

MOONLIGHT (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.



“Hush-hush,
I Will Know
When I
Know”: Post-
Black Sound
Aesthetics in
Moonlight

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Within Derrida’s thought, suspension is both spatial and temporal, pervasive and elusive. It operates under a number of different signs, and in a number of different languages that either resist or yield to translation in ways that are not easily gathered together: epochē, arrêt, syncope, bracketing, iteration, deferral, Aufhebung, and différance.

—Anne McCarthy¹

Based on Tarell McCraney’s 2003 play “In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue,” *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016) is the coming-of-age story of Little becoming Chiron becoming Black on his journey of self-discovery as a black gay man growing up in Liberty City, a poor neighborhood in Miami². Presented in three chapters, respectively titled “Little,” “Chiron,” and “Black,” the film exposes the difficulties in the protagonist’s search for a sexual identity. Even before we see the protagonist on the screen,

we hear a group of kids calling him “faggot” and chasing him into a dope hole. The first chapter ends with Little’s search for the meaning of this derogatory word frequently hurled at him by other kids and possibly uttered by his mother in her scream the film presents in slow motion and without sound. In this first scene of the distorted scream, Chiron’s mother Paula lashes out at him following her confrontation with Juan on the street. In this slow-motion scene, the mother takes out the anger she has built during her confrontation with Juan on Little. The verbal assaults continue in Chiron’s adolescence in the second chapter only to escalate into physical violence. The only person Chiron can talk to is his childhood friend, Kevin, before their friendship is broken by the bullies at school who force Kevin to knockout Chiron in front of their schoolmates. The night before the day of violence at school, Kevin and Chiron pleasure each other on the

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beach under the moonlight. The night with Kevin remains an unforgettable memory for Chiron as we see in the third chapter, which opens with the mother's scream distorted differently, played in reverse motion until the cut to the scream played at regular speed in its loud and clear audibility, in Black's nightmare.

Sound plays a key role in *Moonlight's* aesthetic responses to society's marginalization of black queer men; the film queers a heterologocentric understanding of time and sound

image relations through an aesthetics of suspension. In this essay, I will analyze the two scenes of the mother's distorted scream that close the first chapter and open the third one, in which time is stretched through slow motion and synchronization is put on hold in the film's post-black cinema aesthetics. Following an elaboration on the aesthetics of suspension in the two scenes of the mother's distorted scream, I will address how the film holds Chiron's blackness

and queerness bracketed and in suspension in (between) those two scenes by engaging with Kara Keeling's notion of "the interval," that is waiting as a state of existence in suspension.³ While Keeling's waiting in "the interval," originally developed by David Marriott following Fanon, refers to a predestined state of being in an inescapable, vicious circle, I approach the thinking of suspension in the following Derridean gesture: "To think suspension as suspension means thinking it beyond privation,

MOONLIGHT OPERATES IN QUEER TERMS BY ... SKEWING SOUND-IMAGE RELATIONS AS WELL AS INCORPORATING THE CHOPPED AND SCREWED STYLE OF HIP-HOP TO STRETCH AND DISTORT ALL KINDS OF MUSIC

as constitutive of what it suspends. We might think of suspension as that which holds (holds together, holds back), but does so loosely, allowing for movement and the coming of the unexpected.”⁴

Suspensions of time and of synchronization, which is “the audiovisual lock” and “the lynchpin of sound cinema,” in the two scenes of the mother’s distorted screams “create a kind of mirrored ellipsis in the film, with all of the space in-between holding the weight of

Chiron’s sexuality” in an interval.⁵ The aesthetics of suspension is one specific way in which the film relates to post-blackness by constituting, triggering, and enabling queerness in abeyance, suspended, in the middle.⁶ Before analyzing the distorted screams that join post-black aesthetics in cinema in their suspensions, resonances, echoes, and ripples in *Moonlight*, I offer to turn to post-blackness and its embrace of black/queer—or “blacqueer”—bodies after drawing a short map

of the earlier, mutually exclusive, and hence criticized scholarships of blackness and queerness.

