

## The Hoodie as Sign, Screen, Expectation, and Force

**I**n the aftermath of the shooting death of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, on February 26, 2012, the hoodie became a scene for forensic investigation. It was a central player in the competing stories told about the night that twenty-eight-year-old George Zimmerman followed Martin, a black teenager whose presence the neighborhood crime-watch enthusiast found suspicious on the grounds—Zimmerman claimed to the 911 dispatcher—that his “dark hoodie” was pulled up over his head. Having purchased Skittles and an Arizona Iced Tea from a nearby 7-11 convenience store, Martin was returning to his soon-to-be stepmother’s house in a gated community while Zimmerman followed him, first in his truck and then on foot. Martin’s friend Rachel Jeantel, who spoke with him on the phone minutes before he was murdered, insisted that he pull up his hoodie not just because it was raining (which it was) but also because a strange man was creeping after him in the lowering light. A hundred heartbeats later, Zimmerman fatally shot Martin in the chest.

The hoodie soon populated the landscape of protest and punditry: Million Hoodie Marches in New York City, Philadelphia, and over a hundred other cities nationwide; the viral spread of the hoodie photograph across mediascapes as a gesture of solidarity and critique; Fox news commentator Geraldo Rivera’s “cautions” issued to parents of black and Latino youth to unhood their children; shooting targets of featureless hoodies; (presumably, predominantly) nonblack youth recreating the spectacle of Martin’s death, substituting their own prone bodies in hoodies in mockery, not solidarity; and the proliferating news features querying, “Hoodies: Danger or Fashion?” (Kuperinsky 2012), “When Did Hoodlums Start Wearing Hoods?” (Palmer 2012), or “The History of the Hoodie” (Wilson 2012). Collecting and sifting through this unrolling archive, even after a six-woman jury acquitted Zimmerman of Martin’s murder, I am struck by the dense interactions between human and thing, especially where the hoodie is called upon to tell truths about the body it covers. (Indeed, Martin’s bloodstained hoodie appeared at the trial—flattened between two panes of glass, sleeves splayed, hood up—as a material witness to his murder.<sup>1</sup>) Even as the hoodie

<sup>1</sup> For more on fabric as forensic evidence, see Léopold Lambert’s “Fashion Forensic” (2014).

extended Martin's boundaries into the world, rendering him both more dangerous and more vulnerable, his body emerges and disappears, materializes as a threat and dissipates into shadow. In this ontological confusion between subject and object, between disclosure and deception, the hoodie scripts some part of the performance of racial optics and its claims to legitimate violence.

What cover, then, does the hoodie provide? I leave for others the relation (and nonrelation) of blackness to ontology, to humanness and thingness, with the understanding that others do this labor with much more depth than I could ever hope for here. Mine is the modest proposal that the hoodie makes perceptible the significance of surfaces for a racial optics. Because clothing is both contiguous and not contiguous with what it covers—skin, flesh—it is a mutable boundary that asserts itself within a field of matter, forcing us to confront the intimacy between bodies and things, and the interface between their amalgam and the environment.<sup>2</sup> In considering these dense interactions, I begin with these three presuppositions. Clothes are often understood through an indexical relationship to the person who wears them, functioning as clues to a person's existence in the world. But because clothes often act (or are accused of acting) as camouflage or costume to enable false perceptions, clothes also heighten anxieties about epistemic surety. (Do we really know what we know in seeing?) For these very reasons, clothes might also provide an alibi for a racial colonial optics as a surrogate for flesh. Through such resemblances and revelations, some things close to some bodies imbue them with affective properties that legitimate forms of governance or violence. Such suspicious things feature richly in structures that control and create divisions between the nonhuman and the human and that render the ontologically other available for rape, conquest, detention, or death. Some clothes overcome or animate some more susceptible bodies, whether injurious to their flesh (consider the language of debility and deformity used to describe at times the burqa, or stilettos) or compelling others to act against them, on them (wearing that dangerous, even duplicitous thing—the short skirt, the hoodie—is akin to asking for it). Thus does fabric—as a possible surrogate for flesh, where flesh is the overdetermination of metaphysical substance—participate in the racial mattering and sovereignty of bodies in world-shaping ways.

Drawing on the anarchic archive collocating the hoodie and the body that wears it (and sometimes unfastening them from each other), I pro-

<sup>2</sup> For more about surfaces—skin, cloth, and architectural cladding—see Anne Anlin Cheng's *Second Skin* (2013).

pose that the figuration of the hoodie as an animate thing demonstrates some of the operations of power that deem some bodies criminally other—because they are black, and therefore threatening—and available to state violence. Constructs of race teach us how to see, as Frantz Fanon observed so well, naming flesh an “epidermal schema” (1967, 112) presumed to yield usable knowledge about humanness and its others through a series of abstractions shaping subjectivation from substance. The liberal disavowal of racism as the foundation for the rule of law proliferates such abstractions as alibis; the abstractions that script skin as visible or material evidence of ontological truth slide onto other surfaces, including clothing—as indices for criminality, for instance. The hoodie is thus an example of Hortense Spillers’s *signifying property plus*, unfolding for us the racial optics through which someone is devastatingly lost, the lethal structures that lose our loved ones in the first place (1987, 65).<sup>3</sup> Yielding some sense of racism’s endurance *because* of its incoherences, correspondences, and movements in and through things, things freighted with an excess of those histories that commit some beings to premature death, the hoodie as a sign, a screen, an expectation, and a force uncovers some of the powers that threaten black life in this moment.<sup>4</sup>

### The profile

Trayvon killed by a jerk w a gun but black & Latino parents have to drill into kids heads: a hoodie is like a sign: shoot or stop & frisk me.

—Geraldo Rivera<sup>5</sup>

After Martin’s murder, the hoodie became a material witness. What part did it play in Zimmerman’s hunt, Martin’s death? Was it an accomplice or an innocent bystander? Does the hoodie have a criminal record, a troubled past? Editorials and news features solicited its testimony about the scene’s objects or properties—race, innocence, and criminality among them. For some, the hoodie’s utilitarian ubiquity signals its meaninglessness, even muteness, as witness. An immoderate jumble of qualities—stupid, classic, innocuous, functional, cuddly, universal—describes the hoodie as an ulti-

<sup>3</sup> Although I choose to lean on deconstructionist and poststructural theories, the hoodie also lends itself to analysis as a fetish in the Marxist, anthropological, and Freudian models.

