

“The Optical Trade: From Slave-Breaking in Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* to Self-Breaking in Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*”

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It is hard to have a southern overseer; it is worse to have a northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver yourself.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*.¹

Frederick Douglass’s autobiographical descriptions of his experiences as a slave are often recalled when, in discussions of slavery, an optimistic emphasis is placed on the possibility of the subject’s resistance to violent regimes of subjugation. In these discussions, the famous scene of the narrator’s fight with the slave-breaker Edward Covey is taken as an example of how, by risking his life, the slave is capable of wresting his freedom and “manhood” from the seemingly overwhelming violence and oppression of slavery.² However, in his autobiography, Richard Wright, writing exactly one hundred years after Douglass, illustrates how such manifestations of resistance have in turn elicited further, unexpected forms of subjection. In recasting Douglass’s description of slave-breaking and possible resistance thereto into the early-twentieth-century

American South, Wright points to the shifts of racial violence in American society. He shows how such forms of corporal violence as slave-breaking and lynching had by the 1920s been taken over by (or all but disappeared into) self-breaking, achieved through the injunctions of what I call, after Wright, the optical trade. Naming both an economy of the visible and an historical shift toward disembodied surveillance, the optical trade, as Wright demonstrates, organizes and sustains the racial logic of twentieth-century America.³

We can conceptualize the differences between these two forms of subjection through two theoretical frameworks, namely Hegelian and Foucauldian. It is easy to understand why Hegel, especially as he has been mediated by Alexandre Kojève, would invite an optimistic reading of the futurity of slavery. In the second fight between the master and the bondsman, the slave, by risking his life and thereby establishing human desire, “dialectically overcomes” his slavery, and history reaches synthesis (*Aufhebung*).⁴ As Kojève writes, only the slave, through his experiences of mortal terror and work, is capable of true revolutionary action:

this revolutionary transformation of the World presupposes the ‘negation,’ the non-accepting of the given World *in its totality*. And the origin of this absolute negation can only be the absolute dread inspired by the given World, or more precisely, by that which, or by him who, dominates this World, by the Master of this World.⁵

The master, on the other hand, can be at best “a ‘skillful’ reformer, or better, a conformer.”⁶

For critics of the Hegelian bent, the fight in which the working slave overcomes the idle master is embodied in Douglass’s challenge to Covey. The autobiographical narrator’s uprising prefaces a “dialectical overcoming” of slavery and hence points towards “authentic freedom.” Douglass thus proves to be a true “revolutionary.” As Kojève argues, “the satisfied man will necessarily be a Slave; or more exactly, the man who has been a Slave, who has passed through Slavery, who has ‘dialectically overcome’ his slavery. ... If idle Mastery is an impasse, laborious Slavery, in contrast, is the source of all human, social, historical progress. History is the history of the working Slave.”⁷ Having overcome Covey the master, Douglass the slave is on his way to authentic self-consciousness, which is possible only for the subject who has experienced Slavery.

The Foucauldian/Wrightian reading of slavery’s afterlife in post-Reconstruction America, however, offers no such progressive comfort. Instead, Wright points to the panoptic regime’s superior efficacy over the spectacle of punishment in ensuring subjection. In this economy, the kind of overcoming that Douglass embodies may indeed lead to another trap where slaves are enslaved

even more efficiently, not through their ruthless masters but through their own disciplinary gaze. Wright's recontextualization of slave-breaking thus arguably illustrates the by-now familiar Foucauldian thesis about the enfolding of external injunctions into an internalized code in modern power/knowledge regimes.⁸ While the spectacles of overtly violent racism were partially disappearing by the time of Wright's narrative, forms of subjugation had simultaneously mutated into a more economically disseminated disciplinary regime, whose power rested on the violence of the visible.

In a cautionary note about methodology, Richard Brodhead warns against recognizing in our readings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century North American culture the epistemic shifts of which Foucault speaks.⁹ Pointing out the dearth of references to the racialized logic of punishment in Foucault's work,¹⁰ Angela Y. Davis too encourages caution in translating his studies of incarceration onto the North American scene. Alerting us to the specificities of carceral practices in post-bellum United States, where racial slavery, although abolished, profoundly affected the penal code, she reminds us that, whereas Foucault sees a shift from the body to the soul as the focus of European penal forms, "black slaves in the US were largely perceived as lacking the soul that might be shaped and transformed by punishment." Consequently, "the privilege of punishment"—based as it was on the assumption of the inherent liberty and equality of subjects that could then be rescinded—was applicable only to white subjects, and "the punishment of black slaves was corporal, concrete and particular."¹¹ She further argues that abolition "corresponded to the authorization of slavery as punishment": "The incarceration of former slaves served not so much to affirm the rights and liberties of the freedmen and women (i.e. as rights and liberties of which they could be deprived), nor to discipline a potential labor force; rather it symbolically emphasized that black people's social status continued to be that of slaves, even though the institution of slavery had been disestablished."¹² To show how "slavery's underlying philosophy of punishment insinuated itself into the history of imprisonment,"¹³ Davis further cites Matthew Mancini's argument that the practice of convict leasing disallows the direct mapping of the Foucauldian shift onto the U.S. terrain.¹⁴

Brodhead insists that, while engaging in dialogues between theory and history, we should carefully heed "the interplay of forces specific to actual social sites."¹⁵ The primary way in which I hope to disenable the possible Procrustean violence of theoretical frameworks is by attending closely to Douglass's and Wright's literary works. However, while my focus here is on what these two African-American texts, a century apart, suggest about the shift in nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial relations, a number of historical accounts of post-Reconstruction America corroborate the optical trade that Foucault and Wright suggest to have taken place. Historians make clear that the violence *Black Boy's* adolescent narrator would have faced in the early 1920s was obviously different, but not necessarily lessened, from the brutality of slavery with which Douglass

had struggled. After the “grand but brief interlude of multiracial democratic experimentation”¹⁶ of Reconstruction, by the turn of the century a “stiff conformity and fanatical rigidity” had taken over Southern race relations.¹⁷ C. Vann Woodward mentions Wright’s home state Mississippi as the “pioneer of the movement” for black disfranchisement¹⁸ and goes on to point out that segregation showed no signs of easing in the 1920s, the decade that Wright describes in the passages on which I concentrate in this essay. “In fact,” he writes, “the Jim Crow laws were elaborated and further expanded in those years.”¹⁹ The growth of Jim Crow was made possible by the shifts in the way the color line was policed. Tracing the NAACP’s anti-lynching campaigns, Robert L. Zangrando notes that “[a]s opposition [to lynching] mounted in the 1920s and 1930s, the number of reported lynchings declined, but more subtle forms of brutality evolved.”²⁰ Zangrando points to how lynchings ceased to be widely-advertised entertainment for large crowds and instead were carried out by smaller groups of assailants; how news about lynchings were more often suppressed than distributed to the media, as had been done in earlier decades; and how executions were sometimes sanctioned in mock trials preceding the violence.²¹ I argue that Wright’s autobiography, in describing self-breaking and the optical trade, suggests further ways in which racial violence became less tangible yet more effective in the early decades of the twentieth century.

To further illustrate such shifts in racial subjection, I will follow how, for numerous African-American writers and thinkers of the nineteenth century, religious organization and activity—whose syncretic forms may have enabled slave survival²²—participated in the optical trade and mutated into practices of subjection that ensured docility. Wright too points to this double effect: while he does at times offer a positive assessment of the function of religion and spirituality in African-American communities,²³ he is better known for dismissing religion’s emancipatory potential and emphasizing its role in the disciplinary network of subjection.²⁴ In *Black Boy*, he describes the pupils in a religious school as “a docile lot,” “claimed wholly by their environment” (100). In this, he echoes the ways many nineteenth-century African-American writers grappled with Christianity’s ambivalent potential for both liberation theology and a renunciation of worldly resistance.

If my analysis of Douglass and Wright yields a rather pessimistic reading of slavery’s afterlife—where “slavery is dead but inescapable”²⁵—I am not alone in noting such tendencies. Indeed, the problematic I point to has been catalogued in more depth and range by Saidiya V. Hartman in *Scenes of Subjection*.²⁶ One may want to emphasize not only that the implication of resistance in the networks of power makes it impossible to foresee the effects of any counterstrategies, but also that the ubiquity of power renders *all* future mutations strictly unforeseeable.²⁷ Given such unpredictability—what Ann Laura Stoler calls racism’s “polyvalent mobility”²⁸—one hopes that tracing past evolutions may encourage the kind of “pessimistic activity” to which Foucault refers in commenting on the political implications of his work.²⁹ While the exploration

of what such unstable practices of resistance and self-making might mean remains beyond the scope of this article, I will point to *an* opening by very briefly noting the role of the experience of the literary—reading and writing—has for Wright’s autobiographical narrator.