Black Nationalism’s misogyny, homophobia, and hetero-patriarchal stance led to hostility towards queer sexualities and added to its discrimination in terms of social status, class difference, and educational background.⁷ The Black Power movement’s goal of redeeming blackness, as in “black (man) is beautiful,” through macho hetero-patriarchy resulted from a

conflation of the success of racial identity with an ideal manhood.⁸ The redemption of an emasculated black male identity in the form of “a worship of the phallus” limited the black artists’ capacities in expressing themselves and their experiences.⁹ Racial uplift, positive images, and cultural authenticity left no room for satire, critique, or queerness. With few notable exceptions, Black queer artists existed like ghosts during the 1920s Harlem Renaissance and in the Protest Era of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰ They finally came out starting in the late 1970s and more in the 1980s when black gay activism was also happening.¹¹ However, advocates of post-blackness believe the struggle is not yet over and that the discriminatory demons of the hetero-patriarchal black power movement still demand an exorcism today. “Post-black” is a term first used by curator Thelma Golden in reference to a group of black artists

who dismissed the label “black artists” as they were careful to avoid the potential limitations brought by the codes of cultural authenticity of black nationalism.¹² The term is also defined by Derek Conrad Murray as “an effort to redefine the parameters of blackness in the twenty-first century, and to push it beyond the stifling dictates of nostalgia for past political movements.”¹³

Due to racial patriotism, fundamentalism, and policing, black people were threatened with exclusion from their communities and labeled “turncoats” or “sellouts” once they crossed the borders of “black authenticity.”¹⁴ Similarly, queer studies was accused of pushing queer people of color to the margins and bringing the experiences of white middle-class and mostly male subjectivities to the fore.¹⁵ It is the “queer of color critique” that “challenges ideologies of discreteness” and “attempts to

disturb the idea that racial and national formations are obviously disconnected.”¹⁶ Increasingly in the twenty-first century, queer scholars have rendered the voices of intersectional groups audible as “[s]exuality is always racially marked, as every racial marking is always imbued with a specific sexuality (gender, class, and other classificatory inscriptions are equally determined and determining).”¹⁷ As Johnson and Henderson claim in *Black Queer Studies*, intersectionality and a non-single-variable politics are the tools to fight oppression and respond to the “complexity of contemporary subjectivities” in the post-modern era.¹⁸

Thematically interested in queer sexuality in the coming-of-age story of a black boy from a poor neighborhood in Miami, *Moonlight* joins the contemporary debates on intersectional politics and

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post-blackness through its queer aesthetics of suspension as well. *Moonlight* operates in queer terms by specifically skewing sound-image relations as well as incorporating the chopped and screwed style of hip-hop to stretch and distort all kinds of music including classical scores with piano or violins.¹⁹ In its post-black aesthetics of playing with sound and image relations, *Moonlight* queers—better yet, quares—such relations through its aesthetics of suspension, specifically of synchronization and hence of audibility/inaudibility, presence/absence, and linear/out-of-joint time in the two scenes of the mother’s distorted screams.²⁰ I argue the technique that exemplifies post-black aesthetics in *Moonlight*, namely suspension of synchrony in the two scenes of Paula’s distorted screams, is critical in terms of the film’s defiance of shaming queerness as well as opening an interval for the possibility of queerness.

The first scene of the mother’s distorted scream occurs in slow-motion, a technique that stretches time and in that elongation suspends the linear forward progression of narration, putting it on hold and sustaining ambiguity like a fog that covers a road blocking one’s vision in traffic. The scene not only defies a capitalist understanding of homogeneous and measurable time of forward progress and teleology of reproduction—or “reproductive futurism”—through slow motion, but also deflects hetero-patriarchal shaming of queer sexuality by rendering the mother’s words inaudible.²¹ The mother yells at Chiron, possibly uttering the word “faggot”—possibly, but not certainly. Her words are muted, and we hear only the music. Britell’s gripping music continues over from the previous scene starting as Paula and Juan go their own way after their tense confrontation

