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Decolonizing the Body of the Chosen One: The Bodily Performance of Anakin Skywalker, Buffy Summers, and T'Challa

Abstract

This thesis engages the figure of the Chosen One in fantasy literature. The Chosen One arises as a key figure in fantasy and exists today in the Anglo-American literary imagination as a hero above other heroes. This figure embodies Anglo-American understandings of the Hero's Journey and savior narratives theorized by Joseph Campbell. It is a site of colonial triumph and violence and heteronormative white masculinity. Embedded into reiterations of Chosen Ones in American fantasy films and television, this body is being destabilized and decolonized.

In close readings of Anakin Skywalker in Star Wars, Buffy Summers in Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and T'Challa in Black Panther, these characters decolonize the body of the Chosen One through the expected performance of this hero by engaging with Judith Butler's theory in Performativity. However, each of these characters experiences colonizing violence and narratives thrust upon them due to their racialized and gendered bodies, turning them into spectacles. These narratives confirm Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa are antagonizing the heteronormative white male body. While the Chosen One has not been fully decolonized, the steps these characters are taking to change the performance and expected body of this identity show it to be changing for the better.

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Decolonizing the Body of the Chosen One: The Bodily Performance of Anakin

Skywalker, Buffy Summers, and T'Challa

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Alise M. Wisniewski

June 2019

Advisor: Dr. Donna Beth Ellard

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Decolonizing the Body of the Chosen One: The Bodily Performance of Anakin Skywalker, Buffy Summers, and T'Challa

Literature is a practice in world-building. It creates narratives that reverberate within its readers, echoing the world in which they live. However, in the creation these worlds, different genres, like fantasy, perpetuate plot tropes and archetypes that build the world by reiterating the familiar and expected performances of this world. These tropes and archetypes preserve narratives that have real-world consequences, shaping how people think through the lens of literature. Within fantasy literature and its world-building, “the Chosen One” represents such an archetype and performance with its own bodily narratives attached to it.

“The Chosen One” is a term used by critics and writers in the fantasy and science fiction genres to describe a hero above other heroes, who fights evil, saves the world, and proves himself greater than other heroes. The Chosen One embodies Anglo-American understandings of the hero, his fated destiny, and his journey rooted in the literary architecture of medieval fantasy, which frequently understands the hero as a Christ figure: he sacrifices, dies, and is resurrected to save a community and its values. In the Chosen One’s genealogy is King Arthur, whose sacrifice and perennial return to Britain and his quest structures of Arthurian legends function as a literary template for key fantasy figures and texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as Harry Potter

and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and King Aragorn and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. These Chosen Ones, in an Anglo-American fantasy tradition, are not only Christian in their heroic attributes, but also white men, as seen through Harry Potter and Aragorn. Consequently, the reiterations of this race and gender are produced when fantasy fiction, fantasy and science fiction films, and Popular Culture imagine their heroes. The presumed bodies and performances occupy the position of the Chosen One in white heteronormative masculinity, which seeks to position itself at the top of a hierarchy of heroism. Thus, implicit in the archetype of the Chosen One is a colonial logic of the body and its performances- what a hero's body can and cannot do as hero- that looks to keep a specific heteronormative white male at the peak of what body and narrative a Chosen One occupies. However, in order to understand this colonizing genealogy and its logic, one must turn to the how the hero has been studied and classified by fantasy scholars so this narrative reach into Popular Culture and its films can be both seen and understood.

Although, classic myths and folktales have engrained themselves into the discussion of the hero, traditional readings of the hero by Mikhail Bakhtin, W.A., Senior, Northrop Frye intertwine relationship between Christianity and the modern fantasy hero. While Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, and Senior's "Quest Fantasies" propelled the hero of fantasy into the psyche of modern literary readers, all reiterate a belief in the indelible archetype of the hero as one that perpetuates romanticized notions of medieval Christian mythos and narratives, mirroring Joseph Campbell's colonizing assertions of the hero in his *The Hero With a Thousand*

Faces. Within the scholarship of the hero, Eduardo Lima's "The Once and Future Hero" seeks to root out the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse traditions behind this figure. Lima believes the hero's origins as a reflection of society and time, stating, "The hero thus changes as he moves through time and space, adapting to conform to the views of their society, while inheriting their existence" (1). Lima describes the hero as a reflection of the time and culture in which he was written, perpetuating the hero as a masculine body. He points out the entrenched whiteness in textual and visual representations of the hero today. As such, Lima echoes this thesis's assertion that whiteness engrains itself into the body of the Chosen One.

While the implementation of race theory into critical discussion of fantasy literature has been used by critics to discuss how race is used in this genre, critics and scholars have been slow to fully appreciate the innate whiteness embedded in the hero narrative described by Lima. Some medieval scholars, like Tom Shippey, discuss heroes of color and gender, examining how these heroes changed the genre. Shippey's discussions are invaluable to the dissection of the hero, but other theorists, such as Helen Young and Paul Sturtevant, have addressed fantasy's racial ignorance. Young, like Lima, believes the white baseline in fantasy is rooted in the genre, stating, "Whiteness as default setting is as much a feature of the Fantasy genre as it is of western culture and society" (1). Western society draws its legends from white peoples and stories. As such, Young maintains that a white aesthetic is embedded in fantasy because it is built on white narratives to promote a colonizing worldview placing whiteness at the pinnacle.

Building off Young, Sturtevant focuses in on fantasy's arguably most influential writer and scholar, J.R.R. Tolkien, and his handling of race. Sturtevant states "But Tolkien's conception of 'race' is a huge problem. His ideas have been bred into the core of the fantasy genre—not just literature, but films and games too. Contemporary authors have had to work hard to free the genre from this original sin" (1). Sturtevant maintains Tolkien treated "race" as a distinction between species, using the term to differentiate between men, elves, dwarves, and more in his *Lord of the Rings*, diluting "race" in fantasy to the detriment of discussing how "race" is used in modern society. This handling of race perpetuates the white hero that modern interpretations in fiction and film must write away from. While this thesis agrees with Sturtevant's conclusions about Tolkien and his influence on race in fantasy, particularly in regards to how modern prose and film must grapple with his misuse of the term in regards to bodily images and performances, this thesis maintains race has been handled poorly in fantasy long before Tolkien took up his pen and aligns more closely with Young's interpretations of embedded whiteness in the genre and the hero.

By discussing the overwhelming whiteness and masculinity in fantasy, this thesis looks at how fantasy and the hero operate under white normative narratives seen in fantasy scholarship. In digging through the whiteness inherent to fantasy literature and its narrative partner Popular Culture, this thesis engages with film studies, particularly the works of David Butler and Yvonne Tasker, in order to show how the cinematic characters of Anakin Skywalker, Buffy Summers, and T'Challa fight the colonizing narratives places upon them by the camera's gaze. Butler delves into how the genre of fantasy film

operates, whereas Tasker looks about how the bodies, gendered and racialized, operate in action movies. According to Tasker, how masculinity and femininity in film are performed is changing in the action genre of films (17). While women in action films historically have been sounding boards to confirm the male hero's heterosexuality, more heroines are claiming masculine traits by acting as the hero. Tasker's discussions of male and female cinematic performances as challenges to heteronormative displays of gender are pertinent for this thesis to engage with as it discusses Judith Butler's theories on gender performativity and the intersection of textual imprints of fantasy literature on the performances of cinematic representations of the Chosen One.

Building off of the scholarly history of the hero and his journey in fantasy literature, and by extension cinematic representations of this hero, this thesis engages Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, a text that considers heroic archetypes of the Western canon, with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* in order to explore the heroic performances of the Chosen One in fantasy and film. Because these characters repeat key moments of Christ's narrative, their bodies not only assume mythic status of Christ figures but also attend to the racial and sexual politics of white masculinity in its colonial displays. Anakin Skywalker, Buffy, and T'Challa are figures of contemporary fantasy fiction and film who occupy narratives associated with the Chosen One. However, their bodies adhere to and depart from foundational expectations of the Chosen One figure according to the racial-sexual logics of the Chosen One's performances, challenging this white male body to create the space for themselves to fulfill the role of the Chosen One. Each of these heroes are positioned within Christological narratives,

leaving them open for colonizing violence and narratives upon their racialized and gendered bodies when they break their Chosen One performances.

Upon locating Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa within the embodied performances of the Chosen One, this thesis turns to black feminist theorist Hortense Spillers' essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe." Spillers' discussion of "flesh" and "body" shows how Anglo-American narratives attempt to limit the performances of certain bodies. Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa claim their identity as the Chosen One by performing the required acts and completing their journeys, despite the colonizing narratives seeking to keep them from changing the heteronormative white masculinity story and performance.

In decolonizing, or pulling away from an engrained narrative, the Chosen One performance and body by repeating the performative expectations albeit with difference, Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa have violence inflicted upon their bodies for breaking the predetermined performance of this identity set out by historic tales and performances of the hero in fantasy literature. This violence is not only punishment for breaching the performance, but is the heteronormative white male body of the Chosen One narrative lashing back at their intrusion in this performance because their performances force this narrative to examine its culpability in colonization and causes this body to question this self-proclaimed status as the superior body. The violence Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa undergo transforms them into a warning that Guy Debord calls the Spectacle. Despite the attempts to turn them into narrative and bodily spectacles, each of the heroes manages to complete their destiny. While Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa have not fully succeeded in changing the body of the Chosen One, the violence they receive prove this body and

performance are being destabilized: the heteronormative white male mythos constructed by Joseph Campbell is no longer the base narrative for this identity, narrative, and performance.

In Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, he articulates his theory of the Hero's Journey, a synthesis of world myths that positions at its center the archetype of the Christ-like savior. By locating non-Western stories within a rubric of a Christian god, Campbell's theory is implicitly colonizing in its establishment for it seeks to condense the stories and myths of humans across the world into a single narrative, placing Western Christian ideology at the center. Campbell's work has been influential to writers, like George Lucas, who cites Campbell's work as part of his inspiration for their stories and reimagining of the Hero's Journey. Key to Campbell's Hero's Journey and the archetype of a Christ-like savior are the acts, virginal birth, sacrificial death, and resurrection, which together comprise the performance of the Chosen One. From this point on, this thesis will refer to these narrative elements and performative acts as the components of the Chosen One, a figure structured by colonial impulses of the heteronormative white male body.

Joseph Campbell traces his theory that mythological narratives all share a fundamental path and structure, which he coins as "the monomyth" (1). Campbell compiles the similarities of mythological stories from different peoples all over the world to create what he claims is the true story across all humanity. Campbell summarizes this story's path as, "A hero ventures forth from the world of the common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and decisive victory is won:

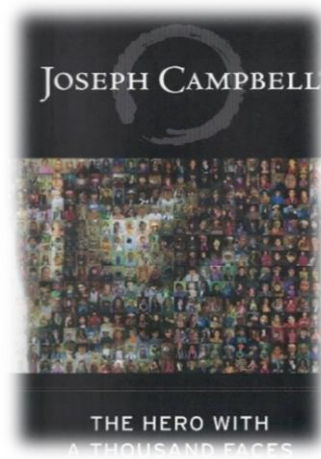
the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (23). The narrative sounds familiar; it is a reiteration of colonialist ideology. White English and European, and later American, colonizers saw themselves as heroes seeking out new lands to claim as their own, often taking over these territories through violence, in order to return to their homeland with the spoils of war to share. As such, while Campbell seeks to tell the journey of heroes, he instead perpetuates a narrative and hero of Anglo-American colonization and makes a fantasy of colonization into an eternal myth.

