Symposium

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The Black Body as Fetish Object

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It was a long time before we began to understand exploitation; and desire has had and continues to have a long history. It is possible that the struggles now taking place and the local, regional, and discontinuous theories that derive from these struggles and that are indissociable from them stand at the threshold of our discovery of the manner in which power is exercised.¹
-Michel Foucault

[Hi]uman life is neither static nor repetitive, the ethical universe, too, assumes various faces and is open to change . . . . The vehicle of each of these changes is human desire, embodied in actual life and practice and structured by social habits and institutions in which tradition and change, orthodoxy and revolt both play their respective parts.²
-Yirmiyahu Yovel

Race is the preeminent pleasure of our time. Whiteness is not a color; it is a way of feeling pleasure in and about one’s body. The black body is needed to fulfill this desire for race-pleasure. In our colorlined world, the white body is a form of desire and the black body is a form of pleasure.³ This article is

³ I use the colorline metaphor throughout, but what follows will concern the myriad interrelated boundaries of race, gender, sexuality, spirituality, physical ability, mental health, class, language, nationality, and neighborhood which both fragment
an examination of the desiring white body and the pleasure function of the black body.

Not all bodily pleasures are sexual. People can create pleasures out of very peculiar things, even out of suffering or inflicting pain. Race is such a pleasure. The colorline, like love, is a many-splendored thing, and its definition is elusive. The colorline, in one aspect, is comprised of the rules of the sadomasochistic game also known to us as race relations. In other aspects the colorline appears as a form of economic or political exploitation. The economic and political contours of colorlined space are well-charted but the sensual aspects of colorlined space remain an undiscovered country. This exploration reveals the racialized and frame our collective imagination. I do not suggest that these boundaries and their intersections all may be subsumed within a discussion of race. Rather, I make the more modest claim that an examination of the colorline shows its production and maintenance to be deeply implicated in the creation of the other boundaries of our society and vice-versa. This is an attempt to establish what theologian Mary Ann Tolbert has called "a poetics of location," that is, one which recognizes "the legitimacy of self-consciously adopting different perspectives on a text at different times." Mary Ann Tolbert, When Resistance Becomes Repression: Mark 13:9-27 and the Poetics of Location, in Reading from this Place, Vol. 2, Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective 331, 332 (Fernando F. Segovia & Mary Ann Tolbert eds., 1995). Such a poetics "eschews claims for universal readings in favor of local readings that are careful to indicate their context and limits." Id. Finally, it "opens its allegiance to the postmodern claim that language is constitutive of reality, rather than simply reflective of it." Id. at 333.

In 1951 Judge J. W. Waring eloquently described the colorline as an illusion:

The whole discussion of race and ancestry has been intermingled with sophistry and prejudice. What possible definition can be found for the so-called white race, Negro race or other races? Who is to decide and what is the test? For years, there was much talk of blood and taint of blood. Science tells us that there are but four kinds of blood: A, B, AB and O and these are found in Europeans, Asians, Africans, Americans and others.

And so we need not further consider the irresponsible and baseless references to preservation of "Caucasian Blood."


For Waring the invocation of the illusory category of race, a product of "warped thinking," was inseparable from both the "sadistic insistence" of the "white supremacists" in declaring that their will be imposed irrespective of rights of other citizens" and the "poor under-privileged and frightened attitude of so many of the Negroes in the southern states." Id. This Article is both an exploration of the theme of whiteness as a "sadistic insistence" on the illusion of race and of blackness as a masochistic complicity in the maintenance of the same illusion. These two pleasures, one sadistic and the other masochistic, meet each other in the production of the "Truth" of race.

Waring was, not surprisingly, driven from his home state of South Carolina as a result of his dissent in Briggs v. Elliott. He lived out his days in New York exile, returning home only for his funeral. See generally Tinsley E. Yarbrough, A Passion for Justice: J. WATIES WARING AND CIVIL RIGHTS (1987).
body as a form of pleasure.\footnote{This exploration of the role of pleasure in racial identity formation is not intended as a "final analysis." Anti-colonialist writer Albert Memmi notes the danger inherent in cleaving to any "final analysis":

We don't actually know what man is, or just what is essential to him; whether it is money or sex or pride . . . . Does psychoanalysis win out over Marxism? Does all depend on the individual or on society? In any case, before attacking this final analysis I wanted to show all the real complexities in the lives of the colonizer and the colonized. Psychoanalysis or Marxism must not, under the pretext of having discovered the source or one of the main sources of human conduct, pre-empt all experience, all feeling, all suffering, all the byways of human behavior, and call them profit motive or Oedipus complex.}


Both movements have been successful in describing the persistence, some say permanence, of the colorline. Neither movement has sufficiently examined the phenomena of endurance itself. The notion of race-
pleasure, which I develop in this article, begins an exploration of the processes by which the colorline seems to elude our best efforts at repression.

In this Article, I describe “race” as a sadomasochistic form of pleasure. I employ an existentialist definition of sadomasochism throughout:

The existentialist definition of “sadism” briefly is this. It is the process by which one man tries to transform another into a mere object of his will. The masochist is delighted by the spectacle of himself as the object of another’s will. The two attitudes are, of course, linked.  

In Part I, I probe the ideological flesh of the white body. I argue that whiteness is a sadistic pleasure and that the black body is a fetish object and that law participates in producing these themes. In Part II, I probe the ideological flesh of those who are colored by the colorline. I argue that blackness has become a masochistic form of pleasure. In Part III, I consider the possibilities for identity-formation outside of the ideological incentives and constraints of the colorline.

I

Whiteness: Ideology Made Flesh

Normally, it is as a result of the vertigo of the other made flesh that one is spellbound within one’s own flesh.  
-Simone de Beauvoir

Let the little child’s mind be poisoned by prejudice . . . and it is practically impossible to ever remove these impressions however many years he may have of teaching by philosophers, religious leaders or patriotic citizens.  
-J. Waities Waring in Briggs v. Elliott

A. Creating Whites

There I was, eating a breakfast of tea and toast after an unforgiving hour of distance running, when my youngest brother called out, “Hey, come here quick, this is my favorite part!”  

Maybe it was the summer of my sixteenth year, 1978, so he would

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8 Simone de Beauvoir, Must We Burn Sade?, in The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings 3, 22 (Austryna Wainhouse & Richard Seaver trans., 1966).
10 Physical exercise often produces a kind of pleasure in and about one’s body.
have been eight. I ran downstairs. He explained that this was his favorite scene in his favorite Tarzan film. He was being ironic.

An intrepid white explorer trudged up from the jungle along a steep, narrow, mountain path. A misstep at such a height meant certain death. His love interest, just as white and almost as brave, followed three paces behind. Behind her followed a long line of native-bearers, a Million Man March of anonymous black men, each carrying an unbelievably large box or bag or weird lumpy package upon his head. Their naked arms, chests, and legs made them indistinguishable from one another as they toiled for the two pith-helmeted, khaki-clothed subjects of the film—the white male explorer and his female satellite. Racism and sexism were paired on screen as in life. It was a moment pregnant with cinematic possibilities. My brother and I waited for the quickening.

Suddenly, one of the native-bearers slipped and fell. We saw him spiral into the distance. He grew smaller and smaller as he spun downward through the air. Finally, he disappeared into the abyss. He made no visible impact on the river valley below. The critical moment came when the intrepid white explorer turned and exclaimed with horror, “The supplies!”

Living in a colorlined society, one experiences this moment of rebirth a million times—the colorline which cuts us loose from our humanity with the cry “The supplies!” is an umbilical cord for white America. Just as there are no masters without slaves, men without women, or straights without gays, there are no

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Even, perhaps especially, torturous exercises such as long-distance running produce this sensation. It is not a sensation without political ramifications. Fanon writes:

The native is a being hemmed in; . . . This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me.

FRANTZ FANON, THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH 52 (Constance Farrington trans., 1963). Distance running was certainly the major preoccupation of my teenage years as a member of the Brockport High School and, later, University of Virginia track teams. Perhaps Fanon has explained me to myself.

11 The statement, “The supplies!” (spoken as the native-bearer falls into the abyss) like the statement, “I do” (spoken at a wedding) is what J.L. Austin labels a “performative.” Austin writes, “[H]ere we should say that in saying these words [I do] we are doing something—namely, marrying, rather than reporting something—namely, that we are marrying.” In these cases saying makes it so. J.L. AUSTIN, HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS 12-13 (1962). Saying, “The supplies!” while the native-bearer falls into the abyss is doing something; it is a way of nobodying the Other. In such cases saying makes it so.
whites without blacks. The white identity is created and maintained by decorating black bodies with disdain, over and over again. The ritual scarification of Saturday morning TV nегritude is the least of it.\textsuperscript{12}

The image of the black is ubiquitous. Whites return and return and return again to this fetish in order to satisfy a self-created urge to be white.\textsuperscript{13} The satisfaction of this will-to-whiteness is a form of pleasure in and about one’s body. It is a pleasure which is satisfied through the production, circulation, and consumption of images of the not-white. The body is contested territory in the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{12}This is not to imply that such televised scenes of black subalternation are not damaging. Segregation of black children “generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” Brown v. Board of Educ., 347 U.S. 483, 484 (1953). So, too, does exposure to the colorline in the form of films and stories:

It is a long time before [children begin] to question the truth of stories . . .

And though they will eventually learn that some of this world is only fiction, it is specific characters and specific events which will be rejected; the recurrent patterns of values, the stable expectations about the roles and relationships which are part of their culture, will remain. It is these underlying patterns . . . which make stories an important agent of socialization.

\textsuperscript{13}The eternal return to this fetish is an event as complicated as each individual returnee. As William Pietz writes:

The fetish is always a meaningful fixation of a singular event; it is above all a “historical” object, the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event. This object is “territorialized” in material space . . ., whether in the form of a geographical locality, a marked site on the surface of the human body, or a medium of inscription or configuration defined by some portable or wearable thing . . . This reified, territorialized historical object is also “personalized” in the sense that beyond its status as a collective social object it evokes an intensely personal response from individuals.

This intense relation to the individual’s experience of his or her own living self through an impassioned response to the fetish object is always incommensurable with (whether in a way that reinforces or undercuts) the social value codes within which the fetish holds the status of material signifier. It is in these “disavowals” and “perspectives of flight” whose possibility is opened in the clash of this incommensurable difference that the fetish might be identified as the site of both the formation and the revelation of ideology and value-consciousness.

\textsuperscript{3}FETISHISM AS CULTURAL DISCOURSE 3 (Emily Apter & William Pietz eds., 1993) (quoting William Pietz, internal citation omitted).
\end{quote}
conflict over symbolic representation. "Nothing exists in itself;" whiteness composes itself out of images of blackness.\footnote{14 H
erman Melville, Moby-Dick 148 (Penguin Classics 1986) (originally published as The Whale (1851)).} Whiteness is a pleasure which has woven itself into all aspects of our culture and our identities. Visions of black subalterns dance through our dreams, our literature, our arts, our sciences, and our films, like Shirley Temple and Mr. Bojangles.

B. Race as Pleasure

The peculiar pleasure of race is, to use the language of Sade, a "pleasure of comparison," that is, "a pleasure which can only be born of the sight of wretched persons."\footnote{15 The Marquis de Sade, The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings 362 (Austryn Wainhouse & Richard Seaver trans., 1966) [hereinafter 120 Days of Sodom].} The colorline, "the problem of the twentieth century,"\footnote{16 W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk 10 (Bantam Classic 1989) (1903).} produces the wretchedness which we experience as race. It is the colorline, not nature, which makes people white or black.\footnote{17 What Jean-Paul Sartre wrote of Jews is applicable to blacks: "If they have a common bond, if all of them deserve the name Jew, it is because they have in common the situation of a Jew, that is, they live in a community which takes them for Jews." Jean-Paul Sartre, Anti Semite and Jew 67 (George J. Becker trans., 1976).}

Race is a form of pleasure in one's body which is achieved through humiliation of the Other and, then, as the last step, through a denial of the entire process. We deny it through a discourse in which "race" appears as a thing created by nature and not as a practice developed by a culture. By denying their fetishization of "race," whites create a culture in which they are both masters and innocents.\footnote{18 In discussing this production of innocence for the accusers through the attribution of guilt to the accused, James Aho writes, "The casting out of evil onto you not only renders you my enemy; it also accomplishes my own innocence." James A. Aho, This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy 115 (1994).}

We create our own pleasures. There is no strange thing that has not, at some point or another, been fetishized by someone. Foucault, commenting on the S&M subculture of mid-1980s San Francisco, said, "we can produce pleasure with very odd things, very strange parts of our bodies, in very unusual situations."\footnote{19 Michel Foucault, Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity, in Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961-1984) 382, 384 (Sylvère Lotringer ed., Lysa Hochroth & John Johnston trans., 1996).}
For Foucault, "[t]he possibility of using our bodies as a possible source of very numerous pleasures is something that is very important." Power, in the form of racial categorization, is one of those pleasures.

The colorline is one of the ways in which our bodies are used as a source of pleasure. Discussions of the colorline are incomplete if we fail to address its function as an instrument of pleasure. The culture of the colorline, that is American culture, is an S&M culture in denial.

C. Masking & the Colorline

Looking through The Bluest Eye, we can see the way in which whiteness first requires a black presence, and then must mask its requirement:

All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking dreams we used—to silence our own nightmares. And she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength.  

20 Id.

21 Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye 205 (1970). In this passage the conflict is between brown girls and black girls. In the black community, colorism, the preference for lighter-complected people, reifies the black-white dynamic in many ways. Brenda Payton has commented:

The fact is, and we all know it, in almost every aspect of life—education, career, romance, beauty, income—opportunity is determined by skin color.... Within the group, being light-skinned is even more of an advantage than being white in the general society. That reality is the best-kept secret everyone knows.... We make reference to each other’s color in graphic detail—chocolate brown, cinnamon brown, paper-bag brown, high yellow, red bone, blue black, meringue, jet black, café au lait—and yet we claim it doesn’t matter.

Brenda Payton, Black Like Me, in Thinking Black: Some of the Nation’s Best Black Columnists Speak Their Minds 172, 173-74 (DeWayne Wickham ed., 1996). Charles H. Parrish, in a study of black junior-high students noted:

[j]unior-high students used as many as 145 different terms to describe skin color, including “half-white,” “yaller,” “high yellow,” “fair,” “bright,” “light,” “red-bone,” “light-brown,” “medium brown,” “brown,” “brown-skin,” “dark brown,” “chocolate,” “dark,” “black,” “ink spot,” “blue
That this "strength" is, at some level, a "fantasy," is borne out by the fact that it needs such constant reassurance. James Baldwin explains that the fantasy of "race" must be critically examined: "For, if trouble don't last always, as the Preacher tells us, neither does Power, and it is on the fact or the hope or the myth of Power that that identity which calls itself White has always seemed to depend." 22 That strength is produced by the colorline, by the division of the worthy from the unworthy on the basis of race. A series of major and minor aggressions, and their attendant pleasures and humiliations, which are sometimes direct and sometimes voyeuristic, produce this division. 23

We need to rethink the static, inert concept we have embraced

black," and "tar baby." Each term was associated with a particular personality type: in general, light to medium skin tones were linked to intelligence and refinement, while dark skin tones suggested toughness, meanness, and physical strength.


23 For a discussion of minor aggressions, see generally Peggy C. Davis, Law as Microaggression, 98 YALE L.J. 1559 (1989). These microaggressions can be elaborate or simple. They sometimes involve a direct interaction, as with "Look, a Negro!" They are often subtle, backgrounded affairs of the type James Baldwin describes in his short story, *Previous Condition*:

The train stopped. A white boy and a white girl got on. She was nice, short, svelte. Nice legs. She was hanging on his arm. He was the football type, blond, ruddy. They were dressed in summer clothes. . . . She squealed, holding the dress at the knees and giggled and looked at him. He said something I didn't catch and she looked at me and the smile died. She stood so that she faced him and had her back to me. I looked back at the ads. Then I hated them. I wanted to do something to make them hurt, something that would crack the pink-cheeked mask. The white boy and I did not look at each other again. They got off at the next stop.

JAMES BALDWIN, *Previous Condition*, in GOING TO MEET THE MAN 68, 83 (1965).

Or, they can be fallout, black rain, from major aggressions, Molefi Kete Asante writes:

To remind us of just how cruel the whites could be in the South, an African man was killed and his body dragged through the dirt roads of the two black sections of town . . . . I was barely six when this happened, but the fumes rising from the anger in the black community colored the mental skies of a thousand children for several years. The damnable deed rained down hatred among us every time the story was told of how the poor victim had pleaded his innocence before they killed him.

of “race”. We can better understand race if we liken it to sexuality. I use the term “sexuality” in the Foucauldian sense:

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient . . . It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power . . . Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.24

Race, like sexuality, must also be understood as “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power.” Race, like sexuality, is a way of feeling good about and in one’s body. Race, like sexuality, is an instrument which has been useful for “the most varied strategies” of power. Race, like sexuality, is a place where power masks itself as nature.

D. The Uses of Resistance

The whole thing is unreasonable, unscientific and based upon unadulterated prejudice. We see the results of all of this warped thinking in the poor under-privileged and frightened attitude of so many of the Negroes in the southern states; and in the sadistic insistence of the “white supremacists” in declaring that their will must be imposed irrespective of rights of other citizens.25

-J. Waties Waring in Briggs v. Elliott

Whatever commandment the prisoner has disobeyed is written upon his body by the Harrow.26

-Franz Kafka

1. Denial as Pleasure

Race, the 20th century’s preeminent form of pleasure, promises to be the problem of the 21st century because its many-splendored pleasures are asymmetrical. Race is an unadulterated form of pleasure for whites only. For blacks, it is a form of humiliation. The absence of revolutionary counterviolence, however, supports an understanding of humiliation as a form of masochistic pleasure for many subalterns.

Where there is insult there is resistance. But where there is

resistance there is also denial. From *Plessy v. Ferguson*\(^{27}\) to *Adarand Constructors v. Pena*,\(^{28}\) the response to black outrage has been denial. In *Plessy*, Justice Brown captured the spirit of the post-Reconstruction era when he wrote:

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff’s argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.\(^{29}\)

In that passage, Justice Brown constitutes the Court as a white court by referring to the opinion of the “colored race” as irrelevant to the proper construction of the statute.