From Slave-Breaking to Self-Breaking

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault famously traces the transitions that he claims shaped the penal system and the whole of Western societies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He contends that “the gloomy festival of punishment” of the seventeenth century—characterized by an excess of violence, by the protracted torture of criminal(ized) bodies, and by the public display of the execution proceedings—was slowly superseded by a disciplinary practice where the “body as the major target of penal repression disappeared.”³⁰ Foucault argues that, in the latter form of punishment, disciplinary power “imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen” (187). He also stresses that the panoptic surveillance that finds its extreme form in the carceral situation is by no means limited to prisons or other disciplinary institutions such as the army, the schoolroom, the orphanage, or the monastery.³¹ In these, one can observe in concentrated form the strategies of surveillance and discipline discernible in the society at large. As Gilles Deleuze points out, “discipline cannot be identified with any one institution or apparatus precisely because it is a type of power, a technology, that traverses every kind of apparatus or institution, linking them, prolonging them, and making them converge and function in a new way.”³²

That slavery included practices that Foucault would name those of the spectacle is clear from Douglass’s text. In a crucial, early scene in the *Narrative*, the young narrator describes the sight of a female relative being mercilessly beaten.

No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move [the master’s] iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It

was the most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper
the feelings with which I beheld it.³³

Even though the lashes do not land on his back, this “most terrible spectacle” “str[ikes]” the young spectator “with awful force”; even though he is not directly subjected to the beating, the scene he is forced to witness nevertheless ushers him through “the entrance to the hell of slavery.” In other words, the violent, public scene of the punishment sutures the narrator into his “place” within the violent economy of slavery.

Clearly, however, the spectacle of the punishment is supported by other strategies of subjugation—strategies which seem to correspond to the Foucauldian concept of disciplinary power. The most famous passages of “slave breaking” are those where Douglass describes his servitude under the “negro-breaker” Edward Covey.³⁴ Using deception to catch his slaves “neglecting” their duties of constant toil (and thus to justify consequent punishment), Covey surreptitiously watches over his servants: “His comings were like a thief in the night. He appeared to us as being ever at hand. He was under every tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the plantation” (57). Notably, he successfully induces in the slaves a kind of paranoia similar to the disciplinary subject’s sense of being under the ubiquitous gaze in Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon: “He had the faculty of making us feel that he was always present” (570). Douglass’s account suggests, then, that in African-American history, there is an overlap in the two deployments of power: Covey’s strategy partakes in both spectacle and panopticism.

We must note, however, that, although slaves seem to be uncertain whether or not they are being watched over by their master, his gaze nevertheless fails to become properly panoptic. The slaves, for example, manage to exchange mutinous words among themselves. As Douglass recalls, he and other slaves “never called [Covey] by any other name than ‘*the snake*.’ We fancied that in his eyes and gait we could see a snakish resemblance.” For the servants, Covey’s “trickery” is a decidedly “unmanly” practice (265, 266). Clearly, Douglass is able to cast a gaze of contempt upon the master’s strategies and distance himself from the scene of surveillance.

According to Foucault, the staging of state-sanctioned violence in the seventeenth century invited repercussions by which those wielding the power were themselves threatened. Public execution, he writes, “was . . . dangerous, in that it provided a support for a confrontation between the violence of the king and the violence of the people. It was as if the sovereign power did not see, in this emulation of atrocity, a challenge that it itself threw down and which might one day be taken up” (73). This challenge, of course, is what Douglass’s narrator responds to in his counter-violence and resistance to Covey. After several vicious beatings, he decides rather to fight his master to death than to succumb to another flogging. It is here that the power balance between the two men changes: “This

battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood" (65). What Covey experiences is the kind of *reversal of violence* which, according to Foucault, was the reason behind the eighteenth-century shift to discipline. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Douglass himself predicts such reversals as the outcome of the terroristic attempts at black disfranchisement: "In arguing upon what will be the action of the Negro in case he continues to be the victim of lynch law I accept the statement often made in his disparagement, that he is an imitative being; that he will do what he sees other men do."³⁵ The young Douglass's resistance, then, was part of the costly consequences of slave system's sovereign violence that W. E. B. Du Bois sardonically identifies as one of the driving forces behind abolition: "It was seen, first in England and later in other countries, that slavery as an industrial system could not be made to work satisfactorily in modern times. Its cost was too great, and one of the causes of this cost was the slave insurrections from the very beginning, when the slaves rose of the plantation of Diego Columbus down to the Civil War in America."³⁶

In *Black Boy*, Wright illustrates the way in which such problems were resolved in the twentieth century. Indeed, scenes of uprising or rebellion are missing from his autobiography. Instead, he suggests over and over again that, for a racially marked subject, a crucial survival skill in the South is the ability to *read* race and to show that s/he is literate in matters of race: to show by demeanor that one knows one's place. The fact that the narrator proves to be less than agile in learning the significance of color leads him to several confrontations with his environment. Among these, there are scenes which vary from the violence exhibited by white people (see, for example, 172-75) to other, seemingly less injurious moments of guidance by his fellow blacks. Here, I want to concentrate on an example of the latter that takes place as one of the narrator's well-meaning friends, a young man called Griggs, instructs him in the importance in learning to *see* color in one's environment and, further, in controlling what one lets white people see. Griggs, whom the narrator meets washing his employer's windows, scolds the narrator for his inappropriate behavior: "'See?' he said triumphantly, pointing his finger at me. 'There it is, *now!* It's in your face. . . .' He paused and looked about; the streets were filled with white people. He spoke to me in a low, full tone. 'Dick, look, you're black, black, *black*, see? Can't you understand that?'" (176). Drawing attention to Dick's failure to "look" properly—to see and to show that he is "black, black, *black*"—the friend exhorts him to pay attention to the color of the people around them, to learn to see the racial markedness of his environment: "'You act around white people as if you didn't know that they were white. And they *see* it.'" Griggs has to spell out for Dick the disastrous consequences that being color blind can have: "'White people make it their business to watch niggers,'" he explains. "'And they pass the word around. . . . You're marked already'" (176).

To Griggs's advice that he should be careful not to "act around white people as if he didn't know they were white," the narrator remarks, "'Oh, Christ, I

can't be a slave'" (177). For the narrator, acting according to the code proposed by Griggs is tantamount to being enslaved. Yet, acceding to such slavery may be required for survival:

"But you've got to eat," [Griggs] said.

"Yes, I've got to eat."

"Then start acting like it," he hammered at me, pounding his fist in his palm. "When you're in front of white people, *think* before you act, *think* before you speak. . . ." (177).

The narrator is faced with a choice—whether or not to become literate in the racial code of the South—that is, precisely, an overdetermined and, hence, an impossible choice because at stake is his existence: "I fought with myself, telling myself that I had to master this thing, that my life depended upon it" (186). If he would not conform to the code, he would not make a living and would possibly be killed. Here, the narrator encounters the power and lure of subjection. Judith Butler argues that one of the ways in which power induces subjection is by promising continued existence as its corollary: "within subjection the price of existence is subordination. Precisely at the moment in which choice is impossible, the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence. . . . Subjection exploits the desire for existence."³⁷ However, while Wright's narrator is promised continued existence were he to conform to the Southern, racialized code of conduct (he would be employed and not immediately be threatened with violence), subjection would condemn the racialized subject to a kind of immobility, a living death. While this condition is related to what Orlando Patterson has called the slaves' "social death," the immobility it induces differs from slavery's "profound natal alienation" or exclusion³⁸ in naming a kind of a territorial suture into and by the optical trade.

