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that Govern our Lives, an Argument for a New Poesies of Being, i.e., Return the Devil’s Fire

By

Michael J. Myers II

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

African American Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Ula Y. Taylor, Chair

Professor Michael Mark Cohen

Professor Nikki Jones

Professor Daniel H. Perlstein

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Abstract

“Nigger Chaos”: On Violent Black Rebellion – Towards the Pirating of the Epistemological Codes that Govern our Lives, an Argument for a New Poesies of Being, i.e., Return the Devil’s Fire

by

Michael J. Myers II

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Professor Ula Y. Taylor, Chair

Nigger Chaos is a multifaceted and multilayered experimental storytelling project in Black Studies. The stories and pieces of data from which this dissertation draws is animated by the theoretical formations of violent black rebels, sutured together by the sonics of black musicians, arranged and composed with the fugitive in mind. In one register, this study departs from traditional scholarly inquiries into violent black rebellion wherein violence is operationalized as a dependent variable within a predictable arc that extols resistance, rescues the black body, ascribes it with agentic characteristics, and/or identifies rebellion as symptomatic of a larger phenomenon enacted with a predetermined teleological endpoint. *Nigger Chaos* understands the violence of the black rebel as an independent variable imbued with narrative properties possessing distinctly autonomous semantic and material characteristics. Reconceptualizing violent black rebellion in this manner not only elucidates how the use of violence by black people has historically served as an effort to reshape their lives, but also how their utilization of violence – as an ideological formation freed from means/ends – challenges the founding epistemological antagonisms upon which colonial and state power was created and maintained, namely who is killable and who is not.

And, on another scale, *Nigger Chaos* attends to the long intellectual history that carefully created our current epistemological socio-politico-juridical order and examines the ways in which violent black rebellion intervenes, in the form of a question mark, to postulate different possibilities and new potentialities of being. I do this by tracing the epistemology that animates the codification of the pirate within the legal and political imagination of Western statecraft and analyzing the ways in which these grammars have been transumed over and across time. It is suggested that the interplay between the state and the pirate – as the enemy of all, to whom no rights are afforded and no protection owed – discloses the positionality of the violent black rebel. That is, our current socio-politico-juridical epistemological order, by design, constrains the black subject’s opportunity for redress to be found in appeals to the state. And yet, it is this very same positionality – always an enemy, always potentially violent, and always an internal threat – that makes possible for a new political praxis.

For

My teachers

Robyn and Michael Myers, my first teachers

Kathleen M. Contrino

Ula Y. Taylor

Michael Mark Cohen

&

Sylvia Wynter

Katherine McKittrick

My students

Past, present, and future

And for all the violent black rebels that dare to compose a different story

To

Those who know the curious heaviness of the gun

and wonder

what aiming at different targets might do

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillah al-Rahman al-Raheem

As the original and yet-to-be-finished-twelve-pages-and-still-counting-version of this section may attest, my ability to sufficiently express the depths of the sincere gratitude I have for everyone who helped me to get to this side of the dissertation proved to be an impossible task. I *attempted* to provide specific examples of precisely how and why I am so very thankful for the people and places herein named because it is important to me that you may know by feeling such sentiments. It was formatted, albeit in text, like a shoutout record from those old DJ Clue mixtapes. But alas, I have failed. I must now *contend with* the fact that I am half past the eleventh hour to submit this project by the necessary date stipulated by my postdoctoral fellowship. Please forgive me for any oversights; I kindly ask that you blame it on my mind instead of my heart. Likewise, anything that is good and generative within this dissertation is a credit to Allah (Alhamdulillah), the Universe, the scholarship from which it draws, my thought partners, and my committee members; all faults are my own.

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And lastly, shouts to Buffalo! It is a completely different valence of living where one must get it out of the ice and snow than it is to get it from the mud; to grow in a city with a team that went to the championship four years in a row and lost all four years; to know nothing of winning, and to *still* muster the courage to believe (*billieve*) so fiercely that “next year is going to be *our* year.”

My heart belongs to Buffalo // Street names so poetic, street corners dangerously stoic // Scuffed Nikes can lead to closed caskets // Dilapidation and dope fiends, yellow piss stains in snow // But every spring, roses still manage to grow // Pure aesthetics to my soul

After all this time of being away, I have learned that such delusional optimism is an ethos for being, which conditions the possibility for misreading the world. For instilling within me this orientation to the world, thank you!

¹ Benny the Butcher, and Keisha Plum. *Intro: Babs*. Tana Talk 3. Buffalo, NY: Griselda Records, 2018.

Overture

A Prelude to Nigger Chaos

$\text{♩} = 70$

Gunn Vox

Rest in peace Vi-no Rest in peace Mic Rest in Peace Mig-uel Rest in peace Sha-nell

Piano / Pad

Electric Bass

Backing Vox

3

Lead

Cha-nel ski mask we liv - in in hell We liv - in in hell

Pno.

E.Bs.

Vox

Amberst Station 2, Westside Gunn

At this level of Otherness [...] so total was his mode of Nigger Chaos.

– Sylvia Wynter, *The Ceremony Must be Found: After Humanism*, 1984 (p.36)

The place, the antithesis of the Dante's Inferno in which they find themselves now, from *where they were from*. The here and now was exile. The dream of the return became central. [...] Here began the spirituals, the blues, the culture of exile, the aesthetic/symbolic rearticulation [...] of being [...]. Singing of the sweet chariot coming to take them home, the slaves claimed their true origin, as a population, denoted the present order as a vale of tears, delegitimated its principalities and powers. [...] To all who partake in the song [...] – the world outside the song [...] must be burnt. [...] To bring crashing down, at the level of the psyche, individual and collective, all such walls. Thereby, untuning, unstringing the respective interacting dynamics of their institutionally imposed structures, and, together with them [...] our present hegemonic socially conditioned psychic structure.

– Sylvia Wynter, “*We Know Where We Are From*”: The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley, 1977 (pp. 43-48)

Officer told me to turn the beat off // I turned it a level higher // Then return the Devil's fire

– JAY-Z, “Can I Live II,” 1998²

Act I: D'Evils

On November 29, 2012, the police executed Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell during a traffic stop in Cleveland, Ohio. Confusing the sound of a car's exhaust backfiring for gunfire, more than one hundred police officers gave chase to the vehicle they were driving: a blue, 1979 four-door Chevrolet Malibu. When Malissa and Timothy ran out of road, eventually coming to a stop sandwiched between an alleyway wall and two police cars, twelve police officers proceeded to shoot eighty-eight bullets into their parked car. And as this is unfolding, another cop, Michael Brelo, arrives to the scene.

Within a matter of twenty seconds – less time than it will take for you to read the following series of events within this paragraph – Brelo fired his city-issued Glock 17 a total of forty-nine times at Malissa and Timothy. From within the confines of his squad car, he placed Malissa and Timothy into his sights and commenced participating in the already-ongoing-police-shooting-rampage. He emptied his seventeen-round magazine into their Malibu; reloaded his gun; exited the police car; ran to the back of his car; shot another seventeen times at Malissa and Timothy through the driver's side window; reloaded his gun for the second time; jumped onto the hood of the Malibu; found his balance; took point-blank aim; and fired fifteen more rounds through the windshield. The police collectively shot a total of 137 times at Malissa and Timothy.

An execution by firing squad.

² Westside Gunn, *Amberst Station 2*, Hitler Wears Hermès 6 (Buffalo, NY: Griselda Records, 2018); JAY-Z, *Can I Live II*, Reasonable Doubt (Re-Release) (1996; repr., New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1998).

The reports filed by the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office coldly read like the ledgers maintained by those who trafficked in black-people-as-commodity-property, assessing whether their teeth were in "good" or "poor" condition; commenting that Malissa's "nude body is that of a normally developed and adequately nourished black female" and that her "scalp hair is short, black, curly, and has a normal distribution"; describing Timothy's neck as "short and supple" and that his "pubic hair has a normal distribution for gender." Timothy's blood level content was measured to the nanogram of a milliliter (ng/mL) – to one-billionth of a gram – to determine how much cocaine was in his system. The exacting "recovery of projectiles" from Malissa's head –

A 7/8" x 3/8" x 3/8" gray and copper metal fragment and a 1/2" x 3/8" x 1/4" irregular gray metal fragment are recovered from the mouth

*Course and direction: Left to right, front to back, and downward.*³

– meticulously measured, compiled, and reconstructed to precisely determine the "how" and "where" each fragment of "copper-colored metal" fractured, lacerated, and/or penetrated, perforated, and punctured the bones, muscles, joints, soft connective tissues, and the organs that once supported their biological lives. The Autopsy Reports enumerated the number of times bullets tore holes through their flesh. Their deaths were both ruled homicides.

Malissa Ann Williams. *Cause of Death: Multiple (24) gunshot wounds of head, neck, trunk, and left arm with multiple visceral, vascular, and skeletal injuries.* HOMICIDE

Timothy Ray Russell. *Cause of Death: Multiple (23) gunshot wounds of head and neck, torso, and extremities with skeletal, vascular, and visceral injuries.* HOMICIDE⁴

Yet such careful indexing and cataloguing belie the fact that within the sixty-six pages of reports provided by the County's Medical Examiner, Malissa's name is carelessly spelled "Melissa" thirty-three of the forty times she is mentioned. *The irreverence of their indecency.*

³ Joseph A. Felo, "Gross Anatomic Description: Malissa Ann Williams," Case Number: IN2012-02024, Gross Anatomic Description (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, January 8, 2013), 1,2; Andrea L. Wiens, "Gross Anatomic Description: Timothy Ray Russell," Gross Anatomic Description (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, January 7, 2013), 1; Andrea L. Wiens, "Toxicology Laboratory Report: Timothy Russell," Toxicology Laboratory Report (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Regional Forensic Science Laboratory, January 2, 2013), 1–2.

⁴ Hon. John P. O'Donnell, Judgement Entry of the Verdict After a Bench Trial. In *The State of Ohio v. Michael Brelo*, No. CR-13-580457-A (Court of Common Pleas, Cuyahoga County, Ohio May 23, 2015); Thomas P. Gilson, "Report of Autopsy Of: Malissa Ann Williams," Report of Autopsy (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 3, 2012); Thomas P. Gilson, "Report of Autopsy Of: Timothy Ray Russell," Report of Autopsy (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 4, 2012); Thomas P. Gilson, "Cause of Death Report: Malissa Ann Williams," Cause of Death Report (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 3, 2012), [capitalization original]; Thomas P. Gilson, "Cause of Death Report: Timothy Ray Russell," Cause of Death Report (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 4, 2012), [capitalization original]; Thomas P. Gilson, "Medical Examiner's Verdict Of: Malissa Ann Williams," Medical Examiner's Verdict (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 1, 2012); Thomas P. Gilson, "Medical Examiner's Verdict Of: Timothy Ray Russell," Medical Examiner's Verdict (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, December 1, 2012).

It bears repeating: Malissa and Timothy were shot at by the police 137 times while they were cornered, parked, and sitting (unarmed) inside of their car. [Thank you, Baby Suggs, holy, for your heart.⁵]. Of the thirteen cops that participated in the execution, Brelo was the only person to be indicted and tried for a crime.⁶ On May 30, 2014, the secretly impaneled grand jury indicted Brelo on two first-degree charges of felony voluntary manslaughter. If convicted, he faced a twenty-five year sentence in prison, the maximum allowed sentence a judge could impose.

Prior to the Brelo case being heard however, the families of Malissa and Timothy were each awarded \$1,500,000 – this the decided value of their lives according to the now-time of plantation logics – in a civil suit against the city of Cleveland. Likewise, the city’s police department was again in the news for killing black people. This time, a twelve year old boy named Tamir Rice. He was playing in the playground with what a neighbor imagined to be a gun; the police killed Tamir within two seconds of their arrival. The corresponding protests that erupted in Cleveland developed a different resonance when, two days later, on November 24, 2014, the grand jury returned a no-bill indictment for the cop that killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. The hue and tenor of a growing national awareness of police gunning down black people – or, the extrajudicial police killings of black people, as the grammars of liberal notions of justice would have it – galvanized mass social movements across the country for black life. And some frequencies registered the coming sound of justice when, on December 4th of the same year, Eric Holder, the United States Attorney General, announced that the Cleveland Police Department, not unlike many other police departments throughout the country, were engaged in “a pattern or practice of using unreasonable force in violation of the Fourth Amendment” of the United States Constitution and “structural and systemic deficiencies and practices – including insufficient accountability, inadequate training, ineffective policies, and inadequate engagement with the community” – were endemic to the department and were “contributing to the use of unreasonable force.” Such findings, the Department of Justice notes, were “well-founded” concerns already known unto the city’s chorus of “community members [and] civic leaders.” Attorney General Holder’s report repeatedly declared the “need for sustainable reform” as the rejoining remedy for institutional and systemic antiblackness – both a citational carryover from the same counterinsurgent strategies designed to quell black revolt operationalized in President Reagan’s *A Nation at Risk* report (1983) and the *Kerner*

⁵ “[I]n this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass [...] Yonder they don’t love your flesh. They despise it. They don’t love your eyes; they’d just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. [...] And no, they ain’t in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins instead. No, they don’t love your mouth. [...] And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight.” In: Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 87–90.

