifier, the
Signifying Monkey” who operates as “the trickster figure of Yoruba mythology.” The implication of Reid-Brinkley’s omission is that it avoids entirely the problem signifyin(g) presents for authentic engagement between white and black audiences because the theory is expressly opposed to “information giving” and instead hinges on linguistic strategies of tricking white audiences.\(^{35}\)

To fully appreciate signifyin(g) and its importance would require one to read Gates’ *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self* as the first of a three part volume “that treat the nature and function of both Afro-American literature and its criticism.” The second text, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Criticism*, charts the tradition’s self-contained terms for order, its internal and overriding principles of criticism. The final text, *Black Letters in the Enlightenment*, examines specific strategies of signifyin(g) as they appear in unique circumstances across a range of historical texts. Gates notes, “These three works, while addressing different aspects of a central question, are fundamentally related to each other as three parts of what I hope is a larger whole.” As such, this section cannot hope to explain the entirety of the theory. Instead, I aim to explain the basic origins of signifyin(g) and how the theory applies to contemporary policy debate.\(^{36}\)

The Afro-American literary tradition contains in it the character Esu, who is represented as the Signifying Monkey. According to Gates, “Esu is the Yoruba figure of the meta-level of formal language use, of the ontological and epistemological status of figurative language and its interpretation.” In *The Signifying Monkey*, he explains, “the Signifying Monkey serves as the figure-of-figures, as the trope in which are encoded several other peculiarly black rhetorical tropes.” Accordingly, “the Monkey’s language of
Signifyin(g) functions as a metaphor for formal revision, intertextuality, within the Afro-American literary tradition.” The Signifying Monkey views texts as having an “indeterminate relationship between truth on one hand and understanding on the other.” The relevance of this interpretive principle for this discussion is that the signifyin(g) takes place “at Esu’s crossroads, where black and white semantic fields collide.” Through black vernacular structure, it exploits homonymic tension between common white cultural understandings of terms.³⁷

Affectively, signifyin(g) resonates in “perpendicular universes” to common white interpretations of terms to achieve “the obscuring of apparent meaning.” To understand the true relationship of signifyin(g) to policy debate, it is necessary to reflect on an important myth that corresponds to the Signifying Monkey’s extended tradition. Gates explains:

The action represented in Monkey tales turns upon the action of three stock characters—the Monkey, the Lion, and the Elephant—who are bound together in a trinary relationship. The Monkey—a rhetorical trickster figure, like Esu, who is full of guile, who tells lies, and who is a rhetorical genius—is intent on demystifying the Lion’s self-imposed status as King of the Jungle. The Monkey, clearly, is no match for the Lion’s physical prowess; the Elephant is, however. The Monkey’s task, then, is to trick the Lion into tangling with the Elephant, who is the true King of the Jungle for everyone else in the animal kingdom. This the Monkey does with a rhetorical trick, … a play on language use.³⁸

This tale corresponds well to the participants of policy debate. One can read the Monkey as the team signifyin(g) on the Lion, who represents the traditional team. The judge
corresponds to the Elephant. The signifyin(g) team seeks to deflate the perceived superiority of the traditional debaters by rendering them “hapless” due to their inability to interpret the black vernacular. Accordingly, they seek to convince the traditional team they have “spoken literally, when all along [they have] spoken figuratively.” Upon losing to the signifyin(g) strategy, the traditional team “realizes that [its] status has been deflated … because [it] fundamentally misunderstood the status of the” signifyin(g) team’s arguments. This explains why traditional teams are commonly upset when they lose to non-traditional strategies. Their dissatisfaction stems not from losing the debate as much as not understanding the function of their opponent’s argument throughout the debate.39

A useful example of this phenomena occurred in the Octafinal debate of the 2013 NDT between Harvard University and The University of West Georgia. Throughout the tournament, West Georgia’s affirmative consisted primarily of poetry and jazz music inspired by the BAM. The affirmative offered a performance that violated traditional genres of debate to express how language has objectified black humanity in the United States. Arguing for the need of a new language to articulate black humanity before seeking action, they stated:

One should mainly wonder why of course, why we cannot do both. Why that is talking about pain must we deemphasize your beauty to put aside or substitute it before talking about plans to commence. … We who are dark have done precious little talking about our pain in this post-civil rights era and probably a bit too much posturing about our plans. If anything, we have a surplus of plans…what we do not have is a language.40
In this particular debate, however, they added the following statement to the beginning of the first affirmative constructive:

Listen! I think y’all should listen. I think the USFG\textsuperscript{1} should do something with….I think the USFG should do something with…with energy. Like, you know, solar and shit.\textsuperscript{41}

Harvard responded to West Georgia’s position with a Framework argument stating that the affirmative should be rejected for its failure to provide a normative plan that endorsed the resolution.\textsuperscript{2} They argued that discussing federal government action was necessary to preserve debate as a site of political engagement. Within this strategy, however, Harvard failed to acknowledge the presence of the advocacy statement that West Georgia set forth at the beginning of the debate.

West Georgia rebutted Harvard’s position by arguing, among other things, that the preceding statement met the negative’s interpretation for debate. Observe the following statement from West Georgia’s first affirmative rebuttal:

They read all these arguments about how we’re not political engagement. They are absolutely wrong. This is how we engage within this debate space and this is how we engage outside of the debate space. We are constantly in a state of subversion where we are tricking white people into these ideas. We’re tricking

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item This is a common acronym for “United States Federal Government.”
\item The 2012-2013 NDTCEDA resolution read – Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reduce restrictions on and/or substantially increase financial incentives for energy production in the United States of one or more of the following: coal, crude oil, natural gas, nuclear power, solar power, wind power.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
white people with this whole central advantage because we understand that y’all want a text so we give you text and then we trick you.\textsuperscript{42}

In this respect, West Georgia ‘tricked’ Harvard with their opening statement that signified on a normative plan. West Georgia went on to win the debate on a 4-1 decision.

Read alongside Reid-Brinkley’s assessment of the Louisville Project, this example demonstrates the success of signifyin(g) as a strategy for winning individual debate rounds. Recognizing its viability as a successful debate strategy does not however guarantee its success at fostering resistance. At its core, “signifyin(g) is the black trope of tropes, the figure for black rhetorical figures” that seeks to disguise the black vernacular from white audiences. While this serves West Georgia’s purpose of a “survival tactic,” it calls into question its viability at fostering disalienation and acknowledgment.\textsuperscript{43}

Instead of arguing openly, signifyin(g) disguises advocacy in tropes. For Tell, “undoing the synthetic work of rhetoric and its tropes” is a requirement for achieving the “‘first and final point of resistance.’” Similarly, Moten argues that the signifyin(g) tradition as forwarded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Houston A. Baker is “anathema” to resistance because it “arrest[s]” black folks’ ability to challenge their objectivity by cloaking that challenge in language. Rather than seek out genuine argument, signifyin(g) as public argument is infected by what Ruth Shively describes as a “‘parasitic’ need” for “an order to subvert.” In this sense, signifyin(g) is more concerned with demonstrating rhetorical prowess than generating successful resistance.\textsuperscript{44}

As a model of argument to foster black public voice and resistance, signifyin(g) is particularly suspect. Resistance requires a mutual understanding to challenge opposing forces, especially in settings of debate. Shively writes:
At the very least, we must agree about what it is that is being debated before we can debate it. … Nor can one demonstrate resistance to a policy if no one knows that it is a policy. In other words, contest is meaningless if there is a lack of agreement or communication about what is being contested. Resisters, demonstrators, and debaters must have some shared ideas about the subject and/or the terms of their disagreements. … And a demonstrator’s audience must know what is being resisted. In short, the contesting of an idea presumes some agreement about what that idea is and how one might go about intelligibly contesting it.\textsuperscript{45}

Signifyin(g) presents a problem for resistance spaces of debate because it creates confusion about the necessity of challenging normative structures. An observer of this form of performance is left without an understanding of the necessity of an institutional challenge.

