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SPIRITUALS AND THE CHAIN OF MEMORY IN JAMES CONE'S *SPIRITUALS AND THE BLUES*[1]

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Abstract: *James H. Cone gives an account of a black cultural identity in his Spirituals and the Blues (1972) that can be seen as connecting to a body of tradition that reveals Cone's reinvigorating memory work. The present essay examines how the chain of memory is at work to reconstruct the African American self in a religio-culturally authentic way.*
Keywords: *African American cultural memory, African American religio-cultural identity, chain of memory, spirituals*

1. Introduction

The advent of Black theology fame marked by the early works of James H. Cone can be seen as African American memory work resurfacing to narrativise the longing and demand of contemporary African Americans to have access to their past also in religio-cultural terms. His study *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* published in 1972 reifies this search in many ways. Especially the insistence on spirituals can be seen to establish a connection to a body of (religio-cultural) traditions that verifies for him the existence of an ontological black community to which he seeks to maintain ties through reinvigorating memory work. Lawrence W. Levine's evaluation of the significance of spirituals explains Cone's strategy:

> The spirituals are a testament not only to the perpetuation of significant elements of an older world view among the slaves but also to the continuation of a strong sense of community. Just as the process by which the spirituals were created allowed for simultaneous individual and communal creativity, so their very structure provided simultaneous outlets for individual and communal expression. (2007: 33)

Spirituals keep an African genealogy intact - much as it was initially connected to an ethnic diversity rather than to a concept of Africa (Jones 2004: 255) -, while also proving the existence of a black community (in the sense of both being already there and in a dynamic state of becoming), as well as delineate the relation of the individual to the community past and present, allowing the individual to "re-member" the collective anew.

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On the one hand, Cone's memory narrative works to "re-member" (see Dixon 1994: 21) as in resuturing African Americans in the narrative discourse through theologizing as well as in restoring as the opposite of dismembering, thus he also envisions a healing process. Especially, the endeavours of the early Cone may be seen by some critics as practicing "dangerous memories" for their apparent deconstructive strategies regarding white memory work. On the other hand, Black theology functions as, what Toni Morrison identifies as, "rememory," i.e., "rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past" (2019: 324) - a "concept of mental recollection, both anamnesis and construction" (Rushdy 1990: 304). In Cone's work, rememory does not simply serve to counter as to liberate African American history and memory, but to make sense of the void in the texture of memory to effect closure and, in this way, to effectively deal with silences, omissions, and erasures - ultimately to reinstate the "Black sacred cosmos" (see Lincoln and Mamiya 1990: 2) in cultural terms. The present paper examines how Cone's works prove that the dual function of memory work facilitates a strategy to carry the possibility of bringing healing to the torn texture of African American memory and reconstructing the African American self in a religio-culturally authentic way.

2. Cone, spirituals, and the chain of memory

2.1. Spirituals as a body of tradition

African American religious history richly documents that religion has come to signify along "God-talk" discourses that show the human capacity to appropriate narratives to express their perspective of the social, cultural, and political realities. As Albert J. Raboteau's (1978) apt description of the slaves' religion exemplifies, religion as memory work involves remembering to justify a community's origins, to justify identities in the present, and provide directionality to fathom whereto the community should be heading. To establish or maintain a chain of memory, however, must have been problematic initially for various reasons. The varied background of slaves projects multiple traditions, rendering it difficult to unifiedly represent a narrative of origins, and, for any tradition, the traumatic experience of the Middle Passage must have been disruptive, causing a break in the chain - much as it was the initial cornerstone that led to the "solidification of [. . .] cross-ethnic bonds" (Jones 2004: 255). Breaks do not mean erasure, though, and the influx of slaves from Africa well into the 19th century directly nurtured memories of Africa and African traditions in the African American community as Cujo Lewis's story exemplifies it in Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo* (2018).

The idea of the chain of religious memory reflects on the very nature of religion as "Religion is in a word the system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious of itself; it is the characteristic way of thinking of collective existence" (Durkheim 1951: 277). Revolving around the symbolic, reminiscing and memory do not lie in remembering historical events in their concrete actuality but rather in the way they are remembered. The memory process blurs the contours of the events, the emphasis being transferred on their interrelation and their possible sequentiality to express the scope of meaning defining for the community's self-interpretation. The chain in its formalized and normative form amounts to tradition, which, at the same time, narrows the scope of dissent as "religions can socialize us only in so far as they refuse us the right of free examination" (idem: 343). In this

way, meaning is derived from the collective, and individual chains strengthen the braiding of the collective. The chain is the mode and the structure, which when narrativised can yield individualized texture of the stringed events. The individualized narrativisation of the cultural memory then is able to provide for the "lineage of belief" (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 125) throughout time in subsequent generations.