⁶ Scott Sistek, Cynthia Moore, Randy Patrick, Paul Box, and William Salupo were suspended for twenty-one days. Michael Rinkus was suspended for twenty-two days. While Michael Brelo’s termination from police duty was upheld in arbitration proceedings in 2017, the other five officers that were fired, Wilfredo Diaz, Brian Sabolik, Michael Farley, Christopher Ereg, and Erin O’Donnell, were subsequently reinstated during the same arbitration hearings. William Demchak retired. Charges of misdemeanor dereliction of duty were initially levied against Michael Donegan, Jason Edens, Paul Wilson, Patricia Coleman and Randolph Dailey. However, charges were eventually dropped in the former three cases and upon Coleman’s acquittal, Dailey was never prosecuted. Adam Ferrise, “Fired Cleveland Police Officer Michael Brelo, Five Others, Trying to Get Jobs Back,” *Cleveland.Com*, October 17, 2016, sec. Metro; Adam Ferrise, “Michael Brelo Stays Fired, Other Officers Involved in ‘137-Shots’ Chase Get Jobs Back,” *Cleveland.Com*, June 13, 2017, sec. Metro; Lauren Floyd, “Two Cleveland Supervisors on Trial In Case of Cops Firing 137 Shots to Kill Unarmed Pair,” *Atlanta Black Star*, July 16, 2019, sec. News.

Commission Report (1968) and a foreshadowing of the same machinations that would underwrite the *Ferguson Report*, which would be published the following year on March 4, 2015.⁷

The trial in the case of the *State of Ohio v. Brelo* commenced on April 6, 2015, and was presided over by John P. O'Donnell, a Democrat. Charged with voluntary manslaughter, the prosecution was tasked with evidencing beyond a reasonable doubt that Brelo knowingly killed Malissa and Timothy in violation of their Fourth Amendment Constitutional rights. The specific statute reads as following:

No person, while under the influence of sudden passion or in a sudden fit of rage, either of which is brought on by serious provocation occasioned by the victim that is reasonably sufficient to incite the person into using deadly force, shall knowingly cause the death of another or the unlawful termination of another's pregnancy.⁸

The legal matter upon which Judge O'Donnell was to rule hinged upon whether Brelo's actions were "objectively reasonable." And this determination flows from the legal precedent on the matter. In the rendering of his ruling, the legal citations that have come to (over) determine the legal framework for determining the guilt/innocence of cops that have killed black people are provisioned.

Ohio v. Sellards (1985); *Patterson v. New York* (1977); *Ohio v. Muscatello* (1978); *Ohio v. Calhoun* (1983); *Ohio v. Rhodes* (1992); *Burrage v. United States* (2014); *Ohio v. Johnson* (1977); *Ohio v. West* (2006); *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985); *Plumbhoff v. Rickard* (2014); *Graham v. Connor* (1989); *Untalan v. City of Lorain* (2008); *Saucier v. Katz* (2001); *Ohio v. White* (2013)

Emplotted within each case are stories that represent a certain tell, a proleptic indication that, to borrow Sylvia Wynter's phrasing, law-likely enacts on the outcome of future stories. It is along this closed-circuit citational loop of precedent that legal thinking, and subsequently, the behaviors deemed to be il/legal, are governed.

The orbit of thought revolving around the above citations reason that the standard of "objective reasonableness," which is again the criterion against which Brelo's guilt/innocence is measured, is predicated upon the officer's own perception of the existence of "imminent [and] serious bodily harm to him and the other officers [and] to the public." Crucially: it matters not if the threat imagined to the cop is real, imagined, or otherwise found later to be something innocuous –

⁷ United States Attorney's Office and United States Attorney's Office Northern District of Ohio, "Investigation of the Cleveland Division of Police" (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, December 4, 2014). Compare the animating logics to the Ferguson report: "Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson" (Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice, March 4, 2015). But "to reform a system," as Dylan Rodríguez notes, "is to adjust isolated aspects of its operations in order to protect that system from total collapse, whether by internal or external forces. Such adjustments usually rest on the fundamental assumption that these systems must remain intact – even as they consistently produce asymmetrical misery, suffering, premature death, and violent life conditions for certain people and places." See: Dylan Rodríguez, "Reformism Isn't Liberation, It's Counterinsurgency," *LEVEL*, October 20, 2020, <https://level.medium.com/reformism-isnt-liberation-it-s-counterinsurgency-7ea0a1ce11eb>. For a fascinating and compelling argument about the counterinsurgency efforts waged by the federal government through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to prevent urban black revolt, see: Mahasan V. Offutt-Chaney, "'Learn Baby Learn,' Federal Education Policy and the Disciplining Politics of Opportunity: 1965-1999" (Dissertation, Berkeley, CA, University of California, Berkeley, 2019).

⁸ OH Rev Code § 2903.03

the perception of the threat encountered by the cop who must decide to use lethal force is all that matters here.⁹ And right on cue, from the very opening, Brelo *sang* this song to a tee! As presaged by the governing logics cohered from previous precedents, and with the gusto of an alto, Brelo belted out his perceived fears during his interview with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

I've never been so afraid in my life. I thought my partner and I were being shot at and that we were going to be killed.

I've never been more afraid in my life for me and my fellow officers, sir. [...] I thought we were going to get rammed. I thought we were going to be shot and killed.

When asked to account for firing as many times as he did at Malissa and Timothy, and why he proceeded to empty an entire clip from the top of the police car's trunk down into and through the driver's side window, Brelo testifies that he "sees the suspects moving, and I couldn't understand why they were still moving [...] and I just couldn't understand why the suspects were still moving." The should-be-already-dead-yet-remains-undead-and-zombified characterization he attributes to Malissa and Timothy, he tells the interrogators, compel him to jump onto the hood of the Malibu, and fire fifteen more times at point-blank range through the car's windshield. He recounts again his recurring thoughts, "Why are they still moving?" "Why haven't they stopped?" "Why is the threat still moving?"¹⁰ During the trial, the expert witness for the defense testified that Brelo's actions prior to him jumping on the hood were "objectively reasonable" because the other cops present were *also* shooting at Malissa and Timothy. Even further, when asked if Brelo "acted reasonably" when he fired on the hood of the Malibu through the windshield, the same expert witness concluded that he "would probably say so." The judge cites these definitions of "objective reasonableness" and in his decision, he writes, "My conclusion that Brelo was justified in deciding to use deadly force should come as no surprise."

To illustrate both points being made here, the rationale of "objective reasonableness" the judge is limning – and however ironic – the shared point that I am attempting to make here, Judge O'Donnell lists the names of the other cops who shot at Timothy and Malissa, though none of them were on trial, and then enumerates how many times they fired their guns while simultaneously qualifying each instance – again, in accordance with legal precedent and expert witness testimony – as being justifiably reasonable in their perceived perceptions – both individually in the case of Brelo and as a unified collective – of the threat posed by Malissa and Timothy.

William Salupo reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least a shot at the Malibu and both of its occupants; Paul Box reasonably perceived a threat justifying a shotgun blast at Russell and Williams; Christopher Ereg reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least two shots at Russell and Williams; Wilfredo Diaz reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least three shots at Russell and Williams; Brian Sabolik reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least four shots at Russell and Williams; Michael Farley reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least four shots at Russell and Williams; William Demchak reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least four shots at Russell and Williams; Randy Patrick reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least nine shots at Russell and Williams; Michael Rinkus reasonably

⁹ O'Donnell, Judgement Entry of the Verdict After a Bench Trial. In *The State of Ohio v. Michael Brelo*.

¹⁰ Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigation, Michael Brelo Interview, Exhibit No. 18, December 10, 2012.

perceived a threat justifying at least nine shots at Russell and Williams; Erin O'Donnell reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least 11 shots at Russell and Williams; Scott Sistek reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least 12 shots at Russell and Williams; Cynthia Moore reasonably perceived a threat justifying at least 14 shots at Russell and Williams. [...] Brelo reasonably perceived a threat justifying about 34 shots at the suspects.¹¹

The final burden of proof required to be shown by the prosecution is evidence of causation. Judge O'Donnell states that "cause is an act that directly produces a death and without which it would not have occurred." And again, as stipulated by the narrative interpretations of case precedent, it had already been determined that a "but-for" formulation of causation constitutes the minimum threshold for causation. In other words, because Malissa and Timothy were shot at so many times by so many different people, in order to satisfy the crime of voluntary manslaughter, the prosecution had to prove that Malissa and Timothy were not killed by anybody "but-for" Brelo's actions alone.¹² Forensics failed to prove which of the twenty-four bullet holes killed Malissa and which of the twenty-three bullet holes killed Timothy.¹³

On May 23, 2015, Judge O'Donnell delivered his verdict and found the defendant, Michael Brelo, not guilty of voluntary manslaughter. To briefly summarize how the court arrived at this decision: a) the prosecution could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Brelo was not "objectively reasonable" in his perception that Malissa and Timothy constituted a threat; b) that a collective of police officers all shot at Malissa and Timothy, suggests the reasonableness of such gratuitous use of force; c) legal precedent is the basis for rulings in instances of cops killing black people and as such, a proleptic plot portends and delimits the horizon of possibility for any other outcome, or any new story to unfold; and d) Malissa and Timothy sustained so many bullet wounds, the bullet dealing their deaths could not be identified.

The conservative, who does not dispute the validity of revolutions deeply buried in history, invokes visions of impending anarchy in order to legitimize his demand for absolute obedience. Law and Order, with the major emphasis on order, is his watch word. The liberal articulates his sensitiveness to certain of society's intolerable details, but will almost never prescribe methods of resistance which exceed the limits of legality – redress through electoral channels is the liberal's panacea [...].¹⁴

*Whoever said illegal was the easy way out
 Couldn't understand the mechanics
 And the workings of the underworld*¹⁵

¹¹ O'Donnell, Judgement Entry of the Verdict After a Bench Trial. In *The State of Ohio v. Michael Brelo* at 28–31.

¹² O'Donnell, at 16–25.

¹³ "I cannot [...] find beyond a reasonable doubt which of the four fatal wounds [Brelo] caused." O'Donnell, at 19. It should also be noted, that Judge O'Donnell mentions Malissa seven times throughout the rendering of his verdict, and misspells her name every single time.

¹⁴ Angela Y. Davis, "Political Prisoners, Prisons and Black Liberation," in *If They Come in the Morning... Voices of Resistance*, ed. Angela Y. Davis (1967; repr., New York, NY: Signet Books, 1971), 27.

¹⁵ JAY-Z, *D'Evils*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

Act II: *Politics as Usual*

Cops killing black people is not a new phenomenon. And Michael Brelo, as an individual, is unremarkable. However, that a police officer was indicted by a grand jury and subsequently charged with a felony for their role in killing a black person is a statistical anomaly. While the precise vastness of such an irregularity is difficult to assess (police departments are not legally mandated to report the incidences of police-involved murders – and because, at the time of this writing, there is no known systematic method of collecting data for the deaths wrought by the hands of other custodial institutions, county, city, state, and federal corrections represent but one set of institutions intertwined with life-taking measures), what is new are the technological advances that have enabled the flow of information pertaining to police killings to spread much easier. For example, within the ten year period of 2013 and 2023, data scientists safely estimate that the police killed approximately 12,340 people. Of this number, the police killed roughly 3,160 black people – a rate of death three times higher than whites and twice the rate of any other racial group. And between the same years, the police were charged – not convicted or sentenced – for a crime in less than one percent of all instances.¹⁶

But the quantification of black life lost, ripped to pieces and forever changed – the people who lost their partners, friends, their pops or their mommas, their granny’s, aunties, and uncles, the mothers and fathers who mourn the lives of their beloved children being cutdown and torn asunder – how can any number bring to bear the unfathomable emptiness made to be carried every waking day of those who remain? And to what extent does such cataloguing and indexing of black death become a stand-in for the ways in which blackness becomes known?

My effort here in Act II, is not to invent a different mode of analysis concerning the quantifiable metrics by which *we know we* are continuing to survive through even our quotidian, premature deaths. Instead, and if only to highlight here that which will be discussed later in Chapter Two, what Ruth Wilson Gilmore refers to as “doomed methods of analysis” that, like the closed citational loop of thought and behavior observed in the Act I,¹⁷ come to replicate and reiterate the very same forms and logics of death we are attempting to undo. Moving away from this scene of repeated carnage then, I wonder what might seeing each of these persons names killed between 2013-2023 on these pages *do* in terms of eliciting an otherwise detour from the flattening of their lives through numbers. Someone on this earth is mourning their death. Someone cries, laughs, and remembers them – their smell, an inside joke, a rejoinder that life is short. Someone somewhere feels something intimately about someone here. And this is a starting point for what follows throughout this dissertation [Thank you, Baby Suggs, holy, for your heart.].¹⁸

¹⁶ Samuel Sinyangwe, DeRay McKesson, and Johnetta Elzie, “Mapping Police Violence Database,” February 2024, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

¹⁷ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 241; Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 950; 954.

¹⁸ “‘Cry,’ she told them. ‘For the living and the dead. Just cry.’ And without covering their eyes the women let loose. [...] It started that way: It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart. [...] ‘Here,’ she said, ‘in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. [...] Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face ‘cause they don’t love that either.

