

On the subject of roots

The ancestor as institutional foundation

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In 1983, Toni Morrison's classic interview-turned-essay 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation' was published in Mari Evans's anthology *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*.¹ In the piece, Morrison concerns herself with the figure of the ancestor in African American literature. For her, the ancestor is a 'distinctive element of African American writing', and because of this distinctiveness, the ancestor should be a central component of African American literary criticism.² She continues by saying, '[It] seems to me interesting to evaluate Black literature on what the writer does with the presence of an ancestor. Which is to say a grandfather as in Ralph Ellison, or a grandmother as in Toni Cade Bambara, or a healer as in Bambara or Henry Dumas. There is always an elder there.' This elder, according to Morrison, possesses a certain symbolic and hermeneutical weight. '[These] ancestors', she says, 'are not just parents, they are sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom.'

In a period in which U.S. colleges and universities such as Harvard, Yale, Brown, Georgetown and Wake Forest are wrestling with their legacies in slavery, it would seem that our time is ripe for transporting Morrison's insights and those similar to hers beyond the terrain of literature and to the domain of the academy. Indeed, the former Trump administration's *The 1776 Report* – issued just before the inauguration of President Biden – acknowledged the ancestral stakes of conservative understandings of the U.S. university. The report stated, for instance, 'The founders insisted that universities should be at the core of preserving American republicanism by instructing students and future leaders of its true basis and instilling in them not just an understanding but a reverence for its principles and core documents.' In the

report, the founders represent an ancestral ethos for compelling students to conform to state protocols.

We might say though that the kind of present-day reckoning with slavery and colonialism's role in producing the modern U.S. academy means that we must acknowledge that the founding fathers are not the only ancestors that haunt those institutions. The student protests and the institutional scrutiny that they inspire suggest a competing ancestral ethos, one that not only inspires us to 'get our history right' but to promote forms of knowledge and practice that are both critical of and alternative to the dominant ancestors' calls to identify with state and capital. Insisting on an alternative set of ancestors who need to be acknowledged, the recent record of protests on U.S. college campuses confirms the ancestral presence of the subjugated and our need to respond to that presence. In this way we can think of colleges and universities as contested ancestral grounds, ones in which dominant and subjugated ancestors vie for ideological authority.

Hence, the minoritised ancestor is not a discourse that's external to the university. Indeed, this essay engages the ancestor as both a figure of the unacknowledged labour that produced the modern academy and as an ethical interruption to the academy's normative operations, particularly in those moments when the ancestor's descendants reckon with the academy. In such a context, black intellectual cultural production emerges as an appropriate venue from which to theorise the minoritised ancestor as a catalyst for critical transformations. Put simply, turning to black cultural production allows us to converse with the minoritised ancestor in ways that the usual philosophical critique of the academy never could. However significant, the dominant philosophical registers have never addressed the minoritised ancestor as a figure of epistemological and institutional import-

ance. Taking my cues from Morrison's essay, in particular, and black literary and intellectual production, in general, this essay alternatively takes some initial steps toward a hermeneutic that can analyse the various and contending ancestral discourses at work on our campuses and the struggles that they inspire.

The dominance of the European spirit in the western academy

An institutional criticism like the one that this essay calls for is not really foreign to the university. Indeed, the ancestor as a discursive figure has always had a particular function in the modern western academy and in classical social theory. In *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings implicitly identified this function when he wrote, 'The reason it is necessary to reread Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte and Kant is that the vast majority of the contemporary "solutions" to the crisis of the university are, in fact, no more than the restatements of Humboldt or Newman, whose apparent aptness is the product of ignorance of these founding texts on the history of the institution.'³ With this, Readings implies that the dominant ways in which we try to assess and attempt to fix the university betray the ways that we are possessed by a particular ancestral assemblage – that is, how we are the unwitting heirs of Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte and Kant. In the language that Avery Gordon gave us in her classic book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, we are haunted by the terms that these thinkers laid out for thinking and practicing the university.⁴