Cone's anamnesis can be seen as an individualized narrativisation of African American religious thinking and, in this way, the actualization of the black religious tradition. As he (1972: 87) claims in *The Spirituals and the Blues*, "with contemporary Black Power advocates, who stress political liberation by any means necessary; that a 'new' black theological language is needed if black religion is going to articulate today the historical strivings of black people in America and the Third World". In the post-civil rights era, Cone's reworking of the black religious tradition does not deny or eliminate the different items in memory but gives them a different explanation as the new context requires: "what is needed is not a dismissal of the idea of heaven but a reinterpretation of it, so that oppressed blacks today can develop styles of resistance not unlike those of their grandparents" (ibid.). The new vitality of black consciousness in Cone's time necessitates renewing the link between the past and present as "the demonstration of continuity is capable of incorporating even the innovations and reinterpretations demanded by the present" (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 87). Cone's reinterpretation of the past leads back to slavery pointing to the old-time religion of grandfathers in the peculiar institution prior to the Kingsian non-violent creed and even beyond, to African roots. As Cone argues, regarding the African American tradition, in his *God of the Oppressed*,

> it is no less true that American black people have a tradition of their own that stretches back to Africa and its traditional religions. We are an *African* people, at least to the degree that our grandparents came from Africa and not from Europe. They brought with them their stories and combined them with the Christian story, thereby creating a black religious tradition unique to North America. African culture informed black people's perspective on Christianity and made it impossible for many slaves to accept an interpretation of the Jesus story that violated their will for freedom. The passive Christ of white Christianity when combined with African culture became the Liberator of the oppressed from sociopolitical oppression. (Cone 1997: 104-105)

Returning to the identifiable beginnings of the African American community is not just relying on African American traditions but reviving them and renewing them "to actualize the past in the present" (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 88). Importantly, Cone does not seek to establish a new religious paradigm but recycles the African American traditions as "the body of representations, images, theoretical and practical intelligence, behaviour, attitudes and so on that a group or society accepts in the name of the necessary continuity between the past and the present" (idem: 87). In this way, he insists on a tradition and confesses to being part of a tradition in the effort of validating and anchoring his chain of memory in African American cultural memory. By emplacing his theologizing analyses within a tradition, Cone claims and demonstrates the operation of African American religiosity, similarly to Durkheim (1995: 420) establishing that "the cult is not merely a system of signs by which the faith is outwardly expressed; it is the sum total of means by which that

faith is created and recreated periodically. Whether the cult consists of physical operations or mental ones, it is always the cult that is efficacious". From this point of view, Cone devises Durkheimian effervescence as his operation is wilfully blended in the collective and thus it is the latter that remains in focus signified through its "effervescent vitalism" (Shilling, Mallor 2016: 155). The vitalism of the African American community is taken as proof of continuity as well as the appropriating power of the community.

To establish the link between the past and present, Cone identifies the spirituals as the manifestation of the African American religious tradition and thereby religion as memory (on a secular level he does the same with the blues). Black theology is established as a direct continuation of antebellum black religion: "the spirituals are black freedom songs which emphasize black liberation as consistent with divine revelation. For this reason, it is most appropriate for black people to sing them in this 'new' age of Black" (Cone 1972: 38). The mnemonic manoeuvre Cone practices finds a theological background in his theological thinking in the 1970s, in which he argues, regarding the (Black) theological tradition, that:

> Theology cannot ignore the tradition. While the tradition is not the gospel, it is the bearer of an interpretation of the gospel at a particular point in time. By studying the tradition, we not only gain insight into a particular past time but also into our own time as the past and the present meet dialectically. For only through this dialectical encounter with the tradition are we given the freedom to move beyond it. (1997: 75-76)