Tyree Bell, Peter Jourdan, Chandler T. Guinn Jr., Yolanda Thomas, Xavier Tyrell Johnson, Darrell Banks, Cedrick Chatman, Robert Earl Gary Jr., Linda Sue Davis, Michael W. Daniel, Frankie Pitt, Dushine James Smith, Quintine Barksdale, Karlando Roberts, Karvis Jabbar Gamble, Steven Askew, Jayvis Benjamin, Reginald Lamont "Deucey" Epps, Donovan Thomas, Ray Charles Hayes, James Eric Griffin, Nijza Lamar Hagans, Barbara Lassere, James Brown, Willie Davis Jr., James David Anderson, Brandon Hubert Culpepper, Ishmael Muhammad, Anthony Dwayne Harris, Dexter Lee Fair, Chaz Devell Williams, Otis Roberson, Alden Patrick Anderson, Gabriel Vernon Stevenson, Kenny Detrelle Montgomery, Charles A. Baker Jr., Taft Sellers, John Dawson Parker, Stephen O'Neal Wattley II, Christopher Allen Taylor, Richard Edward McKenzie, Marcus Dewayne Patterson, Amos G. Smith, Anthony Desean Meeks, Terence Anderson, Khalid Bouaiti, Adam Christian Donohue, Dashaude J. Carr, Kimani Gray, Anthony Rawls, Clinton Roebexar Allen, Horace Whiting, Austin Ryan Thomas, Willie Lee Bingham Jr., Wayne Arnold Jones, Tyrique Rashad Johnson, John Harris, Skyler Stewart, Kevin M. Bailey, Transcini Richerson, Barry Caldwell, Kendall Carroll, Ryan Rogers, Kenneth Knight, Daniel Lee Rhodes, Russell Lydell Smith, Khari Neville Illidge, George Golden, Broderick Huggins, Bryan Stukes, Matthew Renard Joseph, William E. Morris, Jermaine C. Coleman Jr., Alexander Wilson, Bradford Louis Etheredge, Cleman R. Sweptson Jr., Dylan Samuel-Peters, Dason Peters, Thomas G. Manuel III, John R. Monroe, Craig Demps, Fred Bradford Jr., Dennis Clark III, Larry Hooker, Eric Andrews, Amjustine Hunter, Cary Ball, James Coleman, Brandon Smith, Kenzell Hobbs, Cody Point, Brice Quintin Jefferson, Gabriel Winzer, Tavontae Jamar Haney, Ronald Michael Davis, Urie Adriel Gilchrist, Jordan Burnell West-Morson, Lawrence Edward Graham III, Kenneth Bernard Williams, Ryan Koontz, Clifton Armstrong, Frito Valcin, Marquis James Spencer, Deion Fludd, Tywon Jones, Kendra Diggs, Marlon Brown, Terrance Terrell Franklin, Gerald "Skip" Tyrone Murphy, Kourtney Hahn, Emmanuel Gatewood, Louis M. Squires, Jermaine Darden, Christian Leonard Eaddy, Dalton Smith, Terry Laffitte, Terrence Dawson, Charles Curl, Joshua "Omar" Johnson, Anthony Michael Bland, Julian Dawkins, Belton "Amir" Lomax, Raysbawn Marquis Brown, Thomas Bean, Leonard Thomas, Ajani Mitchell, Gary Hatcher, William Dupree, Bernard Peters Jr., Kyree Johnson, Nathaniel McRae, Ernest Zaus Jaquine Barnett, Edward Mwaura, Bill Jackson, Keoshia L. Hill, Demetrice D. Presnall, Lana Morris, Seon Rose, Richard Haston, Rustin Wilkerson, Craig Devon Rodgers, Micah Anthony Key, Joseph Paige, Darrius J. Lowery-Baptiste, Quincy Williams, Recardio Shormon Clark, Eliakim Tipan Shabazz, Antwon Johnson, Sammie Lamont Wallace, Michael Westley, Joe White III, Cedric Howard, Thomas Robinson, Jaquaz Walker, Kenneth Dewayne Cooper, Donnell Carter, Jourdan Akili Wagner, Damon Earl Bacy Byrd, Cacedrick White, Deangelo Lopez, Lonnie Taylor, George Harvey, Christian Green, Ernest Foster, Vincent Wood, Carlos D. Runyon, Glenn Llewellyn Briggs, Antonio Johnson, Herman Pickens, Donald Ray Washington Jr., Shawn Payne, Rashad Jarrett Hopes, Brian Simms Jr., Kenneth Jewell Stafford, Deon Williams, Daryll Blair, Carlos Crompton, Tyrone West, Andrew Thomas, Kendall Walker, Laroy Brown, Leigh Weeden, Corey Thomas, Deomain Hayman, Tevin Hammond, Dainell Simmons, Larry Eugene Jackson Jr., Ryan L. Stokes, Tyris Wilkerson Michael Jermaine Lollis, Allen Desdunes, Jermaine McBean, Shaaliver Douse, Roudy Hendricks, Montrell Moss, Jeffery B. Lilly Jr., Russell Donahue, Wayne Edwards, Martin A. Duckworth, Allen Harvey Jr., Eric McNeil, Patrick

You got to love it, you! [...] You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. [...] So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver — love it, love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet.” In: Morrison, *Beloved*, 87–90.

Othbro Sullivan, Ronnie Ledesma Jr., Travis Miller, Al Pickett, Edmond Demont Fair, Korey Marcel Germaine, Tevon Smith, Henry Kiner, John Van Allen, Rickey Rozelle, Henry Montgomery, Dontre Bennett, Benjamin Hickey, Denis Reynoso, Kenneth Lamar Bedgood, Kendrick Lee Amest, Ray Anson Mitchell, Charlie Christopher Bates, Monroe Isadore, Marlon Horton, William Rinaldo Brown Jr., R.T. McGinty, Samuel Frazier, Courtney Andrew Hollomon, Jonathan A. Ferrell, Mitchell Alanda St. Clair Jr., Aaron Alexis, Derek Deandre Walker, Steven Byrdo, Antonio Nash, Tracy Daquan Bost, Tavaris Lokeco Gulley, Alexander Jamar "A.J." Marion, Elijah Glay, Dawud Alexander, Miriam Iris Carey, Reginald Williams Jr., Jack Lamar Roberson, Jared Harris, Sherman T. Threets, Darrell Atkinson, Jack Lamar Robertson, Darryl Lee Drayton, Brandon Devone Smith, William Taylor, Shaqur McNair, Aaron Dumas, Cameron Massey, Shawn Dewayne Dean, Eddie Hollins, Taemarr Walker, David D. Long, Tracy Clyde, Terrance Harris, Angelique Styles, Matthew Desbune Swiney, Ronald Roland, Damon Cortez Hall, Tevin Robinson, Dimetri Polen, William Alfred Harvey III, Jarmel Anthony Cosby, George Pryor, Cortdalro Damarcel Brown, Dominique Jean, Quentin Eric Hicks, James Bryant, Alfred Ferrell III, Dionne L. Jordan, John Wayne Howell, Thomas Ardd, Michael Blair, Robert Desir, Deonte Traylor, Don White, Donte Lamonte Jordan, Shawn M. Rieves, Abdul Kamal, Willie James Williams, Bill Larry Jones, Gary Boyd Sr., Devin Johnson, Jason D. White, Jonathan Wilcher, Rexford Dasrath, Antoine Duane Goodrum, Tyler Damon Woods, Marty Maiden II, Lennard Whittle, Danny Thornton, Robert Brown, Carnell Lanair Williams, Clarence Dorris, Ervin Edwards, Jason Akeem Lewis, Jonathan D. Rodgers, Darius Jamal Murphy, Ananias Shaw, Samuel Freeman, Darryl Max Dookbran, D'Angelo Davis, Jared Brown-Garnham, Kenneth R. Herring, Cimarron Lamar Lamb, Sharon Rebecca McDowell, James Torres, Darrell King, Somourian Jamal Wingo, Dante Chavful, William Jackson, Kendall Alexander, Dontae Daveon Lewis Hayes, Ricky Junior Toney, Julius Michael Reese, Rasheik Calhoun, Joesbawn Edward Williams, Perry Webb, Gregory Vaughn Hill Jr., Paul Smith, Jordan Baker, Henry Jackson, Eldrin Smart, Chris Provost, Pierree Davis, Charles Hull, Christopher Stirkens, Cornelius Turner, Alton Reaves, Kevin Dejon Grissett, Ariel Levy, Anesson Joseph, Don Pooley, James L. Norris, Willie James Sams, Johnny Rico Richardson, Donald Haynes, Anthony Jamal Bartley, Deonta Denight Mackey, Anthony Bartley, Leroy Turner, Ernest Satterwhite, Stephon Averyhart, D'Andre Berghardt Jr., Bernard Lofton, Keith Atkinson, Yvette Smith, Oscar Gaspar, David Goins, Gregory Sanders, Treon "Tree" Johnson, Marquise Jones, Lew G. Tyree II, Robert J. Stora, Roy Eugene Irvin, Kenny Clinton Walker, Emerson Crayton Jr., Victor White III, Floyd Gene Hodge, David L. Robinson, Daniel Martin, Hallis Kinsey, Winfield Carlton Fisher III, Daquan Hendrix, Rajsoun McCray, Homer Ken Warren, Aaron Dino Smith Jr., Douglas Cooper, Willie Neall Harden, Alfred Redwine, Sakhar Williye Robinson, DeAndre Lloyd Starks, Antquan T. Watson, Bryant Augustus "Fluke" Stallings, Tracy L. McCraw, Raason Shaw, Zikarious Flint, Marcus Garner, Dustin Keith Glover, Robert Antonio Jones, Remis M. Andrews, Daniel Christoph Yealu, Tinoris Williams, Jameel Kareem Ofurum Harrison, Gregory Lewis Towns Jr., Charles A. Brown IV, Michael C. Nichols Jr., Claudell Webb Jr., Adrian Williams, Joe Huff, Tyrone Davis, Emmanuel Wooten, Dion Julius Brown, Dontre Hamilton, Londrell E. Johnson, Eddie Macon Jr., Armand Martin, Jonathan Swindle, Jerry Wilson Jr., Justin Griffin, Perlle Golden, Dominique Franklin Jr., George V. King, Howard Wallace Bowe Jr., Devante Kysbon Hinds, Joseph Givens, Jonathan Lee Asuzu, Tommy J. Yancy Jr., Gary Smith, James Renee White Jr., Tommy Jackson, Scott Kato, Charles D. Broadway Jr., Juvon Allen, Osbourne Broadie, Jermassioun Viondrey Rodgers, Michael Myers, Shiquan M. Krouser, Montez Dewayne Hambric, Terry Heath, Jeremy Vann, Jose Valerio, Duane Erick Strong, Mark Anthony Blocker, Quintico Goolsby, Tayler Rand Rock, Etoine Baucum, Sandy James McCall, Frank McQueen, Thomas Dewitt Johnson, Lawrence H. Faine, Steven Jerold Thompson, David Latham, Lonnie Flemming, Angela Beatrice Randolph, Emanuel Jean Baptiste, Roylee Vell Dixon, Broderick Johnson, Frank Rhodes, Jason Harrison, Eric Harris, John Schneider, Devaron Ricardo

Wilburn, Darrell Haymon, Ismael Sadiq, Denzel Curnell, Royce Flournoy, Juan May, Antoine Dominique Hunter, Lavon King, Samuel Lee Johnson, Dennis Hicks, Rodney Hodge, Andres Morales, Nyocomus Garnett, Paul Ray Kemp Jr., Jerry Brown, Icarus Randolph, Warren Robinson, Christopher Jones, James McKinney, Charles K. Goodridge, Tyshawn Hancock, Lawrence Campbell, Michael Reams, Dominique Charon Lewis, Eric Garner, Andre Milton, Jonathan L. Williams, Donovan Bayton, Charles Leon Johnson II, Briatay McDuffie, Vamond Arqui Elmore, Harrison Carter, Robert Henderson, Patrick Small, Steven Isby, David A. Mendoza, Daniel Pierre, Anthony Calloway, Jacorey Calhoun, Daniel Row, Jeremy Lake, Cedric Stanley, John H. Cramford III, Michael Laray Doze, Malcolm Franklin, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Torrez Harris, Eddie Davis, Dante Parker, Corey Levert Tanner, Michelle Cusseaux, Frederick R. Miller, Levon Leroy Love, Andre Maurice Jones, Luther Lathron Walker, David Ellis, Kajieme Powell, Darius Cole-Garrit, Arvel Douglas Williams, Vernicia Woodard, Anthony Lamar Brown, Desean Pittman, Steven Lashone Douglas, Cortez Washington, Roshad McIntosh, Kerry Wesson, Jeremy Lewis, Naim Owens, Eugene N. Turner III, Kendrick Brown, Alphonse Edward Perkins, Shawn Brown, Darrien Nathaniel Hunt, Elijah Jackson, Ricky Deangelo Hinkle, Caesar Adams, Michael Bonty, Kerry Lynn Brown, Kashad Ashford, Charles Smith, Michael M. Willis Jr., John Jolley Jr., Cameron Tillman, Nolan Anderson, Eugene Williams, Oliver Jarrod Gregoire, Javonta Darden, Marlon S. Woodstock, Tracy Ann Oglesby Wade, Miguel Benton, Carl Blossomgame, Michael Abney, Lashano J. Gilbert, Balantine Mbegbu, O'Shaine Evans, Iretha Lilly, Aljarreau Cross, Reginald Owens, VonDerrit D. Myers Jr., Abaviel T. Whitfield, Qusean Whitten, Elisha Paul Glass, John C. Carr, Ronald Johnson, Adam Ardet Madson, Ronnie D. McNary, Tarrell Lucas, Laquan McDonald, Zale Thompson, Michael Ricardo Minor, Brian Burch, Craig Hall, Joseph Priolo, Kaldrick Donald, John T. Wilson III, Charles Emmett Logan, Christopher Anderson, Raphael Thomas, Robert William Hampton III, Cinque D'Jahspora, Carlos Davenport, Aura Rosser, Darnell Dayron Stafford, Tanisha N. Anderson, Cecil Chaney Tinker-Smith, Keara Crowder, Akai Gurley, Myron May, Tamir E. Rice, O'Tavis Hall, Leonardo Marquette Little, Eric Ricks, Romain Brisbon, Lincoln Price, Isaac Lee Ricks, Jerry Demonte Nowlin, Christopher Bernard Doss, Calvin Peters, Travis Faison, Thurrell Jowers, Michael D. Sulton, Brandon Tate Brown, Xavier McDonald, Dennis Grisgby, Terrell Beasley, Antonio Martin, Gregory Marcus Gray, Terrance Gilbert, Carlton Wayne Smith, Quentin Smith, David Andre Scott, Jerame C. Reid, Kevin Davis, Eric Tyrone Forbes, Brian Pickett, Leslie Sapp III, Omarr Jackson, Andre Larone Murphy Sr., Hashim Hanif Ibn Abdul-Rasheed, Ronald "Maynard" Sneed, Artago Damon Howard, Marcus Ryan Golden, Kavonda Earl Payton, Donte Sowell, Mario A. Jordan, DeWayne Carr, Phillip Adam Garcia, Rodney Walker, Terence Walker, Jr., Daniel Brumley, Isaac Holmes, Tiano Meton, Demaris Turner, Darin Hutchins, Jermonite Fletcher, Edward Donnell Bright Sr., Dewayne Deshawn Ward Jr., Yvette Henderson, Ledarius D. Williams, Jimmy Ray Robinson Jr., Jeremy Lett, Markell Atkins, Herbert Hill, James Howard Allen, Joseph Paffen, Desmond Luster Sr., Anthony Bess, Phillip Watkins, Lavall Hall, Janisha Fonville, Douglas Harris, Terry Price, Stanley Lamar Grant, Calvin A. Reid, A'Donte Washington, Glenn C. Lewis, Ian Sherrod, Thomas Allen Jr., Cornelius J. Parker, DeOntre L. Dorsey, Darrell "Hubbard" Gatewood, Charly Leunden "Africa" Keunang, Shaquille Barrow, Fednel Rhinvil, Jason Moland, Tyrone Ryerson Lawrence, Andrew Anthony Williams, Tony Terrell Robinson, Naeschylus Carter-Vinzant, Tony Robinson, Monique Jene Deckard, Cedrick Lamont Bishop, Anthony Hill, Theodore Johnson, Jamie Croom, Terry Garnett Jr., Bobby Gross, Askari Roberts, Kendre Alston, Brandon Jones, Richard White, Denzel Brown, Devin J. Gates, Walter Brown III, Jeremy L. Kelly, Nicholas Thomas, Meagan Hockaday, Jamal Hall, Angelo West, Byron Hebert, Dominick R. Wise, Phillip White, Maya Hall (Ricky Shawatza Hall), Tyrail Ezell, Robert Washington, Jr., Donald "Dontay" Iry, Eric Courtney Harris, Darrin A. Langford, Paul Anthony Anderson, Walter Scott, Justus Howell, Desmond Willis, Dexter Bethea, Don Oneal Smith Jr., Mack Long, Colby Robinson, Frank