The underlying colonial rhetoric has not gone unnoticed by Campbell’s critics. His greatest detractor, Maurice Friedman, believes Campbell’s modernization of the myth became a means for Campbell to promote his own worldview under a guise of documenting the collective mythology. Friedman goes as far to say, “This modernization means a decisive step toward the psychologizing of myth; for in the end it is not a myth for community for the individual” (385). For Friedman, Campbell manipulated cultural mythology in order to fit into his worldview and personal beliefs, transforming the myth from a collective story into an individualistic enterprise. No longer are myths the basis for a collective, cultural belief, but the mechanizations of one man to promote his own condensing of world literature into a colonial flagship.

This colonial fantasy is embodied in the cover art of his collected work, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, wherein a photo mosaic of different heroes from cultures and stories all over the world forms the collective image of Jesus’s face; thus, every body becomes beholden to the colonial ideal of the white man. While this imagistic collective

is in itself a colonizing act, it is important to remember that the image of Jesus as a white man is already a colonized image promoting white supremacy despite the fact a historically accurate Jesus would have been a man of color. By collecting the images of heroes of all cultures and bodies together to form the face of Christ, Campbell implies that the Christian mythology of the savior is the universal truth of heroic tales and that his bodily performance is required of all bodies claiming the mantle of hero in Campbell's colonizing worldview.

Figure 1.1



These performances of the mythical hero comprise a cycle that Campbells terms as the “Hero’s Journey,” a narrative based on Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection (211). Campbell presents this journey as a narrative circle, implying it is an inevitable, repeated cycle and performance. To Campbell, the hero will set forth from his home to seek an adventure, where he faces a darkness that will slay him. All is not lost on his path, for until he completes his journey he cannot rest. Instead, he is called back from the

brink and resurrected from the dead; upon his return, he fulfills his destiny and saves the world from evil.

The Jesus narrative repeats this cycle, but in this repetition, colonial enterprises are at work. The impregnation of Mary by the Holy Spirit is seen as a blessing as the child of this birth is born pure and without sin, a sign that this body is meant for greatness. The colonizing implications of this birth center on the idea that it was a white male body born without sin; perpetuating the self-proclaiming superiority of the white male body over those of others as whiteness equates to purity. In wanting to claim this connection to Christ, the colonizing white male body attempts to establish a genealogy of superiority. But the colonizing force of this narrative goes even further. Campbell himself writes,

Any leaf accidentally swallowed, any nut, or even the breath of a breeze may be enough to fertilize the ready womb. The procreating power is everywhere. And according to the whim or destiny of the hour, either a hero-savior or a world-annihilating demon may be conceived—one can never know (267)

The most prevalent discussion of the virgin birth in Anglo-American society comes in the form of the immaculate conception of Jesus. In Anglo-American's society's need to link the immaculate, sinless, conception of Jesus to a Christian mythos, literature and myth are being further colonized in favor of a whiteness that seeks to keep itself relevant.

The second performance of the Chosen One in the performative cycle is that of the sacrificial death of the body. One of the distinguishing hallmarks of a Chosen One's body is the fact it possesses abilities the normal human does not, like Jesus's ability to heal the sick. The capabilities of the Chosen One sets them apart from other men and other bodies: it is only the body of the Chosen One, the hero chosen by destiny, who can

complete its journey. These abilities, however, come with the duty to sacrifice the body to defeat evil through death. Reflecting Christ's self-sacrifice for the greater good and the forgiveness of mankind's original sin, whose pure body was the only one capable of fulfilling this destiny, the concept has been seen time and time again in fantasy stories: Captain America crashes his plane to prevent Hydra bombs from reaching American soil; Randal Thor willingly sacrifices himself in the Last Battle with the Dark One; and Sam Winchester jumps into Satan's cage in order to stop the Apocalypse. With each new iteration of the Chosen One in time, the sacrifice stays constant even as ideas about what the sacrifice can do for society adapt to the specificities of time and culture. According to scholar Susan Mizruchi, sacrifice was for the good of society, which depends upon collective individuals for survival (28). It is a burden of an individual, or Chosen One, to sacrifice himself for the Greater Good. This ideology reflects the need for the Christ-figure to sacrifice itself for the good of humanity; the Chosen One in his performance of this identity, needs to be unselfish with his body in favor of the masses.

The Chosen One's journey, like Jesus's, does not end with death: he is resurrected to return to the fight, leaving his tomb empty. The empty tomb motif has been applied in hero stories for centuries, stemming from the idea that an empty tomb marks the resurrection from death. Resurrection is not only a reward, but a call to action once more, a return; the hero's work is not done. Within the Jesus narrative, this empty tomb is intrinsically tied to his resurrection and his translation into heaven, where he awaits his return to earth to save his faithful followers from damnation. Scholars and theorists, like Neill Q. Hamilton, posit the empty tomb symbolizes the resurrected body missing from

the tomb, preparing readers for the reappearance of the Chosen One's body. According to Hamilton, "In the resurrection incident common to the synoptics, the empty tomb, we are suddenly prepared for a flesh-and-blood appearance of a resurrected Jesus [...] Thus, the empty tomb is a logical and traditional prelude to the appearance of this body" (416). For Hamilton, the emphasis on Jesus's body missing from the tomb prepares for the reappearance of this body; and this empty tomb is transformed into a motif for future literary Chosen Ones, who not only have empty tombs of their own, but are resurrected white bodies.

As Campbell understood, the fungible Christ-figure and hero has a long narrative lineage of repeated performance. This performance upholds not only these stories but also colonial narratives about the superiority of heteronormative white masculinity. By taking Campbell's assertions about the Hero's Journey and applying them to Judith Butler's theory of bodily identity performativity, the Chosen One becomes a bodily identity and its bodily acts of performance can be defined. In this defining of performance and narrative, the space for repetition with difference is created. It is in this space, racialized and gendered Chosen Ones control their performance, identity, and narrative. Rather than perpetuating a white masculine performance of hero and Chosen One, these Chosen Ones can change the narrative to allow their bodies and performances.

In Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, gender identity fluctuates, adapting to the time in which a body performs. For example, in the 1950's, a woman might wear Rockabilly dresses to show off her feminine figure in a demure way when she went out to dinner with her husband. Not only is this performance influenced by culture, but it is politically

and historically charged. This history goes well beyond the lifetime of a performer, according to Butler, who states,

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender identity is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who made use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again (526)

The performance of identity has been ongoing for centuries, being twisted and solidified by historical, political, and cultural contexts about what is acceptable.

Thus, Butler hypothesized that identity is nothing more than an illusion socially and continuously created through “language, gesture, and all manner or symbolic social sign” (519). It is the social body that creates the individual identity upon a body by demanding an accepted performance. These social performances must be upheld and repeated in order for them to take root and create a performative identity. It is the true and intelligible performative repetition that makes and solidifies the performance and the claim to an identity; one cannot act out these expectations once but must continue to repeat these bodily gestures to embody this identity.

Butler critic Dino Felluga calls this repetition and status quo the “hegemony of heteronormative” (1). This hegemony reinforces and prioritizes the binary that precludes bodies performing outside of their expected and accepted roles. Felluga states this maintains power, saying, “What is required for the hegemony of heteronormative standards to maintain power is our continual repetition of gender acts in the most mundane of daily activities (the way we walk, talk, gesticulate, etc.)” (1). Power

structures can only keep their influence as long as the performance perpetuates politically charged acts rather than breaking free of the mold.

As a performance that follows racialized interpretations of Christ's "heroic journey," the Chosen One is an archetype whose birth, death, and resurrection are repeated, historicized, and politicized to promote a colonized worldview in its repeated performance. Examining the Chosen One's performance creates the space to not only change the performance but allows new bodies to take on the identity through repetition with difference. Like the white males in the genealogical line of the Chosen One in fantasy, Anakin's, Buffy's, and T'Challa's bodies and narratives fulfill the bodily performances of the Chosen One along their respective journeys, marking them as iterations of this trope regardless of their race and gender.

While most Chosen Ones' narratives closely follow that of Christ's myth, the Immaculate Conception is one of the performances most characters fail to meet. Many traditional Chosen Ones cannot claim a virginal birth, like Aragorn and Harry Potter, and yet they continue to claim this identity. Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa follow this path, and it is through their rejection of this performance they begin to question whether it should remain as part of the narrative. Anakin and Buffy both reimagine how virgin birth can be construed, while T'Challa rejects this component of the performance all together.

Apparently following in the footsteps of Jesus, Anakin Skywalker seems to be born of an immaculate conception, yet this revelation is not acknowledged explicitly but revealed across several episodes. When speaking to the Jedi-master Qui-Gon about

Anakin's special abilities Anakin's mother, Shmi, reveals the circumstances of her young son's origins and birth:

SHMI: He deserves better than a slave's life.

QUI-GON: The Force is unusually strong with this him, that much is clear. Who was his father?

SHMI: There was no father, that I know of... I carried him, I gave birth... I can't explain what happened. Can you help him? (*The Phantom Menace*)

Shmi entrusts Qui-Gon with this information because she believes as a Jedi not only would he be knowledgeable about such phenomena from his travels, training, and studies, but that he might be able to help Anakin out of slavery into a better life. For, as Shmi states, Anakin has no father that she knows of to protect and train him, implying he suddenly appeared in her womb. Importantly, like Anakin, Shmi is a slave, and as such, her body is not her own. It would be easy to assume that she was abused sexually by owners or other men in positions of power over her body, like many historical slave experiences. Thus, Shmi might have been impregnated by a man but she simply does not know which man Anakin's actual father. While this could be true, her own utterings suggest otherwise, for even if she did not know the identity of the father, she would be able to explain how he came to be in her womb if this was the case. This ambiguity allows for interpretation and manipulation of Anakin's birth on both the Dark and Light sides of the Force for their own gain by using Anakin's mysterious origins and body to promote the narratives and worldviews they believe in: for Qui-Gon on the Light, this is his belief in an ancient prophecy, while for Senator Palpatine on the Dark, this is his desire to rule over the galaxy as king.

Qui-Gon takes the knowledge Shmi has confided in him and uses it to affirm his belief that Anakin is in fact the Chosen One prophesized by the Jedi Order. For Qui-Gon, Anakin's immaculate conception marks his body as the future savior of the Jedi religion, and as such Anakin must be trained in the ways of the Jedi. His appeals to the Jedi council for Anakin to be tested for aptitude in the Force and accepted into Jedi training despite his advanced age, manipulating Anakin's birth narrative to further his own agenda and beliefs:

QUI-GON: With your permission, my Master. I have encountered a vergence in the Force.