For the narrator, however, it seems impossible to embody this role perfectly:

What Griggs was saying was true, but it was simply utterly impossible for me to calculate, to scheme, to act, to plot all the time. I would remember to dissemble for short periods, then I would forget and act straight and human again, not with the desire to harm anybody, but merely forgetting the artificial status of race and class (177).³⁹

Acting properly requires an ability "to calculate, to scheme"—to adhere to the rules of a certain economy. These rules remain baffling and unreadable for the narrator. However, Griggs knows of a job opening in the vicinity and, having instructed the narrator, informs him: "'There's an optical company upstairs and the boss is a Yankee from Illinois. . . . He wants to *break* a colored boy *into* the optical trade'" (177-78; emphases added). The narrator is given, in other words,

another chance to learn “the optical trade,” the economy of the visible. Here, the exigencies of capitalist economy form the background of, or at least are ever-present in, the maintenance of social hierarchies based on race as the commonsensical criterion of visibility. Learning to see the right way is potentially a “trade” for the narrator, just as “watch[ing] niggers” is made, as Griggs puts it, by “white people” into “their business.”⁴⁰

We must read the verb “to break (in)” in its double meaning in the phrase “to break a colored boy into the optical trade.” It signifies an act not only of introduction but also of a violent, forceful subjugation. “Colored boys” like the narrator have to be broken by breaking them into the optical trade, that is, by teaching them the appropriate way of seeing and being seen, of performing and gazing.⁴¹ The phrase gains its full significance when placed in the historical context of slavery and Douglass’s *Narrative*. As the narrator’s anguished words, “I can’t be a slave,” suggest, “breaking (in)” connotes also the process of “breaking (in) slaves,” teaching them their roles and duties by crushing their will with floggings and beatings, a practice in which Covey and such fictional counterparts as Simon Legree excel. Having listened to Griggs’s instructions on how to act among white people, the narrator of *Black Boy* says, “‘I guess you’re right. . . . I’ve got to watch myself, break myself . . .’” (177; second ellipsis in the original). As the shift from Griggs’s “breaking into” to the narrator’s “breaking oneself” demonstrates, the professionalization of colored boys in and by the optical trade entails violence, which may be most efficacious when self-inflicted. Wright’s autobiographical narrator would have us believe that his failure in breaking himself resulted more from a hapless, unwitting non-conformity than from conscious rebellion:

Perhaps I had waited too long to start working for white people; perhaps I should have begun earlier, when I was younger—as most of the other black boys had done—and perhaps by now the tension would have become an habitual condition, contained and controlled by reflex. But that was not to be my lot; I was always to be conscious of it, brood over it, carry it in my heart, live with it, sleep with it, fight with it (143).

Consequently, his is a particularly “‘tough break,’” as Griggs observes (183).

In the transition from Douglass to Wright, then, the *surveillance* and *slave-breaking* by the master is turned into *self-surveillance* and *self-breaking*. As his later writings clearly show, Douglass was aware of such mutations in the racist procedures of post-Reconstruction America. While writing in 1894 he points to peonage, disfranchisement, and the “mobocratic crimes” of lynching as bespeaking “the determination of slavery to perpetuate itself, if not under one form, then under another,”⁴² I suggest that Wright, in *Black Boy*, observes how slavery had further metamorphosed into practices of self-breaking. In early-

twentieth century America, in other words, the racial logic that sustained slavery was not only inscribed into the penal code (as Angela Davis notes) and morphed into the practices of disfranchisement and lynching (as Douglass argues), but also internalized as the injunctions of the optical trade, where the demand for surveillance is posited upon the subject him/herself, hence not allowing any emancipatory synthesis of the Master-Slave dialectic.

Heavenly Massa

A number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African-American narratives suggest that, despite its counterdiscursive potential, religious activity aided in this transition from “sovereign terror” to more productive ways of panoptic discipline. In this context, Kojève’s reading of the anaesthetizing ideologies of slavery—stoicism, solipsism, and Christianity—resonates with a Foucauldian understanding of the economies of power and visibility. According to Kojève, as the slave tries to come to terms with his situation and to “reconcile the *ideal* of Freedom with the *fact* of Slavery,” he proceeds from an attitude of stoicism—where he tells himself that his Freedom is guaranteed by his inner conviction that he is free—to one of solipsism—where he convinces himself that outside conditions such as slavery do not matter because only inner experience is real—and, finally, to the “ideology” of Christianity.⁴³ Having thus secured the otherworldly recognition by God and freedom in the beyond, the slave does not need to enter into a new life-and-death combat with the master. Kojève’s reading of the Christian slave is harsh: “He is a slave without a Master, he is a Slave in *himself*, he is the pure essence of slavery.”⁴⁴

Cornel West, perhaps the most prominent of contemporary commentators on the “Christian prophetic tradition” in African-American life, points to the one-sidedness of such a view of the black Christian tradition: “the black Christian tragic sense of life,” he writes, “focuses on resistance and opposition in the here and now against overwhelming odds.”⁴⁵ Religious activity has provided openings for other forms of intervention too, allowing, for example, African-American women “to articulate a public discourse critical of women’s subordination.”⁴⁶ Despite such reminders, we should nevertheless recognize the thoroughly ambivalent role of religion in African-American texts. Not only do they point out, as Pauline Hopkins does, that slavery “was sanctioned by almost the whole religious world of the United States”;⁴⁷ more subtly, they suggest that spirituality, *like everything else*, is an inherently double-edged tool whose potential for dismantling the master’s mansion is never clearly separated from its ability for neat housekeeping. For such tools to have any leverage in reconstructive strategies, one must carefully advertise their inescapable, concomitant dangers, for “the bondsman (servant) is all the more the servant, the more he (mis)perceives his position as that of an autonomous agent.”⁴⁸

Of course, whether we note the insurrectionary leverage of black churches in African-American history⁴⁹ or point out their quietist tendencies—as Wright

often does—to assign one meaning to them is to engage in generalizations. As Milton Sernett observes, “Interpreting all African American religion as political radicalism is as much a distortion of the whole as is dismissing the black churches as universally escapist, otherworldly, and politically dysfunctional.”⁵⁰ Du Bois, for one, recognized such complexity: while being “distinctly critical” of “organized religion,” he does note the emancipatory potential in the church which “work[s] for human salvation this side of eternity, and . . . admit[s] the possibility of vast betterment here and now.”⁵¹ While Wright often rejects religion as a source of resistance, in the early short story “Big Boy Leaves Home” he too points to the multiple meanings that can be assigned to religious activity in black communities. When the protagonist has killed a white man in self-defense, his mother tells him, “‘Nobody but the good Lawd kin hep us now.’”⁵² However, the mother’s otherworldly appeal is quickly actualized by communal activity as the members of the congregation help Big Boy to escape. A further detail, however, suggests that they take action merely to wash their hands off the transgressor for fear of white retaliation. One of the elders, for example, refuses to let Big Boy find refuge in the church because “‘ef they ketch im there itll ruin us all. We gotta git the boy outta town . . .’”⁵³

While Wright observes that black “churches are social organisations rather than bands of faithful believers”⁵⁴ whose possible political impact remains “an open question,”⁵⁵ overall he is unconvinced of their efficacy: “The activities of the church . . . have never brought about a favorable change.”⁵⁶ Indeed, African-American spirituality appears in his work mostly as a self-defeating practice of docility and self-surveillance. Both *Native Son* and “The Man Who Lived Underground” contain scenes where the fugitive protagonists gaze upon a black congregation. While Bigger listens to the pathetic songs “of surrender, of resignation” as he hides out in a derelict building,⁵⁷ the unnamed protagonist of the short story is appalled and repulsed by a group of black worshippers: “They oughtn’t to do that, he thought. . . . He felt that he was gazing upon something abysmally obscene. . . . A vague conviction made him feel that those people should stand unrepentant and yield no quarter in singing and praying.”⁵⁸ When his lawyer asks Bigger if he wished to be religious if that guaranteed some degree of happiness for him, he answers, “‘Naw. I’ll be dead soon enough. If I was religious I’d be dead now.’”⁵⁹ Elsewhere in *Native Son*, Christian faith is not only compared to intoxication (“What [Bigger’s] mother had was Bessie’s whiskey, and Bessie’s whiskey was his mother’s religion”),⁶⁰ but equated with racist Klan practices when the cross Reverend Hammond gives for Bigger to wear in jail is doubled in the burning cross of the KKK.⁶¹ Having witnessed these scenes, Bigger tells Max, “‘The white folks like for us to be religious, then they can do what they want with us.’”⁶² Similarly, even as the young Richard in *Black Boy* is drawn to the “vivid language of the sermons,” the “sensual caress” of hymns, and “the dramatic vision of life held by the church” (98, 107), he nevertheless comes to see in organized religion “the attempt of one individual

or group to rule another in the name of God. The naked will to power seemed always to walk in the wake of a hymn” (130). Wright echoes these observations in *Black Power*, where he argues that the Ghanaians have become “more docile” with their acceptance of Christianity.⁶³ In commenting on Africa and its colonial history, he ironically notes that “Heavens had a color line and that was why white men, staunch Christians, reflected so much racial bias in their daily dealing with their fellow blacks. . . .”⁶⁴ Elsewhere Wright ponders, “to what degree is religion in America officially and ideologically identified with the policy of White Supremacy?”⁶⁵