Spirituals as a body of tradition embalmed the actualization of the past for slaves, as it was through the spirituals that they were able to remember their African roots and transpose them into the American setting by "combin[ing] the memory of their fathers with the Christian gospel" (Cone 1972: 32). It was not a mere intercultural challenge to do so, but a struggle for memory and history as they were entombed in the timeless vaults of slavery: "When white people enslaved Africans, their intention was to dehistoricise black existence, to foreclose the possibility of a future defined by the African heritage" (idem: 24). In Cone's interpretation, dehistoricisation was to have been the result of deprivation of slaves' humanity which included the deprival of memories as well. The attempt was coded as a failure in so far as the proselytization of blacks served the purposes of docilisation. Durkheim (1951: 351) reminds us that

> If religion exhorts its followers to be satisfied with their lot, it is because of the thought that our condition on earth has nothing to do with our salvation. If religion teaches that our duty is to accept with docility our lot as circumstances order it, this is to attach us exclusively to other purposes, worthier of our efforts; and in general religion recommends moderation in desires for the same reason. But this passive resignation is incompatible with the place which earthly interests have now assumed in collective existence.

Cone indeed refuses any submissiveness in African American religiosity and claims that the appropriation of Christianity as a genuine black religion is a revolutionary act, a "needed revolutionary praxis" (Cone 1975: 39) to withstand docilisation. Viewed from another angle, his stance against dehistoricisation

implies "cultural production [. . .] as a means of collective psychotherapy" (Tarnóc 2004: 353).

In the struggle for being, religion becomes for Cone the site of rememory as well as re-historicisation (and counterhistory in Foucault's footsteps [see Foucault 2003: 70]), "a historical possibility for human existence" (Cone 1972: 30). In the case of the former, religion is the means of recollection of a shared experience and the spirituals borrowing from the biblical narrative have the function to establish relationality between the individual and community, as rememory takes shape in "the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting" (Morrison 2019: 324). As for the latter, the biblical revelation possesses special significance, as it is the primary means of re-historicisation by historicizing African American presence in their timeless circumstances in two ways: first, by fixating their identity outside their present social reality to the transcendental Other, slaves can locate a binary of difference and thus position themselves in contrast to the objectification of the slave system. As Cone (1972: 40) states, "Revelation was distinctly historical and related to the event of the community encountering God in the struggle for freedom". The spirituals that he quotes also refer to the conceptualization of the revelation as theophany for the individual African American believer: "One day when I was walkin' alone, Oh yes, Lord, / De element opened, an' de Love came down, Oh yes, Lord," (qtd. in Cone 1972: 93), which strengthens the idea that the forced displacement in space and denial of historical time could be countered by the relationality to God through the appropriation of the revelation.

Secondly, the biblical revelation enabled blacks to evaluate their historical time critically, by seeing it as finite especially from the point of view of the relationality mentioned: "It was a question of faith, and the answer which came focused on revelation as the only clue to historical absurdities" (idem: 71). In Cone's argument, the biblical revelation is seen as Christocentric directionality in Barth's footsteps, which implies a directionality toward spiritual freedom and physical liberation. Jan Assmann's concept of the religion of the Israelites echoes this understanding:

> Founded on revelation, it asserts the liberating force of the truth against time-honored customs and traditions. It demands of believers a commitment that, no longer confined to ritual dealings with the sacred, extends across all aspects of life: justice, everyday routines and practices, holidays and workdays, state and family. Religion now becomes something distinct from "culture," to which it stands opposed as a critical voice, while at the same time claiming sovereignty - at least potentially - over all other "spheres of value" (Max Weber) such as politics, law, the economy, science, and art. (Assmann 2018: 338)

African American religion provides a sphere of difference that substantiates for Cone sufficiently that the tradition crystallized in the spirituals purports the autonomous African American subject and the discourse of resistance. Assmann (2018: 332) rightly asserts that "Autonomy is realized as theonomy, and liberation from human servitude - from slavery - is realized by serving God". History becomes lived experience, effervescent in Durkheim's coinage, and the relationality between blacks and God performative. It is in this way that Assmann can assert with the Exodus: "The Exodus story does not write history; it makes history [since] it provides those telling it with an identity" (idem: 328). Historical consciousness and rememory evolve through what Heidegger (1996: 49) terms as

"being-in-the-world", granting the African American subject both intentionality and directionality:

> The "I" of black slave religion was born in the context of the brokenness of black existence. It was an affirmation of self in a situation where the decision to be was thrust upon the slave [. . .] The "I," then, who cries out in the spirituals is a particular black self affirming both his being and his being-in-community, for the two are inseparable. Thus the struggle to be both a person and a member of community was the major focus of black religion. (Cone 1972: 67-68)