YODA: A vergence, you say?

MACE WINDU: Located around a person?

QUI-GON: A boy... his cells have the highest concentration of midi-chlorians I have seen in a life form. It is possible he was conceived by the midi-chlorians (The Phantom Menace)

Qui-Gon believes Anakin is a product of the Force. Within the *Star Wars* realm, the universe is controlled by a balance between the Dark and Light sides of the Force. The Jedi utilize the Light Side and the Sith employ the Dark Side through the manipulation of midi-chlorians embedded in their blood. Midi-chlorians in the bloodstream allow bodies to use and control the Force, thus the ability to control the Force is tied to the body. Anakin's body has never-before-seen levels of midi-chlorians, which to Qui-Gon means midi-chlorians created Anakin within his mother's womb. To Qui-Gon, not only is Anakin unusually gifted in the Force, but his own mother's allusions suggest that Anakin's body could only be created from the Force and the midi-chlorians. As a creation of the midi-chlorians, Qui-Gon seeks to use this narrative to ensure Anakin will be

trained in the Jedi ways so he can fulfill the prophetic expectations Qui-Gon has for him as the foretold Chosen One.

While Qui-Gon uses Anakin's implied virgin birth to further his own agenda, he is not the only Force user to employ the story for his own gain. Senator Palpatine, who is actually the Sith Lord Darth Sidious, manipulates Anakin to the Dark Side by telling him about Darth Plagueis the Wise. Palpatine tells Anakin, "Darth Plagueis was a Dark Lord of the Sith, so powerful and so wise he could use the Force to influence the midi-chlorians to create life..." (*Revenge of the Sith*). After he utters these words, Palpatine looks slyly at Anakin. Palpatine's implication is clear: Darth Plagueis's manipulation of the midi-chlorians seems to have come to fruition through Anakin's supposed immaculate conception. However, while Palpatine heavily implies Anakin is the result of a virgin birth, he does not actually state whether or not he believes this story or if his implications are just thinly veiled lies. Perhaps Palpatine is simply using the narrative at hand to pull Anakin's strings so he will join Palpatine in the Dark Side and he does not buy into Anakin's virgin birth story.

Anakin's body is a product of The Force. This iteration of the immaculate conception marks his body as that of a Chosen One, but in a twist of fate his implied virgin birth does not guarantee a hero. While the Jedi believe him to be a prophesied hero because of his conception and seek to create this narrative through his implied virgin birth, he falls to the manipulations of Darth Sideous, who also uses Anakin's supposed birth to control Anakin, and goes over to the Dark Side, becoming the most powerful force of evil in the universe. The immaculate conception performance of the Chosen One

is thus confirmed and rendered null and void by Anakin and his performance of this component of the Chosen One's identity as the truth of his birth is buried in murky manipulations.

Taking into account the questionability of Anakin's virgin birth, Buffy Summers also does not experience a typical immaculate conception. She is product of both a mother and a father, who is mostly absent throughout the series, seen and talked about only a handful of times. The questioning of immaculate conception in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* does not come in the form of Buffy's birth or her absentee father, but rather in the body of her younger sister. For the first several seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Buffy is an only child. This knowledge is turned upside down in the fifth season, when it is revealed that Buffy has a teenage younger sister, Dawn.

It is revealed that Dawn is not a human but a primordial force known as The Key with the power to unlock gates between all existing dimensions at a certain time and place. In order to protect The Key from an evil goddess, its protectors embodied The Key, transforming it into the teenage sister of Buffy Summers so the Slayer could protect it. The Key's body was created from Buffy's blood, meaning Dawn is literally given life and form from Buffy's body. As such, Dawn is a physical extension of Buffy's body. Buffy herself says, "She's me. The monks made her out of me. I hold her and I feel closer to her than... It's not just the memories of her. It's physical. Dawn is a part of me" ("The Gift"). Dawn was created by Buffy's body and blood and as such Buffy feels a physical almost motherly pull to Dawn as part of herself. Molded from Buffy's blood and body,

Dawn's immaculate conception, so to say, is a twisting of the original myth: she is the creator rather than the created in this warping of the Christian virgin birth mythology.

Anakin's and Buffy's performances of this myth not only mark their bodies as those of the Chosen One but also shows how this identity is already being antagonized. Their challenges and changes to this story and act are repetitions with difference in how this identity is performed. Unlike Anakin and Buffy, however, T'Challa outright rejects the virgin birth of the Chosen One. For, he is not born of an immaculate conception, but from the union of his parents. In his rejection of the performance, T'Challa, like Anakin and Buffy, refuses to perpetuate this component the performance as he does not need it to claim his identity as the Chosen One. Instead, he seeks to carve out a space in his refusal to perform to change the expected narratives.

In the second physical performance of the Chosen One identity, the body of the Chosen One must give up its life to keep evil from consuming the world. As bodies possessing superior abilities and strength, these Chosen Ones, like their white male counterpoints, are required to put their bodies on the line in order to protect the innocent and fulfill their duty. This self-sacrifice usually results in the death of their earthly bodies to complete this performative act. These three bodies put themselves in danger, resulting in the physical or metaphorical death, in order to protect their loved ones, to save society, and to claim their performative identity.

In *Star Wars*, Anakin's abilities come from his strength in the Force, a strength which is intrinsically tied to his body. The number of midi-chlorians in a person's blood determines how powerful a body is in the Force, and Anakin's blood possesses unseen

levels of midi-chlorians Through his blood, Anakin's body has the ability to perform at unseen levels. He can manipulate other bodies and objects through the Force, but most importantly his body has enhanced agility, speed, power, and sensitivity, allowing him to pilot starfighters and space pods in situations that would kill most flyers and helping him defeat more experienced opponents in battle. His powers and ability to use the Force are directly tied to his blood and body, thus marking his body as more powerful than any other body, even those that can manipulate the Force. Furthermore, it marks his body as being the only one capable of fulfilling the sacrifice required of him.

As the Chosen One, Anakin must sacrifice his life and body for the greater good, which would be in fulfillment of a Jedi prophecy predicting his bringing balance to the Force. While Anakin does end up completing this destiny set before him and his body, he does not sacrifice himself in order to fulfill this supposed destiny and performance. Instead, Anakin sacrifices his body to save his son, Luke, from Darth Sidious. The fulfillment of this prophecy to restore balance to the Force by killing Emperor Palpatine is secondary to Anakin's protection of his son. As Emperor Palpatine tortures Luke with the Dark Side of the Force, Anakin watches on. Then Palpatine utters the words that change Anakin's mind and allegiance to the Sith Lord; "Now, young Skywalker... you will die" (*Return of the Jedi*). Unable to allow his son's murder, Anakin grabs the emperor, taking the full strength of Palpatine's power into his body. Anakin takes the full might of the Dark Side of the Force as he hurls the Emperor's body "with one final burst of his once awesome strength" into a shaft, killing him (*Return of the Jedi*). Only Anakin's bodily "once-awesome" strength can withstand Darth Sidious's powers long

enough to kill the Emperor; in protecting Luke, Anakin stops Palpatine's evil reign of terror over the galaxy. But, Anakin's body is damaged beyond repair from killing Palpatine, and so he asks Luke to remove his mask, an act that will kill him. With the removal of his mask, Anakin Skywalker dies, but his bodily sacrifice and death bring balance to the Force. Anakin has finally fulfilled the full extent of the prophecy over his performance and death when he kills Palpatine and sacrifices himself, destroying the Sith and leaving his son, Luke, as the remaining Jedi.

Anakin's self-sacrifice repeats the performance of the sacrificial death demanded by the Chosen One's performance. However, is not to save the galaxy from Palpatine and his evil, but to save his son from death. While his death ends up fulfilling the prophecy of the Chosen One foretold by the Jedi, which has been used to manipulate him his entire life, his decision to lay down his body was not in service of the greater. As such, he repeats the expected sacrificial performance, but with the crucial difference that his body only gives up itself to save his son's life.

Like Anakin's sacrifice, Buffy's body must die in order to complete her performance of the Chosen One identity. But in her repetition with difference of this component of the performance, Buffy sacrifices her body not once, but twice. Buffy as the Slayer is the most powerful body in the humanity. In Slayer lore, there is only one girl in the entire world who possesses the strength to fight the demons and the forces of darkness. A fact that her Watcher, Giles loves to remind her of:

GILES: Into every generation a slayer is born. One girl, in all the world, a Chosen One. One, born with the-

BUFFY and GILES: -- the strength and skill to hunt the vampires-

BUFFY: To stop the spread of their evil. Blah, blah, I've heard it, okay?
("Welcome to the Hellmouth")

When the Slayer before her was killed, Buffy was activated as the Slayer, and her body's potential was unlocked: she has the bodily strength to fight vampires, demons, and any other force of darkness. With this power, Buffy's entire body is a weapon; she possesses superhuman strength, speed, reflexes, stamina, regeneration, and agility, as well as innate hand-to-hand combat skills. Her strength and powers are tied to her body, and thus her body is marked as greater than that of a normal person. But, with this strength comes the sacrificial responsibility of her body; only her supernaturally strong form can defeat evil and save the world from evil.

Buffy's first sacrificial death comes when she is fighting a powerful vampire called the Master, who has been imprisoned for centuries in the caverns beneath Sunnydale. During their battle, Buffy is overcome and the Master drinks her blood. Weakened, Buffy is thrown into a small body of water, where she drowns and dies ("Prophecy Girl"). But, Buffy's journey does not end with her death; instead, she is revived by her friend Xander via mouth-to-mouth resuscitation ("Prophecy Girl"). Without this sacrifice, Buffy would not have been able to defeat the Master and stop the Apocalypse because she needed to realize that it is through her own decision to perform her role as Chosen One that she accepts her power.

Buffy's second bodily sacrifice comes when she must close the portal to Glorificus's hell dimension. Buffy is unable to stop the pawns of Glorificus, and Dawn's blood is used to open the door between worlds, unleashing monsters and demons onto the unsuspecting Sunnydale ("The Gift"). Left open, the portal would bring about the

destruction of the world. The only way the door will close once open is when the final drop of Dawn's blood drains the life from her ("The Gift"). As Dawn prepares to throw herself into the portal and kill herself, Buffy stops her. Along her journey to discover her true power as a Slayer, Buffy is told by the First Slayer, "Death is your gift" ("Intervention"). At first, Buffy does not realize what the First Slayer means, and she comes to see these words as an omen: as the Slayer she is meant to bring death to those she meets. It is not until she is faced with the loss of her sister and the destruction of the world that Buffy finally understands what the First Slayer has been telling her. As Dawn was made of her blood, her body has the ability to close the door between worlds. And so, her death is her gift to Dawn and to the rest of humanity; the sacrifice of her body can save the world. With her death, Buffy can stop this apocalypse and shut the gates of hell; it is her gift to the world and her chance to finally rest. Before she jumps into the portal to give up her body and life, she tells Dawn, "This is the work that I have to do" ("The Gift"). With the sacrifice of her body, Buffy closes the door between worlds and saves the day. She is gone; her body is lifeless. She realized her destiny and job is to close the portal, but Buffy does not sacrifice her body for the Greater Good but for her sister so she can live. Once again, her body is tasked to perform the bodily sacrifice to stop evil because it is her body alone meant to perform this kind of labor, but her decision to leap into a portal to her death lies not in saving society but in saving her family.