Joyce Ann Joyce argues that, by avoiding direct contestation in favor of playing the indeterminacy of language, signifyin(g) “only exacerbates the Black critic’s estrangement from the important social, political, economic, and … psychological forces that shape Black culture.” Instead of taking a discursive scalpel to the abstractions that suppress black humanity, signifyin(g) leaves negative essentialisms in place as it is content to trope the trope. As a survival tactic, moreover, it fails the task of recovering from social death because it is reliant on masking itself in the presence of white bodies. Returning to the original tales of the Signifying Monkey, Joyce explains:

Relying on the power of words, the monkey in the tale of The Signifying Monkey uses the power of words to manipulate the lion and the elephant so as to secure his
own survival. The monkey's survival depends on a common understanding of language that he shares with the lion and the elephant. It is this commonality that the monkey exploits and destabilizes. Moreover, the monkey has to stay in the tree until the lion leaves—that is, until the monkey's environment is safe. This need for safety, in this case the political and social safety of black lives, is the “essential point” that Gates's poststructuralist ideology will not allow him to explore.46

Signifyin(g)’s reliance on deconstruction is ultimately “nihilistic” because it refuses to recognize the possibility for communication to alleviate social death. Rather than erect the challenge of disalienation through authentic speech acts, it retreats into alienation and treats public “existence [as] a [linguistic] game” to be played by tricking white folks in shared spaces.

Watts identifies this aspect of the signifyin(g) tradition as antithetical to the goal of fostering public voice. By masking language through rhetorical tricks, signifyin(g) fails to generate the necessary discomfort for white folks to challenge negative essentialism of black humanity. He writes:

The deliberate construction of such misreadings is a part of a black folk discursive legacy where the storyteller becomes a “trickster” (Gates). ... As deceivers, “tricksters” mask their faces against the blows of white supremacy. White racists are tricked into believing that no challenge to their authority accompanies such public performances. Du Bois understands that an overt form of public acknowledgment is required for the cultivation of a black public voice. And so he asks black citizen singers to reflect on the rhetorical potentialities of speaking...
unmasked and in the open. … White Americans must note the stresses placed on public speech. Thus, in the space of this public acknowledgment on the ethics and emotions of African American speech, “voice” occurs.47

In the context of the debate between West Georgia and Harvard, it is difficult to separate their victory from the new advocacy text they provided at the beginning of their affirmative. For the four individuals who determined West Georgia won the debate, myself included, it was clear that the ‘plan’ they provided met Harvard’s initial Framework interpretation. Despite the power of their advocacy which challenged traditional forms of debate requiring plan action, they won largely in part because of the signifyin(g) act that began the affirmative. This raises the question of whether the remaining judges voted in acknowledgment West Georgia’s ethical critique of normative debate or simply because they successfully tricked Harvard. If it is true, as Wise posits, that privileged debaters must acknowledge the voices of marginalized people in order to challenge their unquestioned assumptions of whiteness, then it appears imperative that we do away with signifyin(g) as a method of argument.48
Chapter Notes

1 Reid-Brinkley, “Privilege, Personal Experience and the Research Burden: Avoiding the Race Debate.”

2 Wise, *White Like Me*: 35.

3 Fanon, 2008: xiii; 89. Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 15.

4 Wise: 35.

5 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 149.

6 Warnick: 68.


8 Johnson: 19.

9 Alexander: 653.

10 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 9-11; 37; 55; 66; 78; 87-88; 93-94; 96.


12 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 158.

13 Fanon, 2008: 191.

14 Alexander: 662.


16 *Ibid*. 

Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 78; 99; 101-102; 107; 155.


Ibid: 103.

Ibid: 100-101; 103; 110.