Shephard III, Donte Adaryll Noble, Tevin Barkley, Thaddeus McCarroll, Darrell Lawrence Brown, Jeffery Kemp, Freddie Gray, Norman Cooper, Daniel Wolfe, William Chapman, Reginald McGregor, Todd Jamal Dye, David Felix, Terrance Kellom, Jared Johnson, Alexia Christian, Jeffrey O. Adkins, Reginald L. Moore Sr., Elton Simpson, Brendon Glenn, Nephi Arriguin, Sam Matthew Holmes, Dedrick Marshall, Lionel Lorenzo Young, Kelvin Antonie Goldston, D'Angelo Reyes Stallworth, Dajuan Graham, Ronell C. Wade, Anthony Quinn Gomez Jr., Chrislon Talbott, Marcus D. Wheeler, Jerome Thomas Caldwell, Javoris Resbaud Washington, Caso Jackson, Anthony Dewayne Briggs, Dalton Branch, James Edward Strong Jr., Kenneth Joel Dotbard, Kevin K. Allen, Richard Gregory Davis, Usaamah Rahim, Andrew Ellerbe, Demouria Hogg, Quan Davier Hicks, Ross Anthony, Isiah Hampton, Charles Ziegler, Fritz Severe, Deng Manyoun, Kevin Higgenbotham, Kris Jackson, Trepierre Hummons, Zaniel Kivon Cranford, Alfontish Cockerham, Kevin Bajoie, Tyrone Harris, Damien Harrell, Spencer Lee McCain, Kevin Lamont Judson, Victo Larosa III, Robert Malone, Kawanza Jamal Beaty, Maximo Rabasa, Jason Hendley, Marcellus Burley, Tremaine Dantzler, Jonathan Sanders, Martice Milliner, Javon M. Hawkins, Freddie Blue, Eugene McSwain Jr., George Mann, Salvado Ellswood, Frederick Farmer, Chacarion Avant, Anthony Smith, Edward Foster, Albert Davis, Darrius Stewart, Samuel Dubose, Andre Williams, Devon Guisberd, Dontae Martin, Brian Keith Day, Earl Jackson Khari Westly, Lawrence Blackburn, Antonio Clements, Darius Graves, Keshawn Hargrove, Raymond Hodge, Max Gracia, Troy Robinson, Charles Bertram, Derrick Lee Hunt, Christian Taylor, Tsombe Clark, Shamir Palmer, Andre Green, Redel Jones, Nathaniel "Nate" Wilks, Reginald Marshall, Asshams Pharoah Manley, Garland Tyree, Allen Matthew Baker III, Benjamin Peter Ashley, Frederick Roy, Deviere Ransom, Mansur Ball-Bey, Thaddeus Faison, Bobby Norris, Curtis Smith, Bertrand Davis, Yonas Alehegne, Felix Kumi, James Marcus Brown III, James Carney III, Cedric Maurice Williams, La'vante Trevon Biggs, India Kager, Angelo Delano Perry, Wayne Wheeler, Tyrone L. Holman, Brandon Foy, Clifford Butler Jr., Joseph Thomas Johnson-Shanks, Bobby R. Anderson, Tyrone Bass, Dante Osborne, Robert Richard Berger, Jeremy McDole, Keith Harrison McLeod, Ernesto Medina López, James Anderson, Anthony McKinney, Junior Prosper, Brandon Lamar Johnson, Jeffery McCallum, Bernard Brandon Powers, Jason Day, Leslie Portis, Martin Ryans, Kaleb Alexander, Ricky Javenta Ball, Rayshaun Cole, Paterson Brown Jr., Dequan L. Williams, Corey Jones, Dion Lamont Ramirez, Lamontez Jones, Adriene Jamarr Ludd, Lawrence Green, Charles A. Pettit, Rolly Thomas, Dominic Hutchinson, Kevin T. Brunson, Marquesha McMillan, Tyrie Cuyler, Anthony Ashford, Jerry Michael Graham Jr., Deaunte Lamar Bell, Tony Berry, Brian Cranford, Bennie Lee Tignor, Alonzo Smith, James Covington Jr., John Edward Allen, Antonio Henr, Adarius Brown, Delvin Tyrell Simmons, Ryan Quinn Martin, Rashad Bugg-Bey, Jamar Clark, Shane Tyler Whitehead, Richard Perkins, Yohans Leon, Demetrius Shelley Bryant, Jeray Chatham, Cornelius Brown, Marcus Deon Meridy, Tiara Thomas, Randy Allen Smith, Steve Dormil, Darick Napper, Nathaniel Harris Pickett Jr., Freddy Baez, Darius Smith, Mario Woods, Raymone Davis, Carlumandarolo Zaramo, Devon Holder, Derek Stokes, Miguel Espinal, Dimitrie L. Penny, Charles Edward Rosemond Sr., Nicholas Robertson, Javario Shante Eagle, Christopher Goodlow, Calvin McKinnis, Ronnie Dubose Carr, Trevon Scruggs, Lionel Waters, Leroy Browning, Bobby Daniels, Michael Noel, Chan Leith, Kevin Matthews, Daquan Antonio Westbrook, Terrozza Tyree Griffin, Quintonio Legrier, Bettie Jones, Keith Childress, Germonta Wallace, Eric John Senegal, Rodney Turner, Carlton Antonio Murphy, Rakeem Bentley, Henry Bennett, Crayton West, Timothy R. Albert, Cedric Lamont Norris, Johnathan Bratcher, Janet Wilson, Christopher Kalonji, Randolph McClain, Christopher Michael Dew, Charles M. ("FiF Money") Smith, Bruce Kelley Jr., Peter John, Antronie Scott, Wendell Celestine Jr., Marese Vince Collins, David Joseph, Shalamar Longer, Eric Harris, Mohamed Barry, Peter Fanfan, Jerand Ross, Sablah Ridgeway, Johnathan Fowler, Calin Devante Roquemore, Dyshawn L. Perkins, Ali Eisa Abdalla Yabia, Calvin Smith, Paul Gaston, Marcos Perea, Kisha Michael, Marquintan Sandlin, Che Andre Taylor,

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Jewan Hall, Luvelle Kennon, Raymond Davis, Augustus Crawford, Eddie Patterson, Jarrett Blakeley Varnado, Paul Jones III, Thomas Aikens, John Bazemore III, Name Withheld, Phillip Pitts, Cornell Lockhart, Calvin Toney, Keian Jones, Nathaniel Fleming, Chester Randolph Ward, Shady Bell Jr., Lawrence Hawkins, Rehyen Bost-McMurray, Jackie Germaine Ragland, Name Withheld, Aquoness Cathery, Rufus Cedric Baker, Keita O'Neil, Johnny D. Carter, David Facen, Jean Pedro Pierre, Frederick, Douglas Wilburn Jr., Ira Crawford, Zoe Dowdell, Willie Floyd McCord, Todd A. Stone, Shaquille Rogers, Jesse Scarsbrook, Dennis Plowden Jr, Isaiah Christian Green, Corey Bailey, Jarvis Lykes, Shaleem Tindle, Ledarren Mixon, John Bailon, Charles Smith Jr., Richard R. Towler, Trayvon Mitchell, Travis Griffin, Shalun Dique Smith, Jonathan Bennett, Amanuel Dagebo, Terry Amons, Thomas Yatsko, James Hawkins, Warren Ragudo, Geraldine Townsend, Donte Shannon, Bryan, Johnson Gregory, Jihad Merrick, Kevin Sturgis, Arther McAfee Jr., Corey Mobley, Ricky Jerome Boyd, Chris McKinney, Nathaniel T. Edwards, William Pollard, Crystaline Barnes, Billy Lewis Rucker, Khalil Lawal, Michael Hansford, Daniel O. El, Anthony Joe Williams, Albert Morton Jr., Name Withheld, Anthony Jacob Weber, David Darden, Tierre Guthrie, Sidney T. Richardson IV, Mark Daniels, Robert Young, Ronell Foster, Jimmy Terry, Trey Ta'Quan Pringle Sr., Lamar Green, Lawrence Shaw, Darion Baker, Lonnie Smith Jr., Edward Hallinan, Glenn Tyndell, Lee Edward Bonner, Joshua D. Babb, Mario Dantoni Bass, Haydon Taylor, William Watson Jr., Marlon Smith, Qawi A. Muhammad, Timothy M. Gray, Michael James Chekel, Marvin Ray McMillian, William Simon, Name Withheld, James Earl Waters, Jamil Omar Harvey, Daniel Stacey Reynolds, Michael Ward, Jontell Reedom, Decynthia S. Clements, Shermichael Ezeff, Cameron Hall, James A. Vaughn, Michael Earl Brisco, Stephon Clark, Rueben Ruffin Jr., Jermaine Massey, Danny Ray Thomas, Linus F. Phillip, Juan Carlos Romero, Rodney Toler, Dishon McBride, Edward Van McCrae, Brian Bellamy, Christopher Lamarr Hall, Bobby Hinton, Timothy Orlando Wyatt, Saheed Vassell, Allan Farris, Deshawn Antonio Carswell, Diante Yarber, Juan Markee Jones, Elijah James Smith, Grechario Mack, Kenneth Ross Jr., Rumondale Jones, Steven Brooks, Dasbaun Shepard, Andre, Lavance Rippy, Lonnie Marcel Bowen, Sanchez Lowe, David Gino Teneyuque, Dytadious Demetrius Mobley, James Bauduy, Terrance Carlton, Carlos Deone High, Demonjhea Jordan, Isaac Jackson, Jeffrey Melvin, Shukri Ali Said, Abadi Gebregziber, Damion "Dae-Dae" Collier, Timothy Raye Mayfield, Terence Leslie, Elliot Reed, Keeven Robinson, Willie Rogers Marable, Marcus-David L. Peters, Anthony Trice Jr., Ronald Clinton, Eddie James Morris, Juvon Leroy Simon, Jerick, Raheem Gray, Shamir Deangelo Terry, Gus Tousis, Maurice Granton Jr., Raymon Lee Truitt II, LaShanda Anderson, Robert Lawrence White, Marqueese Alston, Chavius Hollis, DaNathe M. Gulliford, Nathaniel Adams McCoy Sr., Carnell Nelson, Timothy Mosley, Terrence White, Dwayne Chyburn, Tahaji Wells, Jonathon Buckley, Antwon Michael Rose II, Anthony "Punch" Marcell Green, Timothy Deal, Thurman Junior Blevins, Detandel Pickens Devon, Joey Lewis Bronson, Jason Erik Washington, Chukwumankpam Mbegbu, Rodney Lee Hunter, Donadony Blake Taylor, Terrell Eason, Lemuel Bunn, Charles Webb, Joseph Pettaway, Jethro Benjamin, Harith L. Augustus, Rashaun Washington, Marlin Mack, DeVaughdre Delsba Rogers, D'Mario Perkins, Daniel Hambrick, Cynthia Fields, Lamar Richardson, James Edward Blackmon, David Edward Hall, Tramaine Marquese Poole, Bobby Wallace, Danny Lee, Levester Taylor, Ricardo Giddings, Spurgeon Daniels, Stephen L. Caldwell, Leu Freycinet, Vaughn Harrison Denham, Montae D. Shackelford, Charles Meadows, Gregory Campfield Jr., William Fuller, Anthony Makai Hutchinson, Christopher Anthony Stone, Mario Hobson, Adrian Devon Herron, Aquantis Griffin, Jeremiah Perdue, Christopher Alexander Okamoto, Jeffrey Dennis, Joshua Wayne Harvey, James Clay, Robert Knox, Jalon Johnson, Oshae Terry, Aaron Demonta Fleming, James Leatherwood, Darell Richards, Botham Shem Jean, DaShawn Cole, Brandon Joyner, Dereshia Blackwell, Thomas Watkins, Dacion Steptoe, Detric Driver, Johnny Lee Lloyd, Anton Black, Jerry Foster, Nathaniel Sassafras, Allen Travers, Dravious Burch, Paul Braswell, Datwan Keyo Lewis, Willie Earl Simmons,