Unlike most Chosen Ones, Buffy's body is called upon to sacrifice itself twice. While her first sacrificial death almost directly repeats the need for the Chosen One to die for the greater good of society, her second death is propelled by her desire to save her

sister. Buffy repeats the expected sacrificial death component of the Chosen One, but, like Anakin, she does so with difference when she completes this performance not for the world, but for herself and her loved ones.

While Buffy and Anakin fulfill the usual parameters of sacrificial death, albeit with difference, T'Challa's sacrifice inverts this performance even more. Unlike many Chosen One's whose bodies who are born with supernatural powers or abilities that are dormant or active, T'Challa's body is originally that of an ordinary man's. It is only through the rituals of his people that T'Challa takes on the mantle of Black Panther, the warrior and protector of Wakanda, and receives his supernatural abilities. The mantle and powers of the Black Panther are not inherited; they must be earned by becoming the greatest warrior in Wakanda through trial-by-combat. This message is simple: only the one possessing the greatest strength of mind and body before becoming the Black Panther can receive the abilities of the Black Panther, placing bodies against one another to prove their superiority.

T'Challa possesses the mantle and powers of the Black Panther before he is coronated as king of Wakanda. According to tradition, however, T'Challa must fight against any challenger for his throne and mantle. In the ceremony, only one man, M'Baku, takes up the call and challenges T'Challa for the title of king and Black Panther. Thus, M'Baku's body becomes that of the Other, which T'Challa must defeat to prove himself. In the trial-by-combat, T'Challa drinks a potion that renders his abilities as the Black Panther null; he must prove his body is the greatest without the strengths of the Black Panther. T'Challa defeats M'Baku, proving his body not only the superior one, but

worthy of retaking the powers of Black Panther. Upon earning the mantle of Black Panther, T'Challa drinks from the Heart-Shaped Herb, which gives him the abilities of the Black Panther, including heightened strength, agility, and speed (*Black Panther*). These powers transform his body into one that can perform feats impossible for another human, but his physical superiority is not a given but must be proven without his powers in order for his body to continue its performance of the Chosen One.

After proving his physical worth, T'Challa's self-sacrifice is one that comes from within; he must fulfill the expectations of him as a ruler and the expectations he has for himself. T'Challa's sacrificial death comes when he fights Killmonger for the throne and the soul of Wakanda. Having just discovered Killmonger is in fact his cousin and an heir to the Wakandan throne, T'Challa must fight for the throne (*Black Panther*). For Killmonger declares his right to the throne, stating "I'm exercising my blood right. The challenge is for the mantles of king and Black Panther" (*Black Panther*). Should Killmonger defeat T'Challa, he will take on the mantle of Black Panther and king of Wakanda, meaning an evil man will bear the powers of the Black Panther and will rule over the power and technology Wakanda holds.

Knowing what Killmonger says to be true, T'Challa accepts the challenge for it is the right thing to do, even though he knows he may die in the battle (*Black Panther*). In this challenge, Killmonger and T'Challa undergo the ceremonial battle for the throne; the winner will claim the throne and will decide the fate of Wakanda (and the world). Knowing he must defeat Killmonger, T'Challa willingly sacrifices himself for what is right. Before the battle begins, T'Challa asks Killmonger to consider another way, saying

“This is your last chance. Throw down your weapons and we can handle this another way” (*Black Panther*). T’Challa seeks to prevent further violence, but Killmonger’s refusal means only violence is the only way forward. During the battle, T’Challa is defeated, and Killmonger throws T’Challa off of the waterfall to his supposed death. And in this moment, T’Challa’s body fulfills the sacrificial performance of the Chosen One, who gives their body and life doing the right thing. Though his death has farther reaches as it plants the seeds of doubt in Killmonger in the minds of his trusted bodyguards, the Dora Milaje, who will come to his and Wakanda’s aid upon his resurrection.

On the surface T’Challa’s self-sacrifice seems to parallel and repeat the required performance of the sacrificial death of the Chosen One, but through his perceived repetition of the performance he makes a crucial difference in the act: he does not actually die. Instead, T’Challa experiences a metaphorical death that serves as a call to action for those Wakandans who believe in the goodness of humanity to fight against Killmonger. In his sacrifice to save the soul of Wakanda, T’Challa’s metaphorical death empowers his true followers to fight for the world when he calls upon them. While his sacrifice and death do not appear to have the same world-shaping effects as Anakin’s or Buffy’s, his death actually sets the stage for saving humanity from a second-wave of colonization led by Killmonger against white bodies, thus repeating the self-sacrifice of the Chosen One with difference.

By having these three bodies possess the bodily abilities of the Chosen One, Anakin, Buffy, and T’Challa repeat the sacrificial death component of the performance of this identity on their own terms. Like their white counterparts, these heroes’ journeys do

not end in death. Instead, their bodies are called upon to return, to leave their grave empty, and to use their bodily abilities to fight evil, echoing the hero's resurrection to the land of the living, leaving his tomb empty and answering of the call of duty.

The resurrection, or the creation of the empty tomb, in Anakin's story once again repeats the expectations placed on the Chosen One's body, but the temporality of his resurrection plays with this performance and creates a difference in the repetition. In the vein of repetition with difference, Anakin's bodily return is a metaphorical resurrection that takes place before his actual death. It is a resurrection that changes his body into a mechanized weapon and it is one that is not chosen. During his battle with Obi Won, Anakin's body is destroyed. The only way he can live is in a mechanical body (*Revenge of the Sith*). Anakin is taken into a medical bay for his surgery by Emperor Palpatine, where he is fitted with metal legs and a metal arm. As the script direction states, "VADER, dressed in his black body armor, lies on the table. Nose plugs are inserted and the mask drops from above, sealing tightly. The helmet is fitted and VADER begins breathing" (*Revenge of the Sith*). With his body burned and dismembered, he is forced into a black metal suit that breathes for him and keeps him from dying. In this armor, he is no longer Anakin Skywalker. When his body arises from the table, he is no longer a man. As such, Anakin Skywalker dies metaphorically, only to be resurrected as Darth Vader. He is part man, part machine. He was not reborn; instead he is created, as a medical droid tells Darth Sidious, "My lord, the construction is finished... he lives" (*Revenge of the Sith*). He is not rebirthed, but built; he is more machine than man. Anakin, now fully Darth Vader, is not returned to his former self. Instead he is

constructed in a way that is less than his body because his earthly vessel was destroyed after forsaking the path of the Jedi.

Anakin's resurrection into the mechanized Darth Vader replicates the empty tomb performance of the hero returning to protect the land, but in his replication he enacts three key differences to the performance. His first change to the performance comes temporally; his resurrection precedes his self-sacrificial death to complete his journey. Instead, his resurrection occurs out of sequence with the supposedly intended linearity of the performance, wherein the Chosen One dies and is resurrected. In this temporal confusion, when Anakin is resurrected, he is metaphorically resurrected into Darth Vader in a mechanized suit; his body is not raised but automated. Together, these changes show Anakin's repetition of the resurrection of the Chosen One but differentiate his performance for the expected act of resurrection, allowing his performance to fulfill the requirement but showing the fungibility and fluctuation occurring to this portion of the performance.

Similar to Anakin's repetition with difference of resurrection, Buffy also defies the normal narrative of the resurrection of the Chosen One. Buffy truly dies not once but twice, and both times she is resurrected. The first time she was saved, she was resurrected from a few moments of death after her drowning at the hands of the Master ("Prophecy Girl"). This sacrifice has farther reaches than what is understood on the surface. In Slayer lore, when a Slayer dies, the next Slayer in line is activated. When Buffy drowned, she was dead for several moments before she was revived by Xander, and so a new Slayer was activated.

It is important to keep in mind that for this resurrection and despite the ramifications, Buffy did not want to die, but she choose to fulfill her duty. Despite knowing she was destined to die, she wanted to keep living, and so when she is resurrected for the first time, it is welcomed. Her second resurrection, on the other hand, was less desired. When Buffy is resurrected for the second time, she has been dead for several months after sacrificing herself to close the portal between worlds and to save her sister. Grieving her loss, needing her to return to protect Sunnydale, and believing her to be stuck in a hell dimension, Buffy's friends perform a magic ritual to resurrect her from the grave ("Bargaining: Part 1"). When Buffy emerges, she is lost and confused. It is not until several weeks later that it is revealed where she was when she was dead: "I live in hell because I've been expelled from heaven. I think I was in heaven" she sings to her friends in the midst of an attack from a musical-inducing demon. To this resurrected Buffy, earth is hell. Death, as her gift, was also supposed to bring her peace. Instead, she is recalled from her rest by her friends to reclaim the mantle once more and to fight evil. And now she must sacrifice her body once more in fulfillment of the performance of the Slayer identity because it is what is expected of her and it is the only life she knows. Thus, Buffy is not allowed the peace of death because her work is no longer complete.

With the resurrection of her body, Buffy repeats the intended performance of the Chosen One's return from the grave. Buffy's first change to the performance comes simply by the number of times she is brought back; she cannot seem to stay dead and is resurrected twice. Though it is the second change to the performance that is more significant in Buffy's repetition of this component of the Chosen One performance; she

was not supposed to be raised from the dead a second time. Buffy had completed her destiny as the Chosen One and her death was supposed to be her time to rest, but that is taken from her. This seemingly endless recalling of her body to sacrifice itself changes the resurrection performance as she continues to fulfill this component again and again, unlike the intended performance which does not demand continuous self-sacrifice and resurrection.

Unlike Buffy and Anakin, T'Challa chooses to return to the land of the living, rejecting the safety of death because he knows it is the right thing to do, it is what he as the Chosen One must do. After Killmonger "kills" him, T'Challa's body disappears as Killmonger throws it over the waterfall, leading everyone to believe he is dead (*Black Panther*). With no body to bury, his tomb is left empty. However, his body is found alive, but on the edge of death by M'Baku and the Jabari tribe. In order to save his life, he is given The Heart-Shaped Herb, which returns the powers of the Black Panther to his body. The herb takes him back to the in-between place of his ancestors, where his father tells T'Challa his time is over: "The time has come for you to come home and be reunited with me" (*Black Panther*). In the eyes of his father and his ancestors, he has completed his journey, but instead he chooses to complete the performance of the Chosen One by refusing death. T'Challa tells his father, "I cannot stay here with you. I cannot rest while he sits on the throne. He is a monster of our own making. I must take the mantle back. I must. I must right these wrongs" (*Black Panther*). Wakanda has hidden itself from the rest of the world under the guise of keeping its technology from reaching the wrong hands, but this has only led to isolation and watching evil take root. By choosing to

return, T'Challa seeks to right the wrongs of the past and to protect the future. T'Challa chooses to keep acting as the Chosen One for he is determined to save Wakanda from Killmonger and from itself by bringing its knowledge to the rest of the world.