This assemblage of ancestors would set the grammar for the construction and continuation of the modern Western academy long after their deaths. Locating these thinkers within the tradition of German idealism, Readings argues, 'The achievement of the German idealists is a truly remarkable one: to have articulated and instituted an analysis of knowledge and its social function. [They] deduced not only the modern university but also the German nation.' For him, these thinkers who brought philosophy, aesthetics, and history together yielded 'an articulation of the ethnic nation, the rational state, and philosophical culture, which linked speculative philosophy to the reason of history itself (*for almost two centuries of imperial expansion*).' On the way to thinking the

terms of modern philosophy and aesthetics, these intellectuals conceived the modern nation-state, the modern academy, and modern national culture. These idealists may have wrongly presumed that ideas would change the world, as Marx would argue in *The German Ideology*, but their ideas did in fact bring institutions *into* the world.

Derrida reflected on this remarkable achievement through which thinking would birth institutions in his book *Eyes of the University*. He wrote, 'Every text, every element of a corpus reproduces or bequeaths, in a prescriptive or normative mode, one or several injunctions: come together according to this or that rule, this or that scenography, this or that topography of minds and bodies, form this or that type of institution so as to read me and write about me, organise this or that type of exchange and hierarchy to interpret me, evaluate me, preserve me, translate me, inherit from me, make me live on.'⁵ This remarkable achievement gave birth to institutions that would train us to organise and evaluate the world, and in doing so, it would teach us to organise and evaluate ourselves and others. As they were implied through formulations such as 'the founding fathers' or 'founding texts', a dominant set of ancestors would direct us to come together according to certain rules, scenographies, typographies, exchanges and hierarchies.

This dominant set of ancestors arose out of the histories of imperialism. In terms of the American colonies, the historian Craig Steven Wilder has demonstrated that American colleges were central to expanding colonialism through the dispossession of native lands and extending slavery through the exploration of black labour. The dominant ancestral and therefore ideological foundations are rooted in colonial dispossession and enslavement. Those histories also helped to shape modern political and academic knowledge. To reiterate Readings, imperial expansion linked speculative philosophy, the academy, and the nation-state.

In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe shows how modern liberalism and the colonial division of humanity gave birth to one another.⁶ We see this explicitly in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. In his chapter 'Of Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-being' he argues, 'There is only too great a tendency in the best beliefs and practices to degenerate into the mechanical; and unless there were a succession of persons whose ever-recurring originality prevents the grounds of those

beliefs and practices from becoming merely traditional, such dead matter would not resist the smallest shock from anything really alive, and there would be no reason why civilisation should not die out, as the Byzantine Empire.⁷ Worried that Western civilisation was getting too close to that of China, he said, 'We have a warning.'⁸ Where progress was concerned, the Chinese, he argued, have become stationary – have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners.' The Chinese, he continues, 'have succeeded beyond all hope ... in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conducts by the same maxims and rules.' In contrast he asks,

What has made the European family of nations an improving, instead of a stationary portion of mankind? Not any superior excellence in them, which, when it exists, exists as the effect, not as the cause; but their remarkable diversity of character and culture. Individuals, classes, nations, have been extremely unlike one another: they have struck out a great variety of paths, each leading to something valuable; and although at every period those who travelled in different paths have been intolerant of one another, and each would have thought it an excellent thing if all the rest could be compelled to travel his road, their attempts to thwart each other's development have rarely had any permanent success, and each has in time endured to receive the good which the others have offered.⁹

For Mill the European family of nations represents a long ancestral and racial line that moves toward progress. The modern Western academy would be born from and partake of this ancestral story. Those institutions, like the nations from which they came, would present themselves as the catalysts for and measurements of human development. In her interpretation of Mill, Lowe suggests that Mill understood Western originality to mean the unique combination of free trade, liberal democracy, and colonial government. Western Man would become the symbol of this originality, the sum total of an ancestral assemblage. In his own discussion of the figure of man, Foucault would argue, for instance, that Man was not a 'phenomenon of opinion but an event in the order of knowledge',¹⁰ serving as the ground for modern thought since the nineteenth century, laying the foundation for the emergence of the human sciences.