In 1963, the nation’s capital witnessed a watershed moment in American history. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shared his “dream.” King’s was a “dream” of reparations, he told a spellbound audience that “America has given the negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds,’” and demanded that the check be cashed.\(^{30}\) Later, King came to realize that the cost of grace would be a transformative disgorgement of all ill-gotten gains. Thus, he wrote, we should solve the problem of poverty “directly,” through a “guaranteed income.”\(^{31}\) The problem of the colorline was also simple, “if a city has a 30 percent Negro population, then it is logical to assume that Negroes should have at least 30 percent of the jobs in any particular company, and jobs in all categories rather than only in menial areas.”\(^{32}\) King’s “dream” may have been the one moment in which white America opened its eyes to the colorline.

\(^{27}\) 163 U.S. 537 (1896).


\(^{29}\) *Plessy*, 163 U.S. at 551.

\(^{30}\) Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have A Dream*, reprinted in *The Penguin Book of Twentieth-Century Speeches* 331 (Brian MacArthur ed., 1992) (delivered Aug. 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C.). King had come to the capital one century after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation because “[W]e must face the tragic fact that the Negro still is not free. . . . One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.” Id. The black body’s “exile” could be ended, and Americans could be reconciled across the colorline, only after the debt, the debt owed by white America to blacks, was paid.

\(^{31}\) Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr.* pp. 555, 615 (James M. Washington ed., 1991).

\(^{32}\) *Id.* at 603.
In Adarand, Justice Scalia rejected King’s “dream” in a concurrence that can be read as a manifesto of denial:

In my view, government can never have a “compelling interest” in discriminating on the basis of race in order to “make up” for past racial discrimination in the opposite direction. Individuals who have been wronged by unlawful racial discrimination should be made whole; but under our Constitution there can be no such thing as either a creditor or a debtor race. 33

In rejecting the “minority set-aside program” at issue in Adarand, Justice Scalia denied existence of the colorline altogether, writing, “In the eyes of the government we are just one race here. It is American.” 34

In other contexts involving power and its uses, we have grown to understand the psychological impact of denial. 35 For example, consider the following narrative of child sexual abuse:

As time goes on he doesn’t even bother to stroke or hold or touch me. I’m not even there. But each time before he leaves, he leans down, his nose brushing against my ear, and whispers, “Just remember, Honey, nothing happened.” And being eager to please, I remember perfectly. 36

This aggression against the victim’s memories and perceptions is part of the pleasure of abuse and bears strong resemblance to the dissembling and the incitements to dissemble one finds in color-coded discussions. Race seems permanent because we fail to remember that its perpetrators enjoy it and that masking their

33 Adarand, 115 S. Ct. at 2118 (Scalia, J., concurring) (internal citation omitted).
34 Id. at 2119 (Scalia, J., concurring).
35 Martha Minow writes, “The use of anesthesia in surgery spread quickly once discovered. Yet the nineteenth century doctors who adopted anesthesia selected which patients needed it and which deserved it.” Martha Minow, Justice Engendered, 101 Harv. L. Rev. 10, 10-11 (1987). Not surprisingly, the doctors used categories of gender, race, ethnicity, and class to determine whose pain was serious. Minow comments:

The endless variety of our individualism means that we suffer different kinds of pain and may well experience pain differently. But when professionals use categories like gender, race, ethnicity, and class to presume real differences in people’s pain and entitlement to help, I worry. I worry that unfairness will result under the guise of objectivity and neutrality.

Id. at 11. What Minow writes of physical pain, may also be said of the psychological pain of caste-based humiliation. It is rarely taken seriously when it comes to black victims of racial humiliation. Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), serves, perhaps, as one notable exception.

enjoyment only enhances it. Seducing one’s victim into an after-the-fact complicity, making one’s victims “remember perfectly,” is not simply a masking technique, it is the central pleasure of race.

Denial of someone else’s pain is a form of torture in itself. As a form of torture, it has destructive consequences:

If you take someone’s thoughts and feelings away, bit by bit, consistently, then they have nothing left, except some gritty, gnawing, shitty little instinct, down there, somewhere, worming round the gut, but so far down, so hidden, it’s impossible to find. Imagine, if you will, a worldwide conspiracy to deny the existence of the color yellow. And whenever you saw yellow, they told you, no, that isn’t yellow, what the fuck’s yellow? Eventually, whenever you saw yellow, you would say: that isn’t yellow, course it isn’t, blue or green or purple, or . . . . You’d say it, yes it is, it’s yellow, and become increasingly hysterical, and then go quite berserk.37

Imagine that it is your pain which is denied by the world around you. The denial of that pain is an even greater humiliation than the original injury.38 When racial humiliation was explicitly written into the fabric of our laws and our lives, it was denied as humiliation. When the same racist thread is woven into the tapestry of American law and culture, some say in a more subtle pattern, it is similarly denied as humiliation. Denial enhances the pleasure.

In The Body in Pain, Elaine Scarry describes the structure of torture as the conversion of real pain into the fiction of power.39

37 Elizabeth Wurtzel, Prozac Nation 93 (1994) (quoting David Edgar, Mary Barnes (1984)).
38 Toni Morrison, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, depicts such a scene:

They put me in a big room with a whole mess of women. The pains was coming, but not too bad. A little old doctor come to examine me . . . . When he left off, some more doctors come. One old one and some young ones. The old one was learning the young ones about babies. Showing them how to do. When he got to me he said now these here women you don’t have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses. The young ones smiled a little. They looked at my stomach and between my legs. They never said nothing to me.

Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye 124-25 (1970). The passage does more than display a difference of perspective. It shows the political nature of the medicalized body. The discourse of medicine is deployed, in the passage, in a way that is intimately connected to maintenance of the colorline. The dismissal of black suffering is part and parcel of a political order based on the colorline.
Although she writes of physical torture, her words also describe the phenomenon of racial humiliation:

The physical pain is so incontestably real that it seems to confer its quality of “incontestable reality” on that power that has brought it into being. It is, of course, precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable, the regime so unstable, that torture is being used.\(^{40}\)

The torturer expands his world by demonstrating, through pain, his victim’s absence of a world: “What by the one is experienced as a continual contraction is for the other a continual expansion, for the torturer’s growing sense of self is carried outward on the prisoner’s swelling pain.”\(^{41}\) The victim’s world shrinks, under torture, to the vicinity of his own body. Scarry continues, “[I]t is by the obsessive mediation of agency that the prisoner’s pain will be perverted into the fraudulent assertion of power, that the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power.”\(^{42}\) In regimes governed by the colorline, it is the objectified pain of those labeled “black” which is denied as pain and experienced as power. This power gives reality to imaginary colorlines, thus imbuing those on either side with whatever essential qualities are in season.

Because torture “aspires to the totality of pain,” we see that “the torturers, like pain itself, continually multiply their resources and means of access until the room and everything in it becomes a giant externalized map of the prisoner’s feelings.”\(^{43}\) The “room,” in the case of the colorline, is the world. The “torture” is racial humiliation. The “externalized map” is the social construction of the form of pleasure we have come to know as “race.” This disaggregation of black and white bodies, this social construction of race, is experienced as \textit{pleasure} by the latter and \textit{humiliation} by the former.

\(^{40}\) \textit{Id.} at 27. Scarry’s book has implications even beyond racial humiliation. The authors of \textit{The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse}, list \textit{The Body in Pain} in their resource guide for victims of sadistic ritual abuse. They write, “[\textit{The Body in Pain}] explains the experience of being tortured. Although it focuses on political torture, it clearly reflects the experience of survivors who have been tortured in sadistic ritual abuse.” \textit{Bass & Davis}, supra note 36, at 552.

\(^{41}\) \textit{SCARRY}, supra note 39, at 56.

\(^{42}\) \textit{Id.} at 45.

\(^{43}\) \textit{Id.} at 55.
2. Race as Rape

Race and rape are similar performances in that the pleasure of power that race brings its perpetrators is comparable to the pleasure of power that rape brings its perpetrators. Indeed, both pleasures work a similar pain into the identities of their victims. Rape, a crime of humiliation, often covers its tracks by redescribing itself as seduction.

The rapist seeks resistance. For it is only against resistance that the rapist can experience the pleasure-in-humiliating he seeks. The rapist, therefore, seeks to harm his victim in order to take pleasure in the thwarting of her resistance. That is, the rapist's pleasure cannot be separated from the harm he wishes to impose upon his victim.

The victim's body is not the target of the rapist's attack. The victim's body is the screen through which the rapist strikes at her soul, the source of her resistance. The soul, in rape, appears as the theme, or identity, which one has selected for one's body. The rapist seeks to impose his meanings on her body.\textsuperscript{44} The re-characterization of rape as seduction is also a form of rape-pleasure, occurring as it does in the face of the victim's resistance. The rapist experiences the same pleasure during the struggle over the rape as in the struggle over the meaning of the rape, for in both cases he struggles to impose his theme upon his victim's body.

In \textit{Strangedays}, a film set in a dystopic Los Angeles gone mad with police illegalities, this concept of denial is played out more fully.\textsuperscript{45} Drugs are passé in the braver, newer world of \textit{Strangedays} because science has made it possible to record inner experiences. Thus, everyone is able to relive her most personal moments, or those of others, at will. The “wiretrip” technology of 1999 A.D. makes it possible to record our memories or the

\textsuperscript{44} Rape is a crime men commit against women. It is not a crime women commit against men. Indeed, even when men rape other men, they do so in a manner that reaffirms the patriarchal norms of the institution of rape. I have, therefore, used the word “he” to represent perpetrators and the word “her” to represent victims. There are, obviously, exceptions to the general rule. However, the general rule shows rape to be a class crime, that is, a crime committed by the class of men against the class of women. The general rule also shows rape to be a crime which constitutes each class—women are the bodies made available for rape and men are the bodies for whom the Other bodies are made available. The class nature of rape is masked by pretensions to bilateral symmetry and so I avoid them in this article. People do not rape other people. Men rape women.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{STRANGEDAYS} (Twentieth Century Fox 1995) (Kathryn Bigelow directing).
inner experiences of other people without distortions of memory or perspective. Pushers, like Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes), deal in "playback," recorded inner experiences, rather than pharmaceuticals. The future is a world of glass.

In a pivotal moment of Strangedays, a rapist sexually mutilates a young woman while recording his inner experience of the crime. As he records his rape-pleasure experience, he "jacks her into his own output," that is, he simultaneously records and transmits his experience to his blindfolded victim via the wiretrip apparatus. Thus, his victim, as she is being sexually mutilated, is brought to a full consciousness of just how much her feelings of pain and horror are enjoyed by her assailant. She sees her ruined flesh through his eyes. Moreover, she experiences his rape-pleasure as her own. This increases her fear and loathing, which, in turn, heightens his pleasure. This cinematic moment represents the full experience of oppression—the substitution of the oppressor's gaze for your own. In Strangedays the rapist-oppressor substitutes his story for his victim's story through technology. In the real world this substitution is completed through ideology.46

3. Rivers of Expectoration: Humiliation & Availability

Race, like rape, is, among other things, a crime of humiliation. To be thematized as black is a form of humiliation in and of itself.

46 Ideology, of course, cannot be decoupled from the institutional arrangements and policy choices which give it life. Consider this exchange between Primo Levi and his Auschwitz interrogator:

Pannwitz is tall, thin, blond; he has eyes, hair, and nose as all Germans ought to have them, and sits formidable behind a complicated writing-table. I, Häftling 174517, stand in his office, which is a real office, shining, clean and ordered, and I feel that I would leave a dirty stain on whatever I touched.

When he finished writing, he raised his eyes and looked at me.

From that day I have thought about Doktor Pannwitz many times and in many ways. I have asked myself how he really functioned as a man; how he filled his time, outside of the Polymerization and the Indo-Germanic conscience; above all when I was once more a free man, I wanted to meet him again, not from a spirit of revenge, but merely from a personal curiosity about the human soul. 

Because that look was not one between two men; and if I had known how completely to explain the nature of that look, which came as if across the glass window of an aquarium between two beings who live in different worlds, I would also have explained the essence of the great insanity of the third Germany.

“I am a Negro, and tons of chains, storms of blows, rivers of expectoration flow down my shoulders,” wrote Fanon of the colorline.\(^{47}\) There can be no such thing as good race relations for it is the category of race itself which constitutes the humiliation. Blackness is the yellow star, the pink triangle, the scarlet letter, and the bad reputation. To be black is to occupy the role of inferior-for-whites, specifically, to be black is to be available for racial humiliation.

The black body is available for humiliation all of the time, or as Fanon put it, “[w]herever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro.”\(^{48}\) In a short story about a black expatriate’s fears regarding his impending return from France, where he had lived as a human being, to the United States, where he had lived as something less, James Baldwin describes the total availability of the black identity:

Nothing was more familiar to them than the sight of a dark boy, singing, and there were few things on earth more necessary. It was under cover of darkness, my own darkness, that I could sing for them of the joys, passions, and terrors they smuggled about with them like steadily depreciating contraband. Under cover of the midnight fiction that I was unlike them because I was black, they could stealthily gaze at those treasures which they had been mysteriously forbidden to possess and were never permitted to declare.\(^{49}\)

The colorline here appears as a device which, like sexuality, gives one’s body a thematic structure. It is a curious theme; however, because its function, pleasure, must remain unexamined in order to be fully enjoyed. Examination risks tossing off the “cover of darkness” and showing the colorline as a social practice rather than a natural object. Blackness is presented as a natural object, for it is only where the category of race is deemed natural, that is, independent of social choices, that the hierarchical ordering of things can be enjoyed. Put another way, the natural is the alibi of power.

4. Textual Pleasure

Race-pleasure may be obtained directly or textually. The di-
rect pleasure in saying "Look, a Negro!" is akin to the textual pleasure of talking, reading, writing, or thinking about the "black problem." The discourse of race involves lavishly decorating the black body with statistics, stories, and images of violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease. The decorations are peculiar in that they actually constitute the body that they pretend to highlight. The discourse of race textually reproduces the black body. Thus, the encounter with the black body in the jungles of the arts and sciences is no less real than encounters on other terrains, or, put another way, "[t]here is nothing outside the text."

This production of knowledge concerning the black body is a process by which whites exorcise their own demons, and is, therefore, a pleasure in itself. If the black body is the site and cite of all ills, then the white body is not. The black body is the result of this convergence of power, knowledge, and pleasure. The discourse of race, then, is itself a discourse of pleasure-humiliation. In talking about race, we make ourselves white and black—a process which produces pleasure for the former through the humiliation of the latter.

Race is not a matter of "difference;" it is a matter of power. There is no "race" without the colorline. The ideology of "difference" functions as denial in our culture by masking, on the ground of nature, the sadomasochistic relationship between whites and blacks. The discourse of "racial difference" is not solely a way of representing the social as the natural, it is also a pleasure-in-itself. It is a way of transforming desire into dis-

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50 The literature of childhood sexual abuse is illustrative of this experience of textuality:

_Estelle_: When I began trying to find help, it was the beginning of a bitter education in human failings. As I went from therapist to therapist, it became terribly clear that the supposedly dispassionate professionals seemed just as titillated by my story of incestuous involvement with my father as my father had been excited by the actual experience with me.

_Judith Lewis Herman & Lisa Hirschman, Father-Daughter Incest 186_ (1981). Victims of "race" similarly find audiences more "titillated" by their stories of pain than moved to help eradicate the colorline.


course. Just as the invective “Look, a Negro!” produces race-pleasure, so does the entire discourse of “race” produce race-pleasure by treating a social conflict as a natural object. Just as the rapist enjoys his victim when he humiliates her through rape, so too does he enjoy his victim when he humiliates her by calling it seduction. Whiteness is a form of rape which perpetually redescribes itself as seduction.

Whites and fellow-travelers enjoy their victims in the same way when they humiliate them through the act of racial labeling as when they humiliate them through the discourse of racial categorization.\textsuperscript{53} There is no “race;” there is but race which humiliates and race which is humiliated.\textsuperscript{54} There is pleasure in humiliating the Other through race just as there is pleasure in denying that is what one has done. This denial is accomplished by engaging in a discourse which naturalizes the social. Finally, there is a pleasure in imposing your theme not just on the body but on the soul of the Other. This last pleasure, the pleasure of re-characterizing rape as seduction, or race as natural, is accomplished through ideology.

\textbf{E. The Manufacture of Denial: Ideology as Seduction}

It is horrifying to realize just how much your suffering is enjoyed by your oppressors. It is a horror that most subalterns would rather not face. Hegemony implies the ability of a group to take advantage of the subaltern will to deny by seducing them into complicity with their own oppression.

The colorline is ubiquitous. We can find it in interactions large and small. It is painful to contemplate and so we often choose to dismiss the evidence of our eyes. In a slightly different context, saying goodbye to the patriarchal white New Left in 1970, femi-

\textsuperscript{53} “Racism” is a way of masking the fact that it is the category of race itself that constitutes the humiliation known as the colorline.

\textsuperscript{54} French feminist Monique Wittig writes similarly regarding the category of sex: The masters explain and justify the established divisions as a result of natural differences. The slaves, when they start to rebel and start to struggle, read social oppositions into the so-called natural differences.

For there is no sex. There is but sex that is oppressed and sex that oppresses. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary.\textit{Monique Wittig, The Category of Sex, in The Straight Mind and Other Essays} 1, 2 (1992).

That Wittig writes of sex and not gender is significant. In current feminist debates sex is regarded as biological while gender is regarded as cultural. Wittig rejects the notion of the biological altogether.
nist Robin Morgan captured the reason why the oppressed are so often seduced into complicity with their own oppression. In her essay, *Goodbye to All That*, she wrote:

[...]

It hurts to look one’s oppression in the face. It is often psychologically easier to be a “good sport.” We flee from truths the acknowledgment of which will leave us even more thoroughly disgusted with ourselves. We will do almost anything to maintain the “cover of darkness” in order to avoid seeing just how put down we are. We will even submit to oppression, lay back and enjoy it, rather than face up to just how much we are hated. That is, we will perform our victim-identities, with joy, for our oppressors rather than acknowledge the pain. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, discussing her family’s return from the Manzanar Internment Camp, describes this pain:

What I had to face now, a year later, was the future. I was old enough to imagine it, and also old enough to fear it. The physical violence didn’t trouble me. Somehow I didn’t quite believe that, or didn’t want to believe such things could happen to us. It was the humiliation. *That continuous, unnamed ache I had been living with was precise and definable now.* Call it the foretaste of being hated. I knew ahead of time that if someone looked at me with hate, I would have to allow it, to swallow it, because something in me, something about me deserved it. At ten I saw that coming, like a judge’s sentence, and I would have stayed inside the camp forever rather than step outside and face such a moment.