T'Challa fulfills the resurrection performance with two major differences; he does not actually die to experience his resurrection and he elects to return from death. In the minds of his people and enemies he died, and so his return from the grave is nothing short of a resurrection. As such, the change in the resurrection performance comes from T'Challa's rejection of death and elective return. Whereas many Chosen Ones are not given the choice, T'Challa decides his fate.

Each hero experiences the phenomenon of the resurrection, leaving their tombs empty and fulfilling this part of the Chosen One performance. T'Challa, however, is the only one that elects to return to complete his performance; Anakin as Darth Vader is reconstructed (resurrected) by Darth Sidious for his own means, and Buffy is pulled from heaven by her friends because they miss her. Nevertheless, each resurrection completes this phase of the Chosen One bodily performance to prove each character as a true hero. With each resurrection, these bodies are allowed to further perform the identity of the Chosen One and complete their destinies. Though, Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa all repeat the resurrection with significant differences to the expected performance, creating changing within this narrative that challenges the idea of whether or not a heteronormative white male is the only body capable of this performance and create the space for their bodies to inhabit the identity of the Chosen One.

While Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa complete the performances of the Chosen One according to Butler's assertions on performativity of repetition with difference, their bodies are still subjected to colonizing narratives due to their race and gender when they break their performance. Butler's theories do not account for these types of narratives upon an unexpected body that claims an identity because Butler roots her ideas about performance in an ideology rooted in white subjecthood, the one group that can claim the status of subject without question. Butler's original theory in performativity does not account for race in its assumptions but assumes a personhood inherent to all bodies regardless of race. Race, like gender, plays a role in not only performing and claiming an identity, but in claiming personhood. The racialized and gendered body has had its subjectivity not only questioned but stripped away throughout history. Butler's oversight takes on a white ideology and serves to highlight the body of the Chosen One as one linked to an assumed whiteness that pushes back on the non-white body.

It is in this failure to link the intersections of race, class, and gender upon the body onto the performance it is crucial to turn to Hortense Spillers and Guy Debord in conjunction with Butler. Spillers represents a break in how race and gender contest an assumed body and its expected performance. In this break, Spillers shows how race and gender must be taken into account when discussing performance and the colonizing narratives that seek to punish the racialized and gendered body to turn them into a spectacle. In this vein, Debord builds on what a spectacle is and how it is used by a prestige group to keep the "Other" or the intruder to a performance at bay. By combining Butler's, Spiller's, and Debord's theories on performativity, bodily narratives, and

spectacles, the colonizing narratives thrust upon Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa are exposed. Through this exposure, these narratives can be dissected to show how despite the colonizing violence these characters experience, this violence proves that the white heteronormative male is in danger and resorts to colonizing narratives to protect itself.

Like Butler, Spillers challenges the performances expected of a body, particularly in regards to the intersection of gender and race. Spillers, in her acclaimed work "Mama's Baby, Papa's Baby," digs into the Moynihan Report released by the U.S. Department of Labor in the 1960s. The report accredits the plight of the black family to the reversal of gender roles, wherein black mothers take on the roles of mother and father. According to the report, the black mother takes on more "masculine" and fatherly roles of gender as a result of the absent black father, breaking conventional white American gender roles. Spillers challenges the need to create the white family sphere as the standard to hold black family dynamics to and asserts the report, "... suggests that 'underachievement' in black males of the lower classes is primarily the fault of black females" (66). To white society, power and leadership are passed down from male to male, father to son. A female body taking the role of familial leader disrupts this pattern; thus, the black female precludes young men from reaching their potential. Spillers sees the report as pathologizing a forbidding of the female and black body to perform the "masculine" role of leader properly based on her gender and her race.

While the report asserts the black female body takes on more socially traditional masculine traits, it fails to adequately contend and attribute the legacy of slavery and systemic racism to its assertions. In these failures, Spillers complicates the need for black

women to “defy” their gender and take on the role of both mother and father. Spillers maintains that the black female body is a site of punishment for its adopted masculine attributes that date back to its status as a captive body. In the captive body, Spillers states,

the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. But this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point of convergence biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortune join (67)

According to Spillers, the black body, male and female, has been subjected to cultural and political violence that place specific narrative upon the how the black and gendered body is allowed to perform in its sexual, cultural, and societal roles.

This raises an important distinction between “body” and “flesh.” Spillers writes, But I would make a distinction in this case between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse (67)

To Spillers, flesh comes before body; it is the universal form that comes before it becomes body, and as such it is a true subject without narrative constraints. The “body” only comes after cultural narratives, like those of gender and race, have been imposed upon the form. If Spillers is to be believed, the body as an object cannot gain subjectivity and must adhere to societal norms and rules.

Spillers discusses how the black body is punished for indiscretions against narratives placed onto it by society through racist propaganda, like the Moynihan Report, mirroring Butler’s claim that “... we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (178). Failing in a bodily performance means the body needs to be punished for breaking from the expected, repeatable performance. Punishments for this failure come in

different forms, like revocation of the identity or violence against the body. The need to attack a body for breaking a performance enforces a colonizing narrative against the body and shows how race and gender, posited by Spillers, intersect in performance. Bodies unable to fulfill the ideal image of the expected performance are subjected to punishments the “standard” body of this identity does not face.

In the punishment of the failed performance, the spectacle is borne. The spectacle is the creation allowing a group to unite against an “other” for stepping outside the performance. Changing the performance and the body opens the space for possibilities, increasing representation and diversity from the standard. The creation of spectacle centers on an “allowable” body recognized as the prestige, like that of the white male Chosen One body. According to Guy Debord, “The spectacle is the ruling order’s nonstop discourse about itself, its never-ending monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the stage of totalitarian domination of all aspects of life” (7). This prestige body fights back against bodies attempting to challenge it by making their failures to perform punishable offenses. Continuing the status quo allows the allowable body to keep its power. Thus, the failure of the performance and the punishment for this failure for those outside of the prestige’s imagistic hold is not only the creation of spectacle, but also as the beginnings of changing the performance and the bodies allowed to perform.

Debord delves further into the spectacle, saying “it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (2). The world is mediated by images of what is deemed “acceptable” to society. In the case of the spectacle, however, the image is one that betrays what is deemed as acceptable. The offensive image is put on display to warn

society of the breach of protocol. In the case of the body and bodily performance, the spectacle is the body that breaks the performance of an identity and rejects the expected image. The spectacle exists to censure an opposing body and instead thrives on the displaying the punishment for an offending performance and body.

Though, within the spectacle is possibility, which is where this thesis hopes to intersect with the spectacle. The spectacle shows what society, or literature, could be, not what it is. As scholar Guy Debord writes, "... the modern spectacle depicts what society *could deliver*, but in doing so its rigidity separates what is *possible* from what is *permitted*" (9). According to Debord, the spectacle shows both what is possible in performance and what is allowed. This is why the spectacle of the Other needs to be created by the powerful group: if the Other is allowed to claim space and identity, then the "prestige" and powerful group cannot claim authority over the bodies of others.

The performance of an identity is meant to be fluid and perfect, or else the identity is broken and false. The accepted reality of the Chosen One is a social construct based on political ideology. By believing Butler's assertions about bodies and performance, bodies who conform to an identity's performance but do not "match" or "fit" the expected and demanded body for such a performance can still claim this identity. The performance requires fidelity, but it is promiscuous, allowing many partners to create multiple performative products. However, these bodies have violence inflicted upon them for matching the anticipated performance without matching the physicality demanded of such performance when performance fails. Harkening back to Butler, those who fail or break their bodily performance have punishment and violence inflicted upon their bodies.

By combining this sentiment with Spillers's theories, who suggests race and gender impose narratives upon the flesh, breaks in the performance create specific spectacles of the body. According to Debord, the spectacle is not only the prestige body or image fighting back against an invading body, but a lens through which the prestige body can be challenged by possibility. By looking at colonizing violence and spectacle in through the lens of possibility, the failure of performance affirms this body's identity and creates the space to change the performance as the flesh refuses the narratives thrust upon it. However, by looking at the spectacle as a site of possibility, the narratives Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa can be seen as moments of identity affirmation for the heteronormative white male seeks to stop their flesh's potential through "underachievement."

By the sheer appearance of their bodies, Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa change the notion of what body can perform the acts of the Chosen One to claim this identity. Anakin, T'Challa, and Buffy retain the mantle of hero and Chosen One in their respective stories by fulfilling the bodily performance associated with the Chosen One identity, but at some point in each other journeys they stumble and break the performance. This disruption in the performance results in bodily violence against their bodies. This violence against the bodies of these heroes are the throes of the colonizing heteronormative white male of the Chosen One trying to keep their bodies from reaching their full potential and identity by turning them into spectacles.

However, it is important to remember that unlike their fantasy literary counterpoints who exist on the page, Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa have been brought to life on the screen as well as the page. Their spectacle narratives are informed not only by

the plot surrounding their journey, but by the cinematic elements of film, such as lighting, costuming, and editing. Every editorial and directorial decision on the screen enhances a specific narrative perspective upon their bodies. Film scholar Richard Allen writes about this creation of perspective using directorial elements of cinema as, “casual theories of perception define seeing as the presence of a causal relationship between the object and one’s perception of the object. Seeing is understood as a form of experience, a perceptual one, that is caused by the presence of the object in front of one’s eyes” (2). According to Allen, how one is presented an object, in this case the body of Anakin, Buffy, or T’Challa, influences how one perceives the object and the narratives surrounding it. With this in mind, it becomes pertinent to not only examine the plots of colonial violence upon the bodies of Anakin, Buffy, and T’Challa, but also the cinematic elements, like focus and music, creating their bodies into spectacles through the colonizing perceptions of the screen. As such, cinematic visual elements must be dissected to show the colonizing narratives upon them despite their fulfillment of the Chose One performance.

On the surface, Anakin’s white male body performs the identity of the Chosen One more traditionally than Buffy or T’Challa since his body fulfills the embedded aesthetic of white maleness of the Chosen One. However, throughout his life, Anakin’s body has been racialized. This racialization causes his form to be destroyed when he fails in his bodily performance of the Chosen One identity; he is transformed into a spectacle. With each subsequent failure of his performance, Anakin’s body has different racial violence enacted upon it.