<sup>4</sup> Here I borrow from Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who defines racism as “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (2006, 28).

<sup>5</sup> See Rivera’s Twitter feed at <https://twitter.com/geraldrivera/status/182963128533909504>.

mately inert thing. Clothing manufacturer American Apparel noted in a press release that its hoodies are sold to “everyone,” from toddlers to successful entrepreneurs to college students: “We even sell hoodies for dogs. To say that this classic garment implies that its owner is a dangerous criminal to be ‘feared’ is absolutely ridiculous” (in *NBC News* 2012). “Such a stupid, innocuous garment,” the *Washington Post*’s fashion editor Robin Givhan (writing for the *Daily Beast*) opined. “There [is] way too much that [is] functional, cuddly, and universal about hoodies” (Givhan 2012). In “A Place Where We Are Everything,” published on *The Rumpus*, Roxane Gay argues that discussion about the hoodie is “besides the point”: “Discussing the hoodie is the same as discussing what a woman was wearing if she was raped. What was George Zimmerman wearing when he shot Trayvon Martin? Did his outfit contribute to his paranoia and vigilantism? Discussing the hoodie is as ridiculous as trying to come up with an answer to that question” (Gay 2012). Others, including Neil Roberts (2012), in the introduction to a *Theory and Event* forum on Martin, and Toni Morrison, in *Interview* magazine, also neatly dispense with the hoodie. As Morrison aptly observes, “The killing of young black men has never changed all that much, with or without hoodies. I don’t know of any young black men who haven’t been stopped by cops. Ever” (in Bollen n.d.). In such arguments, the hoodie is dumb and mute, an inert thing, a detail that renders opaque the terrible truth of social death.

But the hoodie does make a difference, though not a simple one. We can easily agree that Zimmerman would have targeted him even if Martin wore, as Gay puts it, a My Little Pony T-shirt. At the same time, such a T-shirt would not be subject to so much capture as an object of forensic inquiry. What, then, is lost in dispensing with (what is dismissed as) mere ornament? Does subtracting the hoodie from the surface uncover the truth? To insist on seeing Martin’s unadorned body, black and murdered, is to insist upon a return to a deeper condition beneath a numbing, noisy distraction that impedes our perception of the stability of the real. But its circulation as a decisive detail, a “property plus,” can and should tell us that the hoodie constellates historical-racial schema. The hoodie, troubling and tangling representations and references to race, may as a detail appear to some to be a distraction, but it is as a detail that it nonetheless captures time and movement, or the span and breadth of a life. Even as some argue the nonsignificance of the hoodie, still others equally insist on its indexical nature: the social-media-circulated photographs of teenagers restaging Martin’s murder made recognizable in part because of the hoodie; the horrific shooting targets sold in Martin’s likeness, a resemblance comprising a featureless, latent presence in a hoodie; the cover of an academic collection

about his murder (Yancy and Jones 2014) that does the same; the hoodie photographs created and circulated in love and rage.

The central question is thus: how and to what (in what direction) does the hoodie draw attention—away from the fact of antiblackness, toward its workings, or both at once? I argue that not only might the hoodie dramatize the materiality of bodies, it can also unfold for us how such materiality is animated by racial histories of abstraction creating resemblances and confluences between humans and things. That is, it is because it appears as a devastating distraction *and* detail that we might conceive of the hoodie not as a heinous substitution for the black body but as the excess assigned to that body, following Denise Ferreira da Silva. Silva writes, “I am interested in racial violence as a figuring of excess—which is what justifies otherwise unacceptable occurrences, such as police [or vigilantes, in this instance] shooting unarmed persons” (2013, 50). It is because the hoodie is both overfull, because it is the meaningful detail, and also empty, because it is the detail that is only filled in specific, contingent, and changing circumstances, that the hoodie does not hide a history of racial violence but might instead focus our attention upon its lethal structures and abstractions.

In his philosophy of signs, Charles Sanders Peirce applied the term *index* to a multitude of signs: a footprint, a weather vane, a sundial, thunder, the pointing finger, the word “this,” the photograph, the rap on the door: “Anything which focuses the attention is an index” (1955, 109). This *anything* occasions confusion. It could be a sensory feature or trace—a touch, an image, a sound—that correlates with and implies a body, a movement, or a moment. It thus corroborates a touch, an existence, which is made present to the addressee. But the index does not necessarily name a one-to-one correspondence between individual object and its imprint.<sup>6</sup> It might bear a resemblance to that which it points, or not. Other indexical abstractions require contextual information (being, place, and time) to convey meaning. Consider *this*, *that*, *now*, *here*, and *I*, references that depend upon the situation of speaking itself, shifting from one implementation to the next. That is, the hoodie might materially derive from the body or thing to which it is attached (a relationship that is *indexical*) and also resemble that body or thing, possessing some of its same qualities (a relationship that is *iconic*), and further gesture toward those qualities absent a body or thing (an abstract relationship that is *symbolic* in its recourse to language). These are not opposed or distinct relations but may be operating in varying degrees in

<sup>6</sup> The fields of object theory and thing theory distinguish between the two, but for this article I use them interchangeably, because my references do.

specific signs, such as Martin's hoodie, in particular, and the hoodie in general.

Wesley Morris demonstrates in his 2012 *Grantland* essay, "What We Talk about When We Talk about Hoodies," that the hoodie is in this manner a multitude:

The reason you see some people in jersey at the airport and at brunch instead of in something else has everything to do with the fabric's comforting warmth and pleasing lack of structure. On the street, a hoodie can transform you. The jersey becomes armor, soft to the touch, rough in certain eyes. The hoodie is "hood." It's "hoodlum." For most black men, the only way to be perceived in a hood is as hard. . . . The hoodie confers blackness. Filipinos and Latinos have found street cred in it—white guys of the John Cena, Mark Wahlberg, Channing Tatum varieties, too: as toughs. (2012)

The hoodie is soft, hard, pleasing, frightening, comforting, street, cool, criminal, just *this* or perhaps *that*. Merging trace (what we might shorthand as contiguous intimacy), icon (existential resemblance), and symbol (discursive arbitrariness), parsing precisely how the hoodie's structure of reference unfolds requires that we consider its interface with other indices.