Ibid: 111.

Fanon, 2008: 179.


Spillers: 205.

Fanon, 2008: 203-205.


Ibid: 95.

Ibid: 203.


41 *Ibid*.

42 *Ibid*.


45 Shively: 181-182.


Chapter Five – Conclusion

My optimism would consist rather in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstances than necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary, historical circumstances than with inevitable anthropological constraints … You know, to say that we are much more recent than we think isn’t a way of taking the whole weight of history on our shoulders. It’s rather to place at the disposal of the work that we can do on ourselves the greatest possible share of what is presented to us as inaccessible.

(Michel Foucault)¹

Now, after first being “for” society and then “against” it, I assign myself no rank or any limit, and such an attitude is very much against the trend of the times. But my world has become one of infinite possibilities.

(Ralph Ellison)²

I began the previous chapter with an excerpt from Wise explaining the importance of giving equal weight to the styles of argumentation and evidentiary standards of economically marginalized and non-white bodies seeking to challenge the normative structure of debate. For Wise, accomplishing this equality in argument evaluation is necessary to hold privileged debaters ethically accountable to perspectives that challenge technocratic assumptions that reduce the world to mere abstraction. Moreover, to do so forces the debate community to acknowledge the voices of those most oppressed by United States’ policy. If we are to treat those styles equally, however, we must also be willing to question and criticize their goals. Reid-Brinkley’s scholarship, which has proven to be critically important to the sustained participation of young people seeking to resist normalization in the activity of policy debate, should not be immune to outside examination.

After parsing through her writings on debate, including online resources, I am left wondering whether the voices of resistance emerging through “the movement” belong to
the young people it advocates on behalf of or whether they emerge from someplace else, such as the ideologies of their coaches or the writings of afro-pessimists. Afro-pessimists who, like Hortense Spillers, would tell you that the sister I have known since she was six weeks old is a slave because of the “particular figuration of the split subject that psychoanalytic theory posits.” Accordingly, she is flesh and property of the “family of the master.” Which, for those taking notes, makes my father the slave owner and our home the plantation because he chose to adopt (read: purchase) a newly born black baby from Philadelphia who, due to a series of complications in the womb, was born with only one functional lung and contracted pneumonia twice before the age of two. She was, in Audre Lorde’s words, “never meant to survive,” but she did because of the only father she has ever known. Her story, and the many others like it in this world, should cause one to question how many contradictions, or anomalies, are necessary for us to reject the positivism inherent to psychoanalytic interpretations of blackness.³

Here I return to Evans’ criticism of Atchison and Panetta, which states that Wake Forest and University of Georgia students’ debate training leaves them unequipped with the ability “to engage the literature base regarding the factness of Blackness.”⁴ My question for those who endorse this criticism is simple: how do you know what Atchison or Panetta teach their students? To the best of my knowledge, neither Carswell Hall nor the Georgia Debate Union contains an observation room from which to examine the day to day actions of its inhabitants. Perhaps if there were it would prevent the ease by which Evans makes the observation:

When your [Director of Forensics] is essentially the symbol of traditional debate and the devaluation of personal experience you are likely to have a problem
recruiting people [whose] identity and personal experiences are relevant to their life and debate experience (women, Blacks and gays for instance.) There are no Black people on the [Wake Forest’s] team as far as I know … It merely seems to produce white male debaters in the image of the white male debaters that preceded them.  

With this comment, Evans stages a headlong retreat into Fanon’s suffocating reification. Beset by alienation, he lashes out at Atchison and constructs him as the symbol of white privilege. In doing so, however, he overlooks a simple fact. Atchison did not write the scholarship in question while serving as the Director of Debate at Wake Forest. It was published while he was the Director of Debate at Trinity University. Moreover, in the three short years he has served at Wake Forest, he has coached twelve debaters to elimination debates at CEDA or the NDT. Only six have been white.