The destruction of Anakin's body is the heteronormative white male's attempts to transform him into a spectacle, a warning against infringing on the performance of the Chosen One. This spectacle of destruction feeds off a need that goes back to the medieval roots of the Chosen One's body for what happens to the body of a traitor. Medieval scholar Danielle Westerhof suggests that the body of the medieval traitor:

... represented 'the corrupted body social' and was itself figured as 'a corruption to be expelled from it during the process of the public execution.' The traitor's body thus became the stage upon which political power and, in particular, governmental surveillance could be played out in terms readily understood by 'those for whom the executions were stage' (187)

According to Westerhof, the individual body is part of the body social, and the body of the traitor is considered a corrupted part of this social body. As a bodily corruption, the traitor's body must be destroyed as an exercise of proving political or governmental power over this body and its identity performance. In the ritual of the public execution, the executed individual cleanses the social body from the disease of the traitor and educated those watching "about the proper, well-policed boundaries of social order" (16). In the Middle Ages, the spectacle of the execution served as a warning to the public to remain in line and follow the collective rules, or else they would face the same fate as the body of the traitor.

And there is no doubt that Anakin's body is that of a traitor: he breaks his vows to the Jedi and goes to the Dark Side. But the violence against his body goes even deeper due the fact he has been racialized since birth by being born a slave. Anakin's status as a slave is not the only indicator of racialization of his body. Scholar Adilifu Nama attaches

Anakin's racializing to the biological nature of personhood, a false equivalent in perpetuated by some scientific ideology. Nama says,

What is most striking about the racial coding of Anakin is that many of the elements used in the film to explain his pathological outcome as the destructive Darth Vader are synonymous with the crisis of black male underachievement put forth in the controversial Moynihan Report. The historical legacy of enslavement, the increase in absentee fathers and households headed by single females, and a need for respectable male role models were theorized as significantly contributing to social maladjustment for many young black men in America (63)

According to Nama, Anakin's story is similar to that of the black male body: he was born a slave, his does not have a father and instead is raised by his mother, and it is not until Qui-Gon brings him into the Jedi fold that Anakin experiences positive male guidance in his life. Furthermore, Nama attributes Anakin's turning to the Dark Side as an example of "black male underachievement" since he does not live up to the expectations of his fulfillment of the prophecy supposedly surrounding him (63). As such, his body is racialized for his narrative since it replicates the narrative forced upon young black men in America.

Since his body is racialized, it can have violence thrust upon it when the performance fails. Anakin fails to maintain the bodily performance of the savior twice throughout his tenure as the Chosen One. In each case, his body is not only further racialized, but destroyed in his metaphorical execution and spectacle. Anakin's first performative break comes in *Attack of the Clones* when he takes his revenge upon the Tuskin Raiders for the murder of his mother. Anakin tells Padme, "I killed them. I killed them all. They're dead. Every single one of them. And not just the men, but the women and the children too. They're like animals, and I slaughtered them like animals. I hate

them” (*Attack of the Clones*). In his search for vengeance, Anakin kills every single person in the Tuskin encampment, even the women and children who could not defend themselves and were not responsible for his mother’s death. This disregard for life marks Anakin’s first performative break as no savior should kill indiscriminately.

After this break, Anakin’s body is punished by violence, but first he is further racialized and turned into a spectacle through both his clothing and his dismemberment. From the moment Anakin breaches his performance of the Chosen One, he is placed in darker clothing than other “good” characters, such as Yoda. Anakin’s darker clothing racializes him, visually showing on the outside the darkening of his soul as he slowly begins turning to the Dark Side. While dark, Anakin’s clothes are not completely black, the traditionally Western symbolic color of evil. Instead, he is placed in shades of brown, marking his body as in-between good and evil. The directorial gaze furthers this internal conflict in Anakin by physically placing Anakin, dressed in his dark colors, between Padme and Obi-Wan during their intended execution. The costumes for both Padme and Obi-Wan are shades of white, confirming their allegiance to the Light and starkly contrasting to Anakin’s darkening and shifting of alliance with the Dark Side. However, the staging of their bodies underscores Anakin’s split allegiance to these two respective bodies: his forbidden love for Padme versus his love for his mentor Obi-Wan. The costuming of Anakin’s body as well as his physical staging in this scene symbolize his conflicting alliances that will eventually cause his second break in his Chosen One performance.

Figure 1.2



(Gibson)

In *Revenge of the Sith*, Anakin's second break in his performance proves to be his undoing, costing him his body. After finding out that his secret wife, Padme, is pregnant, Anakin is haunted by dreams foretelling Padme's death in childbirth (*Revenge of the Sith*). To save Padme, Anakin joins the Sith, betraying the Jedi. Thus, Anakin is christened Darth Vader and tasked with murdering all Jedi, even the Younglings (children with aptitude in the Force), who he kills in the Jedi temple (*Revenge of the Sith*). With this massacre, Anakin fully breaks with his bodily performance of the Chosen One by killing innocent children, becoming a spectacle of the traitorous body.

Figure 1.3



(Brooks)

Attempting to stop Anakin, Obi-Wan dismembers Anakin in a metaphorical execution. Anakin loses both his legs and his left arm before lava catches what remains of his body on fire, searing his skin from his bones (*Revenge of the Sith*). The lighting and special effects upon Anakin's body as he burns serve to show the stripping away of his humanity as his flesh sears off of his bones. The only part of his body not to be engulfed in flames is Anakin's face, a strategic directorial choice which allows the audience to see the final throes of Anakin's humanity before his face is hidden behind the mechanical mask of Darth Vader. Furthermore, while his body is covered in yellow flames, his face continues to display shades of red, suggesting an inner fire burning him from the inside out as the last of his humanity burns away.

In order to further perpetuate the loss of his humanity, the scene cuts between Anakin's body as it is destroyed to Obi-Wan's face, who can barely look at the remains of his pupil. The decision to cut between these two bodies, one destroyed and one whole, serves to show the audience just how far Anakin has fallen in his path as the Chosen One and to turn his body into a spectacle; the directorial gaze refuses to allow Anakin to hide from the destruction of his body by continuing to place the focus on the camera on his body as he slowly burns to death, stripping him of his humanity while his mentor looks on.

While this violence is a punishment for Anakin's breaking his performance and links back to the medieval practice of destroying the body of the traitor, the type of destruction and violence, as well as the imagery of Anakin's burning and dismembered body, has eerie parallels to the history of lynching. When lynching was at its height of

practice in America, white mobs would dismember and burn the “offending” black body (usually male) for the crime of daring to step out of the box white society deemed acceptable. Anakin’s dismemberment and burning, as a racialized body, echo this dark tradition, mirroring the spectacle of the public lynching and executions of the black body by white mobs. Scholar Amy Louise Wood writes that lynching was “spectacle and ritual, firmly rooted in the tradition of social performance of public execution” (24). The public execution, dating back to the medieval need to punish the body of the traitor to set an example for the rest of the social body, is a ritual in itself; it thrives on the repetition of the spectacle. This spectacle polices the actions of the black body by inflicting violence on it for stepping outside of the performance demanded by white society; demonstrating what will happen to bodies who fail to stay in their accepted roles keeps people from changing their performances. By placing a body on display for punishment, it allows a group to join together in their collective “rule-following.” The ritual comes in the degradation of the body for the benefit of traditional performances. As such, the image of Anakin’s metaphorical lynching perpetuates a perspective of racial violence onto the audience, including them in this colonizing narrative whether they realize it or not.

After being left for dead by Obi-Wan, Anakin is found by Palpatine, who has him resurrected as Darth Vader. This resurrection, though a fulfillment of the Chosen One performance has racialized connotations. Anakin’s body is beyond repair, so he is placed into a mechanical suit to keep him alive (*Revenge of the Sith*). This suit is black, symbolizing his treachery and embracing of the Dark Side. By placing his body into that of a black mechanical suit, Anakin, now Darth Vader, has completed the racialization of

his body. For his blackness fulfills the evil always expected of his racialized body, and the mechanization of his body dehumanizes him.

Figure 1.4



(Revenge of the Sith)

However, the costuming of Darth Vader is not the only way this racializing and colonizing narrative is at work in this resurrection scene. Smoke surrounds Darth Vader as he rises, framed by the single overhead white light. The smoke, a product of fusing pieces of metal together, shows how Anakin is more machine than man, while the single light serves to throw Darth Vader's new body into the forefront of the audience's gaze. In this light and encircling smoke, there is no questioning that Darth Vader is no longer human.

Perhaps the most racializing directorial decision in this scene is when Darth Vader speaks; his voice, altered by the mask and breathing apparatus of his mechanical body, is now that of James Earl Jones, a black man and actor. Not only is his body racialized by being put into a black non-human body, but his voice is now that of a black man. The narrative is clear; the black voice equates to evil in this universe as it adds a sense of menace to Darth Vader that a white voice could not in the mind of the director. However,

this problematic framing of the black voice pushes even further as it is not until Anakin is mechanized that this voice becomes his, suggesting that the black voice, like that of the mechanical Darth Vader, represents something that is not quite fully human.

When looking at Anakin's performance, it is easy to consider his actions as those of a traitor. Not only did he renounce his vows to the Jedi and turn to the Dark Side, but his murdering of the Jedi allowed for Palpatine to dismantle the Republic and form the Empire with Palpatine as the emperor. For all purposes, he is a traitor to the body social; he gave up the Light and embraced the Dark Side. Under medieval body politics his body is worthy of destruction through the public execution and spectacle of the traitor. The dismemberment and metaphorical execution by Obi-Wan are his punishment for his betrayal and of his breaking of the Chosen One performance. Though, regardless of his punishments, Anakin still manages to replicate the performance of the Chosen One, albeit with difference. In fact, the racialized violence he receives from the heteronormative white male for his breaks in performance enables him to complete the Chosen One performance on his own terms.

Like Anakin, Buffy fails at times in her bodily performance of the Chosen One. Hers is not a failure committed out of malice or vengeance but comes when she fulfills her first sacrificial death and dies fighting the Master only to be revived. Buffy does not discover the failure of her performance until she fights a young woman named Kendra, who is just as strong as her. When the Master killed Buffy, the next Slayer, Kendra, was activated and called to be the Slayer. With her resurrection, Buffy threw the Slayer succession pattern into chaos and broke her Chosen One performance by creating a

second Slayer. In a way, Buffy's sacrifice strips her of the mantle of THE Slayer, and instead puts her body into a murky place where she has the bodily powers and abilities of the Slayer without the mantle. This, scholars J. Michael Richardson and J. Douglas Robb says, is significant to her as a Chosen One. Richardson and Robb claim, "Buffy, however, while not being the official Slayer, still has Slayer power and, more importantly, chooses to use it for the good of humanity: in short, she behaves as though she were still the Slayer, not "merely" a slayer" (Richardson 1). Buffy has the ability to decide whether or not she is the Chosen One, which marks her as different from her cohorts for she elects to continue on the path as the Slayer even though she knows it will lead to her body being put at risk. Regardless of how Buffy interprets her ability to choose her path, her break in the performance opens her up to sexual violence as her gendered body is no longer the sole Chosen One. Buffy, then, becomes a sexual spectacle for stepping outside of the gender roles and norms imposed by white, Western society upon her gendered body.