At the heart of how the West has spoken about itself, its philosophy and its institutions, there has always been

an argument about ancestors. Indeed, these particular ancestors have proposed ways to interpret the world according to their understandings of human development and knowledge formations. Moreover, they proposed institutions and disciplines that would facilitate and corroborate those interpretations. As the representative and enforcer of those interpretations, Western Man has operated as the ancestral sign of all that is supreme in human achievement. Part of his prerogative has always been to demand our identification. In her own discussion of the power and influence of this figure, Sylvia Wynter has argued, 'Our present arrangement of knowledge ... was put in place in the nineteenth century as a function of the epistemic/discursive constitution of the figure of Man ... [The] unifying goal of minority discourse ... will necessarily be to accelerate the conceptual 'erasing' of the figure of Man.'¹¹ With that goal in mind, let us now turn to those gone, forgotten and unfamed ancestors as the basis of a long-awaited hermeneutical and institutional enterprise.

The Post-WWII moment and the coming of the ancestors

Morrison's essay emphasises the presence of the ancestor as another characteristic of twentieth-century black literature. She states, 'What struck me in looking at some contemporary fiction was that whether the novel took place in the city or in the country, the presence or absence of that figure [of the ancestor] determined the success or the happiness of the character.'¹² Here, the ancestor becomes an interpretive device for the critic in both literary and social assessments – 'literary' in the sense that it becomes a way of evaluating the particularities of African American literature, 'social' in that the depictions allegorise one of the major transformations of African American history, the movement of a people from rural to urban settings. Morrison suggests that the black ancestor becomes a centre of gravity in the moment of social transformations and disruption.

It is significant that the literature that Morrison invokes arises in the post-WWII moment of minority insurgency through civil rights, anticolonial, and black power movements. *Invisible Man* was published in 1952, during the independence movements in Africa and the civil rights movement within the States. Toni Cade Bambara's



work arises at the end of the sixties when the civil rights movement begins to yield to the black power movement. The writer Henry Dumas's oeuvre was written during the period bookended by civil rights and black power as well.

Taken together, the anti-colonial, civil rights, and black power movements produced an ethos to revive those ancestors that the Western ancestor of Man attempted to overshadow and suppress. Touching on that revival, Stuart Hall would argue that you could not talk about the post-war world without also talking about the 'moment when the unspoken discovered that they had a history that they could speak.'¹³ As he said, 'They had languages other than the language of the master, of the tribe. It is an enormous moment. The world begins to be decolonised at that moment.'¹⁴ We might link Hall's and Morrison's arguments by saying that the minoritised ancestor becomes the metaphor for that discovery and the cultural production that this discovery would promote. We must say that neither this discovery nor this ancestor would be engaged as a relic of the past but as a

reconstruction for the present and the future. Hall said, for example, 'It is not just a fact that has been waiting to ground our identities. What emerges from this is nothing like an uncomplicated, dehistoricised, undynamic, uncontradictory past. Nothing like that is the image which is caught in the moment of return.' This was the moment for both invoking and reimagining the ancestor.

If the figure of Western man was designed to promote certain prescriptive norms, the minoritised ancestors were imagined to upset those norms. The function of the minoritised ancestors was to deliberate on how certain taken-for-granted institutions and forms might be alternatively inhabited. For instance, in her discussion of the institution of the novel, Morrison argued,

[When] the industrial revolution began, there emerged a new [middle] class of people who were neither peasants nor aristocrats. In large measure they had no art form to tell them how to behave in this new situation. So they produced an art form: we call it the novel of manners, an art form designed to tell people something they didn't

know. That is, how to behave in this new world, how to distinguish between the good guys and the bad guys. How to get married. What a good living was. What would happen if you strayed from the fold.¹⁵

Morrison designates the novel as an inventor of and guide for an ethical formation suited for the new bourgeois class, a class that emerged in the wake of industrialisation.