I can only imagine the psychic violence felt by those other six if and when they encountered these comments. It raises the question how one so committed to diversity could proliferate comments in the public square of the debate community that erase the presence of those female, black, Jewish, Korean, and Filipino bodies that devote countless hours to an educational activity only to be read as white because of the arguments their institution is assumed to support. As someone who has been equally mis-interpellated in the image of the white male debater, I offer this thesis as a disalienating challenge to those who would assume the entirety of an individual’s existence based on what took place in a debate competition. Let us not overlook that Atchison also coached four debaters to the elimination debates of the NDT while at Trinity University. At least one of them is not straight.
Some will read this and object to my grouping the black body with other oppressed bodies. But it was Fanon who asked, “Is there in fact any difference between one racism and another? Don’t we encounter the same downfall, the same failure of man?”

Granted, there is no denying the uniqueness of anti-black racism in the United States. What strikes me is the assumption that one needs to engage a specific literature base to discover this truth. I learned this at an early age, despite my suburban upbringing. Indeed, I have been quite confident of the existence of anti-black racism in the United States since my older brother was detained at twelve-years-old by the North Las Vegas Police as he walked down a sidewalk near his neighborhood for fitting the description of a crime in progress. The crime: bank robbery. The description: 18-36 year-old black male.

This brings me to a different excerpt from Tim Wise. It is not written about policy debate. Instead, it speaks of the general importance of optimism when seeking political change. Wise writes:

Now, in the wake of Barack Obama’s victory these barbiturate leftists are back in full effect, lecturing the rest of us about how naive we are for having any confidence whatsoever in him, or for voting at all, since “the Democrats and Republicans are all the same,” and he supports FISA and the war with Afghanistan, and all kinds of other messed up policies just like many on the right. Those of us who find any significance in the election of a man of color in a nation founded on white supremacy are fools who “drank the kool-aid,” … These are people who think being agitators is about pissing people off more than reaching out to them. … But effectiveness isn't what matters to them. What matters to them
is raging against the machine for the sake of rage itself. Their message is simple: everything sucks, the earth is doomed, all cops are brutal, all soldiers are baby-killers, all people who work for corporations are evil, blah, blah, blah, right on down the line. It's as if much of the left has become co-dependent with despondency, addicted to its own isolation, and enamored of its moral purity and unwillingness to work with mere liberals. In the name of ideological asceticism, they spurn the hard work of movement building and inspiring others to join the struggle, snicker at those foolish enough to not understand or appreciate their superior philosophical constructs, and then act shocked when their movements and groups accomplish exactly nothing. But honestly, who wants to join a movement filled with people who look down on you as a sucker?

Wise erects a challenge to those who view “radicalism is almost entirely about style and image more than actual analysis and movement building.” Moreover, he reminds us, “It wasn't anger and pessimism that broke the back of formal apartheid in the south, but rather, hope, and a belief in the fundamental decency of people to make a change if confronted by the yawning chasm between their professed national ideals and the bleak national reality.” My optimism in relation to the NDTCEDA debate community is that those who uphold traditional debate will realize that personal experience is inseparable from public argument and that those who resist normative policy debate will recognize that the presence of privilege does not correspond to the desire to extinguish blackness.

I am still skeptical, however, of the assumption that policy debaters should be required to debate from their social position of privilege in individual debate competitions. Reid-Brinkley supports this as necessary for a productive form of
discomfort that “destabilizes the dominant ideological discourses of the debate community.” Elsewhere, however, she writes, “As a 20-year old, I lacked the vocabulary to fully articulate my discomfort with the scripts made available to me.” Bear in mind that the vast majority of participants in policy debate are younger than twenty. Why then should we encourage others to divulge themselves in public spaces before they are ready? I am skeptical of imposing a standard for participation that would require debaters to subject their social identity to be judged in a competitive setting.9

Some will read this as a dismissal of the case that feminine and non-white bodies’ social identities are always already judged in competitive settings. It is certainly not my intention to overlook the unique problems faced by diverse bodies in spaces of competition. Indeed, the success of Reid-Brinkley’s work is that it forces a discussion of the issues hindering diverse participation in college debate. There is no proper way to quantify her contribution to the success of UDL debaters and those seeking alternative styles of debate. Still, I am left wondering whether the target of resistance is actually always already present or instead culturally bound. If the latter, it seems that authentic communication can serve to challenge those assumptions that contribute to the exclusion of certain bodies in policy debate.