Buffy's body is sexualized simply because she is a female Chosen One. Traditional white male bodies fitting this role do not undergo such violence. Since Buffy's inception, her creator, Joss Whedon, sought to subvert the gendering and sexualizing of his heroine, stating "It was pretty much the blond girl in the alley in the horror movie who keeps getting killed... I felt bad for her, but she was always much more interesting... She was fun, she had sex, she was vivacious. But then she would get punished for it" (Vint). However, despite Whedon's best intentions, Buffy's as a female body has been sexualized as either the virgin or the whore.

Throughout most of the series, Buffy dresses in mini-skirts and tank tops when she kills vampires, demons, and the forces of darkness, highlighting her femininity and gendered body. Though, before her break in performance, Buffy's body carries a virginal innocence seen in the clothing she wears as she prepares to sacrifice herself to defeat the Master ("Prophecy Girl").

Figure 1.5



(shannon9396)

Her outfit, a white dress, is meant to highlight her virginal sacrifice for viewers as it symbolizes her purity and innocence. Through her outfit, the directing tells the audience she is a young girl who should be wearing this dress to the school dance that night, but instead she is dressing up to sacrifice herself for the Greater Good. Even the lighting in this scene serves to promote Buffy's body over her importance as an individual. Through the binds of a window, the last vestiges of daylight cast themselves over Buffy. In this light, her face is thrown into shadows while her body and white dress are bathed in light to show them off. This editorial decision shows it is not Buffy the individual who is important, but rather Buffy's virginal body and the sacrifice it is about

to perform that are important. While in this moment her body her body is celebrated for its imagistic virginity, once she fails in her performance by completing her sacrifice she is punished for her sexuality, which is painted as a dangerous thing for Buffy's female body.

Buffy's body has been gendered as female and as such is subject to the historical violence and oppression of the female form. Even though her body aesthetically challenges the heteronormative white male of the Chosen One by being female, it is her sexuality that causes her punishment after she breaks the performance of the Chosen One. Buffy's first sexual punishment comes following the loss of her virginity to Angel, her vampire boyfriend. Upon their climax, Angel experiences a moment of happiness, and thus a loophole in his gypsy curse is activated, releasing his soul and allowing the demon Angelus to take over his body ("Surprise"). This begins Buffy's punishment for her sexuality, as she becomes an after-school-special warning for young women who may desire to lose their virginity. Her narrative message is clear: premarital sex can cause your boyfriend to turn into a monster.

Expanding on her loss of innocence is the directorial messaging buried in the imagery surrounding her body. Once again, her costuming is meant to mirror her sexuality and virtue. Following her sexual encounter with Angel, Buffy dresses in black revealing clothing ("Innocence"). Unlike Anakin, Buffy's black clothing does not represent racialization of her body. Rather, her dark clothes reflect her fall from a grace. Wherein she wore a white dress for her sacrifice, her body is no longer able to claim purity through her clothing due to her loss of innocence. Her black outfitting mourns her

loss of virginity, expounding a death of her virtue through her clothing. While Buffy's body is sexualized due to her gender, her sexuality and deviation away from the virgin mythology surrounding the female body condemn her to sexually-charged punishments.

Figure 1.6



(IMDB)

Buffy's bodily punishment for her sexuality does not end with Angel; she experiences sexual violence in every relationship. When she has a one-night stand, Buffy turns to drinking beer to handle her anguish over her sexuality and casual sex ("Beer Bad"). This beer causes her mind to transform into that of a cavewoman, punishing her for giving into her sexuality. Once again, Buffy's costuming and make-up mirror her punishment for acting on her sexuality.

Figure 1.7



(Ownerman)

Under the influence of this poisoned beer, Buffy stops caring about her appearance. The make-up department puts her hair into dreadlocks, giving her an unwashed, unclean, and primitive appearance paralleling her body's "impurity" for claiming sexual agency. Buffy's unkempt hair mirrors her un-evolved nature for giving into her sexual urges rather than suppressing her sexuality like a proper woman; she is no longer in control of her sexuality as well as her hair. The messaging behind this decision is subtle, but turns her body into a spectacle, warning females what will happen should they dare to step outside of their sexually restrained gender role and take control of their sexuality.

It is not enough that Buffy experiences shaming for her sexuality, but sex even becomes seeped in violence for her. After being resurrected a second time, Buffy is emotionally numb and she begins having sex with her frenemy, Spike the vampire, to feel something. But, their first sexual encounter is anything but loving; they start having sex while they are fighting ("Smashed"). In between punching one another, they begin taking one another's clothes off and suddenly are sleeping together. In her need to feel, Buffy conflates sex with violence.

Eventually, Buffy realizes she needs to end this relationship because she is hiding in meaningless sex. However, Spike cannot handle this, and his frustration culminates when he attempts to rape Buffy in her bathroom ("Seeing Red"). In the editing of the scene, the camera angle and focus switches its gaze from Buffy's perspective on the floor to Spike's view on top of her throughout the encounter. The changes in perspective force

the viewer to see Buffy's terror as she attempts to fight off Spike but also serve to experience her fear when placed in her mind's eye.

Figure 1.8



(Amazondebs)

In either camera perspective, a narrative of sexual victim weaves around Buffy's body: the violence she experiences is a result of her own encouragements of violence in her previous sex with Spike. The undercurrent of victimizing and blaming in the scene, created by these directorial shifts of point-of-view, marks the first time Buffy is seen as a sexual victim. While she has been punished for her breaches of sexuality and gender roles, she has not been previously victimized. Her vulnerability in this scene echoes for all women for even the Slayer, the most physically powerful woman in the world, is open to such sexual violence. While Buffy eventually fights off Spike, her near-rape in her own bathroom punishes her body for breaking the rules of sexual conduct and for conflating violence and sex.

Buffy's gendered body experiences sexual violence because it does not fit the male body expected of the Chosen One. As Buffy scholar states, "Warrior tradition constructs a coherent masculinity, including impenetrable male bodies, as the key to warrior identity, and renders 'slay-gal' not only paradoxical but, arguably, impossible"

(185). In challenging the masculine Chosen One through her existence and in breaking of her performance of the Chosen One, Buffy's gendered body was opened up to violence and penetrated in a way male heroes are not; her sexuality, which is forced upon her by her gender, leads to violence against her body to transform it into a spectacle warning against a female as the Chosen One. Despite the attempts to punish her gendered body and turn her into a sexual spectacle, Buffy continues in her performance of the Chosen One and fulfills her destiny on more than one occasion.

As with Anakin, T'Challa faces colonizing narratives upon due to his racialized body. T'Challa's first introduction to the Marvel Cinematic Universe comes in *Captain America: Civil War*. At first, T'Challa is an unassuming diplomat at the Sokovia Peace Accords calling for the Avengers to agree for governmental oversight. When the Accords are bombed and T'Challa's father is killed, Bucky Barnes is framed for the attack. T'Challa seeks out Bucky for revenge, which constitutes T'Challa's first break in the Chosen One performance for the savior cannot seek vengeance instead of justice. T'Challa's anger is compared to Steve Rogers's (alias Captain America) desire to bring Bucky in for justice. Thus begins the paralleling between T'Challa's and Steve's black and white bodies, as Captain America is the embodiment of the white Chosen One compared to Black Panther's black body of the savior.

In their first encounter, Captain America and Black Panther appear to be evenly matched with T'Challa's bodily speed, strength, and agility matching that of scientifically-enhanced Captain America. There is always an undercurrent that Black Panther needs to prove himself as good as Steve, who uses his body to stay between

Black Panther and Bucky and keeps Black Panther from making a terrible mistake and killing the wrong man. Through this narrative framing, Captain America comes off as the defender of what is right, merely protecting Bucky from Black Panther. Meanwhile, Black Panther is framed as the aggressor.

This narrative is further pushed by the cinematic framing of the encounters between these two bodies. When Black Panther and Captain America face off against one another in *Civil War*, the directorial cutting of their fight enforces a colonizing imagery, placing Captain America and Black Panther as bodily opposites of one another. Even the costuming and each man's weapon of choice, Captain America's shield and Black Panther's claws, reinforce the narrative of the protective Captain America versus the attacking Black Panther. The shield is a more defensive weapon, symbolizing Captain America's stance as the defender, whereas Black Panther's claws, meant for clawing and scratching other bodies, are offensive. These weapons are literally attached to Black Panther's hands, transforming his body into the weapon. Whereas Captain America's shield can be detached from his arm and thrown, Black Panther's claws are a part of his suit and, by extension, body. During their battle, the writers and directors make a pointed decision to have Captain America's shield attached to his arm, rather than having him throw it, as is his custom, in an offensive act. Instead, the choreographed decision was made to have Captain America hide behind his shield while Black Panther's claws scrape at him, keeping Black Panther at bay.

Figure 1.9



(Black Panther)

However, not only are the men's weapons representative of their stances, but how their masks are utilized are strategic narrative framings by the directors. While fighting, only Captain America's face is given the opportunity to show expression, as Black Panther's is hidden behind his mask. The cutting of the scene zooms onto Captain's face as he struggles to hold off the aggressive Black Panther. This editing allows the audience to connect with Captain America and his struggle as it humanizes him, and Black Panther becomes a face-less attacker the hero must defeat.

Figure 1.10



(Black Panther)

Another important editorial and directorial decision in cultivating the Captain America and Black Panther tension comes in the form of the camera's point-of-view. Throughout the majority of the battle between their respective bodies, the camera keeps

its gaze on fixed on Captain America, giving the audience a glimpse into Black Panther's perspective. While this suggests an attempt at sympathizing with Black Panther by letting the audience see his perspective, it only allows viewers the chance to see Black Panther as the aggressor. The move to keep Captain America is focus serves to continue his narrative as the defender, never showing him as the attacker upon Black Panther. This framing of Captain America as the protective white man versus the antagonistic black man creates colonizing, racial parallels between these bodies. The pitting of Black Panther's body and performance of the Chosen One against the heteronormative white man, Captain America, creates a perspective that Black Panther is only legitimate as a hero and Chosen One when he proves himself equal, physically and heroically, to Captain America.

This battle is not the only time their bodies are pitted against one another. When Captain America and Black Panther lead the charge against Thanos's army in *Avengers: Infinity War*, their bodies are once again compared. This comparison once again enacts Captain America's subconscious bodily superiority in the minds of the directors, even when he is the visitor in Black Panther's native Wakanda, the sight of the upcoming battle. The directors push this narrative even further with their framing and editing. After showing the entire Wakandan army and remaining Avengers running together to confront Thanos's army, the camera zooms out, panning to Captain American and Black Panther as they run side by side, outstripping all the other warriors behind them to engage the enemy first. The message behind this perspective and camera angle is clear: only these two bodies are capable of this speed. This directorial perspective attempts to place Black

Panther and Captain America on the same level over other bodies, but it only serves to perpetuate a colonizing narrative upon T'Challa in its editing.