We might observe then that the hoodie cannot be reduced to a specific material trace (as "just" contiguous with Martin at the scene of his murder) but instead signals a particular distribution of the sensible, following Jacques Rancière, a condition that can be apprehended through the senses, including the configuration of time and space, sensory forms and modes of perception and activity (Rancière 2004). In this way, the hoodie is also, as Sara Ahmed writes, "an effect of how objects gather to clear a ground, how objects are arranged to create a background" (2006, 87). This insight helps to make sense of the index as a structure but also as an event, because it is a situational arrangement of objects triggered in their conditional closeness. Consider the New York subway announcement that "suspicious" backpacks and large containers are subject to search, as if suspiciousness were a property of the object, though these objects only become suspicious when contiguous with some bodies and not others. The gathering of some objects in a cluster thus justifies suspicion to then create a ground for surveillance and policing. This distribution of the sensible—as usable knowledge and as felt atmosphere—helps us to grasp the capacious properties of the hoodie to facilitate or impede recognition, movement, or the will and design of others, to transform and render a body into being-as or being-like some other thing—the criminal or the criminal profile.

The multitudinous nature of the hoodie changes, then, depending on its closeness to other signs and their properties. For those for whom the hoodie is an instigator, a provocateur, it is not the yoga studio but the street that animates its character. Or as Rivera translates, the hoodie dares “shoot or stop & frisk me.” He is far from alone in perceiving the hoodie as a jeering delinquent. Consider this from the Twin Cities–area *City Journal*, in which columnist Harry Stein finds the Million Hoodie March disquieting:

This is emblematic of where the entire American race conversation veers into the land of make-believe. The pretense is that the hoodie is an innocuous clothing item or, at any rate, that it is unfairly seen as carrying negative associations. There’s a word for this: nonsense. The hoodie isn’t like a letterman’s jacket or a t-shirt or a pair of jeans. It does indeed carry associations—for many, ominous ones. Like pants worn low to reveal the shorts underneath, hoodies are part of a style favored by gangbangers and drug dealers and others who hold life exceedingly cheap; which is to say, under certain circumstances, it is apt to heighten another’s uncertainty and fear, and bring potential danger for the wearer. (2012)

Stein unrolls a series of things that he claims signal nothing in particular: the letterman’s jacket, T-shirt, and jeans are neutral and also innocent items. Against these innocent clothes (although some might argue that the letterman’s jacket carries a particular threat), the hoodie is ominous, dangerous (with slippages between *underclass* and *black* in full view).<sup>7</sup> His taxonomy is nonsensical and imprecise, of course. Hoodies are a familiar staple in an athletic wardrobe, but this is beside the point. Stein deploys the hoodie for the cover it provides *to him*—that is, he names the hoodie in order to name black youth as predators. This is how the hoodie renders such youth deviant through association, a relation that denotes porous contiguity between suspect surfaces that together cohere as a sign of criminal potential.

In his 1974–75 lectures at the Collège de France collected in the volume *Abnormal*, Michel Foucault discusses the creation of new technologies in modern criminal justice that categorize individuals who “resemble [their] crime before [they have] committed it” (2004, 19). Foucault spe-

<sup>7</sup> In reference to the letterman’s jacket, I am considering the ubiquity of sexual assaults and rapes on high school and college campuses committed by athletes who are then protected from prosecution by administrators and law enforcement.

cifically inquires into the emergence of criminal psychiatry, through which institutional structures marry psychiatric power with juridical power, to capture a portrait of the dangerous individual, “the individual who is not exactly ill and who is not strictly speaking criminal” (34). Its calculations are deployed before a crime occurs, whether or not a crime will ever occur, in order to see the individual who matches a profile as a dangerous criminal. While the profile Foucault describes is a psychological portrait of a causal background that gives rise to criminality (in which any conduct might be construed as a symptom of a structuring condition), we also know that the profile has long been the scene for inscribing pathology onto a body via visible signs—the body as information. Emerging through the twinned advent of criminology and photography in the nineteenth century, the profile acts as an index and an optics that predicts a correspondence between the sign (tattoos, features, flesh, clothes) and the propensity for criminality in a body, any individual. Thus does Stephen H. Marshall observe, “when Zimmerman saw Martin he saw criminality, understood as the commission of crime, an intention to commit crime, an escape from prior crime, or some combination of the three” (2012).

Though granted an evidentiary status, seeing is not a neutral or passive activity, nor has the cognition of race ever been a simple matter of perceptible fleshiness. Writing about the usage of witness video during the trial of the Los Angeles police officers in the beating of Rodney King, Judith Butler notes, “the visual field is not neutral to the question of race; it is itself a racial formation, an episteme, hegemonic and forceful” (1993, 17). Thus did the video as documentary evidence that King did not resist arrest become, instead, proof that his flailing limbs, under the continuous fall of batons, were lethal weapons. Butler continues, “for when the visual is fully schematized by racism, the ‘visual evidence’ to which one refers will always and only refute the conclusions based upon it; for it is possible within this racist episteme that no black person can seek recourse to the visible as the sure ground of evidence” (19). Calculations that inform the scientific rationalities of the profile (including phrenology and eugenics but also psychology, sociology, sexology, and anthropology) historically involve the screening of populations to establish these indices and optics. Racial profiling thus is a matter of how race is seen but also—through the cognitions, affects, and fantasies that imbue visual perception—how race is structured prior to the act of seeing. As Joseph Pugliese argues, racial profiling is the persistence of hallucinatory vision: “Visual perception is here inscribed with its double, that is, with a disquieting superimposition and a barely perceptible asynchrony” (2006).

In the optics of the profile, through which *the visual is fully schematized by racism*, the hoodie first signals a possible threat and second renders the potential criminal visible. Here Ahmed might be brought to bear to elaborate upon Foucault as we once again consider the causal background that gives rise to a criminal whether or not criminal activities have been committed, or are ever to come. Some objects both clear the ground and create a causal background (which can include “poverty,” “urban environment,” and presence in a “high crime area”); these objects act as sliding indices that together render the palimpsest of racial knowledge and the prediction of criminality.<sup>8</sup> To paraphrase Ahmed, the hoodie clears the ground for the profile (allowing it to go by a name other than racism) as the profile then arranges certain objects (such as the hoodie) around it to create a causal background. To illustrate, one commenter at the *Atlantic Wire* suggested, “The broader point is that the photos released depict Mr. Martin as a preppy good kid. He probably was one. but in my opinion, substantially suspicion was not based on skin color alone, but mainly style of dress. This doesn’t excuse Mr. Zimmerman in any way or form. His actions are his own. But it does shed light on the degree that race played” (Hudson 2012). The author slyly begs the question, proposing that a shift from profiling race to profiling the hoodie is less ethically troubling, even while recalling race once again through a double, its cover.