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Even the isolation and barbed-wire of the internment camp may sometimes be preferred to facing the “continuous, unnamed ache.” The internment camp offered an opportunity for denial.

Elie Wiesel describes the seductive quality of denial in Night: “The Germans were already in the town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict had already been pronounced, yet the Jews of Sighet continued to smile.” Even when the Jews were ordered to wear the yellow star, denial persisted: “The yellow star? Oh well, what of it? You don’t die of it...” (Poor Father! Of what then did you die?). Later, when the Jews were ordered to the Ghetto, the denial persisted and “[i]t was little by little life returned to normal.” The will to avoid the “continuous unnamed ache” was such that the Jews of Sighet began to take pleasure in denial. Wiesel suggests that they started to love the Ghetto. “Everyone marvelled at it. We should no longer have before our eyes those hostile faces, those hate-laden stares. Our fear and anguish were at an end. We were living among Jews, among brothers...” Wiesel comments that “[i]t was neither German nor Jew who ruled the ghetto—it was illusion.”

“Laura,” a victim of child sexual abuse, describes this same illusion, albeit in a different context: “I did not want to believe with a passion. Even as part of me recognized the truth, another part fought to deny what I had seen. There were times when I would rather have viewed myself as crazy than acknowledge what had happened to me.” Acknowledgment, particularly of one’s own complicity—and perhaps pleasure—in a humiliating relationship is difficult: “Even though your experience of abuse may have been confusing, frightening, or devastating, you may also have felt some degree of pleasurable feelings. For many, this aspect of the abuse is one of the most difficult.” Liberation is difficult because when we shatter the situation which produced the degradation we also shatter that part of ourselves which may have taken pleasure in the situation.

57 Elie Wiesel, Night 7-8 (Stella Rodway trans., 1982).
58 Id. at 9.
59 Id.
60 Id.
61 Id. at 10. In the Holocaust the mark of the plural, the yellow star, unfolded in its complete logic and markings became numbers and the numbers became smoke.
62 Bass & Davis, supra note 36, at 97.
63 Id. at 117.
We are also actively encouraged not to disturb the pleasures of our oppressors. The encouragement of the Nazis needs no explanation. The encouragement of the white American does. Race-pleasure in the United States is kept “under cover of darkness” in a manner startlingly similar to incestuous relationships. “Emily,” a survivor of child sexual abuse, describes such a “cover of darkness”: “At night, before I went to sleep, my mother would tell me that what went on during the day when I was awake was really a dream. And that what happened in my sleep, that was real. She turned reality and dreams, awake and asleep, exactly opposite.” In each form of nobodying the Other, the manipulation of the Other’s reality is itself an erotic experience of pleasure-in-humiliating.

F. Fear of Flying & Race Relations

The zipless fuck was more than a fuck. It was a platonic ideal. Zipless because when you came together zippers fell away like rose petals, underwear blew off in one breath like dandelion fluff. Tongues intertwined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the mouth of your lover.

- Erica Jong

Everytime I tell about it, I hurt in a new place.

-Anonymous

Every black body has a million stories of exposure to the “continuous, unnamed ache” described by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. For whites, these exposures take the form of what Erica Jong described as “the zipless fuck.” Zipless, because they are erotic encounters between two or more bodies which are like sex. In the case of the colorline, such encounters are a form of rape.

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64 BALDWIN, This Morning, This Evening, So Soon, in GOING TO MEET THE MAN, supra note 49, at 138.
65 BASS & DAVIS, supra note 36, at 99-100.
67 HERMAN & HIRSCHMAN, supra note 50, at 69 (quoting anonymous victim).
68 Jong uses the term zipless to describe the way in which sexism confines female erotic experiences to the realm of fantasy. I appropriate her term to describe the way in which the colorline liberates white erotic experiences from the realm of fantasy.
69 I do not mean to suggest that rape is not a devastating blow against one’s sense of self. I only mean to suggest that we have an understanding of rape as the crime of forced sex but we do not have an understanding of the colorline as the crime of forced race. Both Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon have described gender itself as constituted by forced sex. See generally ANDREA DWORKIN, INTER-
The zipless fuck is the experience of bodily pleasure that whites obtain by enmeshing blacks in the colorline. Whiteness and blackness are nothing more than their relative positions in this asymmetrical erotic encounter.

1. A Day in "The Life"

On a spring day of my eighth grade year, 1976, on a bus chartered for a class trip to Washington, D.C., one of my schoolmates stood and began to comb her long, brown hair. She was tall and cool and pretty. She combed her long, brown hair slowly and deliberately. After a long while she turned and addressed us all, "Whose comb was this? Thanks, I'm all done." No one responded. It seemed as though the unknown owner of the comb must not have been listening. Just then, one of our classmates answered in a mirthful voice, "It's Farley's comb." I, Farley, was the only black person on this otherwise all-white school trip to the nation's capital. My classmates burst into laughter. The girl with the long brown hair turned crimson and began to cry in loud, long sobs. The sobs quickly turned into the sounds of retching which were accompanied by shudders running through her hunched form. She may have vomited. While her personal trauma unfolded, accompanied by squeals of laughter from all of her white classmates, I said nothing.

Those few minutes of mirth, sobs, laughter, and silence showed the colorline at work. The boy with the mirthful voice who falsely declared the comb to belong to me knew the dance, and so the jest worked as he intended. The girl with the long, brown hair knew the dance and so she wept and became nauseated at the public revelation of such improper intimacy with the Other. Our classmates knew the dance and so the spectacle of such an untoward, albeit unintended, boundary crossing caused great amusement. I was silent. All of us experienced our connection through the colorline as a physical sensation, not as an abstract idea. We were all breathing to the same beat.

Erica Jong's words regarding the erotic applied completely to my white classmates' actions on that school bus: "Tongues inter-
twined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the mouth of your lover.”70 I was the collective soul of my white classmates. They transformed me with their jests, tears, and laughter. I could feel myself extruded as vomit, as sweat, as spit, as abjection itself. Their souls flowed out through their tongues and I, silent and excrementalized, was filled with the nobodyness they desired of me.

The adrenaline rush of the wanton invocation of the colorline, the nausea and shame brought on by the ritual uncleanness of forbidden contact, the peals of cathartic laughter by those whitened by the ritual, and the abject silence of the ‘raced,’ are all part of the meaning of race. To be black is to be available for humiliation, to be white is to partake of race-pleasure, and to be colorblind is to repress one’s awareness of the entire enterprise. The colorline depends on all three aspects—humiliation, pleasure, and denial—for its power.71

What is to be done when your subalternation, your pain, is the source of a pleasure which supports a political order which, in turn, ensures your subalternation?72 Baldwin asked:

70 Jong, supra note 66, at 11.
71 James A. Aho uses the term “reflexive empathy” for exchanges of this type in his phenomenology of the enemy:

The way I come to know you as an enemy/enema is a special case of reflexive empathy. In short, I objectify my own putrefaction by attributing it to you. This entails two distinct but inseparable actions: first, predicating of you excremental qualities and then responding to you according to the bestowed meaning; and second, ‘forgetting’ my culpability in creating you as my enemy - experiencing your ‘filth’ in a taken-for-granted way as a ‘natural’ attribute.

James A. Aho, This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy 113 (1994).

72 The colorline is intertwined with all the other large and small dominations which fragment and frame our collective imagination. I sometimes wonder how the girl with the long brown hair would recollect the incident. Perhaps, hers would be a tale of abject humiliation at her confrontation with the gender-line in the form of this ritual circumscribing of adolescent female sexuality. Young women, even young white women, are not allowed the freedom to trangress the colorline. Would we go out for cappuccino and compare wounds? Would we kiss? Would my encounter with racism-through-sexism compare to her encounter with sexism-through-racism? Would it lead to something more, something deeper than our twice-told tale? “My heart makes my head swim.” See Fanon, supra note 47, at 140. Perhaps it would be an invidious comparison. I feel that hers was probably the lesser humiliation. After all, her tears and her symbolic extrusion of my taint by vomiting were probably enough to bring her back into the fold of whiteness. I write “probably” because I do not know; we never spoke to each other. Perhaps our mutual silence spoke eloquently about hegemony. But what if we did meet?
How can one be prepared for the spittle in the face, all the tireless ingenuity which goes into the spite and fear of small, unutterably miserable people, whose greatest terror is the singular identity, whose joy, whose safety, is entirely dependent on the humiliation and anguish of others?\footnote{James Baldwin, This Morning, This Evening, So Soon, in Going to Meet the Man, supra note 49, at 149. The construction of the victim, of the enemy, is a project pursued with “tireless ingenuity.” The result of this knowledge/pleasure/power conundrum is a kind of Jacob’s ladder—a colorline supported by itself.}

Baldwin’s question has no answer. The “spittle in the face” is the victim’s identity, just as it is the identity of the victimizer. The enemy is the face in the mirror, the spectacularized face, the face covered in spit.\footnote{Was I the only way to expel the toxins that were so much a part of our lives? Ayi Kwei Armah explains the dual themes of purification and ritual as follows: “Sometimes it is understandable that people spit so much, when all around decaying things push inward and mix all the body’s juices with the taste of rot. Sometimes it is understandable, the doomed attempt to purify the self by adding to the disease outside.” Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born 40 (Heinemann Educational Publishers 1968). I was the outside, the place where people spat to purify themselves. My body was the border.} Was this a baptism? I was silent during my moment of humiliation on the class trip to the nation’s capital and in many other encounters since that time. What is to be done? I am blinded, as though by tears, as I trace these bright, glistening lesions of memory. The lesions in the mirror of this memoir are not the pain that they cause. Something always escapes into silence. My silence, like the native-bearer’s ostentatiously disregarded plunge into the abyss of the Tarzan movie, was the colorline.

2. Bread & Roses

\begin{quote}
As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men,  
For they are women’s children, and we mother them again.  
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;  
Hearts can starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses.\footnote{James Oppenheim, Bread and Roses, in Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology 196, 196 (Joyce L. Kornbluh ed., 1998).}
\end{quote}

-Bread & Roses

Silent “resistance” to insult does not make it go away. The insult conveys information and information is transformative. The information conveys insult and is, therefore, also transformative. If you can get away with calling someone a “pariah,” you are correct about that person being a “pariah.” This is where childhood is instructive. On the playground, as I remember it,
when they can get away with calling you names, you are that name. No one who bears the name “pariah” gets to play. When you do not get to play, you are a pariah. Every name is a true name.

Every conflict, then, is a conflict about bread and roses. This is because oppression is not just about economic or political power, it is also about who gets to be regarded as beautiful. To be beautiful is to be regarded as beautiful. The beautiful ones get to feel happy on the playground. The pariahs, the ones marked as “pariahs,” feel miserable on the playground. The “poetics of space” are manipulated through name-calling. Racial categories, no less than Confederate flags, are ways of segregating public and private spaces through name-calling. The category of “race” itself bears all of the information borne by the Confederate flag. The particular name given to the “midnight fiction” of racial difference does not matter. A society either has a color line or it does not.

The plunge into subalternation is continuous. Race is a form of ritual abuse and, like other forms of ritual abuse, is likely to be repeated. One cannot prepare for it, and that is the essential quality of the harm. One cannot prepare to fight an enemy which one has become. Judge Paine, in another context, writes in a way that is instructive here, “once an inmate is raped, he is marked as a victim for repeated sexual assault for the remainder of his imprisonment.” Blackness, in our culture, serves as a marker of a similar sort of being-for-others. Everywhere a black person goes, he goes in a body already marked as a source of race-pleasure. The category of “race” is a prison and a pleasure-

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76 See id.
77 For a discussion of the phenomenology of intimate spaces, see generally, Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Maria Julas trans., 1964).
78 Consider the Confederate flag issue. The Confederate flag waver tells the world three things:
   1. black people are less than zero.
   2. black people are less than zero and so I can get away with flying colors of slavery.
   3. black people are less than zero and so I can get away with flying the colors of slavery in front of everybody.
To be less than zero is to be a pariah.
dome, a humiliation and an ecstasy, a marker and an erasure. And no one exists outside of the category of race.

A meaningful description of the colorline, like descriptions of other forms of oppression, requires us to map its sensual characteristics. The economic or political descriptions of the colorline do not express the way we actually experience the colorline. In a writing exercise for victims of child sexual abuse entitled "What Happened to You," Ellen Bass and Laura Davis inform their readers:

[T]he tight statement "My stepfather abused me" is not the way you live with the abuse, not the way you experience flashbacks. That's not indicative of the creepy feelings you get when something triggers your memory. What you remember is the way the light fell on the stairway, the pajamas you were wearing, the smell of liquor on his breath, the feel of the gravel between your shoulder blades when you were thrown down, the terrifying chuckle, the sound of the TV downstairs.81

What Bass and Davis say of child sexual abuse is also applicable to the colorline. The colorline is a sensation, not "the tight statement," "They discriminated against me." It is only this exploration of the sensual qualities of the colorline that can reveal race-pleasure as an addiction. An addiction which, unlike alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs, leaves no morning hangover. Indeed, whiteness, and the pleasure in and about one's body it entails, cannot be maintained without repeated racial contacts. These repeated contacts create blackness, the form of humiliation upon which whiteness depends.

This sensual quality serves to define the experience of blackness, as well as whiteness. From the subaltern position the colorline appears as a form of ritual abuse, not unlike sexual molestation. Indeed, the reflections of both groups of victims bear a strong family likeness:

Rita: I hated it all the time; it was like a nightmare. There was nothing I could do. I went along with the program. I don't know why he went along with it, because I never responded.82

Marion: How do you get over this? I know it eats away at your very gut level. I think I have forgotten it until some little thing reminds me. Then I relive it again.83

81 Bass & Davis, supra note 36, at 93.
82 Herman & Hirschman, supra note 50, at 96.
83 Id. at 96.
Not surprisingly, my own avoidance strategy of silence on the bus that day resembled those of survivors of sexual abuse:

Sheila: My head just died then. It was an impossible thing for me to handle, so I just didn’t handle it. It’s like it never happened. Everytime I try to talk about it, my mind goes blank. It’s like everything explodes in my head.\textsuperscript{84}

Commenting on her interviews of victims of father-daughter incest, Judith Herman writes that “[f]ear, disgust, and shame were the feelings most commonly remembered. Most of the daughters coped with the sexual episodes by mentally dissociating from them. They ‘froze up’ or pretended that ‘it wasn’t really happening.’”\textsuperscript{85} The family likeness between practices of racial categorization and ritual sexual abuse is unsurprising since in both cases victims are subjected to an unwelcome thematization—as “Lolita”\textsuperscript{86} or as “black”—and in both cases their humiliation constitutes a pleasure for their victimizers.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} Id. at 86.

\textsuperscript{85} Id.

\textsuperscript{86} See Vladi\textsc{m}ir N\textsc{abokov}, Lolita (1955).

\textsuperscript{87} James Baldwin wrote on this theme:

The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear.

G. Race is a Many-Splendored Thing

Race is not reducible to economics or politics. Indeed, it is akin to sexuality:

When taxicab drivers, and store owners, bankers, farmers, Christian ministers, doctors, politicians, patients in mental hospitals and their attendants, writers, university presidents, union members and mill owners, garbage collectors and Rotarians, rich and poor, men and women, unite in common worship and common fear of one idea we know it has come to hold deep and secret meanings for each of them, as different as are the people themselves. We know it has woven itself around fantasies at levels difficult for the mind to touch, until it is a part of each man's internal defense system, embedded like steel in his psychic fortifications. And, like the little dirty rag or doll that an unhappy child sleeps with, it has acquired inflated values that extend far beyond the rational concerns of economics and government, or the obvious profits and losses accruing from the white-supremacy system, into childhood memories long repressed.

The meanderings of the colorline do not admit of precise analysis. In the words of William James, "something always es-

88 The 1955 film Love is a Many-Splendored Thing was itself an exploration of the sensual dimensions of colorlined space. The exploration took the dramatic form of a romance set against the backdrop of Hong Kong during the War in Korea. Consider the following discussion of forbidden love between Dr. Han Suyin (Jennifer Jones), the beautiful "Eurasian" physician, and Mark Elliot (William Holden), the handsome "American" war correspondent:

Elliot: What am I going to do if you go back to China?

Suyin: Play more tennis.

Elliot: You're not really going back to Chunking are you?

Suyin: It wouldn't be any good for you to see too much of me anyhow. I am Eurasian. The word itself seems to suggest a certain moral laxity in the minds of some people. People never think of the meaning of words, they only feel them.

Elliot: You're talking about stupid people.

Suyin: Make no mistake, I'm proud to be Eurasian. I like to think that we combine the best qualities of both races, that we are the answer to race snobbery.

Elliot: Well, you're certainly the answer to a lot of things for me.

Love is a Many-Splendored Thing (Twentieth Century Fox 1955).

89 Such attempts at reduction are themselves forms of denial. When someone says racism is "all about x," x stands for the idea that racism does not exist. The production of this masking-discourse is, like the discourse of racial categorization itself, an erotic project and like other appearances of the erotic, its precise meanderings cannot be precisely charted.


91 I am offering a poetics of location, not a totalizing theory. This Article and its charting of the sensual dimension of colorlined space is more of a "breakaway re-
However, we neglect or deny the colorline’s ability to escape precise analysis at our peril. The naive hope of the Civil Rights Movement that more information about subaltern suffering would change the hearts and minds of a colorlined nation fades even further if we think of race as a form of pleasure. The suggestion that racism in today’s post-civil rights era is unconscious is secondary if we think of race as a practice people enjoy, as a form of pleasure.

The power effects of the myriad pleasure forms enjoyed under the rubric of race beget the colorline. The colorline begets the racialized body. The body is a form of connection, a way of knowing pleasure and humiliation, of experiencing the self-in- Others. The colorline masks itself with our flesh.

Michel Foucault writes that “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms.” Power, for Foucault, does not exist solely in the negative form of prohibitions. Rather, power is “the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.” There is nothing about “race” which is separate from this “complex strategical situation.” What Foucault says of sexuality is also applicable to the colorline:

If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it. Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority, even if they have specific roles and are linked together on the basis of their difference.