Figure 1.11



(The SuperRocxz)

The goal is to show that they are the same in their abilities, but once again it is a subconscious need to prove that Black Panther's black body equals the most powerful white man in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Captain America. This mindset suggests it is necessary for a black body to prove itself equal to that of the established white man's body rather than just allowing this body to exist and claim its own space and identity.

The endless need to “prove” T'Challa's body by comparing it to Captain America's is infuriating as other Chosen Ones' bodies do not need to constantly compare and prove their bodies and abilities. This need to compare has roots in racial history surrounding the medieval body in literature. Body scholar David Marriott traces the production of the racialized body to that of racist doctrine that limits the experience of bodies of color, disallowing certain stories. According to Marriott, “...the racialized body has often been the point of reception through which racism has become readable and natural but [...] the racialized body has also formed a complex limit to the experience of the body as first of all belonging to a self” (163). Allowing the racialized body to exist in

literature performs a dehumanizing and colonizing effect on the body; this body is not allowed a sense of self. While a racialized body forces recognition of this body, the racialized body is viewed as lesser than a non-racialized body, embedding racist narratives in stereotypical “representation.” As such, the directorial need to create a narrative in which Black Panther is constantly compared with and proven equal to Captain America serves as an embedded colonizing narrative in racial representation, despite the efforts to avoid such problematic doctrine.

Bodily comparison to the white male Chosen One in the Marvel Cinematic Universe is not the only racialized violence committed against Black Panther’s flesh: he must kill the invading black man in order to reestablish himself as the Chosen One. T’Challa’s second break in his performance of savior comes when he doubts himself as both Black Panther and king of Wakanda. In *Black Panther*, T’Challa discovers Killmonger is the son of his uncle, who was killed by T’Challa’s father. Upon learning this information, T’Challa questions the man his father was and himself as his father’s son. He tells Nakia, “He killed his own brother, and left a child behind with nothing. What kind of king, what kind of man does that?” (*Black Panther*). T’Challa has idolized his father his entire life; knowing his father was capable of killing his own brother and abandoning his nephew, T’Challa to break his performance as he questions his legitimacy as king and Black Panther in light of his father’s mistakes. This also leads Black Panther to perpetuate yet another form of racial violence against both his and Killmonger’s body: the African Chosen One must destroy the African-American body of the imposter. This

necessity comes after Killmonger takes the mantles of king of Wakanda and Black Panther from T'Challa.

With the claiming of these titles and powers, Killmonger throws Wakanda into chaos, a fact highlighted by the editing of his walk to sit upon the throne of Wakanda for the first time. In the initial shot of Killmonger approaching the Wakandan throne, Killmonger's body is out of focus and placed on the left of the camera. Instead, it is the throne, the Wakandan nobles, and the Dora Milaje who receive the camera's centered focus.

Figure 1.12



(“Killmonger”)

By placing Killmonger out of focus, the director places him as an invading force upon the Wakandan peoples and symbols, an outsider on the periphery of the proceedings of state rather than the true king who can claim the center of attention. Furthermore, everything in this shot is filmed upside down as the camera slowly spirals to find right-side up once more, following Killmonger's ascent until he sits upon the throne. Placing the world in an upside-down framing creates a narrative that Wakanda is in a similar state

of confusion and displacement as an outsider, an African-American, takes control of the most technologically advanced nation in the world.

The colonizing narrative does not stop here; the score during this shot, while not able to be heard in this paper, highlights the confused undercurrents of the scene. The song, “Burn It All,” combines a hip-hop beat with African tribal chants, echoing the blending of black American culture with Wakandan culture as Killmonger takes control. This musical blending suggests that the traditions of Wakanda are at risk with Killmonger, and indeed the soul of Wakanda is in question as Killmonger reveals his plans to usher in a new era of colonization using Wakanda’s advanced technology and places blame for African imperialism at the feet of Wakanda for its lack of action in saving black bodies from slavery.

On the edge of death, T’Challa reiterates Killmonger’s sentiments about Wakanda’s culpability, telling his ancestors,

You were wrong! All of you were wrong! To turn your backs on the rest of the world. We let the fear of our discovery stop us from doing what is right. No more. I cannot stay here with you. I cannot rest while he sits on the throne. He is a monster of our own making. I must take the mantle back; I must. I must right these wrongs (*Black Panther*)

Like Killmonger, T’Challa realizes Wakanda is not without blame for keeping itself locked away from the rest of the world. While T’Challa’s words are strong and decisive, the directorial and editorial choices of the scene underscore T’Challa’s desire to right the wrongs of Wakanda’s past.

Figure 1.13



(“Black”)

In the camera’s gaze, T’Challa stands apart from his ancestors, implying that he stands against them and their ideas. However, it the decision to place T’Challa in a white, the color of the savior, African robe that gives the greatest visual representation of T’Challa’s desire to pull Wakanda into the future. While his ancestors, including his father, are all outfitted in traditional garb, T’Challa’s body pays homage to the past while looking to the future through his outfitting. In this moment, T’Challa’s outfitting and physical placement underscores his need to save Wakanda by killing Killmonger, a need which serves to perpetuate a rivalry between the African and African American body.

The differences in the two men’s mindsets are directly linked to their bodily upbringing and how their bodies are compared. Killmonger, while Wakandan by his father, is an African American man, who had to fight for everything. He shows this struggle on his skin, scarring himself in African ritualistic style for every kill he has made (Magana 1).

Figure 1.14



(Oswald)

The scarring on Killmonger's body compares his body to T'Challa's. The scars not only count the number of kills he has made but represent his desire to reclaim his African ancestry, like many African Americans who experience a diaspora after the removal and enslavement of their ancestors from their homeland. Killmonger's scars show his desire to be part of his people and African heritage.

Killmonger's African American body is put into direct conflict with T'Challa's African body. Unlike Killmonger, T'Challa's body is not an outsider's; he is a Wakandan and African and does not need to permanently mark his body to claim this narrative. In his first fight against M'Baku, T'Challa's body is painted in panther markings and ceremonial face paint, which can be washed off following the fight. Even when T'Challa fights Killmonger for the throne of Wakanda, T'Challa has ceremonial face paint, juxtaposing his "legitimate" claims to ancestry against Killmonger's attempts at legitimacy through scarring his body.

Figure 1.15



(“Coronation”)

The racialized violence forced upon these two black bodies only occurs after T’Challa breaks his bodily performance of the Chosen One by doubting himself and allowing Killmonger to take his mantle of Black Panther. This transforms these two black bodies into representations of the tension between the African American body and the African body, placing them into conflict with one another over who can claim an African heritage and identity. The necessity for T’Challa to destroy the African American demonstrates a different form of colonizing violence upon his body, perpetuating an ideology that needs to keep the African American body as spectacle as it is only his African body that can truly claim the identity of Black Panther.

The two breaks in T’Challa’s bodily performance demonstrate how his black body has been colonized, despite taking on the identity of the Chosen One. The roots of the white body in Chosen One history means that breaks in the performance of his black body require punishment. These punishments are racializing and colonizing violence, changing his body into a racialized spectacle to warn other bodies off of claiming the title

of Chosen One. Despite this violence and attempts to turn him into a spectacle, T'Challa completes his journey and performance by defeating his enemy, solidifying his status as the Chosen One.

This thesis began with the notion that literature reflects the world around it but is also a world-building force. Not only does it create worlds within its pages, but literature influences its readers' mind to promote ideology. As such a powerful force, it is important to recognize colonizing narratives that exist and perpetuate themselves within stories, like that of the Chosen One as a heteronormative white male body. However, by exposing this narrative and proving how new the bodies of Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa are claiming this performative identity, the process of decolonizing the Chosen One can begin.

The Chosen One trope is a bodily performance. So, as long as a body performs the expected acts of the Chosen One, then it can claim this identity even if it is not the body of the Anglo-American male. But, even with this ideology, the white male persists and commits violence against bodies that do not meet its aesthetic standards, turning these bodies into colonizing spectacles. But this narrative can be subverted through performance by choosing to instead ascribe these violent acts as acts of decolonizing violence this body is being antagonized by different characters and bodies. Different iterations of the Chosen One, like Anakin, Buffy, and T'Challa, can help decolonize the Chosen One, despite the fact that these bodies undergo violence to do this work. If work is done to decolonize the body of the Chosen One, then this violence against bodies who

do not “fit” the necessary aesthetic will no longer be necessary because the Chosen One will no longer need to perpetuate world-building, colonizing imagery.

While colonizing narratives seeks to maintain the status quo of the heteronormative white male, Popular Culture characters like Anakin Skywalker, Buffy Summers, and T’Challa are pushing back. At the moment, each of these characters is experiencing a resurgence: *Black Panther* earned an Oscar nomination for Best Picture; Darth Vader’s legacy reemerged in the sequel *Star Wars* movies; and, rumors about a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* reboot have renewed interest in the original television show. These characters have captured the imagination, making them the ideal characters to interrogate the Chosen One and to change the colonizing, world-building nature of this archetype.

They embody this identity since they fulfill the performance of this identity despite the fact their bodies do not “fit” the typical appearance of the Chosen One (i.e. white and male). Even though they fulfill the narrative of the Chosen One, their performance simultaneously repeats with twists the expected narrative. The performance composing the Chosen One identity, the virginal birth, the sacrificial death, and the resurrection or return of the body, is changed, challenging the place of the heteronormative white male at the top of the narrative.

In the break of each of their respective performances, the forms of violence imparted on their bodies are moments of colonization and spectacle. Instead of seeing these violent acts upon their flesh as a victory for the heteronormative white male, it is more pertinent to see this as a change to the performance and who is expected to embody

this performance. It is only through the violence committed against these characters that one can see the performance changing from their repetition with difference and that the white male body of the Chosen One fears their changing of the identity and performance. As such, the spectacle outlined by Debord is not just a means of warning, but an affirmation that possibility is seeping into fantasy literature.

In working to decolonize the body of the Chosen One and the bodily performance of this identity, this does not delegitimize the genealogy of the Chosen One. Traditional iterations of the archetype and identity, like Harry Potter, Aragorn, and King Arthur, deserve their identity as the Chosen One in their respective stories. Instead, by opening up the discussion for what performance is expected of the Chosen One and the idea that any body, regardless of race and gender, can fill this role, then one can dismiss the need for a body to “prove” itself in comparison to this body. This decolonization and deconstruction of the body of the Chosen One and the colonizing narratives surrounding it allows for a reconstruction of the archetype that creates possibility for any gender or race to fill this role without violence inflicted upon his or her body.

The body of the Chosen One is not fully decolonized; readers and viewers still summon the white male body when thinking of who is allowed to perform this identity. Through the violence enacted upon bodies who claim this identity is being challenged. And though it is fighting back against these bodies, their insistence and persistence despite this violence proves their identities and aides in opening the space for the possibilities of more bodies claiming this role.

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