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Roszell Lewis, Robert Johnson Jr., Terry J. Caver, Tobby LaRon Wiggins, Willie Lee Quarles Sr., William Johnson Jr., Maurice S. Gordon, Dion Johnson, George Floyd, Tony McDade aka Natosha McDade, Modesto "Marrero Desto" Reyes, Ruben Smith III, Terrell Mitchell, Momodou Lamin Sisay, Jarvis Sullivan, Derrick Thompson, David McAtee, Tyquarn Graves, Kamal Flowers, Lewis Ruffin Jr., Michael Blu Thomas, Phillip Jackson, Rayshard Brooks, Caine Van Pelt, Donald Ward, Brandon Gardner, Terron Jammal Boone, Derrick Canada, Skyleur Young, Rasheed Mathew Moorman, Robert D'Lon Harris, Aloysius Larue Keaton, Ky Johnson, Kevan O. Ruffin, William Wade Burgess III, Joseph W. Denton, Paul Williams, Erroll Johnson, Malik Canty, Ashley Marie Wells, Richard Lewis Price, Hakim Littleton, Vincent Demario Truitt, Aaron Anthony Hudson, Darius Washington, Vincent Harris, Jeremy Southern, Name Withheld, David Earl Brooks Jr., Chester Jenkins, Darrien Walker, Ashton Broussard, Amir Johnson, Julian Edward Roosevelt Lewis, Salaythis Melvin, Jonathan Jefferson, Rafael Jevon Minniefield, Kendrell Antron Watkins, Anthony McClain, Adrian Jason Roberts, Hasani Best, Trayford Pellerin, Damian Lamar Daniels, Julius Paye Kehyei, Name Withheld, Michael Anthony Harris, Dijon Kizgee, Robert Earl Jackson, Deon Kay, Steven D. Smith, Major Carvel Baldwin, Steve Gilbert, Jonathan Darsaw, Robert Coleman, Darrell Wayne Zemault Sr., Charles Eric Moses Jr., Patches Vojon Holmes Jr., Dearian Bell, Kurt Andras Reinhold, Willie Shropshire Jr., DeMarco Riley, Jonathan Price, Stanley Cochran, Tyran Dent, Anthony Jones, Kevin Carr, Dana, Mitchell Young Jr., Fred Williams III, Akbar Muhammad Eaddy, Marcellis Stinnette, Dominique Mulkey, Rodney Arnez Barnes, Gregory Jackson, Mark Matthew Bender, Ennice "Lil Rocc" Ross Jr., Karon Hylton-Brown, Jakerion Shmond Jackson, Walter Wallace Jr., Maurice Parker, Kevin Peterson Jr., Name Withheld, Michael Wright, Justin Reed, Reginald Alexander Jr., Frederick Cox Jr., Rodney Eubanks, Vusumuzi Kunene, Brandon Milburn, Sincere Pierce, Arthur Keith, Tracey, Leon McKinney, Angelo "AJ" Crooms, Name Withheld, Shane K. Jones, Shawn Lequin Braddy, Javon Brice, Rodney Applewhite, Terrell Smith, Kenneth Jones, Rondell Goppy, Ellis Frye Jr., Cory Donell Truxillo, Udofia Ekom-Abasi, Mickee McArthur, James David Hawley, Kevin Fox, Dominique Harris, Maurice Jackson, Andre K. Sterling, Casey Christopher Goodson Jr., Kwamaine O'Neal, Herschel Turner Jr., Mark Brewer, Donald Edwin Saunders, Thomas Reeder III, Joshua Feast, Joseph R. Cranford, Charles E. Jones, Bennie Edwards, Jeremy Maurice Daniels, Johnny Bolton, Larry Taylor, Monica Goods, Andre Maurice Hill, Sheikh Mustafa Davis, Isaac Frazier, Shamar Ogman, Marquavious Rashod Parks, Helen Jones, Larry Hamm, Jaquan Haynes, Jason Cooper, Shyheed Robert Boyd, Dolal Idd, Isaac Matheney, Carl Dorsey III, La Garion Smith, Tre-Kedrian Tyquan White, Vincent Belmonte, Robert "Lil Rob" Howard, Kwamena Ocran, Jason Nightengale, Matthew Oxendine, Paul Bolden, Patrick Warren Sr., Kenya Reed, Lymond Maurice Moses, Reginald Johnson, Kershawn Geiger, Zonterious Johnson, Christopher Harris, Eusi Malik Kater Jr., Tyree Kajawn Rogers, Steven Emmet Crosby, Randy Miller, Roger D. Hipskind, Karl Walker, Marvon Payton Jr., Jenoah Donald, Trey Webster, Dontae Green, Name Withheld, Christopher W. Hagans, Andrew Hogan, Charley C. McMurtry, Jr., Dustin Demaurean Powell, Clifford Woodards III, Gregory Taylor, Cortez Lee Bogan, Jordan Walton, Brandon Wimberly, Daverion Kinard, De'Aire Jontae Gray, Arnell States, Daniel Newton Neal, Alonte Damar Murphy, Benjamin Tyson, Donald Francis Hairston, Rudy Duvivier, Chandra Moore, Dwight Brown, Broderick Woods, Andrew Teague, Howayne Gayle, Jehlani Black, Tyshon Jones, Tyrell Wilson, Nika Nicole Holbert, Charles Ray Phillips, Christopher Ruffin, Caleb Smith, Matthew James Hurlock, Daryl Lenard Jordan, Exzabian Morgan Myers, Kevin L. Duncan, Frankie Jennings, Aaron Pierre Thomas, Malcolm D. Johnson, Travon Chadwell, Donovan W. Lynch, Matthew Blaylock, Michael Leon Hughes, Willie Roy Allen, DeShawn Latinon Tatum, Stephen Patrick Moseley, Noah R. Green, Divone Wallace, Desmon Montez Ray, James Alexander, Dominique Williams, James Lionel Johnson, Roger Cornelius Allen, Raheem Reeder, Charles Kevell Green, DeShund Tanner, Faustin Guetigo, Daunte Wright, Anthony Thompson Jr., Miles Jackson,

Matthew Zadok Williams, Pier Alexander Shelton, Lindani Myeni, Roderick Inge, Innes Lee Jr., Larry Jenkins, Ryan Oneal Williams, Doward Sylleen Baker, Ma'Khia Bryant, Andrew Brown Jr., Tory Casey, Michael Lee McClure, Marvin Veiga, Terrance Maurice Parker, Hanad Abdiaziz, La'Mello Parker, Eric Derell Smith, Latoya Denis James, Ashton Pinke, Adonis Traughber, Everton Brown, Kalon Horton, Lance Lowe, Samuel Roberto Pleasant, Monolito Ford, Timothy Fleming, Denzell Nathan Clarke, Gary Moncrief, Tyrone Penny, Darion M. Lafayette, Patrick Watkins, Zaekwon Malik Gullatte-Graves, Kortnee Lashon Warren, Juan Joseph Daniele Castellano, Roderick Devonne Merchant Jr., Vedo Hall, Darren Dejuan Chandler, Nicholas Raymond Harris, Shannon Wright, Antonio Christopher Jones, Demetrius Stanley, Bilal Ibn Shabazz Winston, Renardo Green, William Brookins Sr., Winston Smith, Timothy Flowers, Andrew Homen, Michael Lee Ross Jr., Terrell Gas, Josiah L. Byard, Rezek Yaquab Yahya, Eric Cole, Solomon Jamison, Jermaine Sonnier, Ansy Dolce, Carlos Jackson, Jeff Melvin, Briana Sykes, Darrell Vincent, Travis Parham Jr., Wallace Morris, De'Shon Hill, Earl Fitzgerald Hunter, Frederick Holder, Albert Wayne Finnie Jr., Jerome Barber, Tristan Trevino, Joseph Lee Humbles, Shannon Earl Smith, John Reuben Turbe, Gulia Dale III, Leneal Lamont Frazier, Klevontaye White, James Holland Sr, Justin Powell, Marquez Floyd, Ryan LeRoux, Maurice Mincey, Quentin Bogard, Leslie Stephen Scarlett, Irvin Peterson, Gabriel "Sam" Parker, Damien Montrell Cameron, Losardo Lucas, Alexis C. Wilson, James Haynes, Antonio King, Marcus Martin, Michael Contrell Adams III, Dashawn "Big Top" Batiste, Christopher Robinson, Antonio Jackson, Broderick Shelton, James Matalice Smith, Devonte Dawayne Brown, Terrence Bey, Tyran Lamb, Tory Brown, Jamar Jason Taylor, Antwan Gilmore, Robert Anderson, Fanta Bility, Lonnell Cephas, Christopher Corey Moore, Johnny Lee Perry II, Paris Wilder, Martin Luther Bowman, James Williams, Cedric Baxter, Frederick Thomas, Josue Arias, Le'den Boykins, Cedric Williams, Desmond Lewis, Tristan Vereen, Robert Parks, Joshua Cooper, Unsford Lewis, Thurmond, Adrian Cameron, Dishawn Sanders, Turell Brown, Deon Ledet, Desmond Diamond Louis, Keith Cole, Gloria Marie Strong, Kyle Anthony Veyon, Michael A. Craig, R.V. Johnson II, Demetrius Roberts, Darrion Taylor, Donte Lorenzo Laster, Corey Daniel Wellman, Andra Devon Murphy, Simran Gordon, Demetrio Antaus Jackson, Derrick Clinton, Ramone Javaris Dwight, Michael Carothers, Calvin Robinson, Jovan Lewis Singleton, Jermaine Marshall Jones Jr., Jim Rogers, Jermaine Harris, Calvin Wilks Jr., Allan Lorenzo Robb, Deandre Johnson, Jarvis Jarrette, Leon T. Perry, Kim Douglas Ropp, Corey Timothy Stanley, Ivan Foster, Koffi Dzima, Ahmad Akeem Abdul Muhammad, Johnny McGee, LeKenneth Q. Miller, Barry Rigsby, Derrell Lamar Raney, Jabbar Muhammad, Michael A. Quarries, Dashaun Wright, Elliot Lewis, Marcus Mann, Quillan Jacobs, Christopher Walls, Sylvester Tart, Steven Thomas, Chucky Nathaniel Bowden, Jabari Farafai Asante-Chioke, Lionel Womack, Anthony Harden, Devin Edward Hall, Anthony Oliver, Jabari Musgrove, Edward Allen Gatling, Billy Gilbert Bizzell, Anei Gabriel Joker, Alhaji Sow, Michael Wayne Jackson, Quadry Sanders, Donta R. Stewart, Terence Caffey, Christopher Sterusky, Jeremi Moore, Amanuel Aman Moreno, George Hollins, William Gardner, Jahad Patterson, John H. Taylor, Terrance Marquise Dogan, Nakita Williams, Eric Lavon Nelson, Sr., Eudes Pierre, Jessie Lee Gaither, Kokou Christopher Fiafonou, Benny Antonio Hood, James Lowery, Dwayne McDonald, Osman Sesay, Thelonious McKnight, James Williams, Kadeem Errol, Livingston Smith, Clarence Little, Jason Walker, Deaughn Willis, Orlando Taylor III, Joshua Mathis, Raishawn Jones, Junnie Williams, Nathan Humphrey, Yoskar Felix, Lashawn McNeil, Bobby Lee Sutton, Christopher "Chris" Jones, Tyron Coates, Jeffrey Thomas, John Hunt, Equan Hopson, Dyonta Quarles Jr., Isaiah Payne, Amir Locke, Robert Langley, Charion Lockett, Makari Smith, Jayden Prunty, Terrell Russell, Atiba Lewis, Daniel Patrick Knight, Donnell Rochester, Lawrence LeJames Rodgers, Tracy Gaeta, Jacori Shaw, Keleen RaShad Connell, Czyx Harrison, Darian, Quinlan Bryant, Alberto Riascos, Crasteven Kennon Wilson, Osman Brown, Jamarian Marquis McGhee, Joshua Dismuke, Antwon Leonard Cooper, Alonzo Carter, Quentrice McAllister, Tyrea Pryor, Zakareya Ibrahim, Kevin Donel