The African American novel and the figure of the black ancestor, for her, were ways of guiding a social group transiting into predominantly white institutional and social settings. As she says,

[It] seems to me that the novel is needed by African-Americans now in a way that it was not needed before – and it is following along the lines of the function of novels everywhere. We don't live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don't sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is in the novel, I regard it as a way to accomplish certain very strong functions – one being the one I just described.¹⁶

This reinvented novel would be needed in the post-WWII moment in which the opportunities of black advancement were expanding. This expansion would directly impact Morrison's sense of why the black novel was needed. As she said, 'the press toward upward social mobility would mean to get as far away from that kind of [ancestral] knowledge as possible.' Bourgeois ascendancy for blacks would potentially threaten those roots, but this jeopardy was in no way particular to black people. Recall that in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argued that part of what made the bourgeoisie a revolutionary historical force was its ability to end prior social relations.¹⁷ For Morrison the novel was a means of intervening into a phenomenon that threatened the knowledge formations and cultural production of black communities.¹⁸

The ancestor was central to the black novel's efforts, she implies, because the ancestor was a force that could help black people negotiate the disruptions of these social transformations. Talking about the function of the ancestor within the novels, she writes, 'It was the absence of an ancestor that was frightening, that was threatening, and it caused huge destruction and disarray in the

work itself.'¹⁹ If the dominant ancestor, represented by the figure of Man, was designed by Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte and Kant to effect certain responsibilities for developing the self according to the reigning principles of Western institutions, then the ancestors that Morrison invokes in black literature represented the need for responsibilities that would compete with those of their dominant counterparts. Put plainly, the minoritised ancestors proposed ethical and ideological discourses created to problematise bourgeois subjective and institutional transformation, particularly their reliance upon and production of racial and colonial hierarchies. They also called for institutional practices suited for that task.

Slavery, race, and memory

If the ancestors made themselves visible in the post-WWII moment, as I've been arguing, we might think of the kind of reckoning with histories of slavery and colonialism happening throughout the global north, in general, and our universities, in particular, as the logical outcome of the ancestors' appearance. We might take inspiration from Morrison's engagement and call for a critical practice that asks how the figure of the minoritised ancestor can intervene into our academic institutions. In what ways can a critique developed for literature help us in the academy? We might imagine the ancestor asking, 'Consider all the ways that Western Man has asked you to inhabit this place, and ask yourselves, "What might be other modes of inhabitation?"'

In the introduction to *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Immanuel Kant notes how the university *intends* for us to inhabit it. He writes,

The university would have a certain autonomy (since only scholars can pass judgement on scholars as such), and accordingly it would be authorised to perform certain functions through its faculties (smaller societies, each comprising the university specialists in one main branch of learning): to admit to the university students seeking entrance from the lower schools and, having conducted examinations, by its own authority to grant degrees or confer the universally recognised status of 'doctor' on free teachers (that is, teachers who are not members of the university – in other words, *to create doctors*).²⁰

The university *admits*; it *grants*, and it *creates*. The

sequence suggests that admission into these hallowed halls segues into the awarding of degrees and ends with the creation of people. The university not only certifies expertise; it bestows personhood.²¹ It not only promises the recognition for work achieved. It also claims a brand new humanity for us. This is the ancient and dangerous seduction of that dominant ancestral norm known as Western Man, the one who mouths, ‘We are here to show you that you fit within the established order of things. We’ve waited a long time for you. We’ve made a place for you at our table.’

Vincent Harding tried to impart this in his essay ‘Responsibilities of the Black Scholar to the Community.’ He wrote,

Black scholars must remember their sources, and by this I mean no technically historical sources. I mean human sources. I mean they were not created as persons, as historians, as teachers, by Purdue University or UCLA or by the AHA or the OAH or any other set of letters. They are the products of their source – the great pained community of the Afro-Americans of this land. And they can forget their source only at great peril to their spirit, their work, and their souls.²²

Here Harding uses the ancestral source to displace the university as the origin of personhood, particularly for black scholars. Rather than their intellection deriving from the procedures of the university, he argues that it springs from an extra-academic context. As such, their intellectual production and power – in a rebuttal to Western man – is not something the university can claim.