Knowledge, then, of sexuality or the colorline, is a strategy of power. Observed through this Foucauldian lens, the racialized
body and its pleasures constitute one of the myriad masks of power.

1. Bodies of Glass

Edmund White, writing in a different context, captured a notion which can be applied to life governed by the colorline: “People were bodies, I thought; the only valuable people have beautiful bodies; since my body isn’t beautiful, I’m worthless. That was the humble feed I pecked at night and day.”97 Black is not beautiful in a world governed by the colorline.98

Nobodying is a sensual experience that envelops everything. It does not limit itself to the body. It cannot, for the body is the lens through which we encounter the world: “More than symbol, more than the bread and wine of Christ, the body is a knowing connection, it is the telling thing, the medium of experience, expression, being, and knowing.”99 People, neighborhoods, jobs, schools, style, language, religion, and art are all viewed and sensualized through the coloring lens of the racialized body. The entire world of the social is submitted to the libidinal economy of the colorline. The racialized body is a eulogized space, it is given a poetic significance by the colorline. But the body is not the only eulogized space. Its poetry spills out upon the universe it both creates and inhabits.

97 Edmund White, The Beautiful Room Is Empty 85 (1988). Edmund White was writing of his experiences as a self-loathing homosexual. The heterosexual creates the homosexual just as the white person creates the black person. Our ideas of sexual propriety, like our ideas of blackness, are themselves a form of pleasure-indenunciation. This denunciation allows us to sanctify ourselves as decent and the Others as indecent. But the Others do not always stay in their places.

98 That black could not appear as beautiful in a colonial order was understood clearly by H. Rap Brown, Chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who wrote:

All of white america is a structure of institutions that says to Black people, “Nigger you ain’t shit.” All standards of excellence, beauty, efficiency and civilization are such that any comparison between Black and white is designed to favor white and put down Black. And it’s ground into a Black person every minute of every day, whether you’re at work or whether you’re out trying to have some fun, it’s Nigger you ain’t shit. Die Nigger Die!


99 Linda Hogen, Department of the Interior, in Minding the Body: Women Writers on Body and Soul 159, 167 (Patricia Foster ed., 1994).
2. Race & Space

Follow the wake of a beautiful woman, that is, a woman socially constructed as beautiful, as she walks down a crowded street. The normal eddies and currents of human feeling are changed by her movements. Her walk down the street is experienced by the crowd as a physical sensation. "The girl can't help it!" sang Little Richard, in his 1956 homage to female beauty in general, and white actress Jayne Mansfield in particular. She seems to be felicity itself.

Follow the wake of a black man on that same street. The space he occupies is also a sensual space. White boys pull their white girlfriends closer. White women's knuckles whiten as they tug their purses closer. A symphony of automatic doorlocks and cold smiles accompany him down the sidewalk. Stepping in-

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100 Beauty myths operate in a caste-creating manner which bears a family likeness to the colorline. Like the colorline, male power insinuates itself into the very identities of women, often through beauty myths. These myths occupy our bodies and souls. For example, even feminists who view high heels as a form of foot-binding, or self-imposed mobility impairment, may still view high heels as sexy.

101 The song tells us how women are viewed as actually possessing the qualities men attribute to them. That "the girl can't help it" is a double irony. First, if beauty is in the eyes of the beholder the "girl" really cannot help but be the beauty society has made of her. However, if she can't help it, then the innocence of the men who gaze upon her must be questioned, for they have made her thing of beauty. They have made her a thing. Second, if beauty is as beauty does then the "girl" really could have chosen not to play along with the beauty myth. The scene that appears on screen, however, makes it clear that there is no escape from the male gaze.

If she walks by the men-folks get engrossed,
THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT!
If she winks an eye and bread slices to toast,
THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT!
If she's got a lot of what they call the most,
THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT!
THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT if she was born to please,
And if she's got a figure made to squeeze,
Won't you kindly be aware,
THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT!

Bobby Troup, The Girl Can't Help It (1956) (recorded by Little Richard on Specialty Records). In the film of the same name, we see Jayne Mansfield, improbably blond, busty, and slim-waisted, walk down the street in full color. We also see the men seeing her. A pre-pubescent paperboy whistles at her like an adult wolf; an iceman's supply melts under his hands and pours from the bed of his truck onto the front of his trousers before spilling upon the street; milk spurts forth from a milkman's bottle and runs all over his hand; finally, the spectacles of a too-curious neighbor shatter as he gazes upon her body. She's got it and they can't do without it. The scene has all the subtlety of a hand grenade. See The Girl Can't Help It (Twentieth Century Fox 1956).
doors, he is accompanied by a flock of store detectives, security guards, and salespeople. The store detectives and security guards are silent, but the salespeople call, “Can I help you find something?” until he quits the store. He is infelicity itself.

Our images of felicitous space are produced by our images of infelicitous space, and vice-versa.\(^{102}\) When the native-bearer falls

\(^{102}\) J.L. Austin is again instructive. I have characterized the expression “The supplies!” as a performative, not unlike the statement “I do” at a wedding. Austin introduces the doctrine of the infelicities to explain what happens when performatives fail. The doctrine of the infelicities is “the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances.” J.L. AUSTIN, HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS 14 (1962) (emphasis omitted). For a felicitous performance the following conditions must pertain:

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
(B.2) completely.
(T1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend to so conduct themselves, and further
(T2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

Id. at 14-15.

A walk down the street can be a performative. That we often intend to signal something even by the way we walk can be seen in our embarrassment at the infelicity of tripping on the carpet. I trip, and become aware that I have failed to complete the coolness ritual. I am not cool because I have tripped like an oaf. I scuff my feet to be the shy person, I shuffle my feet to be the Uncle Tom, I walk with deliberate speed to signal, “I ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around.”

James Meredith “performed” during his walk against fear in 1966. He intended to show, by his walk across Mississippi, that blacks were not afraid and, perhaps, that blacks had nothing to fear. His was a felicitous performance of the black identity in two acts. By the time of his walk, a “conventional procedure” with a “conventional effect” had been brought into being by the Civil Rights Movement. A black body, alone or with other bodies, sometimes black and white together, would ostentatiously defy a de facto or de jure rule of segregation. White bodies would then perform their whiteness through high or low level lynching.

Meredith was, of course, shot on the second day of his walk. However, his performance was felicitous. The signal, the conventional procedure for black bodies to become “fearless,” was to march, meekly, into the danger. “We are not afraid,” and “We shall overcome” were all part of the script. “I do” brings a married person into being in the way that Meredith’s walk brought an unafraid black body into being. He became a person who had nothing to fear by becoming a person who was “not afraid to die,” a person who had surpassed the limit of power’s claim over the body. It was a conventional procedure in that he performed within conventional racial discourse—so the person who shot Meredith also performed felicitously. Mississippi
into the abyss he plunges out of felicitous space in two senses. First, he falls to his death. Second, the native is a “Fallen” man. To be regarded as a native-bearer, a black, is to have already Fallen. The scene compresses the natural and the social by pairing both falls, thereby doubly highlighting the Fallen nature of the native-bearer. It thus seems quite natural that the intrepid white explorer would turn and shout “The supplies!” upon seeing the native-bearer plunge out of sight. The practice of turning and shouting “The supplies!” is the practice of nobodying the Other. That is, the native-bearer disappears into the abyss because we shout “The supplies!”

The supplies! We watch these white mythologies over and over. They give a “natural-seemingness” to the colorline. They are a way of taking pleasure in one’s body through the body of the Other. Whites cannot think of themselves without the Negro. We are the “bright and morning star” in their navigation of existential space. Whites cannot feel themselves without the Negro. We are the “bright and morning star” in their navigation of sensual space as well.

was preserved as a white nation when its performative buckshot entered Meredith’s flesh. For a discussion of James Meredith’s “March Against Fear,” see JOHN DITTMER, LOCAL PEOPLE: THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN MISSISSIPPI (1994).

The phrase, “The supplies!” along with myriad other signals of disdain are, likewise, performatives. The street, too, can be theater. The 1997 black body which tries to walk as a human, as with the example given above, performs infelicitously. This is because we have no 1997 “conventional procedure” for such a walk. The white female body only seems felicitous. She, too, is caught in an identity trap. She cannot walk down the street as a person for the shadow of the feminine always follows. She is free only to be feminine or to fail to be feminine. She cannot be human because there is no 1997 “conventional procedure” for that performative.


104 James Baldwin writes of this racial orienteering:

Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one’s sense of one’s own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don’t be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man’s definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name.

Baldwin, My Dungeon Shook, supra note 87, at 259-60. For more on racial orienteering see generally TONI MORRISON, PLAYING IN THE DARK: WHITENESS IN THE LITERARY IMAGINATION (1993).

105 See Revelation 22:16 (King James).
Consider the segregated bus of the 1950’s. The image is ubiquitous. We can see the segregated bus in pre-technicolor grainy black and white newsreel footage of utterly abject black, prayerful, soon-to-be-Norman Rockwellized Civil Rights protesters in the back of the bus and utterly triumphant white, soon-to-wave-the-stars-‘n’-bars-of-massive-resistance crowds in the front of the bus. The back of the bus is a sensation of sweat, adrenaline, furrowed brows, and metallic tastes. Minstrelization is a thing one feels in one’s body. It is what happens when you are ordered to “Jump Jim Crow!” The ritualized performance of the black role as a beginning and ending of each sortie from the wrong (black) side of the tracks to the right (white) side is a freefall into the abyss.

The whites, audience to this spectacular presentation, gaze voraciously upon the anathematized black bodies by placing them behind their eyes in the non-space of the abyss, the disfavored and ritually unclean rear seats. The excrementalization of the bodies marked as “black” produces a corollary feeling of blessedness, an ecstasy of belonging and belovedness, in the bodies marked as “white.” Whiteness, emerging from sadistic insistence on the illusion of race through the painful application of blackness to the bodies of the innocent, produces pleasure. Whiteness emerges out of this situation as an orgasmic union with blackness but, ironically, its continuation depends on calling itself a separation from blackness.

3. Race and Bad Faith

Whiteness is not without its complications; the colorline, like colonialism, has a constitutive contradiction. Sartre states succinctly:

Oppression means, first of all, the oppressor’s hatred for the oppressed. There exists a solitary limit to this venture of destructiveness, and that is colonialism itself. Here the colonizer encounters a contradiction of his own: “Were the colonized to disappear, so would colonization—with the colonizer.” . . . The system wills simultaneously the death and the multiplica-

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106 In the Society of the Spectacle, white American history is absolved through the production of a discourse of civil rights history which presents Rosa Parks as the very first black person who refused to obey the rules of segregation. If the subalterns themselves universally agreed to obey the law prior to Rosa Parks, then “How bad could it have been for them?,” or so the implicit argument seems to go.
The Black Body as Fetish Object

The system, the body of laws which maintains the distance between colonizer and colonized or between black and white or between men and women or between here and there, is reified in the bodies it both constitutes and circumscribes. Individuals reify this fundamental contradiction in their hearts and minds. It imbues their behavior with the same bad faith and frenzy exhibited by “the system.” Postcolonial novelist Ayi Kwei Armah, writing on corruption, describes the “chichidodo” in a manner applicable to the situation faced by individuals in colorlined societies:

‘Mmmmmmm . . . ’ the woman almost sang. The sound might have been taken as a murmur of contentment. ‘You are the chichidodo itself.’

‘Now what do you mean by that?’ The man’s voice was not angry, just intrigued. Very calmly the woman gave him her reply.

‘Ah, you know, the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know the maggots grow best inside the lavatory. This is the chichidodo.’

The woman was smiling. 108

The colonizer hates the very thing he needs in order to maintain his identity as a colonizer. This contradiction is the worm in the heart of whiteness. The colonizer needs and hates the colonized: he feeds in a state of Sartrean bad faith, just like Armah’s chichidodo.

4. The Legal Architecture of Desire

The state, and hence the law, emerge as constitutive parts of whiteness and the race-pleasure needed to create and maintain whiteness. The body of law is both flesh and discourse. This is because the state, through segregation, arranges both the public forum and the intimate choreography for the race-pleasure tryst. The time and place of this erotic experience between bodies made black and white is itself a result of a complicated dance of private capital within a vast regulatory web, but the erotic experience is more than the political economy which sets the stage. The bodies come together again and again in a dance called segregation—de jure or de facto—and beget the colorline. Our so-


108 Armah, supra note 74, at 45.
ciety’s economic and political structures stand in relation to race-pleasure in the way that the beehive’s honeycombs stand in relation to honey. The sweetness, the race-pleasure, is the thing which supports the entire enterprise.

Indeed, segregation statutes may be read as a Kama Sutra of race-pleasure. Elleke Boehmer, writing on the texts of imperialism, makes a point that is helpful in understanding the legal texts of the colorline:

[Readers... experience Empire textually, through the medium of nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels and periodicals, travel writings, scraps of doggerel. Yet Empire was itself, at least in part, a textual exercise. The colonial officer filing a report on affairs in his district, British readers of newspapers and advertisements of the day, administrators who consulted Islamic and Hindu sacred texts to establish a legal system for British India: they too understood colonization by way of text. The Empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained in an array of writings—political treatises, diaries, acts and edicts, administrative records and gazetteers, missionaries’ reports, notebooks, memoirs, popular verse, government briefs, letters ‘home’ and letters back to settlers. The triple-decker novel and the best-selling adventure tale... were infused with imperial ideas of race pride and national prowess.]

The racial contours of the legislatively colorlined bodies stand out from the statute books like lovingly carved temple dancers. Bodies are typed and arranged in every possible permutation. The erotic plays over the now-black and now-white bodies with boundless enthusiasm for variety. One sees a detailed racial choreography of everyday life. Proximities, angles, activities, incentives, and punishments all were feverishly written into law. And, conversely, the law was a fever that both the segregators and the segregated came to feel within their bodies.

There was no social space which could not be colorlined by state legislators. For example, by 1949, even schools for the blind were segregated by state law in Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Thus, even blindness could be made to see color through the peculiar magic of segregation.

De jure segregation expanded into every conceivable site by 1949. Consider the following actions by states. Madness was

segregated: mental patients were segregated in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Disease was segregated: Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia forbade race mixing of tubercular patients. Parental love was segregated: interracial adoptions were forbidden in Louisiana, Montana, South Carolina, and Utah. Belief was segregated: it was a crime to publish anything advocating social equality in Mississippi. Communication was segregated: telephone booths were segregated in Oklahoma. Poverty was segregated: paupers were to be segregated in Alabama and West Virginia. Fantasy was segregated: Tennessee and Virginia segregated movie theaters. Punishment was segregated: black and white prisoners could not be chained together in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Thus, even the chains which linked actors Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier together in the 1958 Hollywood integration film, The Defiant Ones, were forbidden. Texts were segregated: Florida and North Carolina required separate textbooks for black and white.

111 Id.  
112 Id.  
113 Id. For an excellent discussion of the history of transracial adoption, see Ruth Arlene W. Howe, Transracial Adoption (TRA): Old Prejudices and Discrimination Float Under a New Halo, 6 B.U. PUB. INT. L.J. 409 (1997).  
114 See STATES' LAWS ON RACE AND COLOR, supra note 110, at ch. III.  
115 Id.  
116 Id.  
117 Id.  
118 Id.  
119 The Defiant Ones (United Artists 1958). This film, directed by Stanley Kramer, is the basic text for all Hollywood buddy movies. Two convicts, black (Sidney Poitier) and white (Tony Curtis), are chained together. They come from separate worlds and do not trust each other; indeed, Curtis' character clearly dislikes Blacks. The dramatic tension comes from the fact that the two men are forced to cooperate in order to make good their escape from prison. It was not a subtle film. In the end, as with all buddy movies in its wake, the two men, like the doomed Queeg and Ishmael, love each other. The two men manage to sever the chain that bound their bodies only to forge a new chain binding their hearts. We are made certain that only death could part this loving pair by the dramatic finale. Both men run to catch a passing train and secure their lives from the savage dogs and the armed police. Poitier catches the train but Curtis is too slow and loosens his grip on Poitier's helping hand. Poitier has a choice between independently escaping to freedom and his old life or facing certain death with his new white friend. Poitier leaps from the train to die with Curtis. White audiences left the theaters contemplating the tear-jerking spectacle of black self-sacrifice. For a good discussion of the relationship between cinema and race relations, see generally Thomas Cripps, Making
schoolchildren.\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Happiness} was segregated: innumerable joys were segregated and thus made into sites for racialized joy—billiard and pool rooms, parks, playgrounds, beaches and boating, racetracks, and circuses were all segregated by race in various states.\textsuperscript{121}

The \textit{site} and \textit{cite} of colorlined pleasure merge when we reflect on the literally-defined nature of our bodies. Our bodies are palimpsests and "race" has been a bold inscription on the layer representing the contributions of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{122} The racial pornographer, the legislator, both carves his accusation message into the black body and makes it true in the act of legislating. That act is an act of race-pleasure. The legislative drafting, executive enforcement, judicial interpretation, academic analysis, jurisprudential theorizing, police violence, mob violence, democratic legitimation, and public awareness of these Acts are all acts of race-pleasure. Sade is helpful in understanding the project upon which these legal actors toiled so furiously:

[A]fter having immured themselves within everything that was best able to satisfy the senses through lust, after having established this situation, the plan was to have described to them, in the greatest detail and in due order, every one of debauchery’s extravagances, all its divagations, all its ramifications, all its contingencies, all of what is termed in libertine language its passions.\textsuperscript{123}

The four libertines of Sade’s \textit{The 120 Days of Sodom}, like the segregators, form a “society” for the purpose of torture and murder. Not content with the simple pleasures of direct cruelty, the libertines establish a method of memorializing and systematizing their deeds, of translating their passions into texts. This transformation of passions to texts is itself a form of pleasure:

[H]e who should succeed in isolating and categorizing and detailing these follies would perhaps perform one of the most splendid labors which might be undertaken in the study of manners, and perhaps one of the most interesting. It would thus be a question of finding some individuals capable of providing an account of all these excesses, then of analyzing them,

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{States’ Laws on Race and Color}, supra note 110, at ch. III.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{120 Days of Sodom}, supra note 15, at 218.
of extending them, of itemizing them, of graduating them, and of running a story through it all, to provide coherence and amusement.\textsuperscript{124}

The legislators of the pre-\textit{Loving} era were engaged in the production of just such an accounting, analysis, extension, itemization, graduation, and narration of the colorline.\textsuperscript{125} Sade’s libertines, like the segregators of the pre-\textit{Loving} era or the neosegregators of our own, “enclose themselves inside their retreat as within a besieged citadel, without leaving the least entrance to an enemy, the least egress to a deserter” and labor “over a code of laws.”\textsuperscript{126} Sade warned, “it is essential that these articles of government be known to the reader who, after the exact description we have given him of everything, will now have no more to do than follow the story, lightly and voluptuously.”\textsuperscript{127} Sade’s statutes, like the statutes of the segregators, do not simply command humiliation, they are complicated texts-of-pleasure. That is, the statutes themselves are, textually, forms of race-pleasure.

