Concealing White Supremacy through Fantasies of the Library: Economies of Affect at Work

Michele R. Santamaria

Abstract

Whether the library in question is as small as a personal collection of books or as large as the Borgesian conception of the library as universe, this article argues that "The Library" can function as a fantasy space that denies its role in white supremacy even while it is intimately and affectively tied to it. As such, the fantasy of the library is a significant obstacle in terms of "denaturalizing whiteness in academic library spaces" (Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015). In order to reveal what the fantasy of the library always seeks to obscure, this article examines three types of "affective economies" (Ahmed 2004): that of library awe, that of library nostalgia, and that of library trespass. By drawing attention to these affective economies, the hope is to shift focus away from the library as a fantastic space to the bodies that circulate in libraries. In doing so, a distinction is always drawn between the bodies that belong and do not belong in library space. Given my status as light-skinned Latina academic librarian, I weave autoethnographic analysis throughout the article as a way of addressing that liminal space between belonging and not-belonging in the library, further accentuating how belonging at the library is constructed around whiteness. In contrast to the affective economy analysis that precedes it, the final section of the article examines how library video tours created by students of color portray aspects of library awe and library nostalgia while also establishing the right of bodies of color to take up space in libraries and fashion their own, sometimes fantastic narratives.

INTRODUCTION

Whatever the size and scope of a library, the argument of this article is that "The Library" can function as a fantasy space that denies its role in white supremacy. Thus, the fantasy of the library operates in ways that make it all the harder to problematize whiteness in academic library spaces (Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015). In order to reveal what the fantasy of the library always seeks to obscure, this article examines three types of "affective economies" (Ahmed 2004): that of library awe, that of library nostalgia, and that of library trespass. By doing so, this article shifts focus away from the library as a fantastic space to the bodies that circulate in libraries. In doing so, a distinction is always drawn between the bodies that belong and do not belong in library space. Given my status as light-skinned Latina academic librarian, I weave autoethnographic analysis throughout the article as a way of addressing that liminal space between belonging and not-belonging in the library as a means of further accentuating how belonging at the library is predicated upon whiteness.

Because autoethnography is not a frequently used methodology in library science, it is important to foreground some of its central tenets. As implied by "auto," the methodology is fundamentally reflexive and reflective, always considering how a sense of "lived experience" (Deitering 2017, 1) can be inscribed and actively transform our scholarly practices. Thus, autoethnography is a qualitative method but, given its aims, comes in no standardized shape or form. As laid out by Anne-Marie Deitering in her introduction to *The Self as Subject: Autoethnographic Research into Identity, Culture, and Academic Librarianship* (2017), there are a few principles that are key to understanding autoethnographic writing as a method: There is no correct, prescriptive way to do autoethnography (11). The method places significant demands upon the reader (12). The process is "very social" in its emphasis on the sharing of stories (13). Autoethnography is not an "easy out" for the researcher (14). There is rigor in the method (15). Revision is essential in contrast to the idea of research as "writing up the results" (16). Finally, like creative writing, autoethnographies are never "finished" pieces (17).

By weaving autoethnography throughout this article, my goal is to offer what Deitering characterizes as "specific, grounded, theorized interpretations of moments in place and time" (2017, 17). When I turn to autoethnography, I do not offer an idealized version of myself but instead interrogate what it means for an academic librarian such as myself, a light-skinned Latina, to work with students of color at a predominantly white institution. In writing about myself autoethnographically, I acknowledge my commitment to support our students of color as much as possible while drawing attention to the fact that unlike some these students, I pass. Autoethnography allows me to acknowledge that those who "pass" have particular bodies that can move through spaces like libraries in very different

ways than those whose bodies are more visibly racialized and whose bodies are construed as threats.

In contrast to those students of color who find themselves monitored, I have found myself slipping by as somewhat invisible in academic spaces. Upon entering the academic world, I have frequently been read as Asian, with guesses about my nationality ranging from Indian to Filipina. It has happened enough to make me wonder if those traits attributed to Asians as "model minorities" have also been ascribed to me, and in thinking more about affect, if there is something to what Sianne Ngai (2005) has to say in *Ugly Feelings*, particularly with regards to "animatedness." Ngai lists "animatedness" as one of the seven "ugly feelings" she analyzes. For Ngai, "animatedness" is a racialized affect, but as is the case with all the "ugly feelings" she explores, "animatedness" can be "thought of as a mediation between the aesthetic and the political in a nontrivial way" (3). Thus, the American racial stereotype of Asians as "silent, inexpressive" and "emotionally inscrutable" offers the clearest juxtaposition to the "exaggeratedly emotional, hyperexcessive, and even 'overscrutable' image of most racially or ethnically marked subjects in American culture" (Ngai 2005, 93). These racially/ethnically marked subjects include Latinos/Latinas. But it has become clear to me that in the minds of many, this "animated" category would not include someone like me who not only looks but also conveys a sense of affect that "belongs" in a library—a body that has always sought belonging at the library, and has considered belonging possible even though I have been occasionally reminded or had to force myself to confront that I am being "given a pass," that the library is not my "home" the way it would be to a white body as the library is part of "a world that is orientated around whiteness" (Ahmed 2007, 160).