on the street. The soaring strings are already highly strung from the tension between Paula and Juan. The violin in Paula's blast in the hallway at home is "screwed down to a key ... that a normal violin can't play," and the chopped and screwed violin creates a deep bass rumble sonically arresting bodies and touching the flesh in its strong penetrating vibrations.²² Donnelly's point that "[w]hen a sequence goes into slow motion, it is almost never accompanied by diegetic sounds that match the speed of the action" is not the reason, though, why Paula's scream is muted.²³ The scream is muted to mimic the futility of a potential utterance of a word that is totally pointless to Little, who does not know its meaning. The sound design of this scene also recalls silent film aesthetics, in which musical accompaniment is offered in lieu of unheard characters' voices with musical accompaniment to

films in which characters' voices are unheard.²⁴ The specific aesthetic choices of muting the mother's scream allows the composed piece to rise to a breaking point, after which it keeps resonating to suspend time by stretching it in slow motion and to bring out the tension of the mother's anger.²⁵ With its suspenseful aesthetics, the scene mimics a feeling of being choked, invoking chest compression and movements being slowed down when confronted with difficulty of breathing. As Chion explains in *Audio-vision*, "Often just one audio element of the soundscape is 'suspended,' with the result of heightening one moment of the scene, giving it a striking, disquieting or magical impact."²⁶ However, unlike the "often-goes-unnoticed" nature of the type of suspension Chion talks about, the suspension through the mother's muted scream in *Moonlight* boldly, conspicuously, and even terrifyingly

marks a turning point in the narrative. For the same reason, the muted scream cannot be categorized as "emanation speech," another type of rare and difficult-to-notice technique offered by Chion "found infrequently in films, wherein the words are not completely heard or understood. Speech becomes a sort of emanation of the characters, not essential for understanding significant action or meaning."²⁷ Alternately, the possibility of categorizing the muted scream as "voice-out" coined by Justin Horton is also infeasible, since the replay of the scene opening the third chapter excribes the first muted scream in a loud and clear synchronization that gives the body back its scream, surprisingly lacking the ugly term.²⁸

In its deliberate silencing of the mother whose muscle tension slows down the temporal flow, the film is thinking on the elusiveness of the meaning of what Little might



FIGURE 1. TERESA TELLING LITTLE HE WILL KNOW IF HE IS GAY WHEN THE TIME COMES IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.

have heard in his vulnerability.²⁹ Approaching vulnerability as the condition of responsiveness, Butler offers: “[S]omething affects us, or we find ourselves affected; we are moved to speak, to accept the terms by which we are addressed, or to refuse them, or, indeed, to skew them or queer them.”³⁰ While the film stylistically responds with its queer aesthetics of suspension, Little responds by diverging from the mother’s path: “She and Little are drifting apart and whatever is back there in that room is something that he will never understand or see.”³¹ Separating his path from the mother’s, Little deviates, and “deviation brings with it anxiety, fear, and a sense of thrill” but at the same time “when it is undertaken in concert with others, it is also the beginning of new forms of solidarity.”³² After they separate paths, Little finds solidarity and communion at Juan and Teresa’s house where he learns

what the derogatory term means. Little understands debasement, degradation, and shaming as well as his deviation and separation from his mother and bonds sideways with the two adults who do not necessarily expect him to “grow up” to contribute to “reproductive futurism.”³³ In their embrace and understanding, substitute parents Juan and Teresa confirm Little does not have to know if he is gay or not “now,” as his now will come later when his childhood is over:

Queer culture, with its emphasis on repetition (Butler), horizontality (Munoz, Stockton), immaturity and a refusal of adulthood (me), where adulthood rhymes with heterosexual parenting, resists a developmental model of substitution and instead invests in what Stockton calls “sideway relations”, relations that grow along parallel lines rather than upward and onward. This queer

form of antidevelopment requires healthy doses of forgetting and disavowal and proceeds by way of a series of substitutions.³⁴

The transition from a door closed on Little by his own mother to a door opened by Juan to welcome Little inside adds extra space in-between the doubled opening brackets, namely the failed inaudible scream and the end of the first chapter signaled in a quasi-theatrical fashion by four flickering elliptical blue lights on the black screen, mimicking an epileptic seizure that suspends a body through twitches and convulsions.³⁵ It is as if time is elongated for the sake of a proper synchronization to be given to the substitute parents who clarify “the linguistic register of autonomy” for Little “against those who really fail to address him.”³⁶ The mother’s scream is marked as lost time while time is stretched to connect the two