Johnson, Jr., Janet Jordan, Malcolm Staton, James J. Emery, Faubricia Virtaux Gainer, Rodney K. Robinson II, Irvin D. Mooror Charley, Nicholas Conklin, Charles Henry Calhoun, Zy'Shonne Johnson, Miguel Estrella, Robert Gadson, Rance Tillman, Ketura Wilson, Frank Campbell, Patrick Lyoya, Ronnie Dwayne Cesear Jr., Zyhiem Hartman, Demarco Mauge, Robert L. Wright, Ronald Anthony Smith, Jeremiah Ruffin, Tracey Ashanti Williams, Charlie Thompson, Ali Coulter, Dwayne Allen Jackson III, Jajuan Ballard, Anthony Hood-Schaffner, Trevon Bonner, Alonzo Nesby, Paul Derrick Moss II, Nickolas Elisha Pierson, Larry Marquail Mixon III, Name Withheld, Bryant Jackson, Naimo Mahdi Abdirahman, William Houseworth II, Erica Graham, Herman Whitfield III, Kelvin Armstrong, Jayden Baes, Jalen Javon Randle, Chase McDermott, Carmello Brumfield, Mekiab D. Harris, Rogers Kyaruzi, Prince Kingly Gurley, Shanice Renee Dantzler-Williams, Miranda Renasia Dantzler-Williams, Stephanie Renee Dantzler, Edward Wilkins, Rameek Smith, Romen Phelps, Deven Nnawuchi, Nygil Cullins, Carlos Roberts Jr., Tavis Latimore Carithers, Rafael Mendoza, Omari Cryer, Camille Weems, Da'Shontay King, Kalah Shannon Gary, Joseph Robertson, Davin Darayle Saunders, Davonnte McKnight, Jeffery Moctezuma Noyola, Datwuan Catchings, Michael Angelo Gales, Marshall Curtis Jones, Corey Brewer, Desmond Eskridge, Tyler Mehki Sincere Boages, Walter Antreall Joyce, Joseph, Robert Henry Thompson, Pozz Striblin, Jerome Lavon Connelly, Normiez Reeves, Brandon Keith Ned, Jovontay Williams, Derrick Dewayne Clark, Frank Baty, Jason Thompson, Kevin Greene, Terry Harrell, Quincy J. Pritchett, Antonio Beekman, Name Withheld, Jason Dodds, Saudi Arai Lee, Christopher D. Kelley, Arlen Jay Bates, Kevin Eugene Boston, Rakim Durham, Jayland Walker, Michael Charles Thompson, Michael McPhail, Joshua De'Miguel Kavota, Christian Parker, Jada Elizabeth Johnson, Trevon Darion Hull, Raudnesia J. Waring, Chanin Emil Mayfield, Reginald Humphrey, Brett Rosenau, Ehmani Mack Davis, Roderick Brooks, Malik Williams, Mack Lee, Madeline Miller, Terrill Anton Jones, Matthew Hyde, Malachi Lavar Carroll, Romaine Manuel, Gloria Melton, Michael Silletto, Maurice "Corey" McCarthy Hughes, Andrew Tekle Sundberg, Brianna Marie Grier, Lazarus David Wilson, Robert Marquise Adams, Imonie Hackett, Fabien Perry, Molka Horton, Jason Lipscomb, De'Shaun Lockett, Tyjarius Holton, Cole White, Kyle Dail, Dante Kittrell, Kevin Hargraves-Shird, Bobby James Brown, Darrin Baker, Walter Lee Osborne, Jr., Presley Eze, Earnest Borders, Alexander Dekontee Weah, Darrel Hood, Divinity Cureton, Jeremy Willie Horton, Adum Mahamat, Otis French Jr., Nasanto Antonio Crenshaw, Timothy Green, Mable Arrington, Melvin Porter, Joshua David Amodeo, Keshawn Thomas, Lamar A. Davis, Roy Cravin, J'Quinton D. Hopson, William Isaac Rich, Derrick Harrell, Donovan Lewis, Dominic Jeter, Jaiden Malik Carter, Ernest Terrell Blakney, Rushdee Anderson, Kenneth Elonzo Marion, Jr., Tommie Gilmore, Bernard Placide, Maalik Amir Roquemore, Bade Ali Jabir, Reginald Grant, George W. Franklin, Joshua Hagans, Derrick Ameer Ellis-Cook, Darryl Ross, Tyshawn Malik Benjamin, Sherman Solomon, Anton Washington, Genesis Hicks, Greg Hightower, Darian Patrick Fisher, Ali Osman, Leroy Quick, Jr, Jaylen Lewis, Terrance Maurice Sligh, David Gerard Jones, Broderick Dunn, Amarion Clotter, Antonio Calmese, Porter Burks, Samuel Vincent Richmond, Terrence Robinson, Jabeim McMillan, Stephaun Jones, Christopher Earl Smith, Jamontey O. Neal, Raheem Lee, Quantaze Campbell, Christopher Ardoin, Taylor L. Lowery, Taylor Grimes, Christopher Blount, Sergio Gruver, Joel Capellan, Derrick Weatherspoon, Desman LaDuke, Ezekiel Lamar Love, Orlando D. Harris, James Wilborn, Carlos Trotter, Willie Williams, Kenneth Jamel Carrol, Donathy Wayne Diddy, Leontae Kirk, Matthew Orlando Dilworth, Eric Jermaine Allen, Krysten Harland Pretlor, Marando Salmon, Javon Tyrone Jones, Derrick Kittling, Tyree Moorehead, Ki'Azia Miller, Jermaine Hickson, Prince Jones, Senquarius Demonta Williams, Marcus Allen, Jerriorite Gibson, Immanuel Jaquez Clark-Johnson, Lerelle Dekari Chatman, Eric Holmes, Tyree Devon O'Neal Jr., Ricardo Almons Gary, Kenneth Knotts, Deshawn Whitaker, Jerome Flanigan, Tiyzair, Ahmad Huddleston, Howard Peter Holliday Johnson, Tavares Harrington, Sherrano Stingley, Troy Bullock, Pierre Thompson, Latoris A. Taylor,

Joshua Leon Wright, Nelson Graham, Jaylin Keshawn McKenzie, Corlunda McGinister, Deshawn L. Jones, Michael Lee Delaney, Jr., Trevontay Jenkins, Monet Darrisan, Damean Alexander Jones, Keith Murriel, Juan Nikely Avalo, Takar Smith, Aaron Lamont Swan Jr., Caleb Swafford, Tyre Nichols, Kenneth Hearne, Alon Oneil Foster, Chiewelthap Mariar, Douglas Price, Daylen Oatts, Lamont Lee Lewis, Devin Shay Cribbs, Anthony Marquis Franklin, Darryl Tyree Williams, Leevon Smith, Joseph Seriale Smith, Ronald Ray Mosley II, Leon Bernard Burroughs, Charles Towns, Patrick J. Boatwright, Edward E. Gant III, Anthony Lowe Jr., Obob Ochan, Hendrix Washington, Darius L.J. Holcomb, Torence Jackson Jr., Ry'Heam Da'Mon Brown, Alonzo Sentell Bagley, William "Scooter" White, Evan Kendrick Wollert, Az'aaan Lee, Terrell Thompson, Julius Hamilton, Damon Dante Henderson, Ronnie Demetris Hill, Tyquorious Walker, Maria Martin, Herman B. Lucas, Amarion Hope, Booker Talefares Pannell, Timothy McCree Johnson, Osiris Rashad Bennett, James Windale Lanier, Adrienne Arrington, Kevin Veal, William Tisdol, Chery Thomas, Alaunte Scott, Daniel Ramone Scott, Dylan Martin, Aaron Martinka, Donovan Adrian Watson, Najee Seabrooks, Okwan Rahmier Sims, Dexter Wade, Kordell Jones, Glennard Herndon, Edridge Alexis, Dalaneo "Debo" Martin, Alberto Montes II, Odell (D.Love) Hicks Jr., Rosendo Enrique Rivero, Willie Dion Giles, Steven Blunt, Tyre Adam Washington II, James Talbert III, William Dunson, Tedarrius Quentez Smith, Norman Levine III, Dontel D. Thompson, Tatiana N. David, Homea "Tony" Spence Jr., Lacorvis Tamar Daley, Deiondre "Dre" Solomon, Jamarr Van-Trell Thompson, Jamal Smith, Darryl Fussell, Jameson Turnbull, Reginald Clay Jr., Isaiah A. Curtis, Jeffrey Alan Martin, Reginald E. Byers Jr., Daniel Yester Ghebrehivet, Joseph Dewayne Taylor, Amaree'ya Henderson, Ainsley Stephen David Popwell, Jr, Frankie Lee Evans, Lance Lockett, Everett Rand, Al Joseph Stenson, Curtis Smith, James Rakeem Pierce, Brandon Lemagne, Justin Roberts, John McKinzie Jr., Kierra Nicole Howard, Kam'ron Malik McBurrough, Zonchez Delarfette Prince-Holmes, James Boyle, Timothy Burgess, Treyvorius L. Stodghill, Asia Fitzgerald, Jeremy D. Haugabook, Freddie Edwards, Alex Rivera, Jor'Dell Da'Shawn Richardson, Delama Casimir, Jaden Durand Mixon, Calvin Cains III, Jordan A. Richardson Antonio Lewis, Lucius Benjamin Gibbs, Marcell T. Nelson, Marquis Griffin, Sr., Rodneshia Lenise Saunders, Danielle Marichal Bell, Cornelius S. Ball, Hercules Sharper Jr., Jarveon Hudspeth, Carl S. Gist, Michael Edward Meadows, LaQuincy Darte' Ward, Darryl Gamble, Devon Derantez Rutherford, Jawan "Jay" Dallas, Jarrell Garris, Ahmad Jaleel Abdullah, Randy Allen Jackson, Billy Jaquan Smith, Bronshay Minter, Abdisamad Ismail, Andra Farnell Craig, Duterval Sejour, Antwan Lindsey, Jessica Denise Brown, Garren Andrew Patty, Jamal Brown, Jabarie Camron Bozeman, Keenan Anderson, Sr., Andre Lloyd Longmore, Charoyd Henrence Bell, Norman Edward Dawson, Willis Thomas Jr., Tony R. Roy III, Victor T. Harris Jr., Matthew Deandre' Norwood, Dantonior Stalling, PoniaX, Kanes Calles (prev. Reginald Kane Jackson), Dominick Hogans, Ryant Bluford, Rev. Tommie Jackson, Demarcus Clark, Freddie Walker, Andrew Wesley Dix, Joseph Rudolph Stiger, Ricky Thomas Cobb II, Sistrane Edwards, Alfred Shawnte' Cole, Jr., Ny'Kendreon Pride, Gary Dwayne Harrell, Kyle Eastes, Marquis Rivera, Tabiem Weeks-Cook, Brandon Lee Cole, Daton Shimondrea Viel, Juan Leonard Johnson, Darron Shaw, Keivion Martez Jones, Giovanni McNab, Johnny Hollman, Name Withheld, Louis C. Gordon-Hay, Roger Sylvester Heard Jr., Courtney Ross, Thomas C. Baskin, Tracee Jablees Marie Blount, Brandon Jamar Hill, Dante Day, Mia Tabb, Tahmon Kenneth Wilson, Jaquan Kiante Fletcher, Eugene McNeal, Kyeiree V. Myers, Jamie David Overstreet, William Hardison Sr., Ta'Kiya Monet' Yvette Young, Jayvion Barthel, Anthony Richard Fields II, D'Metrius J. Robinson, Kendall Darnell Gilbert, Andrew Jerome Washington, Demarcus Williams, Tremaine Jackson, Jaylen Latrelle Routt, Jeremy Finch, Daryl Edward Vance, Stephon Ford, Leon Minniefield, Dhal Pothvi Apet, Jamal Walker, Quentin Hill, Mamady Cisse, Lamoris, De'Juan Speight Jr., Jory Jamarr Lester, Nathan Liverpool, Sidney Dotson, Raheem Freeman, Cleavon Donnell Miles, Sterling Keyon Arnold, Robert Kyle Seiber, Reginal "Reggie" Owens, Eric Levon Taylor, Dimitri Humphrey, Lamar Walker,

Oscar Alfonso Maxwell III, Ricktez Williams, Byron Brown, Tiffany Louise McCoy, Darmon Graves Jr., Stephen Clay Perkins, Floyd Young, Camren Darden, Quiana Brown, Donald Ray Bonner Jr., Christopher Jones, Sylvester Demetrius Selby, Jabad Snead, Randy Sharpe Jr., Marion Holmes, Nicholas Demar Lopez, Gwaun Diron Frierson, Name Withheld, Caleb D. Hooten, Dane Donomar Laing, Arnicious Odom Jr., Emmanuel Millard, Geoffrey Frank Walker, Shaine Deeleeoan Henderson, Sharon Sangster Lee, Jamie Grant, aka "Frank White", Leonard Allen Cure, Arthur Porter, William Frank Lee, Ronald G. Nelson Jr., Rasbeem Edwards, Darcel Edwards, Frederick Davis, Dallas Brandon Cain, Lavaughn Coleman, Kadrian Devante Spencer, Dannon Bryant, Jason Pass, Breonte Lamar Johnson-Davis Sr., Christopher T. Sewell, Fleen Myles III, Tranza Campbell, Hunter Jessup, Justin Barrett McCarrell, Chad McGraw, Azjaynee Owens-Bey, Randall Adjessom, Benard Russell, Tinse Peterson, Leandre, Krushaun Houston, Dachena Warren-Hill, Turell Delonte Campbell, DeMarcus Brodie, Arnel Redfern, Jalina Anglin, Lamar Deshawn Young, Jovan Washington, Christopher Jordan, Larry Brown, Courtney Gordon, Niani Finlayson, James Woods, Ryan Joseph Smith, Shaqwan Cribbs, Curtis Harris, Brandon Daleshaun Keys, Ken'Deris Lawrence, Darvet Brown, Michael Antonio Cobb, Jr., Michael Johnson, Qian Adams, Tony Cox, Kent Edwards, Payton Lawrence, Jakyrab, Wayman, Sanrico McGill, Jamel C. Hill Moore, Mario Paige, Richard Myron Ham, Tristan Decedric Clark, Jeremy Jackson, Ashley Vailes, Johnathan Bady, Vaughn R. Malloy, Michael Dotel, Thomas, Earl "T-Mac" McMillan, Winston Elliot Dunham, Tyrone Lee Johnson II, Aaliyah Anders, Timothy McArdle Jr.

