

E. Hughes

Curriculum Vitae

Department of Philosophy
Emory University
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Areas of Research and Teaching Interests

Area of Specialization: Aesthetics, Critical Philosophy of Race, 20th-Century French Theory, Literary Theory, Poetry and Poetics, and African American and African Diasporic Literature

Area of Concentration: German Idealism, especially Kant, Metaphysics, and Affect Theory

Education

- (2026) PhD, Emory University, Philosophy, *in progress*, **expected May 2027**
Dissertation Title: *Without Ground: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Unbeing*
Dissertation Committee: Cynthia Willett (chair), Lynne Huffer, Dilek Huseynzadegan, George Yancy, and Claire Nouvet (Department of French, Reader)
- (2021) MFA+MA Litowitz Creative Writing Program, Northwestern University, Poetry and English Literature
- (2016) Hon. BA, Dordt University, English Literature

Dissertation Abstract

Title: *Without Ground: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Unbeing*

- This dissertation considers the racial consequences of metaphysical inquiry through a comparative analysis of African American Literature and continental philosophy. It argues that aesthetic theory legitimizes racial slavery, not scientific thought. By tracing these ideas through Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and G.W.F. Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, I argue that both aesthetic feeling and aesthetic production ground human freedom and erect the ontological status of the rational, human being. Since the African slave is posited as one without consciousness

or aesthetic power, continental philosophy categorizes the African as an undeveloped human animal through the invention of the concept of race. Although by the 20th century, French literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard adopts an aesthetic disposition in order to dispossess themselves from the tradition of Western metaphysics through theories of affect, I maintain that his theory of affect cannot account for the unforeseen affect Blackness produces in literature. Through the notion of the writing slave, this project explores the improvisational affect produced in African American literature, focusing on poets Phillis Wheatley, Patricia Smith, and Wanda Coleman.

Published Books

Another Way to Say Dying, Winner of the 2026 Center for African American Poetry and Poetics Book Prize, forthcoming Autumn House Press (2027)

- *Another Way to Say Dying* treads the boundary between the self and the lover. It is a poetry collection that explores the tension of between blackness and love, blackness and queerness, and blackness and queer love—ultimately between loss and reciprocity. In this collection, the speaker contends with shame and the ineffable affect that stirs underneath blackness as an unbearable social identity. The speakers in this collection struggle with vulnerability and the fear of loss and grief, finding *another way* to say the word love—and to mean it—in a world of hatred and uncertainty by exploring themes of sex, emotional intimacy, and failure. This collection attempts to express what it means to enter into relation with the self and with the other despite fear, loss, familial disapproval, and social disavowal.

Ankle-Deep in Pacific Water, Longlisted for the 2025 Maya Angelou Book Award, Haymarket Books (2024)

- *Ankle-Deep in Pacific Water* interrogates the experiences of a black family (originally from the American South) as they contend with the disillusionment of their migration to the San Francisco Bay Area—coping with the longstanding reality of antiblackness. Weaving personal lyric, narrative lyric, and persona, this collection articulates the difficulties of black familial love, black life, and black pain—made particular by the landscape of California, a state that insists (in political ethos) that it is/was not involved in American projects of imperialism or chattel slavery. At the core of the collection is the poem “The Accounts of Mammy Pleasant”—a poem written from the perspective of the formerly enslaved abolitionist Mary Ellen Pleasant from San Francisco who is thought to have helped fund John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry.

Publications

Scholarly Articles:

- (2025) “On Black Poetry: The Corpse and the Phenomenon of Third Person Consciousness,” published in *Callaloo: A Journal of African-American and African Arts and Letters*

Academic Interviews:

- (2024) “Juneteenth Reminds Us That ‘Black Freedom’ Is an Ongoing Project” in *Truthout* an Interview with George Yancy

Selected Literary Publications:

Poetry:

- (2026) “To Let This Woman Love Me,” “Rose,” and “Everything All at Once” selected by Edward Hirsch, forthcoming in Poem-A-Day from *Poets.org*
- (2024) “Bulldaggers in the Garden” published in *Wildness Magazine*
- (2024) “Kyrie” published *Poet Lore*
- (2024) “Everything All at Once,” published in Healing Verse Poetry Line, selected by Trapeta Mayson, former Poet Laureate of Philadelphia
- (2024) “As It Is,” “On Love,” “This Way,” and “Another Way to Say Dying” published in the *Colorado Review*
- (2023) “Bulldaggers Between Starshine and Clay,” “Ekphrasis of Black Women Fucking Each Other,” “Love’s Rare Sightings” published in *The Rumpus*
- (2023) “On Her Leaving,” “I Left My Heart in the Fragrance,” “What’s the Opposite of Lonely?” and “Element of Cloud” published in *Hypertext Magazine*
- (2023) “Black Women Standing Ankle-Deep in Pacific Water,” “Routine” and “In the Opposite Direction of Home, the Road” published in *Jazz & Culture Journal*
- (2023) “All of It Just Means Child” published in *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Art*
- (2023) “I Call Distraction a Bird” and “I Know Love by the Morning” published in the *Indiana Review*
- (2022) From “The Accounts of Mammy Pleasant” published in *Passages North Magazine*
- (2022) “We Have Made a Bed of This Landscape” published in *The Arts Section*
- (2022) “Portrait of My Father” published in *Rhino Poetry*

- (2021) “The Night Is an Eruption of Nebulas” published in *Guernica Magazine*
- (2021) “Meditation on George Washington Dennis” published in *Protean Magazine*
- (2020) “Our Past Bowed Like the Branches of a Madrone Tree,”
“Beckwourth Pass,” “Meet Cute in San Mateo County,” and
“The Way We Were” Published in a special edition of the *Chicago Quarterly Review* edited by Charles Johnson
- (2020) “In San Jose, We Sliced Tomatoes” published in *Poet Lore*
- (2020) “Rippling Through the Dark” published in *The Offing*
- (2020) “My Mother at Twenty-One” published in *Wildness Magazine*
- (2020) “I Called Home in January” published in *BOAAT Journal*

Literary Interviews:

- (2025) Poetry Foundation *Vs. Podcast* with E. Hughes and Lue Hughes, hosted by Ajanaé Dawkins and Brittany Rodgers
- (2025) “E. Hughes: Poet Uncovers Black History” with Hunter Buchheit published in *Visionary Artistry Magazine*
- (2024) “Giving Voice to ‘Silent Casualties’ A Dialogue with E. Hughes” with Robert Stalker published in *The Art Section*
- (2021) “An Interview with E. Hughes” published in *Lover’s Eye Magazine Podcast*
- (2019) “An Interview with Tina Chang” published in *TriQuarterly Magazine*

Academic Work in Progress

“On the Exquisite Corpse: Blackness and Inexpressibility” (under review)

This article explores the philosophical structures of Western literature as it exists in contention with African American literature. The inexpressible is explored through notions of affect (as explicated by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard). Alienated from proper meaning, affect functions as a means of exploring Black ontology through the ineffable structure of the Black poem. In an engagement with Fanon’s psycho-existential engagement with the colonized subject’s use of language in *Black Skin White Masks*, the article tarries with the silence of African American literature and offers an analysis of poet Patricia Smith’s poem titled “That Chile Emmett in That Casket.” This article posits that Smith’s poem functions as a site of exploration of silence and the transgressive nature of Black affect.

Still, the following question remains central to the article’s argument: *How does one properly read the poetry of the writing slave?* The article recognizes that *the work* of art as understood in 20th-century French aesthetic theory, provides an opening for a new kind of engagement with African American literature

beyond that of teleology. Vitality, that which remains inexpressible in blackness, as it remains unassimilable through its endurance of racial slavery, persists as the locomotive of its *unontology*—of the perpetuity of its unmaking.

Academic Conference Presentations

- (2026) Book Session: Response to Dr. James Haile's *The Dark Delight of Being Strange: Black Stories of Freedom*, Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Chicago, Illinois
- (2026) "The Light Excludes Me": Wanda Coleman and the Work of Silence, American Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois
- (2025) "On the Exquisite Corpse: Blackness and Inexpressibility," Association of Philosophy and Literature, Frankfurt, Germany
- (2023) "On Black Poetry: The Corpse and the Phenomenon of Third Person Consciousness," American Studies Association, Montreal, Canada
- (2023) "On Black Poetry," Strategies of Critique, York University, Toronto, Canada (Virtual)
- (2019) "Terror, History, and Materiality: Making Objects of Poems," Theoretical Archeology Group, North America Meeting, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York
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Writers Workshops, Residencies, and Conferences

- (2022) Hedgebrook Writer-in-Residence Program for Women Writers (declined offer)
- (2021) Palm Beach Poetry Festival Workshop (with Vieve Francis)
- (2019) Tin House Summer Workshop (with Maureen McLane)
- (2018) Tin House Winter Workshop (with Patricia Smith)
- (2017) Tin House Summer Workshop (auditor)
- (2017) Zora Neale Hurston/ Richard Wright Foundation's Writer's Week (with Kyle Dargan)
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Selected Literary Readings, Panels, and Presentations