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FIGURE 2. HALLWAY AFTER THE MOTHER INAUDIBLY YELLS AT LITTLE AND GOES INTO HER BEDROOM FRAME RIGHT. THE MOTHER CLOSES THE BEDROOM DOOR ON LITTLE IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.

homes, through the opening and closing —literal and metaphoric—of doors, as a single space occupied by Little. Visually, the transition from the closed door to another one opening for Little is like a reversed mirror image. The mother walks frame right and enters her bedroom and closes the door; next is a cut to a very similar short hallway with a door frame left inside Juan and Teresa’s house. The film demands that we understand the trauma of the muted scream followed by the parental love in the form of proper communication as a single scene in its smooth transition through a graphic match. In Allen’s terms, Little becoming Chiron becoming Black will be able to “conjure blacqueer love” through “time compression magic” by learning from the lessons in the past and by forming a community.³⁷

The third chapter starts with the double distortion of the mother’s

scream; the same shot of the mother entering her bedroom after yelling at Little is played backwards in slow motion. The reverse motion continues until the sleight of hand of a cut to the loud and clear scream that is synchronized and hence played at the regular speed. The mother yells “Don’t look at me!” and Black jumps forward in bed waking up from his nightmare. To our surprise, this time in its precise synchronization, the scream “retroaudibly” lacks the ugly term that we expected to hear after Little’s search for its meaning at the end of the first chapter. With its power to destroy the elasticity of time, synchronization ends the suspension achieved through the muted scream in slow motion that was able to deflect the hetero-reproductive logic of forward progress.³⁸ However, the audible repetition of an otherwise distorted, or doubly distorted and hence synchronized, scream surprises us

FIGURE 3. HALLWAY IN JUAN AND TERESA’S HOUSE. LITTLE IS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR FRAME LEFT IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.





FIGURE 4. JUAN ANSWERING LITTLE'S QUESTION ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE TERM IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.

only to prove the term of humiliation that we expected to hear has gone missing in the audible inaudibilities of both of the distorted screams. Indeed, Black is haunted by his past, and as Derrida explains in *Ghost Dance*: “To be haunted by a ghost is to remember something you’ve never lived through. For memory is the past that has never taken the form of the present.”³⁹

The repetition of the mother’s scream, no matter how traumatic, is also productive. It reminds us that the aesthetics of suspension works to disrupt the act of shaming queerness and hence paradoxically constitutes an interval for Chiron’s sexuality to blossom in the second chapter. The two scenes of the mother’s distorted scream operate like parentheses; they precede and follow Chiron’s coming to terms with his sexuality, with the inaudible and incomprehensible term swallowed first in the silent

scream and not present in the repeated loud scream of the mother. In its impossible (in)audibilities, the discarded term of shaming is not endowed with synchronization in a heterologocentric understanding of presence and forward teleological movement in time. The possibly traumatic moment is skewed, quared, and distorted from its hetero-patriarchal efforts of excluding queerness that it tries to render abject.⁴⁰ I hear *Moonlight* echo post-black aesthetic convictions that black unity, as holding one position—namely ideal manhood, “flattening out differences,” and “sweeping certain things under the rug” in the pretensions of likeness with no room for queerness—is inaudible, out-of-sync, and distorted in today’s “liquid blackness.”⁴¹

In its doubling of the scream, given a latent audibility only later as if in the form of an echo, there is not

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only deferral and repetition but also difference and a play with presence and absence in the suspensions of synchrony.⁴² In the first distortion of the scream, the act of shaming is muted, turned into “the scream of Medusa by definition ‘stuck in the throat,’” and marking “the suspension of life,” rendered inaudible and hence unintelligible.⁴³ The silent scream operates at best like an ellipsis or opening parenthesis—that is, a symbol in a text rather than a word with a meaning silently doing its

work of opening a space of interval; the muted scream, “call it, perhaps, a plenitude without presence, marked by an ellipsis (*points de suspension*) which signifies omission and pause, but also an opening and waiting for response.”⁴⁴ In the way I read Chiron’s queerness, I take the potential Keeling sees in the interval rather than the viciousness of the circle that renders blackness impossible: “The challenge the experience of the interval provides entails opening thought to ‘the