Although certain forms of social privilege are inevitably granted on young white male bodies, I am skeptical that this applies to the scope of those high school and college-aged students that avidly participate in forensic extra-curricular activities. Alexander is similarly critical of this form of responsibility imposed on white bodies. He writes:

A repeated mantra in White Studies, linked with excavating Whiteness, denying Whiteness, and dismantling Whiteness is the notion that privilege requires
responsibility. The assertion is often based in the logic of social responsibility and ultimately reduced to giving something back. Although that is a noble deed … I often reject sentiments of giving to the less fortunate that are embedded in White Studies. Why should White privilege require responsibility? Is it to make up for, to apologize for, to deflect arguments against privilege? Is it an enactment of what Shannon Jackson (1998) calls in “White Noises,” “a conflicted and ubiquitous state of self-righteousness, guilt, entitlement, romanticization, objectification, and self censorship” (p. 53)? … Maybe my concern is the conflation and assumption that to be White is to be privileged—as opposed to the economic- or class-based issue of privilege.¹⁰

The assumption of the universality of privilege contributes to the homogenization of experience. Moreover, it treats skin as a metonymy that allows us to read the truth of people’s experience without a prior act of engagement.

The other problem this understanding of privilege creates is the idea that individual debate competitions are the ideal place to do the work of community building. There exist a range of options for communicating difference to each other in spaces of the debate community. To isolate the importance of this task to debate competitions dismisses the community element entirely. It also raises the question of why young people searching for the proper script to articulate their social position must offer it forth for a judge to evaluate its accuracy. Even if an opponent is seeking to engage authentically, it is the person sitting in the back of the room that has the final say in the matter. Moreover, I am curious how supporters of strategies designed at confronting whiteness expect debaters to accomplish the task of exposing one’s privilege during a
three-minute cross-examination period, which is the only time in debate that places teams in conversation with each other.

On this subject of competition, I am concerned that supporters of resistance will take the success of teams like West Georgia and Emporia at CEDA and the NDT to mean that meaningful black participation can only occur in policy debate through competitive means. This is not some backhanded way of saying non-traditional debaters should be content with losing debates; every collegiate debater dreams of winning the NDT. But are we willing to say that if a student does not ever win a debate at the NDT or even qualify for the NDT their presence in the community was not meaningful? Moreover, in the rush to disidentify with policy debate I worry that supporters of resistance will overlook the meaningful black participation that did occur by debaters who did not choose to engage in strategies of signifyin(g) or genre violation in the 2012-2013 season.

Are we willing to disregard the debater from Atlanta who came up through the Urban Debate League and was part of the first team from West Point to qualify to the NDT in the past six years because throughout the season he and his partner defended that the federal government should obtain nuclear powered naval aircraft carriers? Is it not meaningful black participation that the student from George Mason University who did not have a positive win-loss record at his last tournament ever was awarded The Julia Burke Award for Character and Excellence in American Debate Association Policy Debate? And why is it that the debate community, non-traditional or otherwise, does not celebrate the young woman from Liberty University who recently won the Frank Harrison Trophy which awards the champion of the Junior Varsity Division of the American Debate Association? I am very uncomfortable with this creeping notion that
black excellence can only be found in the debate community in the elimination rounds or the speaker award lists of major national tournaments. So for those in the policy debate community that do not know of the debaters that I just described, I suggest that you take a moment to adopt Fanon’s conclusion and discover them for yourself.