The statutes, in addition to being forms of pleasure and humiliation in themselves, also serve to structure the pleasures and humiliations of our lives. Our personal narratives are both constituted and circumscribed by the colorline. Sade wrote:

\begin{quote}
We have, moreover, blended these six hundred passions into the storytellers’ narratives. That is one more thing whereof the reader were well to have foreknowledge: it would have been too monotonous to catalogue them one by one outside the body of the story. But as some reader not much learned in these matters might perhaps confuse the designated passions with the adventure or simple event in the narrator’s life, each of these passions has been carefully distinguished by a marginal notation: a line, above which is the title that may be given the passion. This mark indicates the exact place where the account of the passions begins, and the end of the paragraph always indicates where it finishes.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

In the above passage, “[t]he care taken to preserve the effectiveness and the framework of a dictionary within the ‘body of the narrative’ entails a painstaking didacticism, to the point of suggesting how the work should be used.”\textsuperscript{129} Like the segregation

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{125} See \textit{Loving v. Virginia}, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).
\textsuperscript{126} 120 \textsc{Days of Sodom}, \textit{supra} note 15, at 240-41.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Id.} at 241.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Id.} at 254-55.
\textsuperscript{129} Marcel Hénaff, \textit{The Encyclopedia of Excess, in Sade and the Narrative of Transgression} 142, 144-45 (David B. Allison et al. eds., 1995).
statutes, Sade’s statutes say everything: “We know who’s who, what each person is capable of, what each person desires, etc. Everything is circumscribed from the outset, and nothing is left ambiguous.”

The subaltern world of the Sadean victim resembles the subaltern world of the native as described by Fanon and the segregated world of the colorline. It is:

A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world, a world of statues . . . a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips . . . .
The native is a being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world. The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place . . . .

Sade’s statutes, like those of the pre-Loving world, constitute what Marcel Hénaff calls an “encyclopedia of excess.” The encyclopedia of excess says too much. It says too much in two distinct and contradictory ways. The encyclopedia of excess is a collision of impulses, of totality (“saying too much” in the encyclopedic sense), and excess (“saying too much” in the sense of a demand that everything be revealed and the claim that “I’m going to tell all”). The encyclopedia of excess can be seen in Sade’s “statutes,” the statutes of the segregationist legislators, and in the civil rights statutes of our own era.

Legislators aspire to totality and tell us every detail of the black body. They also embrace excess, for in telling all regarding the black body they necessarily add supplemental information about themselves; this supplemental information is excess. That is, the legislators’ aspiration for totality reveals their need to tell all about the black body. The legislators’ need to tell all, which produces excess, also serves to undermine the tale they tell. That is, the legislators describe blacks encyclopedically over and over again. Their repetitive encyclopedic iterations of the same old story of natural inferiority belies the dispassionate objectivity upon which their project of encyclopedic repetition depends. The production of the truth of black subalternation, then, is both dependent upon and undermined by the legislators’ pleasure in the production of the truth of black subalternation. The black body is produced as truth because of the legislators’ passion for

130 Id. at 145.
131 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, supra note 10, at 51-52.
132 See Hénaff, supra note 129, at 144.
race-pleasure. The black body is undermined as truth because of the legislators’ passion for race-pleasure. Or so it seems from outside of the pleasure-dome.

II

BLACKNESS, SEDUCTION, AND COMPLICITY

I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair and behave like flunkies.\(^{133}\)

-Aimé Césaire

A. Inciting Masochism

What happens to a person who is cast into the abyss? The experience of such humiliation is expressed in Beloved, a novel based on the true story of an ex-slave who killed her children to prevent their recapture. In Beloved, Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison speaks from the abyss:

That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn’t think it up. And though she and others lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing—the part of her that was clean.\(^{134}\)

Morrison’s description of being made into a creature so dirty that it is impossible to like yourself anymore captures the subaltern condition in a manner akin to Wakatsuki Houston’s “continuous unnamed ache.”\(^{135}\) Fanon too, writes of the subaltern condition in this way: “‘Look at the Nigger!’ . . . My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly . . . .”\(^{136}\) The racial signifier,

\(^{133}\) AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, DISCOURSE ON COLONIALISM 22 (Joan Pinkam trans., 1972) (1955).

\(^{134}\) TONI MORRISON, BELoved 251 (1988).

\(^{135}\) WAKATSUKI HOUSTON & HOUSTON, supra note 56, at 94.

\(^{136}\) FANON, BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS, supra note 47, at 113. In a section entitled “Look in the Mirror,” Bass and Davis write in a manner evocative of Fanon: Another way to counteract the distorted messages you received is to look in the mirror - and really look . . . . Look at your face and also at your body. Don’t look in order to criticize. Look simply in order to be introduced, to make the acquaintance of your body, to see this body in which
“nigger” leads Fanon to reflect on the cultural meaning of his body in the colonial context:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all, above all: “Sho’ good eatin’.”

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men.137

Acts of racial categorization separate black people from their humanity. They are both expressions of disgust and invitations to self-loathing. In the words of Joseph de Maistre, “One cannot gaze upon the savage for an instant without reading the anathema written, I do not say upon his soul alone, but even on the external form of his body.”138 The black, it seems, cannot help but turn away from his new body:

[A]lready I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it’s a Negro!139

Conversely, the “white faces” admire themselves in the speculum of black humiliation. Theirs is a pleasure in the endless elaborations of the colorline. Each slice of the subaltern’s reality, each substitution of the white observer’s gaze for that of his victim, each shout of “The supplies!” creates black people. There is no such thing as “race” without the colorline. The colorline is an erotic experience between two or more bodies.

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you live. This time look with your eyes, not through the eyes of the abuser, the society, the lover, the mother, the judge. Look as if you were an artist, a painter. Look to see, not to judge. Do this five times a day and then write about the experience.

BASS & DAVIS, supra note 36, at 219.

137 FANON, BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS, supra note 47, at 112.
138 CÉSAIRE, supra note 133, at 28.
139 FANON, BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS, supra note 47, at 116.
1. Political Sexuality

Power is everywhere. It insinuates itself into our pleasures, giving our “individual” desires a political architecture. The pleasures we create have power-effects. The pleasure of whiteness supports oppressive actions towards blacks. It is more than an addiction to a particular pleasurable thing. It is a form of pleasure without guilt. Race is a perpetual pleasure. Sade is instructive on this point: “The only deeds man is given to repent are those he is not accustomed to performing. Get into the habit, and there’s an end to qualms and regrets; whereas one crime may perhaps leave us uneasy, ten, twenty crimes do not.” Oppressors also practice denial. Fanon comments that “the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: it is the racist who creates his inferior.”

The racist creates his inferiors but the racist cannot admit that his inferiors are the product of oppression and not nature without destroying the illusion of natural inferiority upon which his pleasure is based. The culture of the colorline is comprised of “silent adjustments” which allow such denials. These denials, in turn, produce the very same pleasures and humiliations as the original aggression.

Erica Jong’s description of the “zipless” encounter as a fantasy scenario of pleasure-sans-politics, is again useful. Jong called it zipless:

[B]ecause the incident has all the swift compression of a dream and is seemingly free of all remorse and guilt . . . there is no rationalizing; because there is no talk at all. The zipless fuck is absolutely pure. It is free of ulterior motives. There is

140 I am indebted to philosopher James Bernauer, S.J., my Boston College colleague, for the term “political sexuality” which so aptly captures the element that is missing from most discussions of public affairs, including the colorline.

141 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, supra note 24, at 93.

142 Walter Rauschenbusch writes, “Sin in the individual is shame-faced and cowardly except where society backs and protects it. This makes a decisive difference in the practical task of overcoming a given evil.” Walter Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel 62 (1990).


144 Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, supra note 47, at 93 (emphasis in original).

no power game. The man is not “taking” and the woman is not “giving.” No one is attempting to cuckold a husband or humiliate a wife. No one is trying to prove anything or get anything out of anyone. The zipless fuck is the purest thing there is. And it is rarer than the unicorn.146

The obscure object of colorlined desire bears strong resemblance to Jong’s “zipless” encounter. The racialist wants to believe that his race-pleasure is not a product of a power relationship, that is, he wants to believe that he is not “taking” and the Others are not “giving.” This is a fantasy; there are no relationships exterior to power because power is immanent in everything, including our forms of pleasure.147

Our identities are forms of pleasure. “White” America is a community that has experimented with, and formed an identity around, pleasure. Race-pleasure, like the “zipless” encounter described by Erica Jong, is a way of acting out a fantasy on the body of another without taking any responsibility for it.148 The “zipless” encounter is not rare when it comes to the colorline.

A racialized society is a sprawling S&M themepark. The pleasure of the colorline is achieved through a discourse which presents “race” as a thing rather than a form of pleasure. A racialized society is a sadomasochistic society engaged in a perpetual orgy in which it denies engaging. The stability of racial categories is a result of the cumulative knowledge-effects of these trysts. To acknowledge race as a form of pleasure would be to surrender the very idea which produces the pleasure, that is, the idea of natural superiority as well as the colorlined space governed by that idea. Therefore the racist blinds and binds himself to his own handiwork and in this way manages to see himself as superior through the lens of the Other’s inferiority.

The pleasure of whiteness is achieved through the degradation of black bodies and a masking of the means by which that degradation is achieved. Conrad uses the term “idea” to refer to the

146 Jong, supra note 66, at 14.
147 See 1 Foucault, The History of Sexuality, supra note 24, at 100-01.
148 James Baldwin makes this argument regarding homophobia:

They’ve [heterosexuals] created faggots in order to act out a sexual fantasy on the body of another man and not take any responsibility for it. . . . I think it’s very important for the male homosexual to recognize that he is a sexual target for other men, and that is why he is despised, and why he is called a faggot. He is called a faggot because other males need him.

way in which the colorline depends upon the pretense that it is not a pretense:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to . . . 149

The reality of the colorline is “not a pretty thing” and is “redeemed” only by the “idea.” The idea is, in turn, redeemed only by imbedding itself in nature. Thus, black bodies are regarded as naturally degraded, for that is the only way to suppress the pleasure-destroying notion that things could be otherwise. 150

Race is a code of pleasure. That is, race is an economy of bodily pleasure not based on sexual norms. There is a pleasure in humiliation. There is a pleasure in the denial of the pleasure of humiliation. Rudyard Kipling’s notion of the “white man’s burden” is a prime example of the embedding of racial notions in a pleasure code:

Take up the White Man’s burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captive need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child. 151

In eight lines, Kipling reconfigures the colonial system as a magnanimous gesture on the part of the colonizers to their natural inferiors, the colonized. In Kipling’s upside-down description,

150 The reason Sade is perverse is because he tore away the “cover of darkness.” His dreams of freedom, from the Bastille, were dreams of pleasure in the systematic, repetitive destruction of the bodies and souls of his subaltern objects of desire. He did not cover his pleasures in the darkness of Conrad’s redemptive “idea.” Stripped of its “cover of darkness,” the underside of European reason - its Dionysian passion for festivals of violence - lay obscenely exposed in Sade’s fiction. Sade casts aside the “idea” and we see the passion which has bowed down to the idea as a means to cover its shame and to make more pleasurable its continuation. Sade himself had to be confined. Sade was confined for tearing the covers off of European freedom.
151 Rudyard Kipling, White Man’s Burden, in Gunga Din and Other Favorite Poems 52, 52 (Stanley Appelbaum ed., 1990).
the rulers are the ruled and the ruled are the rulers. The pleasure of humiliation is denied by grounding the colorline, a social relationship, in nature.\textsuperscript{152}

What I have described is not simply hatred. The colorline does not simply express hatred, it cultivates pain.\textsuperscript{153} Race-pleasure, unlike hatred, demands the existence of the black. The black body in pain is the source of this pleasure. Sometimes, however, the slaves say “no” and interrupt the fantasy. The colorline, then, is an addiction which requires more than simple obedience.\textsuperscript{154} Hegemony requires slaves who say “yes.” The “zipless” encounter, however, requires subalterns who take pleasure in submitting themselves to the master narrative, thus becoming the fantasies of the master race.

Oppressors are, therefore, seductive. The creation of situations which give rise to pleasures-in-oppression is essential to the maintenance of power. Such a situation can be seen in Weisel’s description of the day the Nazi’s ordered the Jews from Sighet:

Then, at last, at one o’clock in the afternoon, came the signal to leave. There was joy—yes, joy. Perhaps they thought that God could have devised no torment in hell worse than that of sitting there among the bundles, in the middle of the road, beneath a blazing sun; that anything would be preferable to that.\textsuperscript{155}

Such situations can be seen in the micro-aggressions of everyday life in colorlined societies.

\textsuperscript{152} See generally Richard J. Herrnstein & Charles Murray, The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994).

\textsuperscript{153} On this point, Fanon writes:

The Negro is a toy in the white man’s hands; so, in order to shatter the hellish cycle, he explodes. I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. In the interval, just before the film starts, I wait for me. The people in the theater are watching me, examining me, waiting for me. A Negro groom is going to appear. My heart makes my head swim.

\textsuperscript{154} Fanon writes of white addiction to black identity performance, “There is a quest for the Negro, the Negro is in demand, one cannot get along without him, he is needed, but only if he is made palatable in a certain way. Unfortunately, the Negro knocks down the system and breaks the treaties.” Id. at 176. The subalterns to whom whites are addicted are unstable. They have a tendency to stop being subaltern in revolutionary situations. In such situations, they tend to lose their objecthood and lose their pleasure-producing qualities. Slaves who say “no” are no longer slaves, but something different.

\textsuperscript{155} Weisel, supra note 57, at 14 (emphasis added).
2. *The Abyss*

Those who are presented with a "sprawled out, distorted, recolored"\(^{156}\) version of themselves as a result of contact with their oppressors often feel themselves cast out of the world. Consider the following observation by a victim of child sexual abuse:

> I used to think I was one step beyond . . . in another world from the others. I dreamed once about a little girl who fell under the bed. They looked for her but couldn’t find her. She was in another dimension. She was upset and crying. She screamed, but nobody heard.\(^{157}\)

This experience of the abyss, is similar to the experience of being "racéd." Race, like sex, is a form of pleasure in one’s body and narratives of sexual abuse therefore mirror narratives of racial categorization. Wakatsuki Houston writes of her experience of being racéd:

> To this day I have a recurring dream, which fills me each time with a terrible sense of loss and desolation. I see a young, beautifully blond and blue-eyed high school girl moving through a room full of others her own age, much admired by everyone, men and women both, myself included, as I watch through a window. I feel no malice toward this girl. I don’t even envy her. Watching, I am simply emptied, and in the dream I want to cry out, because she is something I can never be, some possibility in life that can never be fulfilled.\(^{158}\)

This is the shape given to the “continuous unnamed ache” of life on the wrong side of the colorline.\(^{159}\) Wakatsuki Houston and “Sandra” internalize visions of themselves as permanently outside of the world.

Those cast into the abyss by ritual sadistic abuses such as racial categorization often manage their spoiled identities by embracing them. We see it in the narratives of victims of child sexual abuse:

> **Yvonne:** I feel the relationship between me and my father was wrong and that it has colored the whole of my life. It left me feeling bad and unworthy to live a normal life.
> **Marion:** You just feel dirty inside.
> **Sandra:** I’m nothing but a little dressed-up whore.\(^{160}\)

\(^{156}\) **FANON, BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS, supra note 47, at 113.

\(^{157}\) **HERMAN & HIRSCHMAN, supra note 50, at 97.

\(^{158}\) **WAKATSUKI HOUSTON & HOUSTON, supra note 56, at 123.

\(^{159}\) *Id.* at 94.

\(^{160}\) **HERMAN & HIRSCHMAN, supra note 50, at 97.**
We see it in narratives of prison-rape:

[1] If you become a punk and are locked up for a long time, you will get somewhat used to the punk role. This varies a lot from one punk to another. Some still hate every sex act after a decade of doing it every day. Others focus on the other aspects of the relationship and find some value there. Some treasure the security it brings. Many punks who have good relationships actually become fond of their jockers. ... Psychologists generally consider adaptation to be a healthy reaction to a situation that you cannot change, so don't worry about it if you find yourself adapting to the role.161

We see a similar adaptive strategy in narratives of myriad subaltern conditions.