As Morrison suggested, the ancestors in Harding’s essay emerge to guide people through a transition and an inclusion. The essay is situated in the 1986 volume *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine. The volume came out of a 1983 conference held at Purdue University, a conference that was sponsored by the American Historical Association. The conference was designed to assess the innovative work in African American history that had just been produced in the mid-1970s, by the ‘fourth generation of African American historians’,²³ a group that arose as a result of the political achievements of civil rights and black power. That volume contains an essay by the dean of Black historians John Hope Franklin. He wrote, ‘In the fourth generation [of historians of African American history], which began around 1970, there emerged the largest and perhaps the best-trained group of historians of Afro-America that had ever appeared. The Afro-Americans in the group were trained, as were the white historians, in graduate centres in every part of the country, in contrast to those of the third generation, who had been trained at three or four universities in the East and Midwest.’²⁴ Perhaps rebutting Franklin’s argument, Harding’s remarks are designed to complicate a narrative of progress, a narrative that posits the fourth generation and their work as the outcomes of the academy’s procedures, a discourse that hails them as the children of a set of letters. An ancestral discourse emerges in Harding’s text, offering a life-saving counsel to the fourth generation.



Granddaddy Willie Marvin – Daddy’s daddy – gave me this counsel when I left home to go to college. A former sharecropper and grandchild of slaves, he – like so many other black parents in our rural Georgia community – had sent his children off to school and watched them return oftentimes as strangers. So after giving me a hug goodbye, he would grab me by the shoulders and say, ‘Still stay Roderick’. Sitting on the yards of Morris Brown or Fort Valley State to see his daughters get their degrees was as far as Granddaddy got to any college. Even so, he knew something about the university and its imposition of personhood – enough to warn me about it.

Even with the gravitas of his message, I have always appreciated my grandfather’s admonition that seemed filled with encouragement as well. *Be careful, but go and look at the work that awaits you*, his admonition seemed to say. Like Morrison, I am struck by how the ancestors come when encouragement is most often needed in black cultural production. There is a scene in Lorraine Hansberry’s ‘To Be Young, Gifted, and Black’. A black woman intellectual, no doubt modelled after Hansberry herself, is engaged in a spirited tete-a-tete with a white male intellectual. After hearing him go on and on about the guilt and racial megalomania of Negro intellectuals, she tunes him out and drifts into a reverie, and that’s when the ancestors appear:

I could see his lips moving and knew he was talking, saying something. But I couldn’t hear him anymore. I was patting my foot and singing my song. I was *happy*. I could see the bridge across the chasm. It was made up of a band of angels of art, hurling off the souls of twenty million. I saw Jimmy Baldwin and Leontyne, and Lena and Harry and Sammy. And then there was Charlie White and Nina Simone and Johnnie Killens and – Lord have mercy, Paul was back!

... Oh, yes, there they were, the band of angels, picking up numbers along the way, singing and painting and dancing and writing and acting up a storm!²⁵

At this moment, the ancestors make themselves manifest to declare that our simultaneously ethical, intellectual and institutional charge is to ‘pick up numbers along the way’. This is an idiom of diversity that precedes and transcends any office within the academy. It is an idiom in which cultural and intellectual creation is both mass and minoritised production. And it is still our job to see and build that bridge across the chasm and to expose

the institutional procedures that keep the bridge behind the veil.

Like Morrison, I am interested in the ways that a black ancestral presence manifests in the writing often at the very moment that the university asserts its claims on our work. For instance, Harding addresses what he believes to be the African American historian’s relationship to the pained community of black people. He writes,

In this age of the fourth, fifth, sixth generation of historians, scholars must certainly say as loudly and clearly through their work and their lives that this people has not come through this pain in order to attain equal opportunity with the pain inflictors of this nation and this world. No, I think that our community’s pain is meant to open it toward the light ... This is the responsibility: to keep remembering that to be human, to say nothing of scholarly, is to be constantly moving toward the light.²⁶

Contrary to the claims of Western Man, Harding argues, a new responsibility is needed, a responsibility that sets as its campaign that of addressing historical trauma and developing a faculty that is learned in how not to carry the trauma on.