Do I sense this orientation to an authoritative whiteness when I send an email on behalf of "The Library?" When I make this choice to mention the library instead of myself, I sense that this writing choice renders the request more authoritative and yet also more benign. This would indicate the sense that "The Library" is more than a space. So then, what is "The Library" if it can command in this manner? As I ponder this rhetorical choice, I wonder if I am sitting in a library of sorts, typing, though I am technically in a hotel room. I came here for the quiet, for the ability to retreat and focus on thinking without the bother of my day-to-day life. The aesthetic of the hotel room is reminiscent of the library building that I currently work in: geometric, clean lines, though the use of red in the curtain and desk chair would never be featured in my library, or come to think of it, any of the other modern libraries I have seen. Light greens, greyish blues, dark browns: the color scheme of the posh, modern library building I work in resembles that of a nice, modern hospital. I am not the only one who has drawn this comparison. As quoted in "The Library as Heterotopia: Michel Foucault and the Experience of Library Space,"

Caitlin Moran calls libraries "cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination" (Radford, Radford, and Lingel 2015, 733). For Foucault (1985), libraries and museums constitute the same type of heterotopia, spaces of "indefinitely accumulating time" with the goal of enclosing "in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes" in a "place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" (19). While hotels give the mixed sense of "being home" and "not being home" simultaneously, libraries strongly owe their sense of heterotopia to their architecture, which contributes to the library's heterotopic sense of being both "finite" and "potentially infinite" (Radford, Radford, and Lingel 2015, 740). In doing so, the library approximates qualities that have been philosophically ascribed to awe, particularly in terms of evoking a dimension of awe associated with "intellectual elevation" (Kristjánsson 2017, 141).

Whether a library is more modern or traditional in its architectural approach, the way a library looks is a statement on the values and ways of thinking that the library promotes. In the case of more traditional library architecture, architectural features have been analyzed in terms of how they affirm Western traditions of architecture and thought (Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015, 258). Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro point to scholarship that addresses how representations of white, wealthy, usually male benefactors also convey something about who can claim space in academic libraries and who is valued in those spaces (258). For example, it is not uncommon for academic library lobbies to prominently feature portraits of donors. At one of my workplaces, the library's namesake was pictured in fox-hunting attire near the front of the building, while his descendent was painted in a more casual fishing scene; both white men, both prominently featured on the main floor in different poses of command. In his analysis of the links between whiteness and library spaces, Ian Beilin (2017) pays particular attention to Columbia's Butler Library as a white space. While Beilin draws particular attention to architectural elements that are not present in my library workplace, his broader argument concerns how a "library might become something other than (primarily) white" (91), drawing attention to how library spaces work to continue making white bodies normative.

My current library workplace looks nothing like the library where I did academic work as an undergraduate: a theology library with monastic carrels, where I self-consciously thought back to monks illuminating manuscripts—something I studied in detail as a high school student. It was somewhat like the Gothic library I had longed to work in at Yale, Sterling Memorial Library, with its transformation of the Gothic cathedral into a "cathedral of learning." I was devoted enough to that kind of association between bookishness, libraries, and sacredness so as to learn how to draw different kinds of Celtic knots. Even as I work on an article that will ex-

amine how white supremacy plays a role in the fantasy of the library, I am steeped in these nostalgic and awe-eliciting fantasies of the library, fantasies that are as personal as they are historic, my mind and body wrapped in the sense of sanctuary that libraries gave and still sometimes give me. As such, my lived and even aspirational experiences in libraries are radically different from those described by Sarah Hannah Gómez (2017), whose experience as a user of libraries gave her a clear-cut sense that there were spaces in the library where she did and did not belong (103).

As a Latina with light-brown skin, as an immigrant raised by immigrants who are university educated, I am a person of color who inhabits libraries differently than other people of color. For me, "The Library" seemed to provide a sense of safety and sanctuary. But more recently, in the past few years, I have begun to question both the provision of that safety and its very existence. This questioning has taken place due to my research and also due to intense circumstances. Around last March of the 2018–2019 academic year, "alt-right" posters made their way into our library building. These posters were deemed relatively innocuous by several white faculty members because their language focused upon "identity." College officials debated whether or not the posters had actually ever been in the building since the posters were never physically found but instead found their way into social media. Establishing whether or not the posters were physically posted or photo-shopped, as opposed to addressing the threat of white supremacy, was prioritized. Eventually photographs were posted online of well-known neo-Nazis posting the signs on the second floor, the floor where my office is also located. These photographs were taken near the elevators I ride every day. At first, I felt shock that this happened and further shock at the administrative reaction, perhaps because I was also so powerfully caught up in the library fantasy where a library space is "beyond" such things. Even now as I write this article and face so many ways that the library is not beyond but inextricably bound up in such dynamics, the fantasy of the library still holds some sway as a place that is somehow not only removed from white supremacy but is even antithetical to it in some way. Perhaps at this moment in time in U.S. history, the fantasy holds even greater appeal, with "The Library" framed by many as one of the last bastions of democracy, which is in turn also conceptualized as free of white supremacy.

