

Chapter 1

Being in the Ruins: Of Ontology of the Mess

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the experience of being in ruins and how Black creative work brings to life the question of existential being. It examines the two sides of existence in which decolonial aesthetics represent both being in a place and the condition of those denied full humanity. The chapter reflects on the Black individual, who, as an outsider made of “Black matter,” does not belong in the modern Western world. This individual is considered part of the mess of Blackness. The chapter places Black creative culture in the context of these ruins, showing how it allows Black creators to explore their identity beyond colonial boundaries. In this place, being in ruins creates new, complex existential ideas that turn the Black body into flesh. The chapter unpacks these ideas, presenting the Black body as one deeply connected to dark matter, representing the ruins of modernity—Blackness.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RUINS

There is a zone of non-being, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell. Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation. If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies (Fanon, [1952]2008, p. 2).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8716-7.ch001

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For most people, objects are simply dead things that cannot speak except to speak back what is spoken to them. *What is given to the object is what the object gives back to the subject as a measure of being in the world. What is being then if it is to be understood at the level of blackness and whiteness?* If being is interconnected to the category of blackness and whiteness, which influence how the category operates and also on lived experience, then it necessitates some serious thought. In the name of being, it means whatever happens in blackness, or that which is the category of the dehumanised, can be looked at from the standpoint of the notion of the ruins. Thus, this black being is with a small letter b and is crossed out with a line drawn through it, symbolising being outside the Being, a total subject that Western existential philosophers have successfully situated as a global father. If we are saying being in the ruins, the difficult issues that must be examined are that of being in the ruins and being denied being is the subject of the ruins. What is regarded as being cannot be separated from subjectivity, where subjectivity is the connection with reality that offers qualities of being a subject, being a being, and being a Being who is a subject and/or a subject who is a Being.

Thus, in this book, subjectivity means art, and art means subjectivity. Therefore, the study of art is a study of subjectivity. The task, therefore, is not to be invested much in the genealogy of Being. Rather, the task is undertaking the phenomenology of art and being in blackness. This means that lived experience and subjectivity serve as an interlocutor to being in the ruins. This means to excavate the meaning of being in the ruins of blackness, to think about being of those who are denied Being and from the position of blackness, and to think about blackness from blackness and the meaning of art in blackness. The meaning of art in the ruins will here be called decolonial aestheSis. It is from here that the thought of blackness as the ruin's stems. What kind of being can come from the ruins is not only what preoccupies these thoughts. However, the question of the meaning of the ruins is important to understanding blackness as the interlocutor of being, a reservoir of black creative expression culture, and a space for generativity. Here, the question of being in the ruins becomes central and how this being is animated through black creative endeavours. The two sides of Being/being are where the ruins become an embodiment of being in a place and a site of those beings who are denied Being. From this point, the black subject who is denied Being takes the position of the black extra-terrestrial who is made of black matter. The mess. The one who does not belong in this world of Being because they are a being of the mess. In creative and expressive cultures, the ruins of blackness become a site of ontological excavation for the black subject to think beyond the line, crossing over its being as the subject of the ruins.

Positioned behind the crossing line being in the ruins elicits extra-terrestrial ontological impulses and fabricates intricate non-existential properties that render the black body into flesh. These existential properties present the black body as

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