Wright’s ambivalence about black religion is shared by earlier African-American authors. In Pauline Hopkins’s *Hagar’s Daughter* (1901/1902), a slave buyer observes the advantages of having religious slaves: when one of the marketed slaves informs him of his religious convictions, the white man responds: ““Got religion, have you? So much the better. I like to deal in the gospel.””⁶⁶ Similarly, a slave auctioneer in Martin R. Delany’s *Blake* notes to prospective purchasers of the item for sale that ““the Negro fellow is religious; by the by, an excellent recommendation, gentlemen.””⁶⁷ Religious slaves suit slave owners, who can “deal in gospel” as much as they deal in slaves. In his *Narrative*, Douglass too sees these two economies as mutually supportive: “Revivals of religion and revivals in the slave-trade go hand in hand together. The slave prison and the church stand near each other” (98).⁶⁸ “Were I to be again reduced to the chains of slavery,” he writes earlier, “next to that enslavement, I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst” (68).⁶⁹ While Douglass attacks the brutality sanctioned by white Christianity, Reverend Pinchen of *Hagar’s Daughter*—whom we can see as one of the “reverend slave-driver[s]” that raise Douglass’s ire (70)—importantly suggests other ways in which religion proves productive for slave owners:

“a man in your business of buying and selling slaves needs religion more than anybody else, for it makes you treat your people well. Now there’s Mr. Haskins—he’s a slave-trader like yourself. . . . Before I converted him he would sell husbands from their wives and delight in doing it; but now he won’t sell a man from his wife *if he can get anyone to buy them together*. I tell you, religion has done a wonderful work for him.”⁷⁰

Unlike in Douglass’s *Narrative*, where slave owners quote Scripture to justify debilitating beatings (53), religious discipline here does “wonderful work” for slave traders by curbing the most excessive forms of the master’s enjoyment—what Jacques Lacan would call their obscene *jouissance*—that might otherwise

impede the smooth flowing of (the symbolic) economy and the maximizing of profits.⁷¹ Having become religious, the white man does not allow his personal enjoyment, as disruptive *jouissance*, to stand in the way of good business—but neither do religious sentiments prohibit him from breaking up families if it makes good economic sense. Slavery’s commerce is aided by what Wright’s autobiographical narrator calls “[t]his business of saving souls” (147).

Also elsewhere, religion emerges as a disciplinary method with which slaves are more or less effectively sutured into their places without the necessity of overt violence. In her narrative of 1861, Harriet Jacobs recounts how, after Nat Turner’s rebellion, plantation owners decided to educate their slaves in religion so as “to keep them from murdering their masters.”⁷² Whereas Douglass’s master sends him to Covey after the uprising of 1831, Jacobs’s masters resort to religious education as a way of taming their slaves. In Douglass’s and Jacobs’s narratives, then, religion and “nigger-breaking” emerge as related practices responding to the eruption of slave violence. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, a white preacher reproaches the slaves for being “eye-servants”: “Instead of serving your masters faithfully, which is pleasing in the sight of your heavenly Master, you are idle, and shirk your work. God sees you. You tell lies. God hears you. . . . Your masters may not find you out, but God sees you, and will punish you.”⁷³ The speech, replete with emphases on the all-seeing “heavenly Master,”⁷⁴ ends with an admonishment for slaves to make themselves *more visible* to their masters: “. . . When you go from here, don’t stop at the corners of the streets to talk, but go directly home, and let your master and mistresses see that you have come.”⁷⁵ Nat Turner’s traumatic uprising in August 1831⁷⁶ revealed the slave owners’ management of property as insufficient in that it allowed for such unforeseeable events as the slaughter of up to sixty-five whites in the hands of Turner’s rebels. What was needed was a more finely tuned system of surveillance—a system that would make it impossible for slaves to deploy masks, to be “eye-servants,” to massacre their masters.⁷⁷

Similar concerns are voiced by the slave owners in William Wells Brown’s *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter* (1853). Repeating the Reverend’s call in Jacobs’s narrative, Snyder, a white preacher, counsels his black congregation, “You are not to be eye-servants. Now, eye-servants are such as will work hard, and seem mighty diligent, while they think anybody is taking notice of them; but, when their masters’ and mistresses’ backs are turned they are idle, and neglect their business.” Snyder reminds the slaves that, even if they can conceivably deceive their masters and mistresses, they cannot deceive God, in whose scheme they have been given their natural places as white people’s servants.⁷⁸ Snyder’s speech is held up in *Clotel* as an example of treacherous, disingenuous forms of Christianity. Its two white listeners, the Northerner Mr. Carlton and the Southern slave owner’s daughter, who has been educated in the liberal North, remain abolitionists and see through the pretense. Having married and inherited the plantation from Mrs. Carlton’s father, they institute a new work environment for the slaves, based on, as it were, compassionate Christianity.

Mr. and Mrs. Carlton decide to put into effect a “gradual emancipation” of their slaves: the cruel overseer is dismissed, no physical punishment is to be allowed, and the former slaves are to be credited for their work. The text celebrates the consequent, productive change in the work ethics of the ex-slaves:

*A sedateness, a care, an economy, an industry, took possession of them, to which there seemed to be no bounds but in their physical strength. They were never tired of labouring, and seemed as though they could never effect enough. They became more temperate, moral, religious, setting an example of innocent, unoffending lives to the world around them, which was seen and admired by all.*⁷⁹

The owner of the neighboring plantation comes to the site of the tireless slaves to wonder at the industry and faithfulness of the negroes. Having been frustrated in his eager offers to purchase the negroes as slaves, he asks Mr. Carlton:

“pray tell me what it is that makes your negroes work so? . . . I have never seen such people; building as they are next door to my residence. I see and have my eye on them from morning till night. You are never there, for I have never met you, or seen you once at the building. Why, sir, I am an early riser, getting up before day; and do you think that I am not awake every morning in my life by the noise of their trowels at work, and their singing and noise before day; and do you suppose, sir, that they stop or leave off work at sundown? No, sir, but they work as long as they can see to lay a brick, and then they carry up brick and mortar for an hour or two afterward, to be ahead of their work the next morning. And again, sir, do you think that they walk at their work? No, sir, they run all day. You see, sir, those immensely long ladders, five stories in height; do you suppose they walk up them? No, sir, they run up and down them like so many monkeys all day long. I never saw such people as these in my life. I don’t know what to make of them. Were a white man with them and over them with a whip, then I should see and understand the cause of the running and incessant labour; but I cannot comprehend it; there is something in it, sir. Great man, sir, that Jim; great man; I should like to own him.”⁸⁰

To the visitor’s amazement, such industry and diligence is achieved without the presence of the master’s gaze. As much as the text offers the Carltons as examples of pious white people who treat blacks justly and humanely, what one

arguably encounters here is the shift from a regime of physical punishment to one of internalized super-vision that renders (ex-)slaves their own overseers. Even as they are freed from their immediate bondage, a new “economy,” as the text itself suggests, “[takes] possession of them.”⁸¹ The price of freedom, *Clotel* suggests—perhaps inadvertently—is tokenism and panoptic subjection: as the maternal Mrs. Carlton tells her freed servants in a subsequent scene, “‘From this hour . . . you are free, and all eyes will be fixed upon you.’”⁸² Freedom can be bought only at the price of the implantation of the white gaze. Recalling the failure of Reconstruction, we can suggest that it may be impossible to render an economy that was based on slavery beneficial or salubrious to those who were slaves under it through changes and modifications based on individual volition. A radical refiguring is needed by those whose subjugation/subjection has been (and remains) an integral part of the economy.