To view the library as a space of democratic or, in some conceptions, neutral fantasy is to view it as "beyond" the reach of politics. Such a characterization is epitomized by Virginia Woolf's description of the freedom afforded by her own personal library: "Everywhere else we may be bound laws and conventions—there we have none" (1932, 281). Earlier in the same passage, Woolf goes on to speak about the "breath" of libraries and their status as "sanctuaries." While Woolf's quote is referring to personal libraries, it is worth analyzing how the affective ties Woolf describes extend

to broader notions of libraries. To situate libraries in this realm of pure freedom as Woolf does is reminiscent of Todd Honma's (2005) critique of an eagerness to view libraries as "mythic" in terms of their commitment to democracy. While Woolf emphasizes the freedom of the mind, the sense of a body politic is not too far off given her use of the terms "authorities," and "bound laws." For Honma, libraries are explicitly mythologized in terms of their supposedly unwavering commitment to egalitarian democratic ideals. This in turn yields a profound inability to scrutinize how these mythically good institutions have a role in perpetuating white supremacy. In Honma's critical sense and in Woolf's laudatory one, "The Library" is beyond real, situated in the realm of fantasy (Honma 2005). Though Woolf does not explicitly use the word "sacred," Woolf does describe libraries as "sanctuaries"— as implicitly sacred in their ability to transcend "laws and conventions."

In her groundbreaking article, "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves," Fobazi Ettarh (2018) traces various notions of the sacred as they relate to librarianship. In building her case, Ettarh pays close attention to how library spaces were architecturally conceptualized to mimic the monastic structures that they are historically derived from; Ettarh also draws attention to the powerful notion of library as sanctuary that continues to inform public discourse. Ettarh goes on to examine spatial associations related to the sacred along with the sense of the profession as a calling, akin to religious vocation. By analyzing space, vocation, and the role of the librarian as "priest and savior," Ettarh's ultimate goal is to demonstrate how these sets of beliefs result in "vocational awe," or a sense that libraries and librarians are "beyond critique." Ettarh's points about library spatial associations are shared by many, with architectural library tropes evoking "some of the awe and sanctity usually associated with houses of worship" (Cole and Reed 1997, 19).

Though Ettarh's argument references space and affect, her argument is one that ultimately critiques awe toward professional identity. While Ettarh examines the implications of this awe for librarians and its impact on professional identity, I am interested in how awe toward libraries also conceals white supremacy at work in the library. What this awe does is obfuscate the fact that there are certain bodies that are viewed as "belonging" and others that are not. Given the way that my body navigates that space between "belonging" and "not belonging," this article analyzes my experiences autoethnographically in order to accentuate how whiteness is surveilled and surveilles academic library spaces. Following Sara Ahmed's contention that emotions are not located within things, but actually "do things," the article makes an argument for library awe, library nostalgia, and library trespass in terms of what Ahmed (2004) characterizes as an "affective economy." For Ahmed, what this entails is a circulation of emotions between bodies and signs (117).

In Ahmed's analysis of how affective economies work, emotions do not reside within a subject or object but instead "circulate." In turn, the circulation of emotions "aligns" bodily space with social space (2004, 117). Viewed from this perspective, library awe circulates and in doing so, constitutes which bodies belong and those that do not belong in library spaces. In the following section of the article, I will analyze how the affective economy of library awe aligns body space with social space (Ahmed 2004, 119). As is the case with the affective economy of white nationalism described by Ahmed, the affective economy of library awe also "conceals" through "fantasy" (118). In Ahmed's example, the labor of migrants and slaves is concealed in a fantasy about white subjects' victimhood in the face of encroaching outsiders. In a similar way, the affective economy of library awe conceals white supremacy while helping to sustain a fantasy about the library being a pure space that organizes and accumulates time with the noblest of intentions (Foucault 1985). In this pure library, one of the key emotions that circulates is awe: toward books, toward silence, and toward the library space itself. Similarly, but distinct enough to merit its own analysis, an affective economy of nostalgia also functions to render the library a place of unquestionable goodness and normative whiteness.