Cone's argument does not necessarily represent a reaction to the other, which would postulate the construction of the black self in opposition to the racial other, but an always already black subjectivity, which a "prereflexive, nonintentional consciousness" (Levinas 1998: 129) signalling vertical transcendence instead of a horizontal one directed at the other (Stoker 2006: 98). In interpreting Levinas's view of revelation, Ruud Welten (2020: 363) suggests that "Revelation does not refer to any imaginary order, but to the traumatic encounter with the other". If for Cone the black self is an ontological category disclosed in the act of revelation, the traumatic experience with the racial other and the traumatic experience with the transcendental other evoke the nonintentional state for the black subject to relate to God and the pre-racial primordial black self. The revelation entails that God enters history for blacks, the divine being present there with them.

2.2. Cultural trauma, exodus, and authentication

The trauma of slavery evidently impacts Cone, too, as he recounts the testimonies of oppression and violence in the spirituals. Importantly, however, he reworks them - without being oblivious of them - by refocusing them and placing emphasis on the discourse of resistance, rebellion, and moral superiority: "The authentic community of saints is bound up with the encounter of God in the midst of a broken existence, struggling to be free" (Cone 1972: 66). Apart from the ritualization "to mark the passage of time" (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 125) through spirituals, the ritualization here refers to articulating cultural trauma, which ultimately serves to contribute to a rewarding identity and blends into cultural memory. As Cone (1972: 73) insists, "instead of testing God, they ritualized him in song and sermon. That was what the spirituals were all about - a ritualization of God in song. They are not documents for philosophy; they are material for worship and praise to him who had continued to be present with black humanity despite European insanity". Cultural trauma does not conceal or cover up traumas but allows through transformations grappling with it - transformations that also enable connecting to it through time as Cone's case proves. Cone's view of spirituals shows that beyond witnessing black "somebodiness" narratively, they embody a performative genre (see Cone 1997: 21), which enables actualization and thereby also historicisation of the individual and the community: "The spiritual is the community in rhythm, swinging to the movement of life" (Cone 1972: 33). In effect, it is the agency of the community enacted that represents a Durkheimian notion as "a moral, religious force which stimulated in people an effervescent 'propulsion' towards actions productive of either social cohesion or dissolution" (Shilling and Mallor 2016: 146). Propulsion manifests itself in the performativity of collective identity, which, following Ron Eyerman's paradigm of cultural

trauma, can be remembered in a reconstructive manner by Cone, for whom it then refers to as "formation of the group" (Eyerman 2004: 15).

The cultural trauma of slavery expressed in Cone's study of spirituals marks thus a distinctly African American cultural memory "according to [his] needs and means" (ibid.), which signifies the advent and the continued presence of an authentic black religious community. For Cone, it signifies resistance and the enlivening of the black community in the before-stated manner, which can be verified by the very differentiation between the white man's religion and, what has been considered, the old-time religion of black slaves. The latter to be authenticating has to enshrine a metanarrative of becoming, which can serve as an explanation of origins, justification in the present, and orientation in the future, expressing "a faith in the ultimate justice of things" (DuBois 2007: 175). In religious terms, it heavily relies on the biblical stories of captivity, i.e., the exodus of Israelites from Egypt and also from Babylon. As Cone (1972: 45) claims, liberation is seen as "an act of God in history analogous to Israel's exodus from Egypt". Beyond the analogy, however, reinterpreting the biblical stories is creating a difference from white Christianity: "they combined their African heritage with the Christian gospel and reinterpreted white distortions of the gospel in the light of oppressed people striving for a historical liberation" (idem: 42). In Cone's case, identifying a distinct black religious tradition also means guarding it against whites not only in the times when the spirituals were born but in his own time, dismissing "white" theological inquiries as "inappropriate and very naive" (idem: 72) - a move that reveals his ideological stand, especially as he mentions Barth's work in the same paragraph and his view echoes Tillich's (1951: 60) contextual theology. In this way, however, he is also clear when actualizing the memory of the slaves' struggles in the present, as he uses the present tense in engaging in a seemingly academic excurse.