Lynching and the Optical Trade

Considering the brutality of lynching practices, which survived well into the twentieth century and the era that Wright describes in *Black Boy*, it would be obscene to argue for a clear break between the modes of spectacle and discipline in the U.S. racial economy.⁸³ If disciplinary and panoptic strategies are embedded in slavery,⁸⁴ the threat of violence is an integral component of the optical trade. Observing the changes in racial relations in 1920s, Zangrando writes: “With blacks largely disfranchised, segregated, and economically victimized, supremacists could dispense with lynching as an everyday means of manipulation and control. Blacks, however, could never be certain that violence might not recur.”⁸⁵ In *Black Boy*, Wright suggests the regularity of physical violence in the optical trade by prefacing the scene of Griggs’s instruction with examples of white brutality against blacks (two white men assault a black woman, who is consequently arrested for disorderly conduct; the narrator is assailed by a gang of white youths [172-75]).

But above all, in order to learn the optical trade and to act according to its dictates, black boys have to “watch themselves.” “[W]atch yourself and don’t get into trouble,” a white man tells the narrator (181). In Du Boisian terms, he has to learn to utilize “double-consciousness,” seeing himself through the eyes of others, if he wants to escape becoming a target for violence. In this double-consciousness resides the violence of the visible that sutures the racialized subject into his/her place much more securely than the spectacle of the punishment, however gruesome and traumatic, that Douglass’s young narrator witnesses. Adopting the terminology of trauma studies, we can say that, in the hundred years that separate the two African-American writers, the visible trauma of subjugation in slavery is taken over by the insidious trauma of everyday racism.⁸⁶

However, even though, time and again, the narrator finds himself “resolving to watch [his] every move” (186), he cannot accommodate himself to such

double-consciousness but always forgets his place in the optical trade. In working for the optical company, he learns that to occupy his position in the trade is, in a certain sense, to attempt the impossible. The owner of the company tells his two other employees, white men called Pease and Reynolds, “to *break* [the narrator] *in* gradually to the workings of the shop” (179; emphasis added). While Pease and Reynolds seem to agree, the narrator finds himself sweeping the floors and doing other menial tasks, rather than learning to operate the machines with which lenses are ground and polished. When he asks one of the men to guide him in the work so that he could “learn the trade,” he gets a hostile response:

“Nigger, you think you’re white, don’t you?”

“No, sir.”

“You’re acting mighty like it,” he said.

...

Pease shook his fist in my face.

“This is a *white* man’s work around here,” he said (180).

Finally, the narrator realizes, “I was black; I lived in the South. I would never learn to operate those machines as long as those two men in there stood by them” (184).

As a result of the incident, Pease and Reynolds apparently decide to teach the narrator a lesson. He is confronted by the white men, with Reynolds saying that he heard him refer to his colleague as Pease. This puts the narrator into an unnegotiable double bind. Had he, a black boy, called a white man anything but Mister or Sir, he would be beaten. Were he to deny the accusations, he would accuse another white man of lying, and would consequently be beaten. In the optical trade, the narrator is positioned in an impossible site where he can make no right move, where violence is inevitable; in Jay Mechlin’s folkloric terms, he finds himself faced with a situation of “paradoxical communications” that he cannot negotiate.⁸⁷ Disoriented, he feels “that the people were unreal, . . . that I had been slapped out of the human race” (182), and resolves to resign from the company. The next day, as he returns to get his final pay check, the Yankee boss tries to find out what has happened. “An impulse to speak rose in me and died with the realization that I was facing a wall that I would never breach [*sic*]. I tried to speak several times and could make no sounds” (183). Finally, the narrator leaves the optical company, without saying a word to the boss, “[going] into the sunshine and walk[ing] home like a blind man” (185).

The confrontation with Pease and Reynolds reminds the narrator of a lynching of an acquaintance he has heard of. To understand the exact position of black boys in the optical trade, let us consider this scene:

What I had heard [of the lynching] altered the look of the world, induced in me a temporary paralysis of will and impulse. The penalty of death awaited me if I made a false

move and I wondered if it was worth-while to make any move at all. The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness. Indeed, the white brutality that I had not seen was a more effective control of my behavior than that which I knew. The actual experience would have let me see the realistic outlines of what was really happening, but as long as it remained something terrible and yet remote, something whose horror and blood might descend upon me at any moment, I was compelled to give my entire imagination over to it, an act which blocked the springs of thought and feeling in me, creating a sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived (164-65).

Hearing of the lynching does something to “the look of the world”—to the narrator’s vision of the world and/or the way he feels he is being looked at—and an immobility, “a temporary paralysis,” ensues. The narrator wonders whether he should move at all, or just stay where he is, in his place. This paralysis is repeated as he tries to form a response to Pease and Reynolds: “my tongue would not move. . . . I tried to speak several times and could make no sounds” (182, 183). For such paralysis to be induced, it is not necessary for the racial subject to experience a lynching or even witness one—indeed, it seems that the threat of violence works better when it is not experienced first-hand but remains at a remove. Were the narrator to experience the act of violence himself, he might be able to deduce some logic in the way in which it is meted out, to predict its course and recurrence. Now that it remains to a degree invisible, its logic is similarly cloaked, veiled, and becomes more threatening because unpredictable: the narrator, like the colonized subject whom Frantz Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier.”⁸⁸ As Richard later muses, “perhaps even a kick was better than uncertainty” (253).

Yet, a small opening in the economy of subjection is suggested when, later in *Black Boy*, the crucial term “the look of the world” is repeated to describe the effects of reading. The narrator tells how, in his effort to leave the South, he “hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what [he] read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different” (238).⁸⁹ Reading, like lynching, does something to the narrator’s perception: “the mood of the book” he read would “linger, coloring everything [he] saw, heard, did” (238). The narrator’s first experience of reading—when the grandmother’s lodger reads *Bluebeard and His Seven Wives* to Richard—affects him similarly: “the look of things altered” (38). Through the literary, the narrator is able to address issues

of visibility in new ways. As Robert Stepto observes, “Wright reminds us that reading . . . depends on seeing and knowing and gaining perspective.”⁹⁰ The paralyzing, immobilizing “the look of the world,” induced by the news of the lynching, is renegotiated through the experience of the literary, which resituates the narrator and others in the field of vision. Through reading, the narrator “beg[ins] to regard [the people around him] differently” (238).

But more immediately, Wright’s commentary on slave-breaking lays bare the shift in racialized violence where the black body has disappeared as the primary target and where the agent of the violence has been internalized by the racially marked subject. The comparison between Douglass and Wright suggests that, in the system of subjection that the latter describes, the violence of the visible functions more efficiently to imprison racially marked subjects in their “places” than the overt violence—breaking and lynching—depicted by Douglass.⁹¹ Concomitant to this shift is the move from the most brutal practices of lynching to what some commentators have called “legal lynchings.” Writing in 1894, Douglass wanted the crimes that were imputed to blacks to be dealt with “in open court and in open daylight” rather than by “mobocrats.”⁹² Yet, in staging Bigger Thomas’s trial, Wright suggests that, in the twentieth century, mob violence finds an expression in the very court on whose legitimacy Douglass had relied.⁹³

Hence, even though one is tempted to laud the diminishing aspect of sheer violence in the transition from Douglass’s time to Wright’s, one has to heed Foucault’s advocacy for resistance in the face of any commonsensical conclusions as to the reasons behind the transition from a society of punishment to one of surveillance. According to him, the disappearance of the spectacle of physical torture in juridical systems of the West has been “attributed too readily and too emphatically to a process of ‘humanization,’ thus dispensing with the need for further analysis” (7). A more attuned exploration, he writes, would try to uncover the processes whereby the new disciplinary strategies could penetrate and determine the subjects’ consciousness in “economical” and productive ways unrivaled by the strategies of the spectacle. “What was emerging,” he concludes, “no doubt was not so much a new respect for the humanity of the condemned . . . as a tendency towards a more finely tuned justice, towards a closer penal mapping of the social body” (78). The aim was “to set up a new ‘economy’ of the power to punish, to assure its better distribution, . . . so that it should be distributed in homogenous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body” (80).⁹⁴