In the affective economies of library awe and library nostalgia, books are not just books, but talismans or, as Schlesselman-Tarango (2017) characterizes them, powerful "nostalgic objects" that forward the library as a site of cuteness/innocence (7). Books promise "safety through gesturing to a pre-technological past" and "preclude exposure and engagement with the nasty realities of contemporary society" (8). Since books are an integral part of the affective economy of libraries, that in turn means that libraries and librarians may also "provide an outlet for this sentimental yearning" (8). For Alberto Manguel (2008), the book is also framed as an undeniable source of power, transforming readers by transforming knowledge, whether in religious or secular traditions. Manguel even goes as far as arguing that books still lend "awe-inspiring" credibility by bestowing power to those who seek it, even simply by symbolic association (94). In Manguel's *The Library at Night,* "books, read or unread, whatever their allotted use or value," endow others the "emblematic representation of the powerful qualities associated with books" (94).

While nostalgia is frequently expressed toward books as talismans and toward the stacks as the "serendipitous" source of magic (Radford, Radford, and Lingel 2015, 741), the academic library also continues to be conceptualized in a different way than where they are headed. What academic libraries may be offering are "learning forums" or "knowledge commons," but what patrons frequently idolize are places defined by books, silence, and a sense of interiority. This is certainly what drew me to libraries—the sense that I could make myself as "powerful" as the writers whom Alberto Manguel describes when he writes about their use of the Carnegie Librar-

ies. But to focus solely on the sense of power felt by those bodies that belong in libraries is to miss how libraries themselves, as complex ecosystems made up of people and things, wield power over the bodies that have been marked as not belonging.

One of the ways in which power is wielded over bodies in libraries happens with the policing of silence. I uncovered the degree to which library patrons will fetishize a perfect ideal of silence while writing my autoethnographic essay, "You, She, I: An Autoethnographic Exploration through Noise." What became clear to me as I read comments gathered from our library's administration of LibQUAL was that our users wanted something impossible, or as Hillel Schwartz argues in his monograph on noise, "where one expects, relishes, and enforces quiet, any sound may be loud and all sound may be noise. The greater the anticipation of silence, the greater the ruckus of noise" (2011, 40). Moreover, LibQUAL revealed that several of our patrons felt strongly that a particular group of students of color at our institution were depriving them of this right to perfect silence, pointing out that the students of color were "making too much noise" in spaces that were not required to be silent. In contextualizing this critique, I draw from library historiography that tied librarians to the assimilation process of "noisy" immigrants, ushering their unruly bodies into the realm of becoming appropriate library users and "Americans" (Garrison 1979; Schwarz 2011). In stark contrast, I also note how some bodies were deemed incapable of assimilation. Thus, analysis of the library practices in the Jim Crow South strongly complicates the notion of libraries as "pure" spaces of "freedom," always dedicated to the highest democratic ideals (Santamaria, 2017, 226–27). In drawing attention to these constructions, the attempt is not to reify them or to deny that students of color may also crave silence but rather to explore how certain discourses have oppressively constructed bodies of color in relation to library spaces. As such, the argument is not that silence is white but rather that whiteness has frequently claimed silence so as to police black and brown bodies in ostensibly egalitarian library spaces.

This essay's autoethnographic analysis ends with a consideration of my own body at the library and that of my black son's. Ultimately, this ending leads to my exhorting librarians to question how the assumptions they make about "The Library" and about themselves as librarians impact their awareness of how they police bodies in the building, especially those of black and brown students. It is a point that Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro also draw attention to in their analysis of how to denaturalize whiteness in the academic library when they point out how silence is "actively enforced by staff and passively enforced by space" (2015, 258). The relationship between silence and violence is one that is also actively explored by Oliver Baez Bendorf (2018), who notes that "libraries were never silent in the natural order of things. Libraries were or are silent because library

workers silenced" (164). As Baez Bendorf notes, this silence is hardly ever enforced equitably and involves power. Drawing attention to the dynamics between silence and power also means drawing attention to the affective economies that, to use Ahmed's terminology, help to "stick" together particular bodies, silence, and books in a fantasy library space. And what we find in that fantasy space of stacks, books, and interiority are white bodies; what we find are, optimally, white female bodies.

BODIES THAT BELONG AND ALIGN IN LIBRARY SPACE

As presented in Vani Natarajan's (2017) "Nostalgia, Cuteness, and Geek Chic: Whiteness in Orla Kiely's Library," stacks, silence, and interiority are an integral part of a particular kind of library fantasy that she questions by analyzing video footage of a fashion show entitled "Library." Natarajan situates her analysis on fantasy library spaces as well as the fantasy bodies that are supposed to inhabit those spaces. To do so, Natarajan investigates the way that the terms "library" and "librarian" are used to inform a notion of librarian chic. As Natarajan explains it, "When used sartorially, these words conjure a host of fantasies and imperatives about who librarians are, how they are recognized, and what labors they perform" (122). In these fantasies, "class-privileged white women are centered," not only as the "default visible stewards of librarianship," but also as visible stewards of the "space of the library" (122).