Locating the apprehension of criminality in clothes, then, does not constitute any sort of departure from racial optics that target the body as a contiguous surface of legible information about capacity and pathology. Profiles that include these other surfaces—clothes, and also tattoos, hair-styles—teach us how to see race both with and without skin as an anchor. Echoing Lisa Marie Cacho’s *Social Death* (2012), we can discern this operation in the creation of the categories of nonpersons such as the “gang-banger” or the “illegal alien,” nonpersons who commit what she calls de facto status crimes, who are criminal in being, absent even the commission of an actual crime, and visibly criminal, based on the interpretation of signs organized by the profile as a structured mode of perception, prediction, and preemption. As Cacho observes, most antigang laws profile gang members through such signs: Georgia includes “tattoos, graffiti, or attire or other distinguishing characteristics”; New Jersey lists a shared “tattoo

<sup>8</sup> Some of these indices appear in police reports to justify the racial profiling of stop-and-frisk searches and detentions committed by the New York Police Department. See, for example, those cited in “Mr. Bloomberg’s Logic” (*New York Times* 2013).

or other physical marking, style of dress or use of hand signs or other indicia of association or common leadership”; and Arizona specifies “clothing or colors.”<sup>9</sup> So did clothes become suspect in Arizona’s draconian immigration law, SB1070, which made it a state misdemeanor to lack immigration documents (and more, to fail to carry such paperwork at all times), compelling police officers to determine immigration status if they form a “reasonable suspicion.” Discussing this legislation, California State Representative Brian Bilbray appeared on a cable news show to defray the accusations of racism with claims that “trained professionals,” presumably criminal profilers and other experts in scientific methods of observation and evaluation, will be able to identify “illegals” by their clothes: “They will look at the kind of dress you wear, there is different type of attire, there is different type of—right down to the shoes, right down to the clothes” (in Muskus 2010). And the *Washington Post*’s Richard Cohen, in his sympathetic portrait, concludes that he “can understand why Zimmerman was suspicious [of Martin] and why he thought *Martin was wearing a uniform we all recognize*” (2013; emphasis added).

Such a list of visual signs presumes to educate the eye and to generate proper recognition of the de facto criminal. Enacting what Stuart Hall calls “a taxidermy” and “a specular matrix of intelligibility” (1996, 20), racial optics conceive the profile through the abstraction of contiguous surfaces blurring the distinction between surplus (the tattoo or hoodie as detail) and the ontological (the flesh as essence) that in turn teaches us to see in racial others the unseen truth of criminality. The profile thus claims predictive power from conditional arrangements of objects while performing a sleight of hand in itself arranging the objects before us. That is, these signs are so functionally dispersed (“indicia of association” might also apply to uniforms or Greek lettering) that, as with the hoodie, their actuation depends upon the (here masculine) racial body contiguous with them, while rendering that body as just one object in a chance cluster. In this ontological confusion between subject and object, the hoodie provides cover for racism’s slide into lethal structures that claim to assess and predict threat with disinterest.

Thus does the profile normalize surveillance for potential criminality while declaiming its foundational premises in racial and colonial structures. In a liberal empire that claims for itself legitimate violence as preemption, it bears noting that police powers are increasingly contiguous with wartime powers. Not only does the profile constrict the movements of “Muslim-

<sup>9</sup> See the National Gang Center’s compilation of legislation, state by state, at <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/legislation>.

looking” individuals in and coming into the United States but, in a *New York Times* feature, a costumer for a company that clothes “insurgents” in war games staged for the US armed forces catalogs his sartorial “accuracy,” studying images on the Internet (“to determine, for example, the exact embroidery on the epaulet of an opposition leader’s military uniform”) to teach soldiers to distinguish between “bad” and “good” Arabs by their clothes (Nir 2010). From the post–Vietnam War Ramparts scandal among the Los Angeles police in the late 1970s and early 1980s; to the War on Drugs, which oversaw the rapid expansion of the prison-industrial complex; to the militarization of the US-Mexico border; to the millions of dollars spent by local law enforcement on battlefield-ready tanks, drones, and surveillance operations of Muslim communities in the past decade or more, the gangbanger, the undocumented person, and the terrorist are rendered knowable through visible signs and screens *fully schematized by racism* and organized by the profile as actionable categories for capture or death.

### Misrecognition

Not every guy in camouflage cargo pants is a Marine. Not every dude in a Garnett jersey plays for the NBA. Not every hipster in horn-rims works at the library. And not every black kid in a hoodie is trying to avoid a security camera.

—Wesley Morris (2012)

One argument against the profile that renders the body as information rests on the problem of misrecognition. On the floor of the US House of Representatives, Representative Bobby Rush (from Chicago’s South Side and a former Black Panther) addressed Martin’s murder in his own gray hoodie, beneath his suit and against the congressional dress code. As he pulled off his jacket and flipped the hood over his head, Rush argued, “Racial profiling has to stop, Mr. Speaker. Just because someone wears a hoodie does not make them a hoodlum.”<sup>10</sup> But the hoodie did mark illegitimacy—under House Rule XVII, Section 5, hats and other head coverings are prohibited. As Rush spoke, the speaker pro tempore, Representative Gregg Harper of Mississippi, evicted Rush from the floor. “The member,” Harper said, “is no longer recognized” (in MacAskill 2012).

<sup>10</sup> See <http://thehill.com/video/house/218691-rep-bobby-rush-kicked-off-house-floor-for-wearing-hoodie>.

With Martin's murder, Rush and others who pulled up their hoodies sought to indict the profile as an obstacle rather than an aid to recognition. Such an indictment pointed to a twofold failure: first, that the optics of the profile actually encourages misrecognition, which is no recognition at all, and following from this that misrecognition as nonrecognition or the withdrawal of recognition is a violation of personhood. These arguments rest on the noncorrespondence between the faulty arrangements of the profile to actual individuals and between misrecognition and the ideal presence of personhood. Their proposed solution is more perfect recognition before the law in order to restore that personhood to rightful subjects—those who are not criminal, unlike the gangbanger, the undocumented person, and the terrorist—thereafter.