Making her argument with considerably broader material than I do in this essay, Hartman observes subjection’s tightening grip on the post-Reconstruction African-American subject: “It was often the case that benevolent correctives and declarations of slave humanity intensified the brutal exercise of power upon the captive body rather than ameliorating the chattel condition.” For the racially marked subject of the late nineteenth century, “emancipation appears less the

grand event of liberation than a point of transition between modes of servitude and racial subjection.”⁹⁵ Indeed, in the nineteenth-century narratives I have been discussing here, self-surveillance and violence of the visible prove to be much more effective deployments of power than the threat and execution of corporal punishment. Self-breaking emerges as the logical conclusion to the practices of lesser corporeal violence. As Henry Blake recognizes, benign masters confound if not pre-empt the slaves’ drive for freedom: “‘Tis this confounded ‘good treatment’ and expectation of getting freed by their oppressors, that has been the curse of the slave. . . . A ‘good master’ is the very worst of masters.”⁹⁶ We can similarly contrast the endless, self-imposed toil of the servants at the Carlton plantation in *Clotel* to Douglass’s observation that “There was no earthly inducement in the slave’s condition to incite him to labor faithfully. The fear of punishment was the sole motive of any sort of industry with him” (570). Unsurprisingly, such observations find echoes in theories of colonialism. Peter Hulme, for example, writes that “[t]he problem with slavery is that slaves are dangerous because forced to labour against their will; the danger is removed if their ‘enslavement’ is voluntary and therefore not slavery at all.”⁹⁷ Fanon, too, notes that, in the course of occupation, “the more brutal manifestations of the presence of the occupying power may perfectly well disappear. Indeed, such a spectacular disappearance turns out to be both a saving of expense to the colonial power and a positive way of preventing its forces being spread out over a wide area.” “But such a disappearance will be paid for at a high price: the price of a much stricter control of the country’s future destiny.”⁹⁸ Again, it is economic utility that dictates the shift from colonial brutality to what Gramsci would call hegemony: such a turn proves “a saving of expense” for colonizers and leads to “a servitude that is less blatant but much more complete.”⁹⁹ For Lewis Gordon, the colonizer’s “call for a nonviolent solution amounts to the preservation of colonialism, or at least a transformation of colonialism into a condition that he will prefer, which amounts to a form of *neocolonialism*.”¹⁰⁰

Wright suggests that the function of lynching has been taken over, but not entirely displaced, by the disciplinary practices of self-breaking. Moving from post-Reconstruction to early-twentieth-century America, there occurred “an optical trade” in the strategies of subjection whereby overtly violent practices were subsumed into more subtle yet economical strategies of self-production; lynching and breaking, in other words, were partially displaced by the disciplinary tactics of subjection. This, as I have emphasized above, does not mean that lynching as a deadly and racially driven practice has entirely disappeared. (Here, we may think of Jasper, Texas.)¹⁰¹ Understanding the more subtle functioning of lynching and breaking in twentieth-century America nevertheless allows us to point out, *pace* Foucault, the shifting circuits of power. The optical trade, relying on the systematic deployment of what Fanon calls “epidermalized differences,”¹⁰² is an apparatus of subjection whose functioning is arguably more uninterrupted and economical because it has made the racialized subject, to paraphrase and

recontextualize Thoreau, into his or her own slave-driver. If a Hegelian reading sees in the Douglass-Covey confrontation the “dialectical overcoming” of slavery—or at least a promise thereof—Wright, in revising the optimism that Douglass’s “career as a slave” may give rise to, suggests that the racialized subject in the post-Reconstruction era may have come dangerously close to what Kojève, after Hegel, calls “the pure essence of slavery.”¹⁰³

Notes

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1. Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854; rpt. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966), 7.

2. See, Leonardo Cassuto, *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 87-95; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 60-63; Cynthia Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pt. 3. For a classic Hegelian reading of slavery, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 97-101. Frank M. Kirkland’s “Enslavement, Moral Suasion, and Struggles for Recognition: Frederick Douglass’s Answer to the Question—‘What is Enlightenment?’” in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, eds. Bill E. Lawson and Kirkland [Oxford: Blackwell, 1999], 309-10n100 and Michael Hardt’s (*Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* [1993; rpt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002], 41-45) doubts about Hegel’s overall applicability to describe the material struggles between slaves and masters can be countered by insisting on the necessarily Kojévian emphases of readings that connect revolutionary theories—be they Douglass’s or Frantz Fanon’s—to Hegel. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1947), assembled by Raymond Queneau, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols (New York: Basic Books, 1969). By drawing on Marx, Kojève gives us a Hegel who is less concerned with Absolute Knowledge than with the way desire, impelled by differences between subjects, translates into historical action. As Judith Butler writes, Kojève’s view of history is marked not by Hegel’s synthetic harmony of Spirit but by “the struggle for recognition [which] forms the dynamic principle of all historical progress” (Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* [1987; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999], 64). Moreover, his insistence on “the perspective of lived experience as the necessary context in which to analyze desire and temporality” (*Ibid.*, 73) renders his theory amenable to, say, Gilroy’s and Willett’s readings of Douglass. On Fanon and Hegel, see Lou Turner, “On the Difference between the Hegelian and Fanonian Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage,” in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis A. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 134-51.

3. While my reference here is to Wright, the following discussion is also indebted to Robyn Wiegman’s work in *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

4. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1947), assembled by Raymond Queneau, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 50-51.

5. *Ibid.*, 29.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 20.

8. In conceptualizing my comparison between Douglass and Wright thus, I am obviously indebted to other scholars who have found Foucault’s work helpful in thinking about the racial logics of modernity: see David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), and Ann Laura Stoler, “Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth,” in *Race Critical Theories*, ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 369-91. Goldberg’s and Stoler’s emphases are not so much on the dynamics of surveillance as on modern regimes of truth.

9. Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 17.

10. In *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), Stoler notes a similar lack of references to the question of colonialism in Foucault.

11. Davis, "Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 99.
12. *Ibid.*, 99, 100.
13. *Ibid.*, 102.
14. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 75; quoted in Davis, "Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition," 101-02.
15. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters*, 17.
16. Cornel West, "The Ignoble Paradox of Modernity," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 53.
17. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 2nd rev ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 44. For the growth of Jim Crowism in the first decades of 1900s, see *Ibid.*, 97ff. For a catalogue of not only the racial riots, lynchings, and legal set-backs that blacks faced during 1900-1924, but also the response of African-Americans to such violence, see Mary Frances Berry, *Black Resistance, White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism in America* (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1994), 98-125.
18. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 83.
19. *Ibid.*, 116. Wright himself writes that toward the end of the second decade "racial conflict flared over the entire South" (Wright, *Black Boy [American Hunger]* [1945], rpt. in *Later Works*, notes by Arnold Rampersad [New York: Library of America, 1991], 71; subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text).
20. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 4.
21. On "legal lynchings," see *Ibid.*, 39.
22. Du Bois is one of the many commentators to point this out: see, for example, *The Negro* (1915; rpt. New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 187. On the revolutionary politics of syncretic Christian-African spirituality in slave songs, see Melvin Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), ch 1.
23. See, Wright, *12 Million Black Voices*, photo direction by Edwin Rosskam (1941; rpt. New York: Thunder Mouth's Press, 1992), 130-31. While critical of religion, in *Black Boy*, too, he discerns its meaning as "the thirst of the human spirit to conquer and transcend the implacable limitations of human life" (114).
24. Craig Hansen Werner, "Bigger's Blues: *Native Son* and the Articulation of Afro-American Modernism," in *Playing the Changes: From Afro-Modernism to the Jazz Impulse* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 206.
25. Michael Rogin, "Francis Galton and Mark Twain: The Natal Autograph in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, ed. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press), 76.
26. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
27. For discussions on such unforeseeability from widely divergent, and perhaps incompatible, theoretical vantage points, see Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), esp. "Introduction" and ch. 3; and Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
28. Stoler, "Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth," 376.
29. Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" (1983), in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 343.
30. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 8. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.
31. For Foucault, the difference between the punitive institutions, such as prisons, and the educational ones, such as schools, is shifting. This is because the aim of discipline is control not through repression but through multiplication and engendering: "punitive measures are not simply 'negative' mechanisms that make it possible to repress, to prevent, to exclude, to eliminate; . . . they are linked to a whole series of positive and useful effects which it is their task to support" (24). Elsewhere, however, he emphasizes that, more than other institutions, prisons are designed for the purposes of elimination. Even if all of us "are caught in a system of continuous surveillance and punishment," prisons form a "part of an eliminative process. Prison is the physical elimination of people who come out of it, who die of it sometimes directly, and almost always indirectly in so far as they can no longer find a trade, don't have anything to live on, cannot reconstitute a family anymore, etc., and, finally, passing from one prison to another or from one crime to another, end up by actually being physically eliminated" (John K. Smith, "Michael Foucault on Attica: An Interview," *Social Justice* 18:3 [Fall 1991], 31).