This space of the library, as portrayed in the fashion show, is one of stylized book stacks and leisurely reading. As analyzed by Natarajan, this fashion-show library is a site of white nostalgia that not only portrays what librarians look like but, even more importantly, "to whom the library belongs" (2017, 137). The affective economy of library nostalgia in this case has everything to do with how the people in this "fantasy" world look and move through the things in it. Perhaps even more poignantly when rephrased, library fantasies enacted by the fashion show also demonstrate who belongs in the library. In part, what Natarajan's analysis offers is a kind of "phenomenology of whiteness" as it draws our attention to "institutional habits" that render libraries white female spaces by taking on the "'skin' of the people that inhabit them" (Ahmed 2007, 157).

These assertions about libraries and belonging prompt me to recall/ relive an encounter with a white male librarian who also "belonged" at the library, like me, by virtue of "passing." In recalling this event, I was struck by how my attempt to engage him about difference was met with defensiveness. Because I asked a personal question that revealed the conditions of his passing, this librarian then felt the need to also unveil the conditions under which he construed that I had been passing. In some ways, it could be argued that this was a casual interchange during a professional library program, a brief conversation. In other ways, the interchange was marked by the kind of intensity that characterizes an event where someone dis-

closes something about themselves, something about their whiteness that they are not eager to disclose.

> "I've noticed something about your accent, something underneath the surface," I said to the man who had recently joined our activity group. He looked a bit taken aback for a few beats. Smiled, a strained smile from the corners of his mouth. I regretted asking.
> "I'm from West Virginia. I took years to get rid of the accent."

This type of dynamic surprises me even though I know that certain kinds of accents are looked down upon, know several academics who have also systematically worked their way free of their accents as a way of passing into some normative white academic culture (middle class, somehow not regional, certainly not from the South).

> "Where are you from?" he followed up. Perhaps he asked something else, perhaps closer to the question many immigrants hate—"where are you really from?" or some other variation thereof. What I remember best was the sense that he wanted to exchange tit for tat; that I had coaxed out his secret and he wanted mine.
> "Ecuador," I said, in a small voice. Not because I cared about telling him that but because I felt that I had shamed him somehow by drawing attention to something he wanted ignored.

There is something shameful about passing, a shame that is revealed particularly at the moment of being "caught," as we both were caught by each other in that anecdote. While my experience of passing may not always be as charged as what was described, the dynamic of "passing" is central to my identity as a librarian and as an American. As a lighter-brown, yet not "white" person, I tend to "get a pass" from most white people, only occasionally meriting a glare, though in the past three years of the Trump administration, those glares have become more obvious. I am what many would call "ethnically ambiguous," frequently pegged as Asian. Because of this, I tend to think of my physical presence in a predominantly white world as "performative," as a "costume" of sorts. As I wrote in my essay for the collection *Poet-Librarians in the Library of Babel* (Santamaria 2018), I came to realize that I am extremely self-conscious about the decisions I make when I present myself "professionally" in a normatively white female context. On some level, I worry about "having to look the part," as described by Jessica Macias (2017) in her essay of that same name. As elaborated upon by Natarajan in her analysis of a fashion show structured around nostalgic visions of librarianship, the normative library stewards are white women, and no matter how often some white women in academia might say, "*But I don't think of you as a person of color*"—either out loud or by a hundred other actions—I am not a white woman. Yet, at the same time, my presence at the library has never been questioned to the degree that will be examined later in this article, but there is always a sense of be-

ing monitored, perhaps most of all, of needing to monitor myself because I am not white, not the norm, the standard. Not free.

In order to understand the freedom of white bodies, it is critical to acknowledge that passing is not only central to the autoethnographic analysis here but also arguably central to any analysis of white bodies in space. This is clearly exemplified in Sara Ahmed's (2004) analysis of how a nation-state seeks to distinguish between "terrorists" and "asylum seekers" when there is a fear of being unable to make that distinction. Such fears result in a perpetual state of surveillance. This surveillance is predicated on the notion that there are "bogus" asylum seekers who make the dangerous possibility of passing all the more tangible. The danger then is that "we may not be able to tell the difference," thus enabling those counterfeit bodies to "pass into our community." As such, passing through a space "requires passing as a particular kind of subject" with an "unmarked" and "unremarkable" difference (Ahmed 2004, 122). As a worker in libraries and as a patron of libraries, I have been "unmarked" and "unremarkable," except perhaps in two cases: when I have tried to assert my difference and when certain students of color have tried to discern my difference. In the second case, I have felt that they have done it in order to see some part of themselves in me. I have been basically asked "what I am" by students of color at my current institution, not to catch me at "passing," but instead to establish what might be called a "a flicker of recognition," a term José Esteban Muñoz uses to describe brown subjectivity as actively being shared between different brown bodies (2006).

Since I cut my hair and let it be its naturally wavy texture, it seems that I am more likely to be read as Latina, both by other Latinos and by Anglo whites. This is not entirely why I have styled my hair in this way, but it would be a lie to say that I do not consider what messages its texture conveys, especially when I'm working with underrepresented students. Since working at this predominantly white institution that still has significantly more students of color than my prior institutions, I have made it a point to walk around campus and to nod at any students of color whom I come across. At the very least, I make eye contact. I notice the effort that it takes to move through, much less assert themselves in spaces that are not made for them, that in some senses are made to be antithetical to their success. In my work with different initiatives involving students of color, one of my key goals has been to convey that the students belong at the library and that I can be one of their people because it has become clearer and clearer to me that this a message that students of color need to hear, especially when there are so many ways that academic spaces can convey that they do not belong.