The appropriation of the biblical exodus effects Eric Voegelin's (2000: 236) coinage "revelatory consciousness [...] as the meaning of existence". The exodus identifies the present state of bondedness and projects whereto, which rejects fixity in time and space and, in an eschatological manner, foresees the destination "toward the direction of total liberation" (Cone 1972: 5) and "toward unity and self-determination" (idem: 6). As he claims, "hope, in the black spirituals, is not a denial of history. Black hope accepts history but believes that the historical is in motion, moving toward a divine fulfilment. It is the belief that things can be radically otherwise than they are: that reality is not fixed, but is moving in the direction of human liberation" (idem: 95-96). It is this transformative application of the exodus that Cone transposes ~~it~~ into his time, identifying the liberation of African Americans as unfinished. Through this move, "being-for-the-future" (100) describes the nonfixity of being of the black slaves and thus he restates his insistence on their political consciousness; but he also makes the corrective move to link it to the contemporary condition of black people: "The task, however, of black theologians is to move beyond the distortions of black religion to the authentic substance of black religious experience so that it can continue to serve as a positive force in liberating black people" (101). Religion for Cone serves as the narrative to grant homogeneity and directionality of Black cultural memory through times.

The other aspect of the exodus that comes to the foreground is the idea of chosenness, paradoxically "emerg[ing] from their suffering to live on psychological and spiritual 'higher ground'" (Jones 1993: 23). It evolves through

an evolving Christian identity, the moral disambiguation through oppositionality as a result, and the realization that African American (religious) subjectivity has always already been present in the black community: "This cry is not a cry of passivity, but a faithful, free response to the movement of the Black Spirit. It is the black community accepting themselves as the people of the Black Spirit and knowing through his presence that no chains can hold the Spirit of black humanity in bondage" (Cone 1972: 5). The "Black Spirit" appears an apriori category, which does not hinge on historical verification and which yet can prove as historical for being there prior to dehistoricisation of blacks, possibly referring to African origins. The apriori nature of black subjectivity coincides with God's original plan to choose blacks for a purpose and thereby for the people chosen to justify their chosenness apriori, i.e., not ultimately resulting from the contemporary binary. The "status differentiation translated into the plane of horizontal co-existence" (Weber 1978: 391) signifies for Cone a non-permissive oppositionality, which is corrective, as it dismisses white Christianity as flawed, and prophetic, as it holds a promise of "radical change" (Cone 1972: 94). As Max Weber (1978: 934) also observes, "The chosen people's dignity is nurtured by a belief either that in the beyond 'the last will be the first,' or that in this life a Messiah will appear to bring forth into the light of the world which has cast them out the hidden honor of the pariah people".

The figure of Jesus complements the biblical metaphors and allegories of the exodus of Israel, embalming bodily memories capable of encompassing individual black experiences and thematising Jesus as "God's Black Slave" (Cone 1972: 54), thus as one of them: "Jesus was not the subject of theological questioning. He was perceived in the reality of the black experience, and black slaves affirmed both his divinity and humanity" (idem: 47), which is why "the meaning of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection is found in his identity with the poor, the blind, and the sick" (idem: 48). The personal becomes collective, as the personal/biblical symbolically subsumes individual experience through historical times.

Jesus becomes the ultimate signifier of the metanarrative of African American cultural memory in that of "an African American religious orientation" (Matthews 1998: 20), and Jesus as the signifying vortex blending and, at the same time, representing black experience. However, in the memory narrative of the spirituals, the nativity of Christ is often missing. In Cone's explanation, the lack of treatment of Jesus's birth is the result of plantation political considerations since teaching slaves about liberation was considered dangerous (Cone 1972: 50). However, it does not appear a feasible explanation, given the fact that slaves' transformative power ably reinterpreted the whole of the white man's religion (even through the transforming performativity of singing "involv[ing] the enslaved African's physical being" [Jones 1993: 22]). It appears that Jesus entering the historical world, marking the beginning of restorative work, cannot be as easily dismissed in spirituals either, especially as, in Cone's Christology in *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), it occupies a central position: "The appearance of Jesus as the Oppressed One whose existence is identified exclusively with the oppressed of the land is symbolically characterized in his birth" (Cone 2010: 120). Howard Thurman (1939: 520) points out that some spirituals do address the nativity of Christ connected to his royalty: "This may have been a form of compensation, an effort to give to the spirit a sense of worth and validation, that transcends the limitations of the environment". Compensation for Thurman refers to combining imperiality and intimacy in one image. In his theology, Cone (1997: 67) conceptualizes the birth event with a "special connection between divine

revelation and the poor," establishing a "character [which] *must* have been present in his birth".