B. Pleasure in Humiliation

*Every woman adores a Fascist,*  
*The boot in the face, the brute*  
*Brute heart of a brute like you.*162  
-Sylvia Plath

The pleasures of the flesh are irresistible in our colorlined society. Today, these pleasures exist on both sides of the colorline. Just as there is a pleasure of humiliation, there is a pleasure in humiliation. The fetishization of the colorline by whites is rarely acknowledged. Acknowledgement of fetishization of the colorline by blacks is rarer still. There is a pleasure in using the colorline to humiliate. There is also, at times, a pleasure in being humiliated. Sadism cannot succeed without cultivating its masochists. Masochism cannot succeed without cultivating its sadists. Humiliation may also become a quest.163

Race is, in a sense, the cultivation of the desire for race. Race wants its perpetrators to lash out and its victims to kiss the lash. It is always 1984 in black America and we subalterns, like Orwell’s Winston Smith and Julia, are always encouraged to love Big Brother.164 This cultivation of desire is described by Frederick Douglass in his description of holidays under slavery. Douglass described the holiday seasons as “part and parcel of the

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163 See *supra* note 154.  
164 See George Orwell, 1984 (1949).
gross fraud, wrong, and inhumanity of slavery.\textsuperscript{165} The slaves were given the holidays not out of their masters' benevolence, but because their masters knew "it would be unsafe to deprive them of it."\textsuperscript{166} This bit of rebelliousness on the part of the slaves was transformed into another link in the chain through a series of practices which lead Douglass to comment:

Their object seems to be, to disgust their slaves with freedom, by plunging them into the lowest depths of dissipation. For instance, the slaveholders not only like to see the slave drink of his own accord, but will adopt various plans to make him drunk. . . . Thus, when the slave asks for virtuous freedom, the cunning slaveholder, knowing his ignorance, cheats him with a dose of vicious dissipation, artfully labelled with the name liberty. The most of us used to drink it down, and the result was just what might be supposed: many of us were led to think that there was little to choose between liberty and slavery. We felt, and very properly too, that we had almost as well be slaves to man as rum. So, when the holidays ended, we staggered up from the fifth of our wallowing, took a long breath, and marched to the field,—feeling, upon the whole, rather glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was freedom, back to the arms of slavery.\textsuperscript{167}

This inculcation of immorality in black bodies served to justify, to those who inhabited bodies marked as white, the social facts of white mastery and black slavery. Slave immorality served to display the slaves as children of a lesser god, as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations. Douglass, throughout his narrative, argues that the institution of slavery was dependent upon the cultivation of willing victims:

I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man.\textsuperscript{168}

This principle of Douglass' applies to many situations of oppression, not just slavery alone. The situation described by Douglass is the situation in any of the drug-besotted urban bantustans

\textsuperscript{165} Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave 84 (Signet 1968) (1845).
\textsuperscript{166} Id. at 85.
\textsuperscript{167} Id.
\textsuperscript{168} Id. at 103-04.
which together constitute what I have called the Neocolony.\textsuperscript{169}

The racist creates his inferior. This is a hard saying. The subaltern creates his tormentor. This is a harder saying still. Oppression cannot survive without inserting itself into the hearts and minds of the oppressed. One day a slave says "no." That day is a necessary condition for freedom. We forget that on all the days before revolution the slave said "yes."

C. Performing the Self: Just Say "Yes"

\textit{The best slave does not need to be beaten}
\textit{She beats herself}\textsuperscript{170}
- Erica Jong

\textit{I have made the big decision}
\textit{I'm gonna try to nullify my life}\textsuperscript{171}
- The Velvet Underground

\textit{A moment comes when the torturer and tortured are in accord, the former because he has, in a single victim, symbolically grati-}

\textsuperscript{169} I have used the term “Neocolonialism” to refer to the current relationship between white suburbia and the black inner-city. Malcolm X described the similarities between domestic and international colonialism in a 1965 speech:

I visited the Casbah in Casablanca and I visited the one in Algiers, with some of the brothers—blood brothers. They took me down into it and showed me the suffering, showed me the conditions that they had to live under while they were being occupied by the French. . . . They showed me the conditions that they lived under while they were colonized by these people from Europe. And they also showed me what they had to do to get those people off their back. The first thing they had to realize was that all of them were brothers; oppression made them brothers; exploitation made them brothers; degradation made them brothers; discrimination made them brothers; segregation made them brothers; humiliation made them brothers.


The same conditions that prevailed in Algeria that forced the people, the noble people of Algeria, to resort eventually to the terrorist-type tactics that were necessary to get the monkey off their backs, those same conditions prevail today in America in every Negro community.

\textit{Id.} The same conditions prevail today. In using a phrase from the discourse of drug addiction, “get the monkey off their backs,” to describe the colonizer-colonized relationship, Malcolm X, himself a former drug dealer, highlights the addictive nature of subalternation. Revolution, in Malcolm X’s philosophy, is a way of ending this terrible addiction.


\textsuperscript{171} \textit{THE VELVET UNDERGROUND, Heroin, on The Best of the Velvet Underground: Words and Music of Lou Reed} (PolyGram Records 1989).
fied his hatred of all mankind, the latter because he can bear his failing only by pushing it to the limit, and because the only way he can endure his self-hatred is by hating all other men along with himself. Later, perhaps, the executioner will be hanged. Perhaps the victim, if he recovers, will be redeemed. But what will blot out this Mass in which two freedoms have communed in the destruction of the human?  

-Jean-Paul Sartre

Gary Fisher, a gay African American writer who died of AIDS in 1993 at the age of thirty-two, captured this desire for oppression in his personal diary. His diary is an exploration of what it means when a slave says "yes." In a passage dated "Wednesday/Thursday, December 6/7, 1989," Fisher describes his own desire for oppression as it manifested itself in one of his many sexual encounters with white male strangers in public parks:

I could feel that change but he wasn’t making much noise. He didn’t want bystanders to know that he was going to do the damnable—in the age of AIDS—thing and shoot semen and sperm and perhaps the virus down my throat. No one would have blamed him anyway, but this way the guilt was illuminated entirely and the rape pleasure heightened ‘cause he could do this dangerous thing in silence with people watching.

The perpetrator’s “rape pleasure” in this dangerous and humiliating encounter is “heightened” by its open secret. The perpetrator, as described by Fisher, took pleasure in the cruel embrace because it was at once public and private, “he could do this dangerous thing in silence with people watching.” Those in the park could see the entire encounter but they could not see the willfully unprotected nature of the encounter. However, the onlookers’ blindness to the “damnable thing” could only be a self-willed blindness, since they were all in the park seeking the same thing. Thus, the entire exchange was a game. More striking, however, than the perpetrator’s “rape pleasure” is Fisher’s embrace of victimhood. Fisher notes his partner’s attitude and in so doing reveals his own: “His urgency and he-man nonchalance—no, it was more embarrassed contempt, a smirk, a half grin, not

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174 In this regard, their blindness to the “damnable thing” is of the same type as the general colorblindness displayed by those who are unwilling to erase the colorline.
even a thanks, a ‘see you’ more like, ‘good job, faggot, nigger; I’ll sleep well and won’t think about you after I fasten my pants.’ Sexual intimacy, pleasure, becomes the source of Fisher’s alienation. Instead of finding himself “clad in mourning” like Fanon, Fisher tells his readers that “It felt good to get treated like his slut.”

How is this “silent adjustment” to oppression possible? In a passage dated Saturday, November 2, 1985, Fisher posed the problem more precisely:

Have I tried to oppress myself—as a black man and as a (passive) homosexual man—purely for the pleasure of it, or does that oppression go right to the point of my perceived weaknesses. It is societally impossible for me to make it the way I want to make it (financially, sexually, etc.) so I’m groping for an excuse, one that feels good and therefore must be good.

Fisher is a man who has fallen into the abyss. Fisher turned his fall into a leap. We create pleasure out of strange things, even being cast down. Fisher transformed his fall into a leap through his eroticization of white male power. When society makes it impossible to “make it,” the eroticization of one’s own oppressive situation is a solution of sorts. On Sunday, January 4, 1987, Fisher wrote:

Blackness is a state of frustration. There’s no way out of this racial depression (I don’t feel the frustration personally, but as a part of a people I know that I am being fucked, abused). Sexually I want (desire, fantasize myself to be (being) used. I want to be a slave, sexually and perhaps otherwise. I feel the weakness right now.

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175 GARY IN YOUR POCKET, supra note 173, at 225.
176 Id.
177 See WITTGENSTEIN, supra note 145, § 4.002, 60-63.
178 GARY IN YOUR POCKET, supra note 173, at 187.
179 Audre Lorde, a black lesbian feminist, wrote of the “negative emotions” produced by the colorline in a way that may shed light on Gary Fisher’s inverted anger: Growing up, metabolizing hatred like a daily bread. Because I am Black, because I am woman, because I am not Black enough, because I am not some particular fantasy of a woman, because I AM. On such a consistent diet, one can eventually come to value the hatred of one’s enemies more than one values the love of friends, for that hatred becomes the source of anger, and anger is a powerful fuel.

LORDE, supra note 23, at 152.

Fisher, true to the subaltern situation, came to value the hatred of his enemies more than anything which might resemble the love of friends. He displayed his love for these enemies by displaying himself in the “sprawled out, distorted” form of their fantasies of mastery. For someone who knows nothing else, and Fisher knew nothing else, this can feel like living.
I can't beat death, I can't beat the white man, I can't beat money (another $10.00 check charge), I can't beat the system (time, traffic, the buses, movies are never as good as I expect, food), I can't stop spending (it's a form of sex). But it's not gratification I'm after; it's the frustration that I want. I think that I like the frustration. I think that I like death. Maybe by liking it it will spare me.

This is not living.

It's somewhat exciting, but I have nothing to compare it to.180

Laying back and enjoying situations which appear inevitable can sometimes feel like freedom. The freedom of submission is "somewhat exciting" if one has "nothing to compare it to." Fisher's eroticization of oppression leads him to embrace his oppressors, rather than struggle against them. Fisher willed himself into the "sprawled out, distorted"181 form set out for black subordinates. When "battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: 'Sho' good eatin',"182 Fanon said "no," but Fisher said "yes." Rather than turn away from the stereotype, Fisher takes a Nietzschean suffering-pleasure in becoming the stereotype. By August 23, 1989, Fisher would write:

I'm laying here sideways in the bed with Slavery Defended opened to about midway, sampling the arguments and thinking about how good it felt to serve. Not that it matters, but I enjoyed Thursday [another sadomasochistic encounter] immensely, particularly the sleaze and humiliation of some of it. Ultimately my service depends on the strength of my attention, hence my addiction to those things that I enjoy.183

Fisher is writing of a masochistic encounter which would lead him to comment "The racial humiliation is a huge turn-on. I enjoy being your nigger, your property and worshipping not just you, but your whiteness."184 Fanon describes the process of colonization in a way that shows self-objectification, as described by Fisher, as its ultimate aim:

It is not the soil that is occupied. It is not the ports or the airdromes. French colonialism has settled itself in the very center of the Algerian individual and has undertaken a sus-
tained work of cleanup, of expulsion of self, of rationally pur-
sued mutilation.

There is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and
independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a
whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfig-
ured, in the hope of final destruction. Under these conditions,
the individual’s breathing is an observed, an occupied breath-
ing. It is a combat breathing. 185

Life under the colorline is life under occupation.

D. The S&M Themepark and the Colorline

After revolution has failed, all questions must center on how a
new revolutionary consciousness can be mobilized around the
new set of class antagonisms that have been created by the au-
thoritarian reign of terror. At which level should we begin our
new attack? 186

-George L. Jackson

If it seems somewhat ridiculous to talk of revolution, this is ob-
viously because the organized revolutionary movement has
long since disappeared from the modern countries where the
possibilities of a decisive transformation of society are concen-
trated. But everything else is even more ridiculous, since it im-
plies accepting the existing order in one way or another. If the
word “revolutionary” has been neutralized to the point of being
used in advertising to describe the slightest change in an ever-
changing commodity production, this is because the possibilities
of a central desirable change are no longer expressed anywhere.
Today the revolutionary project stands accused before the tribu-
nal of history . . . . This amounts to recognizing that the ruling
society has proved capable of defending itself, on all levels of
reality, much better than revolutionaries expected. Not that it
has become more tolerable. Revolution has to be reinvented,
that’s all. 187

-Attila Kotanyi and Raoul Vancigem

The post-Civil Rights Movement American landscape is a gi-
gantic S&M themepark. We, the so-called blacks, have all been
“groping for an excuse” in this S&M themepark by seeking plea-
sure in our own oppression. We have come to “enjoy being their nigger[s].” The violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and
disease which have become the urban landscape bear witness to a
new “Happiness in Slavery.” 188 We have been seduced. Racial

185 Fanon, A Dying Colonialism, supra note 79, at 65.
187 Instructions for Taking Up Arms, in Situationalist International: An-
thology 63, 63 (Ken Knabb ed. & trans., 1981).
188 Pauline Reage (pseudonym of a still-unknown author) published The Story of
humiliation has become, to use Fisher’s term, a “turn-on.” We have fallen into the abyss:

[The concept of alienation seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them and have in it their own development and satisfaction. This identification is not illusion but reality. However the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms.]

Turning away from oneself can become a way of life, or rather, an imitation of life which becomes attractive to the native as he “gropes for a reason.” “What did I do to be so black and

O in 1954, the very same year in which *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided. *The Story of O* relates the progressive self-willed debasement of a young and beautiful Parisian, O, who wants nothing more than to be a slave to her lover. O forms an identity based on the pleasures of submission. O-mouths sentiments which resemble both the nihilism of today’s Neocolony and the internalized sycophancy of yesterday’s prayerful, law-abiding, non-violent civil rights marchers:

> What constantly betrays you is my imagination, my vague dreams. Then weaken me. Rid me of these dreams. Deliver me. Take whatever steps are required, so that I won’t even have time enough to dream of being unfaithful to you . . . . But first make sure to brand me with your mark. If I spurn the mark of your riding crop or your chains, or if I am still wearing those rings in my hips, let the whole world know I am yours. As long as I am beaten and ravished on your behalf, I am naught but the thought of you, the desire of you, the obsession of you. That, I believe, is what you wanted. Well, I love you, and that is what I want too.

Jean Paulhan, *Préface to Pauline Reage, The Story of O* at xxi, xxxi (Sabine d’Estée trans., 1965). Common to both the Civil Rights Movement’s non-violent wing and the collective auto-destruction of today’s ultraviolent Neocolony was a masochistic pleasure in submission to the fantasies of their oppressors. The Civil Rights Era rejection of a black armed struggle against segregation mirrors the post-Civil Rights Era’s embrace of the African-American community’s inwardly-directed armed struggle.


190 We all, each of us, “grope for a reason.” In a passage which shows a family likeness between two forms of “nobodyness,” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick recounts two conversations which illustrate reactions to stigma:

> I remember describing to Gary what I’d experienced as the overwhelming trauma of half a year of chemotherapy-induced baldness—a narcissistic insult, of no medical significance whatever, that had so completely flooded my psychic defenses that for the whole duration of the treatment, almost every hour of consciousness had remained an exhausting task.

Gary said, yes, this was what it felt like for him to have KS lesions on his arms. Nobody else ever saw them; he always wore long-sleeve shirts. But alone, he said, in his apartment, he would spend hours, sometimes whole days of months, paralyzed in front of his mirror, incredulous, unable—also
blue?” sings Louis Armstrong in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man.* Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally entitled *An Essay on the Disalienation of the Negro,* ends with the prayer, “O my body, make of me always a man who questions!” Learning to live in a subaltern body often involves learning to submit and stop asking questions. Learning to live in a colorlined society involves learning to love the system.

White fantasies of racial innocence require black complicity. That complicity has been forthcoming. We have become the fantasy figures of the white imagination. That is, we have developed a practice of taking pleasure in fulfilling the fantasies of our masters. The killing fields of the Neocolony are a stage on which the actors perform their alienation, their blackness, beneath the white gaze.

The contending castes have fused in a new pleasure formation. It is as though the fleeing figures on the Grecian Urn have caught up with each other at last. This new pleasure formation features whites partaking of pleasure-in-humiliating and blacks partaking of pleasure-in-humiliation. The two pleasures, resembling

unable to stop trying—to constitute there a recognizable self. Impaled by the stigma.

After Gary’s death I recounted this conversation to one of his sisters.

She said: I think that’s how Gary experienced being black, too.

*Gary in Your Pocket,* *supra* note 173, at 281.


192 *Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks,* *supra* note 47, at 232.

193 Du Bois described the white gaze in 1903 in terms that look into the next century:

*But alas! while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defence of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the “higher” against the “lower” races.*

W.E.B. *Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk* 7 (BantamClassic 1989) (1903). And, of course:

[The facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whispers and portents came borne upon the four winds: Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men?]

*Id.*

194 I have appropriated this image from the poem *I am Waiting,* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *I am Waiting,* in *A Coney Island State of Mind* 49, 53 (1958).
masters and slaves, the "tops" and "bottoms" of S&M culture, save for the fixed positions of the players as black or white, preserve the colorline against all efforts at eradication. Whatever is attempted will be thwarted by myriad individual and collective actions to recreate situations which give rise to colorlined pleasures of mastery or slavery.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it best when he labeled the black body a "tangle of pathology" in his 1965 manifesto of white liberal racism/sexism, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action:

It was by destroying the Negro family under slavery that white America broke the will of the Negro people. Although that will has reasserted itself in our time, it is a resurgence doomed to frustration unless the viability of the Negro family is restored. . . . At this point, the present tangle of pathology is capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world.