QUEER SEXUALITY...IS ALREADY INSIDE, PART OF, AND A POSSIBILITY IN BLACKNESS

unforeseeable, the unanticipatable, the non-masterable, non-identifiable.' Perhaps a whole other reality—one that we do not yet have a memory of as such—opens up."⁴⁵

The inaudible term of shaming in the distorted screams becomes a taboo word for the mother, unutterable, censored, and silenced like a crypt formed inside the film, repeatedly making distorted and inaudible calls through a rippling in suspended time. The suspended act of abjecting and shaming queerness by the mother's

parenthetical screams in the film aporetically opens up a space, an interval for the possibility of black queer sexuality. Queer sexuality that the mother intends to leave out, discard, and expel is already inside, part of, and a possibility in blackness. The impossibly possible queer sexuality works as a trace or *différance* in the distorted screams; their "operations of suspension resemble that of *différance*, opening intervals and breathing spaces into the structure of signification."⁴⁶

The two outer parentheses hold black queer sexuality suspended and stretched in an interval centered inside, in the middle: "Suspension is not, for Derrida, the exclusion of anything, ... but a way of bracketing, keeping contingency present, including it."⁴⁷ It is an interval opened in post-black aesthetics that conjures black queer magic in its inaudible audibilities and impossible resonances echoing "rhizomatic agencement," "temporal dispersal," and "litany for survival."⁴⁸

The bracketing of Chiron's blossoming sexuality produced through the parenthetical distorted screams of the mother is accentuated and doubled through the flickering blue and red lights on the black screen that punctuate the sequential breakdown of the three chapters in a quasi-theatrical fashion. The two scenes of the mother's distorted screams as the outer brackets halt the linear narrative flow twice by elasticating, stretching, and distorting a possibly traumatic moment perversely while they operate through *différance* by not only differing from each other and what could logocentrically be thought of as an origin but also deferring eternally in the suspensions and repetitions of the event rendered highly dense and thick in affective terms and as uncertain and elusive in its semiotic vulnerability.⁴⁹ The flickering elliptical dots of blue and red lights on the black screen, (*Points*

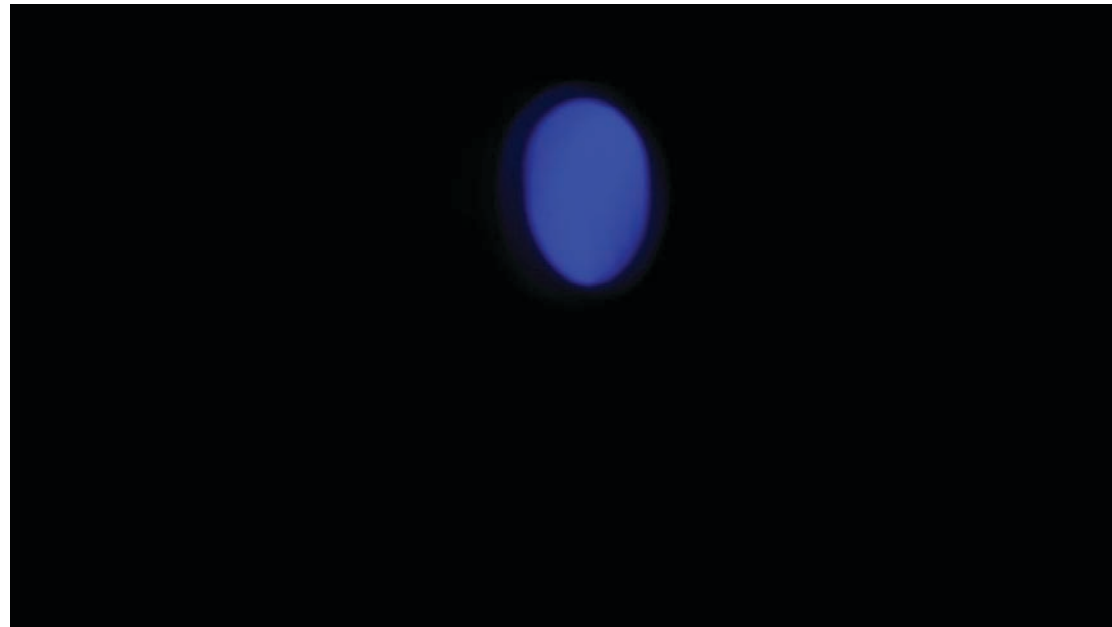


FIGURE 5. THE FLICKERING BLUE ON A BLACK SCREEN SEPARATING THE FIRST AND THE SECOND CHAPTERS IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.