How should we unfold the racial optics upon which misrecognition and perfectible recognition depend? The foreclosure that comes through the hoodie in the profile produces the refusal or inability to acknowledge that an erasure and denial have taken place because that erasure and denial have been excised in turn. But what further erasures or denials occur? And what can these other erasures or denials, or what we might call—following Evelyn Hammonds—"black holes" (1994) tell us about the properties of personhood, their distribution of the sensible or arrangement of objects, that are the effects of law and therefore themselves forms of so-called legitimate violence? And alternately, what else might we discern about the scripts of subjectivation from the hoodie?

To address this last question first, we might observe of its utilitarian nature that the hoodie presumably blurs the distinction between the unique individuality of the one who wears it and that of an infinite number of other bodies who might don a similar garment. Hoodie up, it is a garment that obscures or covers the face, so often cited (as Emmanuel Lévinas does) as the seat of reciprocal recognition or ethical sociality (Lévinas 1985, 98, 119). The encounter with a stranger is presumed dangerous; the stranger whose face is disappeared into the hoodie as its surrogate even more so. For these reasons—because it hides, camouflages—the hoodie (and its racial, colonial sister-other, the hijab) *becomes itself a criminal*, even legally outlawed in some public spaces as a mobile border zone, obstructing the security powers that wish to see the body-as-information more perfectly.

Just as the hoodie renders identification of its wearer more difficult, the hoodie also provides cover for antiblackness. Under such lethal structures and abstractions, the profile is the sensible assessment of risk that conceives misrecognition as an unfortunate consequence. Collateral damage, as it were. To put it another way, the presence of the hoodie in the profile renders what is systemic violence against black life an *accident*

understandable as a rational calculation of danger deferring, but not displacing, the fact of blackness in such a calculation. The deferral of certainty (of meaning, identification) via the effacing hoodie provides recognition and misrecognition simultaneously and also supplies the occasion for the deferral of ethical and legal responsibility for targeting black life.

This occasion becomes clear in an exchange between commentator and satirist Elon James White and a reader, when White posted a photograph of himself in a hoodie to his blog with the confrontational caption (and popular hashtag) *Am I suspicious?*. Before a white background, White posed with the hood of his black sweatshirt pulled over the baseball cap on his head. His hands are clasped, and his lips unsmiling; across his eyes is a black bar lettered in white capital letters: "SUSPICIOUS." It is clear that the intended invitation to *look here* is to first observe and to then discard the presupposition that a black man in a hooded sweatshirt is necessarily criminal. The viewer is meant to recognize the hooded profile as a racial stereotype that denies White his personhood as someone who is not larcenous but enlightened. But this provocation did not unfold easily; one onlooker suggested that yes, he did indeed look suspicious:

[REDACTED]: I grasp the point racism is racism [*sic*], no dress code needed. But we need to watch our PR and how our message is distributed. The above is not helping or helpful to disseminate the message. **It's an image of a thug in a hoodie. Treyon [*sic*] was not a thug, he was a child and this is the image that should be used.** And the main goal is to make the "point" as EASY to grasp as possible. We can march and protest and leverage petitions, but if our attitude is, "read between the lines to get my point", then we move no one. **We also need to utilize the most powerful, personable images we have. This guy is not one of them.**

**Elon James White (me):** Oh HI [REDACTED] I'm the image of the "*Thug in a hoodie.*" Do you know who I am? Do you know what I do? You said that THAT's an image of a thug in a hoodie and TRAYVON WASNT A THUG. Ma'am, I'm not a thug. I'm an engaged political commentator with a background in I.T. I throw dinner parties and build studios from scratch. But YOU saw a thug in a hoodie.

Do you understand the problem now? (White 2012)

Here, the challenge to misrecognition inadvertently invites surveillance ("Am I suspicious?") and presages the failure of the "education" of the eye against stereotype. The frame of misrecognition thus presumes that be-

hind an erroneous suspicion there is a “real” distinction between the thug and his opposite, the rights-bearing person.

The hoodie makes it possible for White’s interlocutor to escape from culpability. Asked to look beneath the hoodie to see the distinctive individual, the hoodie confounds her recognition because the hoodie implies the qualities of thuggishness, or criminality, and imparts them accordingly. Racial subjectivization thus emerges through this interaction between flesh and fabric. Imbued with animative power, Martin’s hoodie not only lends to him the resemblance of criminal behavior and deviant being (because it obscures recognition) but also propels his body physically, expressively, into that other realm of possible activity. Implicit in this reading is the suspicion that the black body is without the self-possession to “just” wear the hoodie. *The hoodie instead wears him, wields the power to transform him into another, the thug.* Such intimacy between susceptible body and sovereign thing is illicit. That the hoodie is not presumed to wear nonblack or nonbrown bodies in the same way implicitly divides rational subjects from material objects along historical-racial schema and consigns black and brown bodies to the side of objects. The hoodie thus highlights the raced body’s presumed affectability—what Silva defines as “the condition of being subjected to both natural (in the scientific and lay sense) conditions and to others’ power” (2007, xv)—so often construed as pathology, as dispossession, as subjection to the design and will of others, even such objects as the hoodie.

Such racialized modes of perception and configurations of space and time presumably compel those who watch *to act on the body who wears it*—to withdraw recognition, to condemn that being to exile, or death. For instance, *City Journal* columnist Stein (2012) asserts that the hoodie is apt to inspire fear in another and thus brings to bear upon the one who wears it a legitimate violence. The hoodie as a sign and a screen then conditions an expectation (criminality) and from this a feeling (fear) and then a force (preemption). Jasbir Puar is useful here in parsing this operation, as she discusses the turban (which is not a hat): “The move from visibility to affect takes us from a frame of misrecognition, contingent upon the visual to discern the mistake (I thought you were one of them), to the notion of resemblance, a broader affective frame where the reason for the likeness may be vague or repressed (You remind me of one of them): from ‘looks like’ to ‘seems like’” (2007, 187). Recognition and misrecognition, then, are not the primary activities working through the profile, and more perfect vision not its resolution. Where an affective frame is in play, it is not just the black body wearing the hoodie who is subjected to a strange ani-

mation but also the watchful body who perceives the hoodie as a threat and cannot help but feel or act in its latent presence.