Furthermore, perhaps it is time that we give more credit to the notion that a win or loss in a given debate signifies nothing further than one team was more successful at convincing the necessary amount of judges to vote for their argument. Any other justification seems to suffer from the same mistaken positivism, however well intentioned, that allowed Charles Lam Markmann to read *L’Expérience Vécue du Noir* and emerge from that reading believing in a single fact of blackness. The preeminent Quare theorist RuPaul once said, “Anybody who steps out of the house with a pair of high heels and a wig is my hero.” In the same vein I think that any young person—whether they be black, white, Hispanic, South Korean, Bengali, Filipino, intersex, female, trans, gay, lesbian, male, disabled, obese, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, adopted, or whatever unique forms of contingency I am inevitably overlooking—should be celebrated for their willingness to occupy a space filled with total strangers and give a speech.
Chapter Notes

1 Michel Foucault and Didier Eribon: 156.

2 Ellison: 563.

3 Spillers: 203; 219.


4 RW, “More on Debate & Anti-Blackness.”

5 Rashad Evans, NDTCEDA Traditions (November 17, 2012, 6:50pm)


6 Fanon, 2008: 67.


8 *Ibid*.

9 Reid-Brinkley, 2008: 149-150.

Shanara Reid-Brinkley, “Ghetto Kids Gone Good:” 79.

10 Alexander, 657.

11 RuPaul, “Gone With the Window” *RuPaul’s Drag Race* Season 2 Episode 1, first broadcast 1 February 2010 by Logo. Directed by Ian Stevenson.
References


Alexander, Bryant Keith. “Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (With Apologies to Frantz Fanon),” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (2004): 647-672.


Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).


———. “Personalized Debate and the Difficulty of Building Coalitions,” resistanceanddebate (June 24, 2012)

———. “Privilege, Personal Experience and the Research Burden: Avoiding the Race Debate,” resistanceanddebate (June 23, 2012)


Saenz, Ricardo. “NDT 2013 Finals - Emporia SW vs Northwestern LV” (April 2, 2013)


Sholle, David J. “Critical Studies: From the Theory of Ideology to Power/Knowledge;”

Spillers, Hortense J. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,”


Tell, Dave. “Rhetoric and Power: An Inquiry into Foucault’s Critique of Confession,”


Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

M.A.  Wake Forest University, Department of Communication, 2013
   Areas of study: Media Studies, Rhetoric
   Advisor: Michael J. Hyde

B.A.  *cum laude*, Trinity University, 2011
   Major Fields: Speech Communication, History

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Debate Assistantship, *Wake Forest University* 2011-2013. Two years of tuition and
stipend for coaching intercollegiate debate.

Baker Duncan Scholarship, *Trinity University* 2007-2011. Awarded for participating in
the intercollegiate debate team.

Topic Selection Committee Student Representative, *Cross Examination Debate
Association* 2010.

assisting the instruction of college students in intercollegiate debate

Inducted into Lambda Pi Eta Honors Society, *Trinity University* 2009.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, *Wake Forest University*, Department of Communication, 2012
   Courses assisted:
   Conspiracy Theories, Introduction to Rhetorical Methods

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“‘The Shadow of Eugenics:’ An Analysis of Normalcy in *The Case against Perfection.*”
National Communication Association, Rhetoric of Science Division, Nov. 2012.

COMMUNITY AND DEBATE

Assistant Debate Coach, *Wake Forest University*, 2011-present

Debate Instructor, Jayhawk Debate Institute, summer workshop for high school students,
*University of Kansas*, 2011-present

Debate Researcher, *Heritage Hall High School*, Oklahoma City, 2011-present


topic controversy selected by the *Cross Examination Debate Association*, 2010

Debate Lecturer, *St Mary’s Hall School*, San Antonio, Spring 2010

Octafinalist, *National Debate Tournament*, 2010
Assistant Debate Coach, **Round Rock High School**, Round Rock, TX, 2007-2009

**ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

National Communication Association, 2012