Moynihan's clearly unprovable thesis is valuable because it is so clearly unprovable. Moynihan does not state a fact so much as he expresses a desire—a desire for something similar to Jong's zipless encounter. The idea of "pathology" makes present-day whites innocent. This idea redeems the pleasures of white overprivilege and, more importantly, it provides a mask, a "cover of darkness," for current race-pleasure practices and practitioners. Innocence, however, does not endure forever, as in George Jackson's words:

When the white self-congratulatory racist complains that the blacks are uncouth, unlettered; that our areas are run-down, not maintained; that we dress with loud tastelessness (a thing they now also say about their own children), he forgets that he governs. He forgets that he built the schools that are inadequate, that he has abused his responsibility to use taxes paid by blacks to improve their living conditions, that he manufactured the loud pants and pointed shoes that destroy and deform the feet. If we are not enough like him to suit his tastes, it's because he planned it that way. We were never intended to be part of his world. It's a silly contradiction for him or us to dwell on the subject of comparisons between the enemy cul-

195 For a discussion of these terms see Marissa Jonel, Letter from a Former Masochist, in Against SadoMasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis 16, 17 (Robin Rath Linden et al. eds., 1982).
tute and its creation, the subculture. The only way the exploi-
ter can maintain his position is to create differences and
maintain deformities.\footnote{George Jackson, Blood In My Eye 183-184 (1990).}

The innocence, challenged by George Jackson, resembles Bald-
win’s “cover of darkness” and Conrad’s “idea.” Innocence re-
quires denial and this denial of oppression is the life of the
system and those whose lives are “thematized” by its spell. The
sociologist, no less than the lawmaker and the law enforcer, sings
the system’s endless hymn of self-praise. For the desiring white
bodies, this is a joyful noise made possible only by the promise of
race-pleasure. This race-pleasure is produced by the sociological
thematization of black bodies as minstrels and as criminals all.\footnote{For a discussion of modern social science as sadistic, see generally, A Story of
the Eyes”/I” The Parasitism of Postmodern Sociology, in Stephen Prohl, Death at
the Parasite Cafe: Social Science (Fictions) and the Postmodern 59 (1992).}

Gary Fisher’s reading of \textit{Billy Budd} is a window into the
processes of “thematization” in Melville’s work and in colorlined
societies. After writing, “I don’t want to become someone else’s
fiction,” Fisher finds himself in “someone else’s fiction”:

\begin{quote}
We are very much the same, Billy and I, for the stutter we
represent in history. Ultimate martyrs too since we weren’t
(aren’t?) there to begin with. We cease to be when someone
takes notice; from that point on you must give us definition.
Your words, your touch, your awareness of our motion gives
us shape; your interpretation of, say, spilled soup completes an
impression that you desire, and we become whatever your im-
pression makes us.\footnote{Gary in Your Pocket, supra note 173, at 204. In Fisher’s work, the
dominate sailor meets the “sprawled out, distorted, recolored” form of the colonized, as
described by Fanon in \textit{Black Skin, White Masks}. Fanon, \textit{Black Skin, White
Masks}, supra note 47, at 113. Billy Budd exists as a mirror for the desires of his
superior officers.}
\end{quote}

Fisher’s comment on becoming someone else’s desire highlights
the way in which the subaltern world is a literarly defined world.
In this world, anything can serve as evidence of anything else, so
long as one has power. Creating one’s subaltern mirror-image is
the central occupation of mastery. In Memmi’s words, “The co-
lonialists are perpetually explaining, justifying and maintaining
(by word as well as by deed) the place and fate of their silent
partners in the colonial drama.”\footnote{Albert Memmi, \textit{The Colonizer and the Colonized} 70 (Beacon Press
1991) (1965).} Fisher continues:

\begin{quote}
Yes, giving shape to nothing has some risks, but that aside you
\end{quote}
usually get what you want (we all do), and in exactly the way you want it. Power over nothing, isn’t it a little like power over a mirror? Claggart, searching for himself in Billy finally gets him . . . Vere, searching for mutiny gets mutiny . . . 201

With this passage, Fisher meets Fanon. The “Yes” of absolute sychophancy in Fisher and the “No” of total revolt in Fanon are both strategies of subversion. The structure to be subverted in both cases is the sadomasochistic subject-object relationship of the colorline. The “Yes” and the “No” are both instances of the fetish “objects” subjecting their users to the feeling of being seen by another. This reverse gaze is menacing because, as Sartre writes:

In the eyes of the other . . . I bend down to peep through the keyhole in exactly the same way as a tree is bent by the wind. To be seen is to be at the mercy of a freedom which is not my own. The sense of shame is bound up with the sense of falling into the world. 202

This “sense of falling” is a possession brought about by the gaze of the Other. Fisher and Fanon see and interpret their masters and, in so doing, each accomplishes a subversion of the master-slave relationship.

E. Becoming the Subaltern

I would venture that there are no healthy brothers of this generation, none at all. 203
-George L. Jackson

In the course of the year 1838, the peaceful island of Barbados was rocked by a strange and bloody revolt. About two hundred Negroes of both sexes, all of whom had recently been emancipated by the Proclamations of March, came one morning to beg their former master, a certain Gleneig, to take them back into bondage. 204
-Jean Paulhan

Today’s situation provides opportunities for race-pleasure through violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease. That is, the thematization of our urban bantustans as areas of

201 Gary in Your Pocket, supra note 173, at 204.
anti-civilization is complete. Our Neocolony has two distinguishing features. First, it is imagined to be unimaginably distant from the suburb. The space between suburb and Neocolony is peculiar in that it cannot be crossed. It is the distance of fantasy and not fact.\textsuperscript{205} This Atlantic of the imagination exists not as a place between here and there but, rather, as the organizing principle that makes “here” and “there” possible. Second, today’s native-bearers are not exploited for cheap labor or raw materials but rather for images of subalternation itself. Yesterday’s native-bearers carried “The supplies!” That was classic colonialism. Today’s native-bearers march in a long Lacanian line bearing images of themselves as native-bearers.\textsuperscript{206} The native-bearers today supply only the opportunity for the intrepid explorers to shout “The supplies!” We live the experience of “pure colonialism” described by Memmi.\textsuperscript{207} What does the black inner-city produce? The Neocolony produces the spectacle of violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease for its masters. The spectacle of black-on-black crime is a commodity, race-pleasure,

\footnote{\textsuperscript{205} James M. Doyle argues that today’s prosecutors, “the criminal justice White Men,” write of their experiences with the Other in ways that produce an imaginary distance between the here and there of suburb and inner-city, just like their imperialist precursors. James M. Doyle, \textit{Into the Eight Ball: The Colonialists’ Landscape in American Criminal Justice}, 12 B.C. Third World L.J. 65, 92 (1992). Doyle writes: “By making fetishes of the remoteness and difference of the colonial landscapes and the colonized people, the Europeans had managed to hide, from themselves, their own impact on the day-to-day lives of the subordinated people.” \textit{Id.} at 92. The imaginary distance, once textually woven into people’s lives, is experienced as actual distance. Hence, the neocolonial relationship between city and suburb. See also James M. Doyle, “It’s the Third World Down there!”: The Colonialist Vocation and American Criminal Justice, 27 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 71 (1992). I have tried to show that distance—real/imagined—is nothing more than the way we experience the separation between here and there.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{206} Frantz Fanon, educated in France, incorporated and expanded upon the then-new theories of Jacques Lacan in his own analysis of the colonial situation:}

\footnote{When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely . . . “The subject’s recognition of his image in the mirror,” Lacan says, “is a phenomenon that is doubly significant for the analysis of this stage. The phenomenon appears after six months, and the study of it at that time shows in convincing fashion the tendencies that currently constitute the reality for the subject; the mirror image, precisely because of these affinities, affords a good symbol of that reality: of its affective value, illusory like the image, and of its structure, as it reflects the human form.”}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{207} See Memmi, supra note 200.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{207} See Memmi, supra note 200.}
which is exported from the heart of darkness to the living rooms and museums of white America.

A colorblind nation watches the body count grow higher every night on the six o’clock news. The body count is repeated as fantasy during the prime time movie hours and then recycled as fact once more for the eleven o’clock news. Each black-on-black crime is seen as evidence of the savagery that lies just beyond the suburban frontier. It is a savagery kept at bay only by spiraling investment in the prison-industrial-complex.208 The prison-industrial-complex, in turn, produces recidivism. This is not news, as we have long known:

Year after year the gates of prison hells return to the world an emaciated, deformed, will-less, shipwrecked crew of humanity, with the Cain mark on their foreheads, their hopes crushed, all their natural inclinations thwarted. With nothing but hunger and inhumanity to greet them, these victims soon sink back into crime as the only possibility of existence. It is not at all an unusual thing to find men and women who have spent half their lives—nay, almost their entire existence—in prison.209

Emma Goldman’s commentary on the prison-industrial-complex rings true today. Today, the production of recidivism is the means by which the colonial apparatus spawns the very chaos which justifies its existence.

Just as there is a sadistic pleasure in the consumption of black criminality, there is a sadistic pleasure in the production of black criminality. It is needed:

Every day, at every moment, they will be defeated, discredited, ridiculed, spat upon—and yet they will always survive. This drama that I have played out with you [torture]... will be played out over and over again, generation after generation, always in subtler forms. Always we shall have the heretic

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208 Our hallucinogenic War on Drugs makes every day another Gulf of Tonkin incident. Aimé Césaire writes:

‘We must resign ourselves to the inevitable and say to ourselves, once for all, that the bourgeoisie is condemned to become every day more sacrilegious, more openly ferocious, more shameless, more summarily barbarous; that it is an implicable law that every decadent class finds itself turned into a receptacle into which there flow all the dirty waters of history; that it is a universal law that before it disappears, every class must first disgrace itself completely, on all fronts, and that it is with their heads buried in the dung-hill that dying societies utter their swan songs.

CÉSAIRE, supra note 133, at 45.

here at our mercy, screaming with pain, broken up, contemptible—and in the end utterly penitent, saved from himself, crawling to our feet of his own accord. That is the world we are preparing, Winston. A world of victory after victory, triumph after triumph: an endless pressing, pressing, pressing upon the nerve of power.\footnote{George Orwell, 1984, at 281 (Alfred A. Knopf 1992) (1949).}

The inequalities of the Neocolony’s schools, the production of recidivism in the Neocolony’s criminal justice system, the barrage of enticing crime dramas and the overreporting of terror all make sense if we remember that though all of our innocent pleasures may be eradicated, “always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future,” Orwell’s character O’Brien concludes, “imagine a boot stamping on a human face for ever.”\footnote{Id. at 280.}

Big Brother reduces Winston Smith to a body made human only by its memory that it had not betrayed Julia, his love and fellow-captive:

\[O’Brien\] ‘We have beaten you, Winston. We have broken you up. You have seen what your body is like. . . . I do not think there can be much pride left in you. You have been kicked and flogged and insulted, you have screamed with pain, you have rolled on the floor in your own blood and vomit. You have whimpered for mercy, you have betrayed everybody and everything. Can you think of a single degradation that has not happened to you?’

\[Winston\] ‘I have not betrayed Julia.’

\[O’Brien\] ‘[N]o; that is perfectly true. You have not betrayed Julia.’\footnote{Id. at 286.}

In the end, as Winston faces the final torture, he chooses the abyss and, in so doing, completes the work of alienation and presents his completed object-self to his tormentors in the Ministry of Love. Orwell writes:

Everything had gone black. For an instant he was insane, a screaming animal. Yet he came out of the blackness clutching an idea. There was one and only one way to save himself. He must interpose another human being, the body of another human being, between himself and the rats.\footnote{Id. at 299.}

Trapped in the torturer’s iron mask, Winston sees, smells, and
hears the starving rats as they prepare to eat his face. At the last moment he hears himself shouting, "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia!" In that moment of betrayal he falls into the abyss:

He was falling backwards, into enormous depths, away from the rats. He was still strapped in the chair, but he had fallen through the floor, through the walls of the building, through the earth, through the oceans, through the atmosphere, into outer space, into the gulfs between the stars.²¹⁴

The collective auto-destruction of the Neocolony in which each says to each "Do it to Julia!" represents the very last stage in the completion of the subaltern object-self and, consequently, the same abandonment of self committed by Orwell’s protagonist.

The Neocolony is kept in existence as a source for voyeuristic race-pleasure. It resembles Disneyland²¹⁵ even more than the Third World of the Orientalist imagination.²¹⁶ The free fall of the inner-city, like an M.C. Escher amusement park ride, folds back upon itself in a manner too subtle for our normal habits of perception. The natives of the Neocolony are perpetually on the eve of destruction. "The supplies!" is the anthem of the Neocolony. The natives of the Neocolony are not the indolent natives of the European-imagined Third World past. The natives, to the contrary, are native-bearers engaged in the work of alienation, of expulsion of self, of deliberate estrangement, of steady masochistic self-torture under the sadistic gaze of the Neocolonizer.

The work of the native-bearer is not alienating work; it is, quite to the contrary, the work of alienation itself. Pure colonialism is pure alienation. Alienation today is unfettered by objects external to the self. The native-bearers toil only at spectacularizing themselves. Spectacle, then, is the only product of the Neocolony. This is the meaning of Debord’s comment that "[i]n form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for

²¹⁴ Id. at 300.
²¹⁵ In Baudrillard’s essay, The Precession of Simulacra, he argues that the fantasy of Disneyland is the fantasy of separation, the fantasy that the space of the parking lot or the surrounding urban/suburban sprawl is any less orchestrated, any less of a themepark than the themepark itself. Jean Baudrillard, The Precession of Simulacra, in A POST MODERN READER 342, 352 (Joseph Natoli & Linda Hutcheon eds., 1995). I have taken up this theme in my exploration of the libidinal band that organizes and colorizes urban/suburban space.
the conditions and aims of the existing system."\textsuperscript{217} The work of subaltern identity reification which provides race-pleasure is also the work which serves as "total justification" for the system. That is Neocolonialism today.

America’s hypersegregated Neocolony provides the perfect situation for race-pleasure.\textsuperscript{218} The images of fratricidal ultraviolence that manufacture the idea of "race," that is, the idea of blacks and whites as essentially different, are produced by the neo-colonial situation itself. The natives, like their suburban masters, do not like the natives. Masters despise their slaves and slaves despise themselves. The natives, confined together, turn upon each other. Fanon’s insight is directly applicable today:

The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of an outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. . . . While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-a-vis his brother.\textsuperscript{219}

In today’s Neocolony, as in the heyday of European colonial rule over the Third World:

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil.\textsuperscript{220}

The sole export of our inner-cities today is race-pleasure. Our urban bantustans produce race-pleasure by ostentatiously displaying themselves as the willful "negation of all values."

"Export," "neocolonialism," "bantustan"—all of the images I have invoked are of distance, of falling out of the world, of removal from here to there, of Paradise Lost. The distance is, how-


\textsuperscript{219} Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, supra note 10, at 54.

\textsuperscript{220} Id. at 41.
ever, imaginary. Imagine the journey, the descent, of the suburban neocolonizer to the urban neocolony, the site of her employment. The trip is not a trip through space, it is a trip through the imagination. For example, if, while still in the suburbs, we ask our hypothetical neocolonizer what is to be done about the problem of youthful energy, she will answer us with playgrounds, nutritious breakfasts, secure homes, high expectations, girl scouts, boy scouts, swimming pools, tennis lessons, physics classes, open libraries, ice-skating lessons, part-time summer employment, take-your-daughter-to-work days, great books, spelling bees, bake-offs, soccer camps, PTAs, and, above all else, love. If, however, we wait until we have arrived in the neocolony before interrogating our commuting neocolonizer, she will answer us with surveillance, police, adult trials, mandatory minimum sentences and, above all else, “three strikes and you’re out.” Childhood is innocent and the black body, to remain black, must remain guilty. Childhood is, therefore, removed from the black body through a series of savage inequalities which are, through a peculiar act of mental gymnastics, denied.221

I am not blaming the victims. It is the neocolonial order which creates and maintains the conditions which give rise to the spectacular pathologies of the black body today. This is not a matter of oppressive structures pressing down on pre-existing native bodies. Rather, the oppressive structures both create and oppress the native bodies. Transforming the current situation is not only a matter of liberating ourselves from a racial order of things; we must also recognize that we ourselves are constituted by that racial order of things. The colonial order maintains those conditions, however, through the inculcation of immorality in black bodies. This procedure serves to justify, to those who inhabit bodies marked as white, the social fact of white overprivilege. However, masters cannot exist without slaves and slavery is never a matter of chains and whips alone. It is always and primarily a matter of seduction.222 The slaves, in order to be kept as

221 See generally Jonathan Kozol, Children in America’s Schools (1991); Alex Kotlowitz, There are no Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America (1991).
222 Iceberg Slim (AKA Robert Beck) describes the relationship between “pimp” and sex-worker in a way that is instructive. After emotionally battering a woman in a bar in order to break down her defenses and convince her to become his “whore,” Beck remarks, “My blast had moved her . . . She was trying to conceal from me the freakish pain-loving bitch inside her.” Iceberg Slim, Pimp: The Story of My Life 81 (1987). Exploiters are exploiters because they are successful at creating, locating,
slaves, must be seduced into substituting their master’s gaze for their own. Through our masters’ eyes, and then through our own, we appear as the anti-culture. These are strange days.

We have fallen in love with our illness. If we examine the five tangled themes of violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease which have become the “African-American” story, the “tangle of pathology,” we can see ourselves “groping for a reason” to justify and make tolerable our subaltern situation. Wilfully embracing this thematization has allowed us to take pleasure in the inevitable. In his discussion of the Algerian experience, Fanon captures this notion:

You are forced to come up against yourself. Here we discover the kernel of that hatred of self which is characteristic of racial conflicts in segregated societies.

The Algerian’s criminality, his impulsivity, and the violence of his murders are therefore not the consequence of the organization of his nervous system or of characterial originality, but the direct product of the colonial situation.

The pathological “oppression sickness” of the Neocolony is a form of submission to a colorlined society’s demand for race-pleasure. This is all hauntingly familiar. Fanon, turning the anthropological gaze back on the colonizers, discusses the French view of Algerian savagery. Fanon writes:

Among the characteristics of the Algerian people as observed by colonialism we will particularly notice their appalling criminality. Before 1954 [the year the revolution began] magistrates, policemen, barristers, journalists, and legal doctors agreed unanimously that criminality in Algeria was a problem. It was affirmed that the Algerian was a born

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223 We have developed “oppression sickness.” Torie Osborne, former executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Services Center in Los Angeles and now the executive director to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, used the term “oppression sickness” to describe the way in which gays and lesbians often turn against each other, rather than face their oppressors. Robert Goss, Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto 156 (1993). Of this Robert Goss writes: “Oppression sickness stems from the gay/lesbian inability to effectively deal with their own internalized homophobia. The destructive patterns of cannibalistic tendencies, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual addiction, co-dependence, battery, and abusive relationships are produced from low self-esteem.” Id. at 157. This inverted conflict produces fatalism. Writing in a colonial context, economist Rawle Farley writes, “fatalism keeps a community asleep. It is the disease of the indifferent.” Rawle Farley, Discussion and National Progress 37 (1959).

224 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, supra note 10, at 309.
criminal.\textsuperscript{225}

The Algerians, in sum, were spectacularized by their colonial masters:

A theory was elaborated and scientific proofs were found to support it. This theory was taught in the universities for over twenty years. Algerian medical students received this education and imperceptibly, after accommodating themselves to colonialism, the elite [the Algerian native elite] came also to accommodate themselves to the inherent stigma of the Algerian people: they were born slackers, born liars, born robbers, and born criminals.\textsuperscript{226}

The French were divided. Some attributed the Algerians' savagery to their defective culture and some attributed it to their defective blood.\textsuperscript{227} Though divided as to its causes, the French were not divided as to the "fact" of Algerian savagery and inferiority.

Today, the Neocolonial gaze is similarly divided. Some neocolonizers see the "tangle of pathology" as the product of "African Americans"' so-called defective culture and some see the "tangle of pathology" as the product of "African Americans"' so-called defective genes. Though divided as to its causes, the Neocolonizers are not divided as to the "fact" of "African-American" pathology. Whether the arguments in support of black pathology are phrased in terms of biology or in terms of culture, they end in exile to the Neocolony.

Dinesh D'Souza, for example, argues in \textit{The End of Racism} that "African Americans"' cultural inability to let go of the past, forget the harms of slavery, and cease complaining about policies like segregation, which he argues were designed to help, not hinder, the progress up from slavery, is the cause of the problem.\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{Id.} at 296.
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Id.} Fanon adds:

We shall here quote the main works on this subject by the psychiatric school of faculty of Algiers. The conclusions of the researches carried on for over twenty years were, let us recall to mind, the subject of authoritative lectures from the Chair of Psychiatry.