Thus does resemblance, not recognition, inform the preemptive rationale that pervades our political moment. In our culture of danger (as Foucault puts it), security names a category of decisive action that perceives a threat to the future as a concrete possibility in the present. At any moment, this threat is realizable as absolute potential, such that even when a threat “passes by,” as Ahmed (2004) observes, it heightens the anticipation of a consecutive moment when it does not. Thus, in the name of watchfulness and heightened security, action is taken not in decisive surety but because of uncertainty and doubt: the NYPD’s citation of vague “furtive movement” as justification for stopping and searching thousands of youth of color; the Obama administration’s insistence that any “military-age male” in a particular region is a potential enemy combatant and available for killing (Becker and Shane 2012); Zimmerman’s accusation, “Fucking punks! These assholes always get away” (Cobb 2013). When the hoodie is narrated as a possible aggressor whose violence is realizable at any moment, the one who reacts aggressively to the hoodie *even when no violence is forthcoming* is understood to be vulnerable, a precarious being. In such a scenario, an armed vigilante might be compelled to stalk and murder a teenaged boy on his route home and yet claim self-defense. As Butler observes of Rodney King’s beating, and as might be said of so many other beatings and deaths of black bodies, “He is hit in exchange for the blows he never delivered, but which he is, by virtue of his blackness, always about to deliver” (1993, 19).

So it should not be surprising that, on the Fox morning cable show *Fox and Friends*, Geraldo Rivera argued that parents should denounce the hoodie as a bad influence. He further stated, “I am urging the parents of black and Latino youngsters particularly to not let their children go out wearing hoodies. *I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin’s death as George Zimmerman was.*” In this grammar, it is the hoodie (and not the state) that criminalizes “black and Latino youngsters” through an animative power or trace, a transferable property of thugness that attaches to what it covers. “I’ll bet you money, if he didn’t have that hoodie on, that nutty neighborhood watch guy wouldn’t have responded in that violent and aggressive way,” Rivera explained (*Media Matters* 2012). “You have to recognize that this whole stylizing yourself as a ‘gangsta’ . . . You’re gonna be a gangsta wanna? Well, people are going to perceive you as a menace. That’s what happens. It is an instant reflexive action” (Hudson 2012). He continued, “Don’t let your kid—you know the old Johnny Cash song, don’t

take your gun to town, son. Leave your gun at home. There is [*sic*] some things that are almost inevitable. I'm not suggesting that Trayvon Martin had any kind of weapon or anything, *but he wore an outfit that allowed someone to respond in this irrational, overzealous way and if he had been dressed more appropriately, I think unless it's raining out, or you're at a track meet, leave the hoodie home*" (*Media Matters* 2012; emphasis added).

When the gun and the hoodie are analogized as aggressive objects (thus Martin could not be absolved as unarmed), the presence of the hoodie renders violence against black and brown youth a rational calculation.<sup>11</sup> Though Rivera demurs that such a murderous response is "irrational, overzealous," he nonetheless presents it as a logical consequence. He moreover suggests that rights and respectability might yet adhere to suspicious bodies through clothes that presumably cleanse them of, or at least weigh against, a criminal resemblance. (The Tumblrs "Geraldo in a Hoodie"—featuring copious images of Rivera in hoodies—and "Hoodies Are Not a Weapon" sprang up almost immediately.<sup>12</sup>) Through these means, the conditions for discipline and death are further displaced through an alternate premise of parental abandonment or individual neglect of *appropriate, rational calculation*. Because the black body resembles a criminal profile that intimates danger as the imminent action of that body, that body must reasonably expect to be the object of another's preemptive violence (stopping, frisking, detaining, killing). According to Rivera, black and brown parents should anticipate such preemptive violence by themselves curbing (as much as they can) the contingencies and continuities that attach more fear, and criminality, to their children—such as refusing to permit hoodies as casual wear and disciplining their corporeal presence (encouraging eye contact with authorities, walking without a swagger).<sup>13</sup> That is, parents and their children must accommodate themselves to the increasing securitization of public space through the preemption of preemption as a series of rational actions. As Melissa Harris-Perry writes, "These statements suggest that the unarmed teenager was culpable in the encounter that led to his death, not

<sup>11</sup> At the same time, in popular conservative discourses the gun is not imbued with the capacity to animate the gun owner—Zimmerman in this case—against his will; the gun owner who "stands his ground" is instead imagined as the self-possessed subject for whom the gun is merely "a tool." My thanks to Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins for the conversation that led me to this observation.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://geraldoinahoodie.tumblr.com/> and <http://selke.tumblr.com/>, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> My thanks to Malissa Phung for the insight about physical comportment informing the body-as-information.

because of any aggressive or illegal act but because he was not following the appropriate protocol for being black in public. A black body in public space must presume its own guilt and be prepared to present a rigidly controlled public performance of docility and respectability” (2012).

The performance of docility and respectability in order to be recognizable as a rights-bearing person unavailable for discipline and death is, as we know, unreliable, and yet it traffics as if personhood (and therefore liveliness) depended upon it. Against the profile, then, some sought a complete picture of a person—to humanize Martin, to demonstrate that he more than accommodated social norms, that he was a good boy and no gangbanger. In the *New York Times*, Charles Blow presents Martin as a young man both ordinary and extraordinary: He liked sports, the mall, hamburgers and fries, “brownies with lots of nuts”; having taken advanced English and math classes, he had planned on attending college; he worked hard and earned money working part-time gigs, painting houses, washing cars, and selling snacks at a Pee Wee football league concession stand; he looked after his younger girl-cousins, “and when he watched the girls he baked them cookies” (2012). Also in circulation were photographs of Martin in other clothes—an Abercrombie and Fitch sweatshirt, a photograph often paired with multimillion-dollar sensation Justin Bieber wearing a similar item, and a high school football uniform. These photographs marshal “evidence” that Martin was an “ordinary” teenager, even a teenager whose now stillborn dreams or future (social and economic) value might be discerned through his clothes. Journalist Michael Ross writes: “Consider the picture of Trayvon in his Bulldogs football uniform, a young man on purpose, a young man *of* purpose clearly eager to be a part of the wider picture of the world, to contribute to something bigger than he is” (2012).

Recognition (and the rights that follow), then, are based on measurable signs of value, such as heteronormativity, higher education, productivity, and piety, through which we might narrate Martin as a “good kid” against those who are not. As another meme insisted, featuring a webcam photograph of a serious Martin gazing steadfastly at the viewer, captioned “my ‘hoodie’ does not mean I’m a criminal.” When photographs of another young black man surfaced on right-wing social media as the “real face” of Martin—this interchangeable, “real face” included gold teeth, pot smoke, and gang signs—the counterresponse included side-by-side comparisons of the “bad” thug and the “good” kid. Presumably, one life is more valuable than another, and we are meant to recognize this distinction immediately, implicitly. But as Nicholas Mitchell observes, “What if

Trayvon Martin *had* come at this white man who held a gun? . . . What if he'd had, instead of Skittles, a bag of weed? Or a beer? Or a knife? Or something else that made it harder to make him look like a kid? How many fewer signatures would that correlate with on change.org?" (2012).