When it comes to academic library spaces, Brooke, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro (2015) provide numerous examples of how spaces align with norms that privilege whiteness (258–59) and convey nonbelonging to underrep-

resented groups. Examples include classical architectural features; representations of wealthy donors; non-Western but decontextualized works of art and therefore imperialist in their framing; and expectations of quiet, individual study, and reference spaces that prioritize surveillance by supervisory bodies that are consistently white. All of these examples "communicate something specific about the anticipated users, behaviors, and cultural histories of those in that space, and by omission, they exclude those who are not anticipated." In terms of the architectural aspect of library space, while white students may experience certain academic library spaces as "empowering" by feeling awe toward their grandeur, underrepresented students may easily feel alienated (Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015). Or in the case of the news stories that will be analyzed, black students may not only feel alienated but be targeted by police because they are construed not just as "not belonging" but as actively posing a threat to "the library."

The Affective Economy of Black Bodies as Library Threats

The models standing in for librarians in Vani Natarajan's analysis of the fashion-show "Library" glide through the library and help to create, if not library awe, a palpable sense of library nostalgia; they are the bodies that circulate in a fantasy library space, the bodies that belong and to whom the library belongs. In stark contrast, in this section, the article will provide case study analysis of how two black librarians were treated in recent news stories. By doing so, the article seeks to demonstrate how antiblackness and white supremacy work through an affective economy of library trespass. As evident in recent current events that made the national media, black bodies are viewed as threats in the library, as bodies that cannot move around freely in library spaces precisely because they are framed as inherent threats. In the case of Juán-Pabló Gonzalez, an LIS student at Catholic University, he was denied access to the Law Library where he was explicitly allowed to study on October 9, 2018. The library worker at the desk also called Campus Police. In the case of Ashly Horace, who is also an LIS student, she was trying to attend a children's story time at a public library on November 15, 2018, and was also escorted out of the building by police.

Both Juán-Pabló Gonzalez and Ashly Horace were treated as threats by library workers who started off by policing them and then ended up calling the police. That they are black people who are training to be librarians is an irony that cannot be glossed over in the field of librarianship, as the profession continues to reaffirm its whiteness in ways that are both overtly and quietly violent. That this continues to happen has consequences that go far beyond our sense of ourselves as a field. In the case of both incidents

that will be examined, there could be no starker way to affirm a point Sara Ahmed makes in "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" (2007, 161):

> For bodies that are not extended by the skin of the social, bodily move-ment is not so easy. Such bodies are stopped, where the stopping is an action that creates its own impressions. "Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing?"

For Ahmed, the free and unquestioned movement of white bodies through space is contingent on "the social" having white skin. Because the social is white-skinned, detained and being questioned is at the center of the two news stories. The blackness of the two librarians generated such a palpable sense of unease and need for monitoring in the social space of the library. In the case of Juán-Pabló Gonźalez, it is also striking to note that in the aftermath of the event, some librarians chose to publicly disavow the woman who called the police on Gonzalez as a nonlibrarian because she is a "law student" rather than a librarian. This disavowal was meant to keep librarianship pure, innocent when it came to the antiblack-ness on display, rather than owning up to the field's need to question its commitment to egalitarianism toward its black patrons and toward its black librarians, or as was the case with both of these case studies, toward people who filled both these roles.

In the case of Juán-Pabló Gonzalez, the library worker's assertion to police over the phone that he was "being argumentative" was enough to warrant seven officers arriving from Catholic University's campus police, officers who have full police authority. Aside from being told to leave by police, Gonzalez was also told that he would need to bring extra docu-mentation in the future in order to prove that he was allowed in the law library. When Gonzalez rightfully questioned whether the library worker was justified in calling the police on him, he was ignored. In the case of black library student Ashly Horace, she was asked by police to leave a children's story hour at a public library. Told that she was "trespassing" by library management, Horace's expulsion was chalked up to an unofficial policy regarding adults accompanying children during story time. As a library student, Horace came in without a child so as to observe story time and had even previously applied to work at that very library. Thus, she was not unknown to library management. A university statement issued in the case of Gonzalez also cited policy in order to affirm the library worker's actions as perfectly warranted and standardized.