It is thus that Algerian doctors who are graduates of the faculty of Algiers are obliged to hear and learn that the Algerian is a born criminal. Moreover, I remember certain among us who in all sincerity upheld and developed these theories that we had learned. We even add, "It's a hard pill to swallow, but it's been scientifically established."

\textit{Id.} at 298.
\textsuperscript{227} \textit{Id.} at 296-310.
Murray and Herrnstein lead the other school of thought. They argue in The Bell Curve that "African Americans" genetic predisposition to low intelligence is the cause of the problem.\textsuperscript{229}

The Algerians discovered a curious thing about the bio-cultural racial identities they had been assigned by their French colonial masters. Revolution, they discovered, accomplished a subversion of that identity. During the revolution against French colonialism, the Algerians discovered their French-assigned colonized identities fading away. The savagery and inferiority that had previously inhabited their bodies were found to be the products of the colonial order. Revolution is the therapy of the troubled subaltern heart. The structures against which we must rebel are within us as well as without.\textsuperscript{230} An anarchist group, Black Mask, recognized in the 1960s that:

The perversions of living are not whimsical; they are integral parts of society as a whole. The fact that certain pathologies (which are truly perversions of life) appear to exist in an entirely individual way having no relationship to the social and political structure of society is a consequence of the intensity of repression as well as deeply rooted fears of comprehending the profound misery of our lives.\textsuperscript{231}

The idea of "pathology," whether group or individual, is yet another mask of power. We are all, each of us, invited, seduced, cajoled into playing roles, assuming identities, and, in masochistic moments we force ourselves to forget that our identities were chosen. Today, there is no revolution to dissolve the subaltern identity.\textsuperscript{232} The pleasure in revolution that the Algerians found in 1954 has somehow eluded us. Instead, the various forms of submission to white fantasies, pathological self-willed identities—violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease—

\textsuperscript{229} See Murray & Herrnstein, supra note 152.

\textsuperscript{230} See Duncan Kennedy, Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy: A Polemic Against the System (1983).

\textsuperscript{231} Ron Hahne, Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherpucker: The Incomplete Works of Ron Hahne, Ben Morea and the Black Mask Group 60 (1990).

\textsuperscript{232} Fanon writes that the process of dis-alienation, although it is dependent upon revolution, must not wait for revolution:

The important theoretical problem is that it is necessary at all times and in all places to make explicit, to de-mystify, and to harry the insult to man-kind that exists in oneself. There must be no waiting until the nation has produced new men; there must be no waiting until men are imperceptibly transformed by revolutionary processes in perpetual renewal.

*Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, supra note 10, at 306.*
have become forms of pleasure in themselves. We form ourselves out of our pleasures.

**F. The Ontological Curse**

*There are books which address themselves, in each individual, to all, and we feel that we are the crowd when we enter them. Those of Genet are brothels into which one slips by a door which is ajar, hoping not to meet anyone; and when one is there, one is all alone. Yet it is from this refusal to universalize that their universality is due; the universal and incommunicable experience which they offer to all as individuals is that of solitude.*

-Jean-Paul Sartre

A passage from Jean Genet’s *Funeral Rites* can be used to understand the masochism of the non-violent Civil Rights Movement. Pierrot had inadvertently put a maggot in his mouth, when “[h]e found himself caught between fainting with nausea and dominating his situation by willing it. He willed it. He made his tongue and palate artfully and patiently feel the loathsome contact. This act of willing was his first poetic attitude governed by pride.”

Sartre writes, “[i]t is too late when Pierrot discovers the maggot in his mouth. Whatever he does, he will not prevent its having defiled him.” Genet, Sartre reminds us, penned the line, “I decided to become what crime made me.”

Genet the orphan, the child of a prostitute, the one who was abandoned, wills himself to become the equal of his fate, his “ontological curse.” Genet, like his character Pierrot, is too late:

Too late when Genet adopts the resolution to steal—he has already lost the initiative. When he launches his counterattack, the others have already organized their stand, they have

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234 *Id.* at 58.

235 *Id.* at 58.

236 We find what Sartre labels the “ontological curse” in the mouth of Jouhandeau, another of Genet’s pariahs:

The insult is perpetual. It is not only in the mouth of this person or that, explicit, but on all the lips that name me. It is “being” itself, in my being, and I find it in all the eyes that look at me. It is in all the hearts that have dealings with me. It is in my blood and is inscribed on my face in letters of fire. It accompanies me everywhere and always, in this world and in the other. It is myself, and it is God in person who proffers it in proffering me, who eternally gives me that execrable name, who sees me from that standpoint of wrath.

Sartre, supra note 233, at 19.
occupied the avenues and public buildings. Before even dreaming of rebelling, he has already granted them the essential: that he is a thief and that theft is disgraceful. After that, his revolt is doomed to impotence and his most heinous crimes will merely justify the prison cell which they are preparing for him.\(^{237}\)

The subaltern identity is a “maggot” in one’s mouth. In other words, the subaltern body and the maggot produce each other. Once the black body is chosen, any “revolt” is “doomed” because in choosing itself, in choosing blackness, it makes itself all those indignities against which it rebels. In other words, the black body, “[b]efore even dreaming of rebelling . . . has already granted them the essential.”\(^{238}\)

Sartre uses the colorline to discuss Genet as I use Genet to discuss the colorline:

[Genet] loves French society as the Negroes love America, with a love that is full of hatred and, at the same time, desperate. As for the social order which excludes him, he will do everything to perpetuate it. Its rigor must be perfect so that Genet can attain perfection in Evil.\(^{239}\)

This “desperate” love for America is the acquired taste for suffering represented by Genet’s maggot. It is an addiction to the black body and its situation that keeps the maggot in place. The black body, then, is a masochistic desire for the colorline. It is a desire for stasis that masquerades, that cross-dresses, as something else. Civil rights will not create the raceless society. We reify the colorline even as we attempt to draft statutes to eliminate it from our lives—this is because we continue to preserve the notion of race. And there is no race without the colorline. A system which continues to take pleasure in engraving racial messages on bodies is a colorlined system. If we strip away the “cover of darkness” we see something like a warning: “Genet does not want to change anything at all. Do not count on him to criticize institutions. He needs them, as Prometheus needs his vulture.”\(^{240}\) Prometheus, to be Prometheus, needs his vulture. The black body, to be black, needs its humiliation. A civil rights movement will not deliver itself from the colorline.

Identity with oneself—the opposite of fragmentation—is a

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\(^{237}\) Id. at 58.

\(^{238}\) Id.

\(^{239}\) Id. at 55.

\(^{240}\) Id.
kind of pleasure. The irony is that subaltern self-identity requires, in the end, a total evocation of self. Bodies marked as black come to desire their markings in a manner similar to that depicted in Sartre’s discussion of Genet’s desire for his destiny:

The child loves his judges, he tries to draw near them, to melt, even to the point of losing consciousness, into the unanimity which he has created. He finds no other way than to share the disgust he inspires in them, than to despise himself with their contempt. The trap works well. Genet tears himself apart with his own hands. He has now become an absolute object of loathing.241

What was the non-violent Civil Rights Movement’s longing for such useless statutes but Gary Fisher writ large? What is the post-Civil Rights Movement festival of fratricide but Gary Fisher writ large? The internalized Spectacle is the desire for the “sprawled out distorted form,” “black blood,” and “thematisation” rejected by Fanon and sought by Fisher.

III

ALTERNATIVE IDENTITIES

The fruits of torments and questions, they cannot be enjoyment for the reader, but rather questions and torments. If our results turn out successful, they will not be diversions, but rather obsessions. They will give not a world to see but to change.242

Jean-Paul Sartre

My role—and that is too emphatic a word—is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept a truth, at evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people—that is the role of an intellectual.243

Michel Foucault

A. Natives Seeing Each Other

The S&M themepark has changed us. The self-chosen ordeal which constitutes the Black experience today has created a different kind of vision. Surrendering to our masters’ gaze, and ex-

241 Id. at 23.
243 RUX MARTIN, Truth, Power, Self: An Interview, with Michel Foucault, in TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: A SEMINAR WITH MICHEL FOUCAULT 9, 10 (Luther H. Martin et al. eds., 1988) (quoting Michel Foucault).
periencing their pleasure in the gaze as our own, has allowed us to first see our bodies “totally imprinted by history,” and second to cast them aside.

Viewing our ruined body, our raced body, through our masters’ lens of pleasure, we are able to feel the way in which our spoiled identity is a political project. The creation of a new body is possible when the creation of the old body is experienced in this way. That is, we have seen and experienced the black body through the eyes of our masters. We have experienced their pleasure in our monstrosity as our own pleasure in being monstrous. Our pleasure in self-abnegation, which has been manifested in the form of a host of tangled pathologies, is a form of freedom from fear—a transcendence of the body. Power over the body reaches its limit when the body no longer fears destruction.

Our experience of pleasure in the destruction of our body shows us, layer by layer, that things could be otherwise. This pursuit of pleasure requires the ability to plot a course. As we plot our course of collective autodestruction we, simultaneously, have the experience of being captains of our fate. The subaltern who chooses a subaltern identity because she takes pleasure in submission to the fantasies of her oppressors is, in that moment, aware that she could have chosen an alternative identity. The subaltern who is willing to follow her pleasure in submission—her pleasure in performance—past the limit of power’s hold over the body, that is, onto death, is free. We are all free at all times to pursue alternative pleasures and construct alternative identities. This, perhaps, is the meaning of the old spiritual Oh Freedom: “[A]nd before I’ll be a slave, I’ll be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free.”244 We are condemned, not to slavery, but to freedom.

B. Hegel: Masters, Slaves, and Self-Consciousness

Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own.245

-G.W.F. Hegel


The master desires recognition from the slave. She does not want to recognize the slave in turn, but, in the end, the slave recognizes herself in her work—this much we learn from Hegel. In the fin du siecle Neocolony, the work of the slave, the native-bearer, is to produce herself as a slave. Thus, the slave’s work, the work through which she recognizes herself as a subject and not an object, is the work of presenting herself as an object and not a subject.

Seeing the body this way, as a created thing, as an object-self, enables us to create anew. Seeing begins the new project, for the old body’s monstrosity lay in natural-seemingness. The black body was imagined to really be like that. The black body today has become unmoored from nature. We, the fetish objects who have become aware of ourselves as fetish objects, are, therefore, no longer objects, but subjects. Our awareness of the performative nature of blackness has come from our suffering-pleasure in playing the subaltern role of pleasure-object. Our utter lack of regard for the body has also come from our suffering-pleasure in playing the subaltern role.

A critical ontology of the body begins with the notion of the body as a part of an order which can always be subverted. Having transgressed the limit of pleasure-in-subalternation, we are on the cusp of a new pleasure formation. We, the native-bearers, the fetish objects, have begun a conversation with each other.

C. Shriek Of The Mutilated

The past is never dead. It’s not even past. 
-William Faulkner

Things don’t progress: they just happen.
Time won’t tell.
-Christopher John Farley

Whiteness is not a color, it is a sadistic pleasure in humiliating.

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246 I. at 111-19.
247 Foucault writes:
The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.
248 William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun, 92 (1950).
249 Christopher John Farley, My Favorite War, 60 (1996).
Blackness, which was simply a form of humiliation used to give birth to whiteness, has developed imperatives of its own. Blackness today is a masochistic pleasure in being humiliated. Blackness, having completely submitted itself to the pleasure imperative of whiteness, has reached its limit. We have overcome:

I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamed. About eighty-five years ago they were told that they were free, united with others of our country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social, separate like the fingers of the hand. And they believed in it. They existed in it. They stayed in their place, worked hard, and brought up my father to do the same. But my grandfather... was an odd old guy, my grandfather, and I am told I take after him. It was he who caused the trouble. On his death-bed he called my father to him and said, 'Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.' They thought the old man had gone out of his mind. He had been the meekest of men... 'Learn it to the younguns,' he whispered fiercely; then he died. 250

We have "Overcome 'em with yeses" by our suffering-pleasure in violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease. 251 Ironi-

251 This pleasure-in-subalternation not only leads to self-consciousness, it is also, in itself, a kind of rebellion. The removal of resistance removes the joy of mastery. Sade writes:

If the objects who serve us feel ecstasy, they are then much more concerned with themselves than with us, and our own enjoyment is consequently impaired. The idea of seeing another person experience the same pleasure reduces one to a kind of equality which spoils the unutterable charms that come from despotism... Any enjoyment is weakened when shared.

Simone de Beauvoir, Must We Burn Sade?, in THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM AND OTHER WRITINGS 3, 22 (quoting Sade) (internal quotation marks omitted). Perhaps it is Sade's "unutterable charms" of despotism to which James Baldwin alludes in his essay MANY THOUSANDS GONE: "Wherever the Negro face appears a tension is created, the tension of a silence filled with things unutterable." JAMES BALDWIN, MANY THOUSANDS GONE, in NOTES OF A NATIVE SON 24, 29 (Beacon Press 1984) (1955) (emphasis added). Reading these two passages, and contemplating Baldwin, Beauvoir, and Sade together, a picture emerges of race-pleasure as species of sadistic pleasure that cannot be named. Baldwin is again instructive:
cally, this suffering-pleasure in the accommodation of white desire has led the fetish objects to become aware of themselves as fetish objects; that is, the performers are now aware that they are performers.

We, the native-bearers, have begun to develop a new discourse. This new discourse of the subaltern black body is uncharted territory. We have experienced the black body from the situation of submission. From that situation, we have experienced the black body as a pleasure formation, a pleasure-in-humiliation, that gave flesh to the black body. The black body is familiar to us today because we have experienced white pleasure-in-humiliating as our own pleasure-in-being-humiliated. In making this connection to the audience we experience our identity, our black body identity, as a contingent, historical project, as a game, as a performance, as a form of pleasure. This experience of blackness as a performance has made it possible to transgress. The creation of a new body is possible once the old body is experienced as a performance.

D. Time On The Cross

It is finished.\textsuperscript{252}
- John 19:30

The Savior said to me, “He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus.”\textsuperscript{253}
- The Apocalypse of Peter (VII, 3)

The black body is finished. The entire project of the black body was dependent on its being understood as a natural, not a

\begin{quote}
In our image of the Negro breathes the past we deny, not dead but living yet and powerful, the beast in our jungle of statistics. It is this which defeats us, continues to defeat us, which leads to interracial cocktail parties their rattle, genteel, nervously smiling air; in any drawing room at such a gathering the beast may spring, filling the air with flying things and an unlightened wailing.
\textit{Id.} at 28-29. Race-pleasure, which comes from domination and which can only exist under the “cover of darkness,” always threatens to emerge by disappearing. That is, we know race-pleasure exists when it is unavailable just as the addict is never more aware that heroin exists as when she hasn’t any. Conversely, race-pleasure also threatens to disappear by emerging. That is, consciousness of race-pleasure reveals the artificial, performative nature of race and since race-pleasure depends on the reality of race, all pleasure connected to race disappears when its reality is seriously questioned. Race-pleasure is a love that dares not speak its name.
\textsuperscript{252} John 19:30 (King James).
\textsuperscript{253} The Apocalypse of Peter (VII, 3), reprinted in \textit{The Nag Hammadi Library in English} 339, 344 (Frederik Wisse ed., Roger A. Bullard trans., 1977).
\end{quote}
social, artifact. The project has undermined itself by completing itself. In the end, the black body, to submit itself completely to the white pleasure-imperative, required a consciousness of submission and an aesthetic of pleasure-in-submission. Only a body conscious of itself as free could surrender itself so completely to the black body desired by whiteness. This pleasure-in-submission, our suffering-pleasure, is a triumph over the body. To endure it, to take pleasure in the Procrustean torture ritual, is to understand the body, and its manipulation, as a form of pleasure within one’s own control. The certitude of having to obey vanishes when one develops an utter disregard for destruction; “death is power’s limit, the moment that escapes it.”

This “escape” can be seen in Gary Fisher’s journal entry of November 27, 1988, which pairs a dispassionate reaction to an HIV-positive diagnosis with a passionate reaction to an unfinished term paper and an unrequited crush:

I have a cold. I had a positive test. I still haven’t finished the Chaucer paper; really haven’t started writing it. But the greatest disappointment, at least as sits with me right now, comes from an encounter at the I-Beam. That handsome, white, flat-topped man, I asked him to dance—after spending an hour looking at him (after Gurrile told him I was interested!)—and he said ‘no.’ How else was I supposed to break the ice?

Fisher’s pleasure-in-submission had, by the time of this entry, led him past caring about the fate of his body. Perversely, our pleasure-in-submission, a pleasure which displays itself through the five major scenes of violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease, has led us to an utter disregard for destruction, which, in turn, has led us past caring about the fate of our bodies. Fisher transcends his body even as he wills himself into the distorted form of white American desires. The black body, made totally plastic by suffering-pleasure, and now aware of its plasticity, understands the false necessity of its time on the cross. James Miller writes in a biography of Foucault: “[T]he ‘slow motions of pleasure-pain’ might liberate a human being from these cruel fantasies by illuminating a historically contingent erotic obsession with violence and aggression, while dissolving in practice the morbid reification of ‘sex-desire’ that Freud had called the ‘death instinct.’”

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254 SIMONS, supra note 247, at 85.
255 GARY IN YOUR POCKET, supra note 173, at 221.
larized pathology of the Neocolony, may have been a “goodbye to all that”\textsuperscript{257}

Surrendering to a kind of hallucinatory fever, as the spectacle of your own blood plunges you into delirium, you are going to face your ‘moment of truth.’

You are going to experience directly, in a way that scientific inquiry has never been able to illuminate, “the silent world of the entrails, the whole dark underside of the body lined with endless unseeing dreams.”

And through this experience—which will safely whisk you to the threshold of your own imagined death—you are going to feel the pathological process, through its own force, snap the soul’s shackles.

Will the ordeal work?\textsuperscript{258}

Willful pleasure-in-submission to the white-assigned black identity, that is, total surrender to the black body in the form of joyful performances of white fantasies of black violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease, has liberated us from the black body. What might this new consciousness beget?

\textsuperscript{257} See Morgan, supra note 55.

\textsuperscript{258} Miller, supra note 256, at 279-80.