In her own essay in *Black Women Writers*, Toni Cade Bambara asks, ‘Is it natural (sane, healthy, wholesome, in our interest) to violate the contracts/covenants we have with our ancestors...?’²⁷ Clarifying the way this question operates in her novel *The Salt Eaters*, she says, ‘In *Salt* most particularly, in motive/content/structure design, the question is, do we intend to have a future as sane, whole, governing people?’²⁸ The ethical charge of the minoritised ancestors is the development of academic communities in which people own themselves and are not owned by the prescriptive norms of disciplinary or institutional belonging. Their work is marked by an imprimatur that does not belong to the stipulations of the academy.

Diverse as they are, what’s significant in the discourse from these writers is that whether we’re talking about Bambara, Hall, Hansberry, Harding or Morrison, none of them reduces the ancestor to a figure of authenticity or essentialism. Each one in their own way addresses the ancestor as a dynamic figure that instructs historically vulnerable people in how to adapt to and negotiate dangerous and alienating circumstances. In Morrison, the reader is presented with the ancestor as a teacherly figure that enlightens in the context of a social transition and

upheaval. Bambara suggests an ancestor that inspires alternative and critical modes of governmentality and governance. Harding assumes an ancestor that calls for modes of identification that frustrate those offered by profession and discipline. Hall intimates an ancestor that inspires the creation of idioms that can deauthorise the master ideologies and narratives of Western modernity. Hansberry proposes an ancestor that promotes polymorphous cultural productions necessary for the survival of disfranchised communities. These formulations do not represent the hackneyed notion of the ancestor as the symbol of essence and identity. On the contrary, these writers and this essay promote the ancestor as a recombinant figure, rearticulating given idioms and social orders.

Just as there is Man, always there is an ancestor. In her book *The Difference that Aesthetics Makes: On the Humanities after Man*, Kandice Chuh calls for an 'illiberal humanities', one that '[bears] the promise of gathering a critical mass constituted in and by an undisciplined relationship to the university.'²⁹ The minoritised ancestors that I have imagined are endowed with this very demand, tasked with ushering into being modes of intellection and institutionality that are diverse and non-aligned, modes represented by as yet unimagined multiplicities and the most productive sovereignties. The question before us is – beyond the acknowledgements and apologies – how will knowledge and practice be reorganised after the ancestors have had their say?

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Notes

1. The following is a revised version of a paper presented (online) at The Humanities Institute, Wake Forest University, 20 October 2020.
2. Toni Morrison, 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation', in Mari Evans, ed., *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 342–43.
3. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999), 62.
4. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2011.
5. Jacques Derrida, *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 101.

6. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
7. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 63.
8. J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, 70.
9. *ibid.*
10. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 345.
11. Sylvia Wynter, 'On Disenchanting Discourse: "Minority" Literary Criticism and Beyond', *Cultural Critique* 7 (Autumn 1987), 208–09.
12. *ibid.*
13. Stuart Hall, 'The Local and the Global', in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 184.
14. S. Hall, 'The Local and the Global', 184.
15. T. Morrison, 'Rootedness', 340.
16. Mari Evans and Stephen Evangelist Henderson, *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 340.
17. Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2012).
18. Morrison saw the novel as a way of activating black cultural forms to assess the dangers of incorporation. To the extent that black cultural forms are being used in the contemporary moment to surrender to incorporation is the extent that those forms are being activated in contradistinction to what Morrison and this essay are describing. This essay is proposing the minoritised ancestor as a resource in the critique of power/knowledge and capitalist political economies.
19. Evans and Evangelist Henderson, *Black Women Writers*.
20. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties – Der Streit Der Fakultäten*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 23.
21. My thanks to Mery Concepción for this insight.
22. Vincent Harding, 'Responsibilities of the Black Scholar to the Community', *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1989), 279.
23. John Hope Franklin, 'On the Evolution of Scholarship in Afro-American History', in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 18.
24. J. Hope Franklin, 'On the Evolution'.
25. Robert Nemiroff, *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words* (Hoboken, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 209.
26. Harding, 'Responsibilities', 281.
27. Toni Cade Bambara and Toni Morrison, *Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions* (London: Vintage, 1999), 139.
28. Toni Cade Bambara, 'Salvation is the Issue', in Evans and Evangelist Henderson, *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*, 47.
29. Kandice Chuh, *The Difference Aesthetics Makes: on the Humanities 'after Man'* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 5.