32. Deleuze, *Foucault* (1986), trans. Séan Hand (1988; rpt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 26.

33. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), rpt. in *Autobiographies*, notes by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1994; rpt. New York: Penguin/Library of America, 1996), 18. Subsequent references to this work, as well as to Douglass's other autobiographical narratives in the same volume, are given parenthetically in the text.

34. Apart from ch. x in *Narrative*, see also chs. xv-xvii in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855); and chs. xv-xvii in *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself* (1893), both in *Autobiographies*.

35. Douglass, "Lynch Law in the South" (1892), rpt. in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner, abridged and adapted by Yuval Taylor (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999), 749. Douglass's statement can be read as an example of mimicry's ambivalence, whose vicissitudes Homi Bhabha has traced in colonial texts: see Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

36. Du Bois, *The Negro*, 159-60. See also Du Bois, *Africa, its Geography, People and Products/Africa—Its Place in Modern History* (1930; rpt. Millwood: Kraus-Thomson, 1977), 47.

37. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 20-21.

38. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 38.

39. See also Wright's similar comments in *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (1954; rpt. New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 6.

40. Also for Griggs, visibility is a trade. However, his menial job as a window cleaner suggests that, as an economy of the visible, the optical trade allows only certain positions to be occupied by African Americans. This trade keeps Griggs in his "place" in the economical and social structures. In remarking to the narrator, "'You're marked already,'" Griggs himself misreads his own position in the trade in assuming that "markedness" functions to inculcate only those who transgress the economy. In the white symbolic order, "racially" marked subjects are, obviously, "marked" regardless of their adherence to the rules of the optical trade.

41. The optical trade for colored youth also includes knowing when not to look, as *Black Boy* later illustrates. Working as a bellboy in a hotel, the narrator has to get used to seeing the prostitutes frequenting the premises and, at times, their white customers naked in the rooms. He, as the rest of the black servants, are, nevertheless, expected not to look since "[i]t was assumed that we black boys took their nakedness for granted." On one occasion, the narrator makes the mistake of looking at a white prostitute in the presence of a customer, thus, unwittingly, transgressing what is allowed for his eyes. He immediately receives a threat from the white man: "'Keep your eyes where they belong if you want to be healthy!'" (193-94). Here, we should recall Pauline Hopkins's, bell hooks's, and Trudier Harris's observations that, during slavery, it was punishable, sometimes by death, for slaves to look directly at their owners; see Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), x; hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115-16; and Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19.

42. Douglass, "Why Is the Negro Lynched?" (1894), rpt. in Foner (ed.), *Frederick Douglass*, 753, 770.

43. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 53-57.

44. *Ibid.*, 56.

45. West, "Subversive Joy and Revolutionary Patience in Black Christianity," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 438.

46. Evelyn Brooks Higginbottom, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10.

47. Hopkins, "Famous Women of the Negro Race: II. Sojourner Truth," *Colored American Magazine*, Dec. 1901, 125.

48. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 258.

49. For the most recent example, see Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, *This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience* (New York: William Morrow, 2003). See also Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 125-26; and Carleton L. Lee, "Religious Roots of the Negro Protest," in *Assuring Freedom to the Free: A Century of Emancipation in the U.S.A.*, ed. Arnold M. Rose (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), 45-71.

50. Sernett "Introduction," in *African American Religious History: Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., ed. Sernett (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 8. See also Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59-60.

51. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (1945; rpt. Millwood: Kraus-Thomson, 1975), 137-38. For the multiple meanings and effects of Christianity for African

Americans, see also Dickinson D. Bruce, Jr., *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2001), 11-13. On the role of religion in earlier forms of slavery, see David Brion Davis, *Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8-10.

52. Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home," in *Uncle Tom's Children* (1940; rpt. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 40.

53. *Ibid.*, 43; ellipsis in original.

54. Quoted in Peter Schmid, "An Interview with Richard Wright" (1946), rpt. in *Conversations with Richard Wright*, ed. Keneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 108.

55. Georges Charbonnier, "A Negro Novel about White People" (1960), trans. Michel Fabre, rpt. in Kinnamon and Fabre (eds.), *Conversations with Richard Wright*, 237.

56. Quoted in Hans de Vaal, "An Interview with Richard Wright" (1953), trans. Edward Lemon, rpt. in Kinnamon and Fabre (eds.), *Conversations*, 157.

57. Wright, *Native Son* (1940; rpt. Stockholm: Jan Förlag, 1943), 222-23. These hymns remind us of "the masochistic prayers" the young Richard is uncomfortably drawn to (*Black Boy*, 108).

58. Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground," in *Eight Men* (1961; rpt. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1987), 32-33.

59. Wright, *Native Son*, 312.

60. *Ibid.*, 212.

61. *Ibid.*, 296.

62. *Ibid.*, 312. Craig Hansen Werner finds Wright unable to detect the empowering and subversive potential in the expressive culture of traditional black communities, represented by such institutions as the church. According to him, Wright remains "deaf to the double meaning of Afro-American song" where "the experience of double consciousness had shaped an expressive tradition in which a self-protective surface acceptable to white listeners masked subversive, frequently political, meanings discernible to black listeners" (Werner, "Bigger's Blues," 206). In other words, Wright is, according to Werner, deaf to the work of signifi(y)ng in hymns. However, apart from bearing in mind the occasional positive assessment that Wright gives of religion's potential for insurrection, we should note that the hymn that in Bigger's ears voices "surrender" and "resignation" is none other than "Steal Away to Jesus," one of the best-known examples of the kind of coded defiance that seemingly humble songs had for early African-American audiences (on "stealing away," see Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 65-70 and Raboteau, *Canaan Land*, 46). It is perhaps Bigger, not Wright, who simplifies the double-voiced message of the song and misunderstand what Cornel West calls black theology's "*revolutionary patience*" (West, "Subversive Joy and Revolutionary Patience in Black Christianity," 439).

63. Wright, *Black Power*, 24. We may note that he uses the same term to describe the pupils of the religious school that he was forced to attend as a child: *Black Boy*, 100.

64. Wright, *Black Power*, 22; ellipsis in original. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon echoes Wright's observations by writing that in the process of decolonization "the inevitable religion" is propounded by the colonialist bourgeoisie with hopes of avoiding "the radical overthrowing of the system" with a compromise (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [1961], trans. Constance Farrington [New York: Grove Press, 1986], 67, 59).

65. Wright, "Introduction," in St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Clayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945), xxxii.

66. Hopkins, *Hagar's Daughter* (1901/1902), rpt. in *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11.

67. Delany, *Blake; or the Huts of America* (1861), ed. Floyd J. Miller (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 26. Delany nevertheless points to the doubleness of spirituality in African-American history in showing how it can be appropriated by the slaves, who "must make [their] religion subserve [their] interests, as [their] oppressors do theirs!" (41). "[W]e shall not be disciplined in our worship, obedience as slaves to our master, the slaveholders, by associating in our mind with that religion, submission to the oppressor's will," announces Henry Blake (197).

68. On the role of white churches in lynchings, see also Leon F. Litwack, "Hellhounds," in James Allen et al., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Sante Fe: Twin Palms, 2002), 21.

69. We should note, of course, that, like Henry Blake, Douglass carefully distinguishes "slaveholding religion" from "Christianity proper" in the appendix to his *Narrative*. For Douglass, the former—"the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land" (97)—has absolutely nothing to do with the latter.