In the end, the allegations brought forth against the two black librari-ans-in-training were that they were too "aggressive" and "argumentative" and that this is why they were asked to leave. To claim that Gonzalez was being "argumentative" is a way of ascribing aggression to his actions, a common feature of discourse that seeks to justify violence against black bodies. This ascribed overemotionality also aligns with Ngai's contention

about animatedness in *Ugly Feelings* (2005). In Ngai's argument, certain ethnic subjects, such as blacks, are labeled as excessive in their emotions. To describe Gonzalez in this way also helps to create a fantasy where the library worker who called the police upon him is the victim rather than the precipitator of potential violence, something Gonzalez does draw attention to with the narration he adds to the video footage he records. Further reifying this image of victimhood, the university in question, in a subsequent statement, noted that Gonzalez never asked the library worker for permission to record the video he took during the incident as though it were the rights of the library worker that were being violated.

In both cases, Gonzalez and Horace's assertions about being treated this way because of antiblackness were met with hurt skepticism or, one could argue, even bewildered shock by the white librarians making these policing decisions, a powerful reminder of how white innocence plays a critical role in upholding white supremacy in libraries. As analyzed by Gina Schlesselman-Tarango (2017), if librarianship positions itself as "for all and against none," then it seems impossible to view these incidents through the lens of white supremacy. Like Natarajan in her analysis of the library fashion show, Schlesselman-Tarango also points toward nostalgia, particularly a "nostalgic white femininity," as a critical emotion in this construction of white innocence (1). For Schlesselman-Tarango, femininity and especially a particular aestheticization of cuteness function to obscure or "veil" the violence of whiteness and white supremacy.

As pointed out by Sara Ahmed in her work on other transgressive bodies, the consequences can be life or death (2007). Given that there is so much at stake, scholars such as Natarajan (2017) and Honma (2005) center counterimaginings on the part of people of color. Such counterimaginings might share some features in common with the videos that this article will analyze: counternarratives that center black and brown bodies in fantasies that both perform and begin to question the affective economies of library awe and library nostalgia. In such counternarratives, we might begin to glimpse ways that students of color can help us to reimagine libraries in a way that would bring them closer to an egalitarian reality.

VIDEO-TOUR ANALYSIS: LIBRARY AWE AND LIBRARY NOSTALGIA

In the following section, the article synthesizes themes from video tours made by students of color at my home institution, a predominantly white institution (PWI). The intent of this section is to summarize a few themes in the student-created videos that resonate with aspects of the library as fantasy. These themes include aspects of library awe and library nostalgia, such as the magic of books and the need for silence. In stark contrast to the economy of affect surrounding library trespass, these video tours display how black and brown bodies find their place in libraries. As such, the

video tours show students of color engaging with people, resources, and spaces according to scripts authored by their creators.

The video tours were created two years ago for a first-year seminar class that was explicitly designed to assist at-risk students in acclimating to academic life. Most of the participants in this program are students of color. All students featured in the library video tours function as "actors" who were cast by their classmates for specific roles in a class project.[1]

In terms of the broader educational context surrounding these tours, students spent a significant amount of their academic time at the library and were also given a library tour by me, their librarian. In retrospect, while I spent a lot of time with these students during the summer they were on campus before the start of the first year and still speak with several of them as I come across them on campus, I could have shared much more of myself as a Latina. I think they would have appreciated that level of openness about my identity. At one point, one student shyly asked something along the lines of "What are you, miss?" It was the buried question in there, asked by the Latino student, that undid me—What are you miss? *Are you someone like me?* Since these tours were created, I have been more intentional about how I represent myself as a person of color with this cohort of underrepresented students. I have done so because it has become progressively clearer to me that it does matter to the students and that I do not need to have come from the same exact background as them to serve as some kind of role model, to at least be someone with whom they can experience a "flicker of recognition," or a sense of shared "brown space" (Muñoz 2006). This sense of shared brown and black space is a key element of all the video tours that I describe here.

Aside from portraying black and brown bodies as the norm rather than the exception in the library, several of the videos engage with silence as an entity in and of itself, explicitly calling attention to it in several ways. Many videos also contrast silence with noise. One video starts with a silent shot of the outside of the building, spending significant time on the name of the building, the "Francine McNairy Library and Learning Forum." No context is provided for the sign; the shot of the sign is not followed up with a shot of the founder's portrait, which hangs above the entrance through the front doors. This omission is worth noting as Francine McNairy was a black woman who was a Millersville University president and was also a major fundraiser for our state-of-the art library building. Given what can be surmised about the power of white male portraits in university library spaces, the fact that an African-American woman is so prominently featured strikes me as a powerful counternarrative to the traditional narrative of white male power in academic library spaces.

Intrusion upon silence is dramatized in one video as some black students dance while the author of the video, also a black student, attempts to study in proximity to where they are. Eventually, the student attempt-

ing to concentrate decides to leave the space, clutching her books to her chest. While the studying student's body language could be construed as performatively "white" in response to noisy "otherness," in keeping with a racialized discourse that aligns whiteness with silence, other readings are possible. These alternative readings can enable us to rethink how we might reconceptualize and recast the economy of affect around silence in the library. Why shouldn't black and brown bodies crave silence, find solace in it, and why shouldn't libraries help to make it possible for them to access? At the same time, the videos portray silence in myriad ways. While silence can be tied to a nostalgic view of library space stewarded by white women librarians, it can also be viewed as a necessity in the context of a world that has become noisier and noisier. In the context of students who have even less access to quiet study space, the relative silence promised by some of our library spaces becomes even more essential.