- (2025) Cave Canem Fellows Reading, AWP 2025
- (2025) The Art Section Poetry Reading: Victoria Chang, Lauran K. Watel, and E. Hughes
- (2024) Cave Canem Fellows Reading, AWP 2024
- (2024) Exhibit B: A Literary Variety Show Featuring Michael Chang, Annie Grizzle, Jasmine Plakson, and E. Hughes
- (2023) What the Universe Is: Brionne Janae and E. Hughes
- (2022) Elevate Atlanta: “Poetry + the Body” Poetry Reading and Creative Conversation Featuring Opal Moore, Melba Joyce Boyd, E. Hughes, Andrea Jurjević, Charleen McClure, and Shariff Simmons.
- (2022) Printers Row Literary Festival: Rhino *Poetry*: Featured Authors Reading (sponsored by the Poetry Foundation)
- (2022) Association of Writers and Poets Panel: Celebrating the Chicago Quarterly Review Anthology of Black American Literature
- (2022) Midland Authors Panel: Moderated by Syed Haider and Featuring E. Hughes, Tsehaye Herbert, and LeVan Hawkins
- (2021) Chicago Quarterly Review: Anthology of African Literature, edited by Charles Johnson and hosted by Bookstall
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Research Grants

- (2019) Northwestern University Fellow Conference and Research Funding
- Funding for a research trip to the archives at the African American Museum & Oakland Library and at Stanford University. The purpose of this trip was to trace Black migration patterns from the American South to the San Francisco Bay Area and to analyze artifacts left by Black migrants during those initial settlements.
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Fellowships, Prizes, and Nominations

- (2025) The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library, Library Laureate

(2023)	Semifinalist for the 92Y Discovery Contest
(2022 – present)	Cave Canem Fellowship
(2022-2027)	Centennial Scholars Fellowship
(2022)	Semifinalist for the 92Y Discovery Contest
(2021)	Longlisted for the Granum Foundation Fellowship Prize
(2021)	Best of the Net Award nomination for poetry by <i>Wildness Magazine</i>
(2021)	Finalist for the Elinor Benedict Poetry Prize
(2017)	Pushcart Prize nomination for poetry by <i>The Matador Review</i>

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record

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| (2025) | Graduate Teaching Instructor: Emory University, Atlanta, GA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructor of Record for Philosophy 135: "Philosophy and Literature" |
| (2025) | Co-Lead Instructor: Emory University, Atlanta Georgia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructor of record for Laney Graduate School SOAR Program: "Special Topics: Philosophy and Black Literary Expression" |
| (2024) | Co-Lead Instructor: Emory University, Atlanta Georgia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructor of record for Laney Graduate School SOAR Program: "Research and Humanistic Social Sciences" |
| (2024) | Graduate Teaching Instructor: Emory University, Atlanta, GA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-Teacher for Philosophy 100W: Basic Problems in Philosophy |
| (2020) | Graduate Instructor: Northwestern University, Evanston, IL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructor of record for English 202: Introduction to Creative Writing |

(2018) **Graduate Teaching Associate: California State University, Fresno, Fresno, CA**

- Instructor of record for English 41: Introduction to Poetry

(2017) **Graduate Teaching Associate: California State University, Fresno, Fresno, CA**

- Instructor of record for English 5A
- Instructor of record for English B

Teaching Assistantships

(2023) **Graduate Teaching Assistant: Emory University, Atlanta, GA**

- Assistant for Philosophy 200W: Ancient Greek and Medieval Philosophy

(2019) **Graduate Teaching Assistant: Northwestern University, Evanston, IL**

- Assistant for English 206: Introduction to Poetry

Writing Consulting

(2023-2025) **Academic Coach: Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA**

- Design curriculum for writing workshops and consult with and offer direction to various advanced degree-seeking students (including but not exclusively MDiv, MA, DMin, etc.) writing theses and dissertations

(2017-2018) **Graduate Writing Consultant: Graduate Writing Studio, CSU, Fresno, Fresno, CA**

- Consult with and offer direction to Master and PhD candidates regarding various and lengthy writing projects (e.g. theses, dissertations, literature reviews)

Research Experience

(2021) **Graduate Research Assistant: Northwestern University, Evanston, IL**

- Conduct research on the Arab slave trade and iconographies of Blackness in the

Arab world.

Academic Service

(2023-2024) **Co-President of Friday Philosophy Forum**

- Organize graduate student panel discussions in the Philosophy Department
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Languages

- French (reading)
 - German (reading)
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References

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