If recognition is that which confers liveliness and value as personhood, and to be misrecognized is to be consigned to social death, then perhaps the problem lies in the premise. As Cacho argues so well, the law depends upon the permanence of some bodies' criminalization: "As criminal by being, unlawful by presence, and illegal by status, *they do not have the option to be law abiding*, which is always the absolute prerequisite for political rights, legal recognition, and resource distribution in the United States" (2012, 8). Thus she observes that contingent and conditional processes of valuation and revaluation reinforce normative structures of power. In this case, closely paraphrasing, to narrate Martin as someone who should be valued in death, such efforts must emphasize his youth, his ordinariness, and cast him as someone he might never have become (Cacho 2011, 42). That is, to represent Martin as a person of recognizable value, and deserving of life, we would need to refuse others who are *unlike* him, which is to adopt a politics that would abandon those deemed proper objects of suspicion and rightlessness—those whose very being constitutes a status crime, rendering them alienable—to their end.

### **The protest**

After Trayvon Martin, "hoodies up" became not just a rallying cry but also an incitement to create new images. Tweeting the widely propagated photograph of the NBA's Miami Heat—hoods raised, heads bowed, and hands clasped—LeBron James tagged it: "#WeAreTrayvonMartin . . . #Stereotyped #WeWantJustice." In addition to celebrities (Jamie Foxx, Sean Combs, Wyclef Jean, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the New York Knicks' Carmelo Anthony, Arsenio Hall, CNN journalist Roland Martin, LeVar Burton, the list goes on), others too sought solidarity through the same, seemingly simple act, including Harvard and Howard law students in front of ivy-covered buildings; elementary schoolchildren lined up along a wall holding bags of Skittles; New York state senators Kevin Parker, Bill Perkins, and Eric Adams; former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm; attendants at vigils and marches; black-and-white drawings of a range of humans in hoodies published in a special issue of the *New Yorker*; even professional portraiture as protest art. Thousands more appear on Facebook and Tumblr, featuring photograph after photograph—selfies often snapped with webcams or mobile phones—of persons with their hoodies up.

The hoodie photograph aims to produce an affective register of solidarity in the forms through which social media provides a (provisional) public sphere. I cannot pursue a full assessment here of how the specificity of the medium illuminates the transformations of the image, its reproducibility and circulation as a perceptibly multitudinous object, but I do wish to gesture toward the optics of indexicality elaborated therein. The hoodie photograph points to something that is there, but what is being pointed to, or brought to our attention, and how? There is the obvious *something*, the photograph acting as a witness to a past moment, in which the person pictured leaves a trace. At the same time, before the hoodie photograph one is aware of the gesture, the “this” of language—*this* indicates another presence outside the frame, a presence whose own moment is irretrievably lost to us, but also the presence of all those other others who also simultaneously gesture toward him. The gesture is contingent upon the presence of the hoodie (and the hood up) but also the captioning of the photograph as part of an ever-growing, anarchic series (whether through an actual caption or through its appearance alongside others); there were photographs before and after Martin’s murder that feature the same elements (frontal pose, hooded sweatshirt), no doubt, but that are not included in this series. So if the “this” of the hoodie photograph (recalling Elizabeth Alexander’s 1994 essay on the Rodney King video “‘Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?’” that brings presence into being in the present only achieves its reference in relation to a specific situation, just what composes this other *this*?

Many hoodie photographs record the lived relations of black life into which they intervene in a culture of profiling and preemption. In hand-made sweatshirts proclaiming, “I am Trayvon Martin”; holding Skittles or a copy of coding handbook *Core JavaServer Faces*; bearing signs reading, in the form of a checklist, “Skittles, iced tea, black, hoodie, am I next?,” a multitude of black bodies situate themselves as like Martin. Scrolling through these hoodie photographs ossifies a material history of racial violence through continuity and repetition; we know that as Toni Morrison points out, black boys (and girls) have been killed, and will continue to be killed (Bollen n.d.). The indexicality of these photographs is not produced solely in relation to the someone who poses but rather to the processes that rendered the absent presence of the murdered Martin not only possible but also structural—that is to say, these photographs gesture toward a *this* that names a serial murder, the grim predictability of more events with the same terrible outcome.

But what about those hoodie photographs that do not seem to feature black or brown bodies, bodies of young men? While the body-as-information is (as we know) an unreliable measure of race and gender, it

might appear more difficult to discern the *this* of these photographs. Do these photographs protest the innocence of the hoodie through its presence on the bodies of uncriminalized (or less or differently criminalized) others, in order to reeducate the viewer—about the hoodie? about the fungibility of black life? Where others produce an individual hoodie photograph, we might readily observe that the hoodie becomes the means through which reference is achieved (we know they mean to gesture to Martin’s murder) but also deferred (because not all bodies are targeted the same by lethal structures and abstractions). That photograph might misrecognize the site of misrecognition as sited, sighted, or cited in the hoodie, substituting the specific body that clears the ground for the hoodie’s criminality with *any hoodie* worn by *any body*. Exploring the formula “I = Another” in advertising and awareness campaigns (as in the AIDS campaign called “I am Africa,” featuring celebrities claiming such correspondence), Kara Keeling usefully observes, “I = Another provides an opportunity and a rationale for a mode of appropriation wherein the needs and interests of an other are assumed to be served by articulating them into the systems and structures of the I who stands in for the dominant group vis-à-vis that for which the other is representative” (2011, 64). This is the by-now-familiar critique that haunts the substitution “I Am Trayvon Martin” as politically impossible. At the same time, we might also readily observe that some bodies are less available—black women, especially black trans women, who are also murdered with impunity—for even this abstraction as reference.

These photographs might also occasion an investigation into how race and gender unfold and envelop bodies distinctly, such that the hoodie adheres criminality to some bodies and not others. As Roland Barthes might explain, “I am the reference of every photograph, and this is what generates my astonishment in addressing myself to the fundamental question: why is it that I am alive *here and now*?” (1982, 84). In one photograph, a light-skinned man holds a sign reading, “Skittles CHECK, Ice Tea CHECK, Hoodie CHECK, black [BLANK BOX], maybe I’ll be spared.” How is it that the person pictured there is alive? And how is it that others like or unlike him, most obviously Martin—who is named as the origin of a series into which he enters (though he is not the origin either)—are not? Accompanying the hoodie, this statement (along with similar statements once collected in a Tumblr titled “We Are Not Trayvon Martin”) suggests that the flesh that it covers is the decisive difference between life and death.