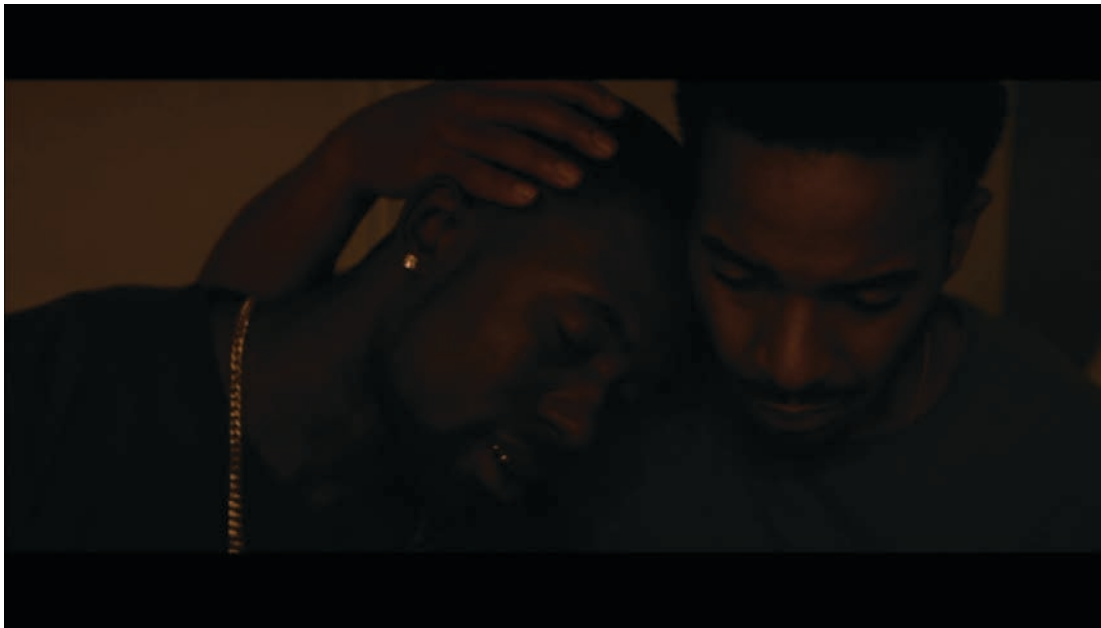


FIGURE 6. THE LAST SCENE SHOWING KEVIN AND BLACK REUNITED: BONDING, LOVE, AND AFFECTION IN *MOONLIGHT* (DIRECTED BY BARRY JENKINS, 2016, A24, PASTEL, AND PLAN B ENTERTAINMENT), FRAME GRAB.

de suspension or *Points...*), double the bracketing of the blooming of queerness in the film, accentuating the paradox of the (in)significance of the adolescent years as highly critical and in constant resonance with childhood and adulthood.⁵⁰ This spatial and temporal interval of queerness opened by the parentheses is an interval similar to and different from the one Kara Keeling proposes in “In The Interval.” Keeling understands the interval as an infernal cycle, as a predetermined duration starting with an opening and ending with an explosion that immediately restarts the entire cycle of the wait echoing Hartman’s notion of the “afterlife of slavery.”⁵¹ Unlike the wait in the interval Keeling reveals, the suspension in *Moonlight* takes queerness in an interval as “... a text with uncertain quotation marks, with floating parentheses (never to close the parenthesis is very specifically: *to drift*).”⁵² Similar

to the interval Keeling explains in relation to the muscle tension and the threat of explosion Fanon diagnoses in the colonized, there is a specific temporal configuration of the distorted screams in *Moonlight*.⁵³ On the one hand, the first muted scream, inaudible and indecipherable, is, like the muscle tension or the “necrotized flesh”, too early.⁵⁴ On the other hand, after the night Chiron spends with Kevin on the beach, the second loudly synchronized scream following a reversed slow motion return of the mother, just like the explosion, is too late. Differently in *Moonlight*, Chiron’s queerness is in the interval, suspended inside and in waiting, but impossibly possible like his blackness that turns blue in moonlight at night, the one night he will have spent with Kevin on the beach.