Similarly, the student videos raise interesting questions about the "magic" of books and whether this aspect of library awe can be preserved in a way that does not act to conceal white supremacy. In several student videos, the books "solve" the students' academic challenges simply by virtue of being located and being held in student hands. Thus, the books are frequently portrayed as possessing an instant academic magic. This nostalgia for the book as object and concurrently for the stacks as a site of knowledge is present in various videos, with many shots of wandering around the stacks, occasionally asking a "librarian" figure for help. Such nostalgia does not align with the students' real academic experiences that summer in the sense that their coursework was not heavily reliant on using books. On the other hand, these portrayals of journeys through the stacks do align with fantasies of the library explored earlier in this article.

In stark contrast to the black library students featured in the case studies drawn from the news, the undergraduate video protagonists of these video tours made their way freely throughout the library. Factoring Sara Ahmed's contention that "whiteness becomes a social and bodily orientation when some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated around whiteness," it is important to note that these videos were created when our campus is nearly deserted over the summer, giving these students an opportunity to "be more at home" (2007, 160). In summer, our students of color are basically the only students on campus and are essentially given an unprecedented opportunity to feel like the norm rather than the exception in our academic spaces. Of course, this no longer holds true at our PWI once the fall semester starts.

Conclusions and Limitations
While the video tours provide opportunities for affect analysis, a next step might be to enrich analysis with the aid of their creators. With the aid of

supplementary interviews conducted with the video creators, Maria Ong's methodology of "body projects" (2005) could be used to delve further into the ways students of color choose to present themselves in predominantly white spaces. Ong focuses her analysis on women of color in physics, but her schema could be applied more broadly to students of color. In the case of the video analysis, Ong's methodology provides a good balance between ethnographic observation and interviews. In breaking down how body projects can work, Ong discusses fragmentation and multiplicity as the main subcategories of body projects, with fragmentation involving the subject choosing "passing," while multiplicity involves nonassimilationist strategies such as stereotype manipulation (595).

Aside from applying body projects to the student videos, further research could more explicitly apply the body project methodology to my own experiences as an academic librarian. The idea of self-presentation has been something that I have been aware of but have only begun to analyze more explicitly in relation to my own unreconstructed participation in library awe and nostalgia. What has emerged from autoethnographic analysis in this article is a story of passing, and the recognition of a need to choose something different, partially and yet also powerfully in response to my work with the students of color who created these library video tours. But passing in and of itself is an exceedingly complicated phenomenon that also exists within a network of affective economies and has its own interesting history in the field of librarianship, such as can be seen in the case of writer Nella Larsen's choice to become a librarian (Hochman 2018) or Bella de Costa Greene (Gordon 1999).

To become a librarian is to choose libraries. And to choose libraries, at least for me, has come to mean to choose the ways that I will write and think my way toward antiracist practices in these spaces. At the end of her article focusing on student narratives and body projects, Maria Ong ultimately calls for the field of physics to reimagine itself so that women of color no longer need to engage in body projects that attempt to render them "ordinary" in order to succeed in their field (2005, 612–13). Ong's closing pages call for greater diversity in hiring, greater support of diverse hires, and other suggestions that would enact systemic change in the field. While this article has discussed individuals, it ultimately has been concerned with the ways that economies of affect function to conceal how the system of white supremacy is ever present in academic libraries. Given the role that library awe and library nostalgia play in concealing white supremacy, it seems just as necessary to end this article with an exhortation to reimagine the library, and along with it, librarianship. What the library would look like if we could go beyond awe and nostalgia to reach and address the brutal reality of trespass remains to be determined. If we could unveil the affective economies that conceal white supremacy in our spaces

and profession, then perhaps the promise of the library as an egalitarian space could begin to be fulfilled. It seems likely that the resulting fantasies of the library would look different from what has been imagined up until now.

Note

1. Given that these video tours are artifacts submitted for a class and that everyone knew they were being filmed, the use of these video tours for analysis is exempt from the Institutional Review Board regulations that govern research with human subjects.

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Michele R. Santamaría is a learning-design librarian at Millersville University as well as the subject librarian for English, language and culture studies, and Latino/a studies. She serves on two campus-wide committees devoted to student success. Along with her MS in library science from the Palmer School of Library and Information Science, Michele also has masters degrees in anthropology and poetry. Previous publications include a chapter in ACRL's "The Self as Subject: Autoethnographic Research into Identity, Culture, and Academic Librarianship." Michele also coauthored a chapter for ACRL's *Metaliteracy in Practice* entitled "Metacognition Meets Research-Based Learning in the Undergraduate Renaissance Drama Classroom."