The silence of spirituals - "the first body of black narration" (Matthews 1998: 146) - and Cone's easy dismissal of the topic may reveal a deeper concern. Jesus's birth marks the beginning of a new age, which is made sure in the Bible to be heralded before the actual event and also verified in history through tethering by activities connected to different groups of people. Furthermore, despite being born in poor circumstances, he is anointed king. For all the status differentiation this may hold for the slave community through identifying Jesus as one of them, from the point of view of memory it appears problematic to remember it as a point of origin, similar to the identificatory move regarding the exodus from Egypt and Babylon. For black slaves and Cone, the Middle Passage obscures the possibility of identifying a zero point for the disruption it represents in both obstructing connections to home and dehumanizing blacks. Cone identifies the Middle Passage as "a stinking ship" in which they were "snatched from [their] homeland and sailing to an unknown land" (Cone 1972: 21). The abrupt severance, alienation, and estrangement are palpable in his words. The ugly reality of the Middle Passage is traumatizing, rendering it deeply unnamable - spirituals such as "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, / A long way from home" can be read as trauma resurfacing connected to loss and discontinuation (see Jones 1993: 21).

The image of the new/old black subject emerges in his evaluation of spirituals. Through recalling black slaves as agents in dehumanizing circumstances, Cone revives contemporary conceptualizations of the self in the making and establishes a direct genealogy between them. He singles out certain types of slaves, based on Kenneth Stampp's evaluation, who represent "the strong-willed field-hand whom the overseer hesitated to punish, the habitual runaway who mastered the technique of escape and shrugged at the consequences, each [winning] personal triumphs for himself and vicarious triumphs for the others" (qtd. in Cone 1972: 29), in order to demonstrate the existence of "the respected slave [. . .] who successfully challenged the rules of white society (Cone 1972: 29). With this manoeuvre, he seems to embed his narrative in African American memory work, as the examples also shed light on the traditional communicative/ performative relation of the individual to the community, similar to the call-and-response pattern (individual difference to assert centripetal activity [see Anderson 2001: 201-202]) and similarly to how Jesus stands for the black community. Cone (1972: 100) projects a "new Black Humanity" that verifies the eschatological anthropology he envisions - a vision that he finds already verified in the resistance of slaves. Therefore, the personal/individual is culturally revived, while the personal becomes political, much as it is seen in Cone's time. The vision of the new black self itself proves political, as it looks to be acknowledged in a wider sense, in social space. If Black Humanity is a given in the slaves' time, Cone establishes its newness as social acceptance in America. This duality can be seen when he (idem: 95) asserts that "the image of heaven served functionally to liberate the black mind from the existing values of white society, enabling black slaves to think their own thoughts and do their own things". Authenticating black action in the past endows black action in Cone's time with the same vigour, sanctioning as blending into a tradition and continuing the work started in the time of slavery - work that is inherent in black humanity and blessed as it signifies the ultimate goal, which is liberation: "Heaven then did not mean passivity but revolution against the present order" (ibid.).

3. Conclusion

Cone's reminiscing of the slave religion as designating a community of Christian believers is reductive. It treats the community as homogenous, not allowing for differentiation regarding time, geography, or inner stratification within local black communities - to name but a few problematizing aspects. As Lawrence W. Levine (2007: 55) reveals, "The sacred world of the slaves was not confined to Christianity. There existed as well a network of beliefs and practices independent of yet strongly related to the slaves' formal religion". It would be nevertheless a mistake to dismiss Cone's study, as it reveals "re-membering" at work, i.e., the remembering subject, the way he remembers, and what it remembers. As Eyerman (2004: 16) evaluates, "In the trauma of rejection, slavery was remembered as its memory re-membered a group. Slavery defined, in other words, group membership and a membership group. It was in this context that the recollection of slavery was articulated as cultural trauma". Remembering the self is in relation to the subject remembered, and the memory of the subject enables, as Melville Dixon (1994: 21) claims, "repopulating broad continuities within the African diaspora". It is then Cone's reimagination of the collective and re-membered connection to it from a perspective that represents his embeddedness in a community in time and space. In his study of spirituals, Cone, as the remembering subject, demonstrates how he finds a way to remember as in "re-membering" or reconnecting to the memory material. His will to remember reveals his contextualizing thinking, as he embeds his memory work into a tradition centring on the "sorrow songs" - "the articulate message of the slave to the world" (DuBois 2007: 169) - that he recycles in his era as supportive of the contemporary black self. Reviving is no simple re-imagination of the past, but a performative action establishing that he remembers, therefore he is.

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