Do these hoodie photographs of those whose bodies are unlike Martin’s also indict lethal structures or occasion what Saidiya Hartman warns is the slipperiness of empathy, through which black suffering is made leg-

ible only on white bodies, or nonblack bodies?<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the initial protests last year around the failures of grand juries to indict the police officers who murdered Michael Brown and Eric Garner, while avoiding the “I = Another” formula explicitly, found large groups of black and non-black protesters marching with their hands up, or dying in solidarity with the dead, a shared repertoire of gestures that has not been uncontroversial. As performative acts that attempt to embody an attachment to a collectivity (however broadly conceived) or the possibility of its repair, their failure for some comes from *not feeling together* or from the presumption (perhaps the presumption of a presumption) of political or social mutuality.

In this regard, the hoodie photograph cannot succeed or even satisfy as an aesthetic or performance commensurate to the condition of foundational violence against black life. But with and against such failure, we could also read these hooded faces in their anarchic nonseriality not as images *of* the other but as images *for* the other. This image for the other is a necessarily inadequate gesture, following the exposure of the one pictured there to the precarious life of the other addressed in the photograph. How should we understand that a person alone in a room fell still for just a moment before the camera’s eye to construct an image of *feeling* solidarity, or even of feeling out of control because of the crisis that is in truth a condition, an image to circulate in the world, even if this is an always already poor image because that is what they have to give, though it is never enough? In a randomly chosen series of these hoodie photographs, we might see a light-skinned older black woman in red-framed eyeglasses and a grim expression; a multiracial group of teenagers gathered on a sidewalk holding a banner, “Do I look suspicious to you?”; two girls, one white and one light-skinned, who took the time to add a frame of smudged black ink and the caption, “We Are Trayvon Martin”; an American Indian teenaged girl with facial piercings; a woman in hijab and a hoodie posed in her living room, or a waiting room; a group of four possibly white children (and their dog) sitting on a porch with the sign, “NY Demands JUSTICE for Trayvon Martin!”; a black drag queen in dramatic

<sup>14</sup> Hartman’s discussion of white empathy continues, “The effort to counteract the commonplace callousness to black suffering requires that the white body be positioned in the place of the black body in order to make this suffering visible and intelligible. Yet, if this violence can become palpable and indignation can be fully aroused only through the masochistic fantasy, then it becomes clear that empathy is double-edged, for in making the other’s suffering one’s own, this suffering is occluded by the other’s obliteration” (Hartman 1997, 19).

false lashes and green eye shadow matching her hoodie; a middle-aged, mustachioed Latino man in his office cubicle; a young black child holding the sign, “I am Trayvon Martin” snuggled against an older white woman holding the sign, “Do I look suspicious to you?”

In each person’s submission to the camera eye, decrying the nonneutrality of the vision that renders some humans into things, we could understand these hoodie photographs as a demand to look without knowing again, again, and again. Toward this end, the multitudinous details—the adolescent flourishes (using apps to add borders, captions, tints), the hand-lettered signs, the messy bedrooms walls, the careful application of makeup or its absence, the pet who intrudes—attest to each photograph’s unique conditions of manufacture. Collated together, those photographs might embody this hope from Jacques Derrida, “that pure ethics, if there is any, begins with the respectable dignity of the other as the absolute *unlike*, recognized as nonrecognizable, indeed as unrecognizable, beyond all knowledge, all cognition and all recognition” (2005, 60). In their incommensurable failure and noncorrespondence, perhaps the hoodie photographs point us to an affective solidarity that requires that we abandon resemblance as necessary for personhood, recognition as a condition for subjectivity, and expressive truths as prerequisites for choreographies of protest against state-sanctioned violence.

### **The force**

Had Trayvon Martin not donned a hoodie, George Zimmerman would have stalked and murdered the unarmed teenager regardless. No matter what is worn, the black body is regarded as a mobile danger and therefore a moving target. Nonetheless, where racial optics operate through vitalizing or animating a thing such as the hoodie as contiguous with the body it covers, we find that race does not depend on immovable parts but on a dynamic constellation of signs, screens, expectations, and forces. And this is no small thing. We might summon the My Little Pony T-shirt as the very opposite of the hoodie—because it connotes a girlish innocence presumably unavailable or absurd to persons in Martin’s body—to argue (correctly) that no garment would have provided adequate protection. And yet the hoodie is also not interchangeable with this T-shirt, because the hoodie is crucial to the profile that covers for antiblack violence, because it is a decisive object that clears the ground and provides a background for that violence, and because it is a suspicious object that is called upon to render race an incidental detail in a murder. We find that the hoodie is not passive or lifeless at all but instead that it bears the tensions, forces, and powers of its history in this moment.

At the same time, as Fred Moten insists, “the history of blackness is a testament to the fact that objects can and do resist” (2003, 1). With this in mind, we might consider what it means to be objectified in order to transform our sense of the impossible. To be an object is to be determined by another, is a being-for-other (to recall Hegel). However, becoming a subject is also a subjection, because to be a subject is to be inscribed through layered abstractions that render one recognizable, and against those who are not, who are instead alienable. So we might instead stay with the thing to understand better these lethal structures, as Silva elaborates: “This is done by focusing on the relationship exposed when The Thing is addressed as a mediator and not a measure. . . . The Thing immediately/instantaneously registers (mediates without transforming, reducing, or sublating) the *relationships* (violent and otherwise) that constitute our conditions of existence” (2013, 58).

Thus, we might linger on the intimacy between subject and object, body and thing, to picture another ethics of being-in-relation. As Silva’s Thing, the hoodie refuses both the accommodation to an unjust politics of the human (through respectability, through forms of recognition that create further cutting into life) and also the lethality that invests the object with life only to murder its double, its cohort. As impossibly figured at the scene of a million hoodies marching, the hoodie protests the racial violence that targets its intimacies with bodies that always already resemble the crimes they have not committed, have yet to commit, or might never commit, bodies with whom it is ontologically confused—not to draw a bright line between human and thing but to be in solidarity across radical incommensurability and to indict the ways in which racisms arrange the ground between them, before them.

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