It is an interval initiated by time suspended and stretched through its ripplings from inside out; queerness

centered inside centrifugally ripples through the aesthetics of suspension of the ellipses, visual, sonic, or textual. It is an interval for a bonding, communion, and union to last forever in a suspension without end: “(...the state of suspension in which it’s over—and over again, and you’ll never have done with that suspension itself).”⁵⁵ ■

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IN MOONLIGHT**

Endnotes

1. Anne McCarthy, "Suspension," in *Jacques Derrida: Key Concepts*, ed. Claire Colebrook, (London: Routledge, 2015), 24.
2. Barry Jenkins explains in his commentary in the special features of the DVD.
3. Kara Keeling develops this understanding of suspension following David Marriott, "'In the Interval': Frantz Fanon and The 'Problems' of Visual Representation," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2003): 91-117.
4. McCarthy, "Suspension," 24.
5. Kevin J. Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics: Synchronization in Sound Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12; I would like to thank Charleen Wilcox, who described the suspensions in the two instances of the distorted scream as "mirrored ellipsis" in a conversation.
6. Impossible and atemporal synchronization in the diner scene in the third chapter and the technique of, what Jenkins calls, "portrait vignettes" with Paula and Kevin separately are the other scenes which deliberately queer synchronization, a technique I find teleological and heterologocentric.
7. Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art*, 7-8. See also Rinaldo Walcott, "Beyond the 'Nation Thing': Black Studies, Cultural Studies, and Diaspora Discourse (Or the Post-Black Studies Moment) in Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies, ed. Carole Boyce Davies et. al., (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2003). Institutionally, the reflections of such cultural nationalism and black authenticity were usually found in African American studies, a field born as an academic discipline resulting from social activism.
8. As phrased by Angela Davis in *Black Is Black Ain't* (Marlon Riggs, 1994); Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 98.
9. As phrased by bell hooks, Essex Hemphill, and Cornel West in *Black Is Black Ain't*; Derek Murray, *Queering Post-Black*

Art: Artists Transforming African-American Identity after Civil Rights (London: I.B. Taurus, 2016), 5-7.

10. With its accompanying cultural arm known as BAM (Black Arts Movement).
11. Simon Dickel, *Black/Gay: The Harlem Renaissance, the Protest Era, and Constructions of Black Gay Identity in the 1980s and 90s* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 21-23.
12. Victoria L. Valentine, "A 'Freestyle' Take on Post-Black Art," *Culture Type*, Oct 31, 2013, <http://www.culturetype.com/2013/10/31/a-freestyle-take-on-post-black-art/>.
13. Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art*, 9. The term became popularized, although also partially conflated with ideas of post-raciality, with the publication of Touré's book, *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness?: What It Means to Be Black Now*, where all kinds of expressions of blackness are legitimized within post-blackness including queer sexualities.
14. Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art*, 2.
15. Ian Barnard, *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 3-4.
16. Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 4.
17. Barnard, *Queer Race*, 2.
18. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae. Henderson, ed., *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5-7.
19. In DVD commentary, Jenkins explains that the chopped and screwed style is a genre of Southern hip-hop popular in Houston and Tampa where the music is slowed down and the pitch goes down.
20. E. Patrick Johnson, "'Square' studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother,"

Text and Performance Quarterly 21, no.1 (2001): 1-25.

21. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
22. "Moonlight | Live Orchestra | Official Featurette HD | A24," YouTube video, posted by "A24," February 17, 2017, <https://youtu.be/4isV4dZLJn4>. In the video, Britell explains the difference between scoring the film in the studio vs. the performance of the live score in the theater at a special screening at Million Dollar Theatre in LA.
23. Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics*, 192.
24. The film indeed enjoyed a special screening with a live orchestra accompaniment in a common silent film exhibition manner, joining the trend of other contemporary films being screened with musicians performing the score live in a theater.
25. "Moonlight | Live Orchestra | Official Featurette HD | A24," YouTube video, posted by "A24," February 17, 2017, <https://youtu.be/4isV4dZLJn4>. In the video, Tim Fain plays part of the piece in the distorted scream scene and explains how they had to replace his violin with an electronic one during the live performance. Fain says: "I was playing those passages on an electric violin. We would pitch it down, get this sort of like otherworldly quality to it. I think we arrived at something that got us the very emotional quality for the film. I could feel moments when people were holding their breath."
26. Michel Chion, Claudia Gorbman, and Walter Murch, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 133.
27. Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 222.
28. Justin Horton, "The Unheard Voice in the Sound Film," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 4 (2013): 3-24. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>. The unheard scream of the mother would be a perfect example of "voice out" if it was not endowed synchronization later in the film.

29. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 109.
30. Judith Butler in “Interview with Judith Butler” by Sara Ahmed, *Sexualities* 19, no. 4 (2016): 485.
31. Jenkins explains in his commentary in the special features of the DVD.
32. Butler, “Interview with Judith Butler,” 484.
33. Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 73.
34. Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 15.
35. I would like to thank Charleen Wilcox, who made me think of “epileptic seizures” in relation to the flickering elliptical dots on the black screen that recall strobe light effects triggering epileptic seizures. A seizure is a suspension for the body that moves uncontrollably.
36. Butler, “Interview with Judith Butler,” 485–486. Butler interprets the political power and appeal of Sara Ahmed’s work in this way.
37. Jafari S. Allen, “Allure: Conjuring Blaqueeer Magic,” a keynote discussion with Tarell McCraney and Jafari S. Allen hosted by Morehouse College Safe Space, March 31, 2017.
38. On time and synchronization, Chion offers: “The sound of the spoken voice, at least when it is diegetic and synched with the image, has the power to inscribe the image in a real and linearized time that no longer has elasticity”, and hence the negativity of such a destructive power (1994, 18).
39. Jacques Derrida in *Ghost Dance* directed by Ken McMullen in 1983 (DVD release by Cornerstone Media, 2006).
40. Scott emphasizes the potential powers of accepting degradation and humiliation in his understanding of abjection.

Although my reading of abjection is different from his, I am certainly interested in his discussions of trauma and nonlinear time as well as lost time providing escape from subversiveness and subjugation in the rest of this paper.

41. hooks explaining the problem of “ideal manhood” in *Black is Black Ain't*; Alessandra Raengo, “Blackness, Aesthetics, Liquidity,” *liquid blackness* 1, no. 2 (2014): 4-18.
42. Jacques Derrida, “Différance” in *Margins of Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1984).
43. Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 671.
44. McCarthy, “Suspension,” 26.
45. Keeling, “‘In the Interval’,” 110.
46. McCarthy, “Suspension,” 24.
47. McCarthy, “Suspension,” 29.
48. Jafari S. Allen, “Black/Queer Rhizomatics Train Up a Child in the Way Ze Should Grow...,” in *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 28. Jafari Allen prefers the use of the term “agencement” to “assemblage”; Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 111. Borrowing the term “temporal dispersal” from Merleau-Ponty, Scott offers that it is one of the powers of blackness; Audre Lorde, *The Black Unicorn: Poems* (New York: Norton, 1995).
49. Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art*, 23.
50. *Points de suspension: Entretiens* is the title of a 1992 book, a collection of interviews with Jacques Derrida; the book is titled *Points...:Interviews, 1974-1994* in its English translation.
51. Keeling, “‘In the Interval’,” 103-105.

- ^{52.} Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (Hill and Wang; 2010), 106.
- ^{53.} Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 1; Keeling also elaborates on the specific temporal configuration on page 103 in “‘In the Interval.’”
- ^{54.} Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 103.
- ^{55.} Jacques Derrida, “Living On,” in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom et. al. (New York: Continuum, 1979), 77.