70. Hopkins, *Hagar's Daughter*, 12; emphasis added. Whereas Douglass appends a lengthy explanatory note to his *Narrative* to rescue "Christianity proper," Hopkins, as Augusta Rohrbach notes, merely suggests the white Christian double standard with the ironic passive voice in characterizing the "noted divine" as someone "who was considered deeply religious" (9; emphasis

added). See Rohrbach, "To Be Continued: Double Identity, Multiplicity and Antigenealogy as Narrative Strategies in Pauline Hopkins' Magazine Fiction," *Callaloo* 22:2 (1999), 484. Another passive construction, the sentence immediately following the above further suggests the blacks' imprisonment in their religious communities: "The slaves *were congregated* in the back yard enclosed by the high wall" (9); emphasis added). While Hopkins repeats the condemnation of slave religion in her other writings too (see "Famous Women of the Negro Race: VII. Educators (Continued)," *Colored American Magazine*, June 1902, 126), she does also articulate a distinction between slave-holders' Christianity and liberation theology, lamenting that "the white pastors of the plantations taught the slaves the duty of master-worship to the exclusion of God-worship" (Hopkins, *A Primer of Facts Pertaining to the Early Greatness of the African Race and the Possibility of Restoration by its Descendants—with Epilogue* [Cambridge, Mass.: P. E. Hopkins, 1905], 30-31) and that, consequently, "[t]he position of the American churches on the question of slavery did great damage to the cause of Christiaity [*sic*]" (Hopkins, "Hon. Frederick Douglass," *Colored American Magazine*, Dec. 1900, 126). See also Hopkins, "Famous Men of the Negro Race: Charles Lenox Redmond," *Colored American Magazine*, May 1901, 39; "Famous Men of the Negro Race: Sargeant William H. Carney," *American Colored Magazine*, June 1901, 89.

71. Similarly, in Harriet Jacobs's narrative, the perversely passionate attachment of Doctor Flint to his slaves clogs the slave economy as he refuses to sell the runaway slave girl's siblings for good profit (Jacobs [Linda Brent], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), rpt. in *I Was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives*, vol. 2: 1849-1866, ed. Yuval Taylor [Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999], 612). In the more recent example of Lalita Tademy's *Cane River*, one slaveholder professes: "There are some who do not exercise good sense, treating their Negroes worse than their oxen, but that's just a handful, ignorant enough to damage their own property. . . . The church teaches us that they have souls, and they have to be faithfully led" (Tademy, *Cane River* [New York: Warner Books, 2001], 23).

72. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 587.

73. *Ibid.*, 587-88.

74. In *Hagar's Daughter*, references to "heavenly Master"—or "Massa Lord" (9)—at times poignantly confuse Him with secular massas (10). Similarly, God's dubious title as a "gentleman" (11) places Him in the same category with "Southern gentlemen" and "reverend gentlem[e]n" (12). Such confusion suggests that "the Christian frees himself from the human Master only to be enslaved to the divine Master" (Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 56). As Douglass observes late in his career, pro-slavery theologians "divide[d] the Negro into two parts. [They] argued that the Negro had a soul as well as a body, and insisted that while his body rightfully belonged to his master on earth, his soul belonged to his Master in heaven" ("Why Is the Negro Lynched?" 774).

75. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 588.

76. See Merrill Cole, "Nat Turner's Thing," in *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 261-81.

77. In Jacobs, masters place their charges under the gaze of the white congregation after the uprising; similarly, in Douglass, a white mob breaks up the Sabbath school where Douglass has taught, suspecting that it cradles "another Nat Turner" (*My Bondage and My Freedom*, 254; see also *Life and Times*, 559). That the whites' reaction to Turner's rebellion in both Douglass and Jacobs is to dissolve black churches and schools suggests the insurrectionary potential within these African-American institutions. The seeds of similar escape from panopticism are evident in Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), where solitary Bible-reading affords the black protagonist respite from her mistress's cruelty and "watchful eye" (Wilson, *Our Nig, or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, rpt. in *Three Classic African-American Novels*, ed. William L. Andrews [New York: Mentor, 1990], 334). While religion did function to encourage and sustain the slaves' (and their descendants') resistance to oppression, I argue here that it remained a counter-strategy with unforeseeable effects.

78. Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), rpt. in Andrews (ed.), *Three Classic African-American Novels*, 149.

79. *Ibid.*, 208-9, emphasis added.

80. *Ibid.*, 209.

81. *Ibid.*, 208.

82. *Ibid.*, 229.

83. For descriptions of lynchings whose brutality cannot but remind one of the opening scene of *Discipline and Punish*, see Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching*, 41-42, and Litwack, "Hellhounds," 8-9, 14-16.

84. Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 39-40.

85. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching*, 12.

86. See Laura S. Brown, "Not outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 100-12.

87. Mechlin, "The Failure of Folklore in Richard Wright's *Black Boy*," *The Journal of American Folklore* 104 (Summer 1991), 282. Mechlin discusses the Pease-Reynolds incident at 286-87.

88. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 53. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, "The terrorism of the lynch mob would not have been a potent weapon if the Black Americans claiming their rights and freedoms had known, not only that some portion of them would be murdered, but which ones. The genocidal 'solution' was never possible in the American South because the struggle was, precisely, over the control of labor power: only the specifically *disproportionate* effect of terrorism, made possible by the randomness of the violence, gave the needed leverage without destroying the body on which it was to work" (Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* [1985; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993], 88). In the autobiographical *Darkwater*, Du Bois similarly suggests that racism's unpredictability renders it all the more powerful and insidious (Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* [1921; rpt. Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1975], 223). See also Douglass, *Narrative*, 69; and Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching*, 42.

89. The term is repeated in Wright, *The Outsider* (1953), rpt. in *Later Works*, 492, 497, 526, 675 ("the sight of the world"), 774.

90. Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 146-47; see also Houston A. Baker, Jr. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (1984; rpt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 146. Wright is not the only "reader of color" to experience such perspectival expansion through literature. In his autobiography, Richard Rodriguez writes of his childhood experiences: "Merely bookish, I lacked a point of view when I read. Rather, I read in order to acquire a point of view" (Rodriguez, *The Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez: An Autobiography* [1982; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1988], 64).

91. We should note that Douglass, too, suggests several times that slavery and bondage work more efficiently when the gaze of the over-seer begins to function, as it were, as *supervision*; that is, when the master's presence becomes diffuse and intangible. In the third chapter of the *Narrative*, Douglass describes the fate of a slave of a plantation big enough for the slave never to have met his owner. Unaware, he comes across the latter, who asks the unsuspecting man what he thinks of his master. The man, not realizing to whom he is talking, complains about his lot and, in a few days, is shackled and sold down the river. Having heard of the incident, all slaves curb their demeanor and begin to carefully monitor their own behavior (27). Thus, while, for Douglass, the spectacle of punishment is crucial in keeping slaves in their places in "the hell of slavery," disembodied surveillance functions alongside it.

92. Douglass, "Why Is the Negro Lynched?" 762, 756.

93. In *Exorcising Blackness*, Trudier Harris connects Bigger's trial to the Scottsboro proceedings, where the nine black defendants were "clearly lynched" (97). Ishmael Reed argues for a similar link between Bigger and a later, alleged legal lynching in his "Bigger and O. J.," in *Birth of a Nation 'hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O. J. Simpson Case*, ed. Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Lacour (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 169-95. Considering the proliferation of the "lynching" trope, we should further point out what is perhaps the most striking reversal of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century usage of the term: its deployment to describe the trial of a white man for a conceivably racist assault on a black man. With this, I am referring to an extraordinary moment in the Abner Louima court case when the father of Justin Volpe—the NYPD officer who was accused of (and who later admitted to) sodomizing the Haitian immigrant with a toilet plunger or a broom in a police precinct restroom after an arrest—called the widely-publicized trial a "modern-day lynching" (quoted in Amy Waldman, "Unremarkable Past and Unspeakable Act," *New York Times* 26 May, 1999, late ed., B9).

94. See also Foucault's observations, in *Madness and Civilization*, of how the madmen "freed" from their chains were simultaneously placed in a field of surveillance whose injunctions were unparalleled by physical incarceration (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* [1961], trans. Richard Howard [1965; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1988], esp. ch. 9).

95. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 5, 6. Also Du Bois observes that "Reconstruction became in history a great movement for the self-assertion of the white race against the impudent ambition of degraded blacks" (Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 137).

96. Delany, *Blake*, 127.

97. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 205.

98. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 142.

99. *Ibid.*

100. Lewis R. Gordon, "Fanon's Tragic Revolutionary Violence," in Gordon, Sharpley-Whiting, and White (eds.), *Fanon*, 304; see also Gordon, *Her Majesty's Other Children: Sketches of Racism from a Neocolonial Age* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 154.

101. See Ashraf Rushdy, "Exquisite Corpse," *Transition* 83, (2000), 70-77.
102. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1967; rpt. New York: Grove Press, 1982).
103. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 56.