To behold the amalgamation of the above names and to collectively grieve each of their lives is to ponder the shattering of the worlds inhered by those remaining who feel their presence in absentia. To feel with such cataclysmic wreckage is to then *return* to the scene of devastation – it is to *return* to Judge O'Donnell's ruling in Act I and his prefacing thereof that the right of police to kill black people ought not be a surprise; to do so is lawful and justified. This desecrating of unrequited and unredressable desecration pierces beyond the legitimacy of policing – cutting past the myth that such murders are extrajudicial – and strikes to the core of the matter: the deadening of black life wrought by the police is pre-figured and pre-accomplished by the very etiological grounding upon which the authority of the sovereign coheres and forms. Revealed therefore, is a history of state-making that evinces the appendages of its apparatuses – from policing to public housing; from urban planning to public education – as acts of governing through counterinsurgency and against black people.

My faith in the justice system is what it has been: it's not for us; it's not for the black community. It is what they have shown us time and time again. That's about it.¹⁹

*They built me to be filthy
On Some I-do-or-die shit, for real²⁰*

¹⁹ This is what Se'Quette Clark, the mother of Stephon Clark, said when the grand jury ruled that the police were lawfully justified in killing her son. Autumn Payne, "We Are Outraged.' Stephon Clark's Mother and Family React to DA's Decision," *The Sacramento Bee*, March 2, 2019.

²⁰ JAY-Z, *Politics as Usual*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

Act III: *Can I Live*

Why do they keep killing us?

Who do we call when the cops is the ones doing the shooting? To whom are we saying that our black lives matter? And why? Why are die-ins, kneeling before cops, and other performances that replicate black docility and submissiveness like the chanting of “hands up, don’t shoot” the horizon of protest gestures? Why were politicians only offering recourses to voting as the emollient to the terror-induced harm being caused by the everyday questioning of whether we or someone we love would make it home before the police acted (lawfully and reasonably) on the perceived threat we represent? Why do the police *keep* rioting? How do we get rid of the police? Why are our protests being paternalized by the dictation of what means of doing so is deemed acceptable? Does requesting permits to walk through the city, in all actuality, pose a challenge to the same source of power granting such permits? The above questions ought to move us to ask the following: **What might an actual threat to power look like?**

The aggregated hue and tenor of such repeated questioning hummed an enunciation of a different politics comprised within different epistemic registers of social relations, morality, ethics, and understanding.²¹ However, the humming eventually grew cacophonous and came to more closely cohere resonance with the furious sonics operationalized in the ROAR Édouard Glissant heard.²² Redound to the concatenating intonations elicited from both the hum and the ROAR, the questions guiding this dissertation are sounded. The two questions that specifically contour this composition are as follows: a) How is the figure of the violent black rebel, as embodied by Micah Xavier Johnson for example, conceived within the socio-politico-juridical order? and b) What does the violence of violent black rebellion *do*? An exploding supernova of stories are produced from the epistemological dehiscences of these questions. The anteroom to one such pivotal story is the project of revolution, specifically revolutionary nationalism, as posited by Thomas Jefferson.

Fragmented Foundations

Michel Foucault in his 1975 lectures to the Collège de France argues that seventeenth and eighteenth-century “challenges to the history of sovereignty and kings were predicated on revealing the machinations of sovereign power,” namely that “power, the mighty, the kings [...] have concealed the fact that they were born of the contingency and injustice of battles.”²³ Foucault reveals three things here. Firstly, he shows that the monarchy is a production of historical forces rather than a mythical event. Secondly, he demonstrates that the transformation of society into popular sovereignty from monarchical sovereignty was precipitated by and through conflict. Lastly, he posits that the perpetuity of monarchical power moved through violence against its subjects. And, as illustrated below, the insistent portrayal of George III as a warmonger in the Declaration of Independence echoes Foucault’s point. In the middle section of the Declaration of Independence,

²¹ Here, I am invoking Tina Campt’s capacious notion of the hum: “A hum can be mournful; it can be presence in absence or can take the form of a gritty moan in the foreground or a soothing massage in the background. It can celebrate, animate, or accompany. It can also irate, haunt, grate, or distract. [...] The hum [...] is a quotidian practice of refusal that exceeds the sayability of words.” Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), 3–4; 43.

²² Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11–22; 124–25. This ROAR is discussed further in the second chapter of this dissertation.

²³ Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, ed. Mauro Bertrani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald, trans. David Macey (New York, NY: Picador Press, 2003), 71–72.

Jefferson lambastes George III for waging war against his own subjects and that his sovereignty is illegitimately produced and reproduced through acts of violent force. Jefferson's rhetoric deployed throughout this section of the Declaration of Independence constructs the anglo-colonists as impelled (and passive) actors and functions to mask their violence – both anent the Native population and the maintenance of black slavery – and to justify their impending use of violent force against an emergent racial threat that they themselves constituted.

For Foucault, the toppling of kings signals the birth of a new conceptualization of sovereignty whereby the “[s]tate is, and must be, the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race.”²⁴ His reading therefore suggests that revolutionary doctrines of popular sovereignty are mutually constituted by conceptualizations of race (and otherness). This conception of race constructs anglo-Europeans, and in the case of the Americas, Creole, as needing protection from its enemies from within and without, which creates the distinction between themselves and others through racial distinctions; this can be seen in the relationship between American and British subjects, anglo-Creoles and native Americans, and anglo-Creoles and black people.²⁵ And this demarcation of difference between whiteness and blackness in the Americas in particular, came to designate the former as both oppositional and constitutive of blackness.²⁶ Stretching Foucault's suggestion anent the significations of race, this antagonism provides Anglos with the political ground necessary to inscribe blackness and black people as an internal enemy, upon which the sovereignty of Jeffersonian nationalism can thereby be constructed.

When the former subjects of the king came to view themselves as the sovereign (i.e. popular sovereignty), Foucault's account suggests the way to do so was to both imagine themselves as a racial body and to create an opposing racial body. For the anglo-Creoles in an American context, the transition to a republic from a monarchy required not only constructing the king as an enemy that needed to be deposed, but also mandated the production of a new enemy: *the violent black rebel*. The decline of monarchical sovereignty and the rise of popular sovereignty in the colonies is therefore a filiation of an anti-black and genocidal racist discourse of blackness that comprises the Declaration of Independence.²⁷

The production of whiteness as mutually constitutive of, and antithetical to, blackness as a function of the transition from monarchical sovereignty to popular sovereignty looms large in the following passage from Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration of Independence:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the CHIRSTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among

²⁴ Foucault, 81.

²⁵ On creole, see: Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 174.

²⁶ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 233–57.

²⁷ “both *Nigger* and its transformatively generated semanteme *native* [...] functioned at the level of empirical reality as the embodiment of the dysgenic Other [...] as the [...] that-which-is-in-itself that guarantees the [...] secular model of the absolute subject in its bourgeois conceptualization.” Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles,” *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (1989): 642.

us, and to purchase that liberty of which *he* has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom *he* also obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another²⁸

The first sentence of this quote positions the black rebel as passive to the aggression of the king as the colonists on whose behalf he is writing. But if the enslaved are equal counterparts of Anglo docility to George III, they seem to be doing something different when they “rise in arms among us” – the “arms” being used by the enslaved are pointed at the Anglo “us.” The enslaved come to comprise two contradictory positions within Jefferson’s concatenation of nationalism and revolution within the Declaration of Independence: the enslaved double for the Anglo-Creole colonists and they are also subjects who use violence against the colonists, which is a mimetic function of George III. This characterization of the enslaved as both abject and docile while concomitantly posing a threat through the use of violence, while removed from the final draft of the Declaration of Independence, still haunts Jefferson’s later writings.²⁹ More germane to the subject at hand though, popular sovereignty as imagined by Jefferson’s project of revolutionary nationalism depended upon managing the black violent rebel as a racialized enemy that threatened the very liberty that the preamble of the Declaration of Independence posits as an inalienable right.

The inalienability of liberty collapses around Jefferson’s equivalence of the anglo-Creoles and the violent black rebel. The above passage implicates both the enslaved and the British colonists in a struggle against the Crown to defend their liberty whereby the former fight for the “Liberties” denied them by George III through their imposed condition of enslavement and the latter fights for both the liberties violated by the king and for their “*lives*,” which are endangered when the enslaved violently struggle for their liberty. While the equivalence between the Anglo colonists and the enslaved flounders as a result of the two fighting each other, the more fundamental compromise of liberty’s inalienability is Jefferson’s justification of the black rebel’s violence. The violent struggle of the enslaved for liberty operationalizes the “sacred right” to liberty advocated in the Declaration of Independence. Conversely, the rights of the Anglos to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are concomitantly jeopardized by this very struggle for liberty.

Jefferson’s appellation of liberty as a self-evident, natural, and unalienable right bestowed upon all “by their creator” suggests a belief in the Enlightenment ideal of universality. But when this passage from the preamble is juxtaposed against his polemic against George III for violating the liberty of the enslaved, we see that Jefferson did not need liberty to be universal; instead, liberty here operates independent of historical precedent and universalism as it connotes a likeness to property that is non-exchangeable or non-transferrable between entities or persons. Accordingly, the social bond of society breaks whereupon liberty is alienated. What is particularly apposite about Jefferson’s account of the encroachment of liberty by George III is not merely his acknowledgement of the enslaved’s right to liberty, but rather by signaling the Anglo colonists were warring against both the Crown and violent black rebels. This implies, according to the logic posited by the Declaration of Independence, that the former was justified but the latter was not. An attempt to alienate liberty breaks social relations, and as Jefferson argues, George III impinged upon the liberties of both the

²⁸ Thomas Jefferson, “Jefferson’s ‘Original Rough Draught’ of the Declaration of Independence,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, vol. Volume 1, 1760 to 1776, 47 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 423–28 (italics and grammar original).

²⁹ See for example, Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney, vol. 15, 19 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 550–51.

Anglos and the enslaved – yoking both groups into a position of war with each other and with the king; this indicates the violent contestation around which Jefferson’s notion of liberty coheres – namely one’s right to liberty at the exclusion of another. Jefferson proposes, however mendaciously, that this contestation of liberty flows from George III’s impingement upon the Anglo-Creoles by virtue of having supported and transported black people into the “new world” as chattel property and in so doing, George III deracinates the liberty of both groups. Slavery transforms liberty into a fraught principle. For as Jefferson implies, liberty may be entitled to all in an abstract sense, but when George III transports black people from one continent where their liberty was in tact into another where white people impugn their liberty, the “natural order of racial difference” is violated.³⁰ Liberty thus becomes a divisively fraught principle whose meanings must be determined through struggle.

The above passage from and about Jefferson seems to outline an aporetic struggle for liberty between the American Revolution and the enslaved who use violence to rebel against the imposition of slavery. The American Revolution that created the “free and independent states” did so vis-à-vis apocalyptic possibilities anent Anglo America’s destruction. Jefferson writes in Query XVIII from “Notes on the State of Virginia” the following:

And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patrie of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another: in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are even seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. —But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil.³¹

Jefferson is describing an incipient slave revolution here – the very same violent “revolution” that disappeared from the final version of the Declaration of Independence. At the time of his writing, the Anglo colonists were still on the verge of nationalism and the narrative from the Declaration of Independence regarding the position of the violent black rebel returns – only this time it is the Anglos as “despots” in relation to the enslaved. Making a point to characterize the enslaved as both passive (“degrading submissions” to their masters) and concomitantly powerful (the “labour” of the

³⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, PA: Prichard and Hall, 1788), 298.

³¹ Thomas Jefferson, “Query XVIII,” in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, PA: Prichard and Hall, 1785) (spelling and punctuation original).

enslaved engines the American economy and simultaneously threatens to destroy Anglo American civilization), Jefferson constitutes the black enslaved as both terrifying *and* justified in their use of violence – according to the same grammars and logics portended by anglo-nationalism – within the continuing project of Jefferson’s nation; yet the loyalty of the enslaved must be to a community or to a cause antithetical to the integrity of U.S. nationalism.

Jefferson’s insistence on the incomprehensibility of black efforts of liberation through violence is precisely what authorizes Jefferson to imagine black desires and political forms as the constitutive other of Anglo-European revolutionary nationalism. The clause from the first draft of the Declaration of Independence provided above suggests that the natural rights advocated as universal are actually historical productions and dependent upon the interpretations and actions of different actors, and the racial dialectic deployed by Jefferson posits that two oppositional camps might be necessary for these actors. Moreover, Jefferson cannot pronounce the modalities through which the enslaved express their rights as wrong – while he may not like these expressions – the legal encodings of life, liberty and happiness come to be contingent upon racial positioning. Difference therefore becomes the operative distinguishing factor: black conceptualizations of liberty are unequivocally different. And the use of violence from the enslaved, or their progeny, produces a lethal incommensurability for Anglos and their notions of liberty. Blackness, as necessarily tethered to the violent possibilities of insipient rebellion or struggle according to Jefferson’s logic, becomes the “impossible remove from whiteness.”³² This sort of logic capacitates the construction of communities that cogitate their purity insofar as they continually name their difference from the opposing force that threatens their apocalyptic destruction.³³ Thus the positioning of the violent black rebel, enslaved or otherwise, provides Jefferson with a founding fiction – a political mythology – to inaugurate revolutionary nationalism in the New World whereby violent rebellion by black people constitutes an apocalyptic threat to the orderly, rigid, and stable construction of Anglo identity and community.

This short story of Jefferson’s nation-making/building project gets at the configuration of the violent black rebel within the socio-politico-juridical order in three crucial ways. Gleaned firstly are the particular timbres of meaning imbued into the nation-building project of Jefferson and onto black people therewithal. For just as the monarchy, and its toppling, are the result of historical forces, as per Foucault, and akin to the historical precedent Jefferson deploys to inscribe rights with the tonal characteristics of private property, the conceptualization of blackness congeals into a matter of historical definition. Black or blackness is therefore an event, as Sylvia Wynter argues,³⁴ and meanings inscribed onto black or blackness to secure the political mythology undergirding Jefferson’s nationalism, reaching back into the past, pandiculating out into the future, and orients our current episteme in the still-ongoing revolutionary nationalism of the United States. The reasonableness of perceiving blackness as a threat to be killed (Act I) is presaged by Jefferson’s project of revolutionary nationalism whereby the requisite condition for its operationalization dictated the enslaved and their progeny be constructed as potentially-always-incipiently-about-to violently rebel.

³² Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Carolyn Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³³ Talal Asad, “Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today,” *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015): 166–214; Leila Khaled, *My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, ed. George Hajjar (Toronto, Canada: Hodder and Soughton, 1973).

³⁴ “Black” is a historical definition, an *event* rather than a fact. [...] The blacks were the necessary non-group, non-men, against whom the whites could define themselves. As the exploiting group the identity of whites was fixed and rigid, an identity impelled by the situation of violence in which they found themselves and from which they profited [...].”

Secondly, the violent black rebel – whether imagined or real (i.e., the difference between a conspiracy and the material manifestation of an uprising) – to be constitutive of an apocalyptic threat to the orderly, rigid, and stable construction against/through which the anglo identity and community coheres. And violent black rebellion, as always looming, as conspired, and as enacted, is governed against and mediated through macabre spectacles of torture, public executions, and other liberal notions of “white justice” (performed again and again and again...).³⁵ Emergent from the juridical, social, and coercive modes of structurally repeated and proliferated “cultural and emotional terrorism directed” at the enslaved and their progeny – as constituted by the violent black figure Jefferson constructed – become the internal enemy against which state power is created and maintained, discursively and empirically.³⁶ Expressed here is this founding epistemic antagonism (e.g., Life/Death; Order/Chaos; White Civilization/Nigger Savage) upon which dominant cultures, according to Sylvia Wynter’s 1984 essay entitled, *The Ceremony Must be Found: After Humanism* – and from which the namesake of this project gains its name – “create its corresponding type of *chaos* which represents just as active a creation as that of the order itself.” This epistemic expression “is alone the vehicle by which human orders are enabled to define themselves into being.” The death-dealing line drawn by Jefferson thus bolsters the logics from which “reasonableness” can materialize and be recognized as such and functions to demarcate who is killable and who is not.³⁷

Providing the grounds for the second orienting question to be mapped, the third and last revelation from this story of Jefferson attends to the disavowal of the deviousness of the violence of violent black rebellion he imagined. Jefferson’s conceptualization of violent black rebellion, and specifically the violence thereof, evinced an openness and an unknowability beyond the threatening potential to undo his project of anglo nationalism, which moved along and towards alternate epistemic modes of freedom-being such that the grammars of equality and liberty were rendered moot for black people. However, such deviousness ascribed to the violence of violent black rebellion that was disavowed in the final version of the Declaration of Independence, came to be similarly disavowed within the historiographies of violent black rebellion.

Early scholarship anent violent black rebellion concerned itself with counting the number of enslaved persons revolting and debating the acceptable threshold by which violent black revolts could be named as such; and this would spill over into arguments regarding the terminological – what, for example, counts as a rebellion or a revolt. Another thread within this foregoing genre of scholarship worked to testify to the agentic qualities of black people, enslaved or otherwise, and to evidence the strategies of resistance practiced against their conditions of unfreedom. And when historians brought Marxism to the subject, the only measure for a political expression to be garnered from violent black rebellion was whether the state was captured. The violence of violent black rebellion, as imagined by Jefferson and historicized by (presumably) well-meaning scholars, not only functioned to reconcile Jefferson’s fears of violent black revolt capacitating apocalyptic futures for the whites and their nation, but therefore also became ensnared by proscribed and predetermined teleological endpoints – flattened – by appropriating and conscripting this violence into the grammars of the American Revolution and the American Civil War.³⁸

³⁵ Leigh Renee Raiford, “‘Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare’: History, Memory, and the Photography of Twentieth Century African American Social Movements” (Dissertation, New Haven, CT, Yale University, 2003), 38.

³⁶ Sylvia Wynter, “Sambos and Minstrels,” *Social Text* 1, no. Winter (1979): 152.

³⁷ Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument,” 27.

³⁸ For example, see the following works: Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York, NY: Appleton & Co., 1918); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 5 edition (1938; repr., New York, NY: International

The genre of such studies offers little in the way of answering the second question orienting the plinth of this project, namely what does the violence of violent black rebellion *do*? My short-titled dissertation, *Nigger Chaos*, therefore, departs from inquiries (as referenced above) into violent black rebellion wherein violence is operationalized as a dependent variable within a predictable arc that extols resistance, rescues the black body, ascribes it with agentic characteristics, and/or identifies rebellion as symptomatic of a larger phenomenon enacted with a predetermined teleological endpoint. *Nigger Chaos* understands the violence of violent black rebellion to be imbued with narrative properties possessing distinctly autonomous semantic and material characteristics. The “violence” of black rebellion is a knowledge-making, discourse-constitutive formation imbued with epistemic expressions and pedagogical valences. Possessing its own semantic and narrative quality, violent black rebellion is a capacious intellectual project that creates an opening to an elsewhere neither predetermined nor preconfigured. Reconceptualizing violent black rebellion in this manner not only elucidates how the use of violence by black people has historically served as an effort to reshape their lives, but also how their utilization of violence – as an ideological formation freed from means/ends – challenges the founding epistemological antagonisms upon which colonial and state power was created and maintained, namely who is killable and who is not.

And, on another scale, *Nigger Chaos* attends to the long intellectual history that carefully created our current epistemological socio-political-juridical order and examines the ways in which violent black rebellion intervenes, in the form of a question mark, to postulate different possibilities and new potentialities of being. I do this by tracing the epistemology that animates the codification of the pirate within the legal and political imagination of Western statecraft and analyzing the ways in which these grammars have been transumed over and across time. It is suggested that the interplay between the state and the pirate – as the enemy of all, to whom no rights are afforded and no protection owed – discloses the positionality of the violent black rebel. That is, our current socio-political-juridical epistemological order, by design, constrains the black subject’s opportunity for redress to be found in appeals to the state. And yet, it is this very same positionality – always an enemy, always potentially violent, and always an internal threat – that makes possible for a new political praxis.

So he lived and so he would have died had not he raised his hand [...] That made him an outlaw, and being a man of courage he decided to die with his face to the foe.³⁹

*I’d rather die enormous than live dormant*⁴⁰

Publishers, 1983); Kenneth. M Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1956); Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1959); George. M Fredrickson and Christopher Lasch, “Resistance to Slavery,” *Civil War History* 13, no. 4 (December 1967): 315–29; Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 1963).

³⁹ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Mob Rule in New Orleans: Robert Charles and His Fight to Death, the Story of His Life, Burning Human Beings Alive, Other Lynching Statistics* (Chicago, IL: s.n., 1900).

⁴⁰ JAY-Z, *Can I Live*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

Act IV: *Friend or Foe*

Just as the violent black rebel questions and challenges the very epistemic conceptions and frameworks by which they are constituted, so too does the compositional arrangement of this manuscript. The narrative form through which each chapter is articulated, functions to perform the storytelling work of violent black rebellion. The multimodal and polyphonic modes of narration attempts to disrupt the episteme that presupposes the telos of academic writing wherein hierarchical narratives disclose knowable facts, and instead, seeks to forever imagine the open-ended possibilities for something different.

Guided by the work of Sylvia Wynter and grounded in black feminist historical methodologies, I think with slave narratives, autobiographies, newspaper articles, oral history, creative works of art, letters, and the judiciary, legal, and political utterances found in court proceedings to piece together the theoretical formulations posited by violent black rebels. Drawing from the living history of transatlantic slavery, I argue that violent black rebellion, or nigger chaos, plots the possibility for new stories with new meanings and new conceptions of freedom. As both theory and praxis, nigger chaos is a transgressive revolt against the semantic charter upon which our current epistemological operates and coheres. *Nigger Chaos* resists neat categories of periodization and teleological narratives and moves back and forth through time while sustaining a deictically interdisciplinary analysis at the site of violence.

Each chapter braids together the ideas of Sylvia Wynter, the provocations of violent black rebels, and the epistemological project into which they are intervening. Chapter One *returns* to Southampton County, Virginia in 1831, which is one of the few instances of explicit identification of a slave revolt in the colonies Wynter's references. By placing her conceptualization of the human into a catastrophic confrontation between heaven and hell, I argue that the violence enacted by the Church is an act of reversal, re-invention, and recreation. In Chapter Two, I *return* to the Christiana Revolt of 1851. Here, I think with Wynter's work on storytelling and the relationship between proleptic plots that ensnare blackness and the possibilities capacitated by violent black rebellion to articulate new stories with new citational referents. Wynter's understanding of exile is given wings and extends to the skies in Chapter Three, specifically, to the Sky Pirates that hijacked planes in an attempt to escape. The throughline of each chapter traces the figure of the violent black rebel – from the Jefferson, to Cicero, to Richard Nixon; illustrated is not only how the grounds by which black people are categorized as killable – reasonably and lawfully – but also how the grammars that operationalize such exigencies move in and out through Cicero's pirate figure.

Like the theory and praxis of violent black rebellion, it is *in medias res* that this dissertation project begins. *Nigger Chaos* is as much a history of the present as it is a history of the past and of the future. Every narrative articulation of violent black rebellion is a gesture to demonstrate that not only is violent black rebellion – the actual violence of such – challenging the epistemological line demarcating who is killable and who is not, but it is also a gesture towards illustrating how the violence of violent black rebellion is in excess of merely reducing white people to the biological. For if this was the case with violent black rebellion, it would be identical to the operationalized logics undergirding white/state violence against black people.

There is a gesture – in each chapter underwriting each studied case – to demonstrate not only that violent black rebellion – the actual violence of such – strikes at the racial ontological line that demarcates who is killable and who is not, but also that the violence of violent black rebellion does more. The textual composition of *Nigger Chaos* is an attempt to mirror perform what violence *does*. My thinking on this is informed by Sylvia Wynter's, 1992 short-titled essay entitled, *Rethinking*

'*Aesthetics*,' wherein she puts forth a deciphering practice that asks not merely "what texts and their signifying practices can be interpreted to *mean* but what they can be deciphered to *do*." And Carmen Kynard, in her 2013 short-titled book, "Vernacular Insurrections," works towards narrative articulations that are "not only counterhegemonic, but also as affirmative of new, constantly mutating languages, identities, political methodologies, and social understandings that communities form in and of themselves, both inwardly and outwardly." She continues, "Vernacular insurrections then are not merely the bits and pieces chipped of or chipping away at the dominant culture, but a whole new emergence."⁴¹ With Wynter and Kynard together then, what I am attempting to do, is to illustrate the work of violence – the *doing* of violent black insurrection – through the writing itself.

To escape bondage, to introduce a different concept of the human, or to abandon the human as a political concept, rebellion and continuous struggle may be the only course. But this will depend on the practice of rebellion and of struggle; struggles and rebellions may only end up reproducing the sovereignty of the state and its positive law. And yet, some rebellions and struggles carry the potential to introduce new texts and practices for losing the human in politics, or articulating other concepts of the human, while challenging the texts and practices of state law.⁴²

Friend or foe, yo
*State ya biz*⁴³

⁴¹ Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards Deciphering a Practice," in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye B. Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 266–67; Carmen Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-Literacies Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 11.

⁴² Samera Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 17.

⁴³ JAY-Z, *Friend or Foe*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

1

“With Their Own Weapons”*Towards the Eschatological Reversal in the Gospel According to Nat Turner*

But that in traumatic times like ours, when reality itself is so distorted as to have become impossible and abnormal, it is the function of all culture, partaking of this abnormality, to be aware of its own sickness. To be aware of the unreality of the inauthenticity of the so called real, is to *reinterpret* this reality. To *reinterpret* this reality is to commit oneself to a constant revolutionary assault against it.

– Sylvia Wynter, *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk about a Little Culture, Part One*, 1968 (p. 24)

[...] and she laughs at the time to come.

– Proverbs 31:25

Judge Jeremiah Cobb:	Have you any thing to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced against you?
Nat Turner:	I have not. I have made a full confession to Mr. Gray, and I have nothing more to say.

Introduction: “For as the blood of Christ had been shed on this earth ...”

In 1831, between the late summer days of August 21-23, Nat Turner and his Congregation killed fifty-five white people in St. Luke’s Parish, Southampton County, Virginia. The weapons used to kill the whites – axes, religion, swords, civilization, guns, orderliness, mallets, forced labor, machetes, God, hatchets, and (exiled) Lucifer – the same symbols and objects whites thought would secure their dominion over all the world – were stolen, weaponized, and turned against them. The murderous chorus¹ butchered, maimed, tortured, stabbed, and shot men, women, and children – some of whom were also dismembered and decapitated. Despite the parishioners of Turner’s Church only comprising of fifty or sixty persons at its peak – a mere fraction of a fragment of those 60,000 enslaved *mujahids* who waged an island-wide jihad in Jamaica from 1831-1832 which resulted in the deaths of only a dozen whites – more white people were raptured by Turner’s liturgical

¹ “Who else would dare believe another world was possible”? See Saidiya Hartman’s notion of the chorus: *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2019), 347–49; and throughout.

sermon in this small backwater parish than in any other such convocation in American history.² For this is the Gospel according to Nat Turner, as ordained by the will of God and revealed unto him through the Holy Spirit by interpreting the given signs, visions, and dreams.³ Cognate with the apocalyptic teachings of Jesus, Turner understood that the Kingdom of Heaven was coming to earth and the “the great day of judgment was at hand.”⁴ But only after a great battle between good and evil occurred and the wicked were annihilated and the earth purified by fire.⁵ Transforming the homiletical into praxis, Turner’s theology reveals that he and his disciples were but the mere instruments through which God’s apocalyptic outpouring of sacramental violence flowed.⁶ Accordingly, the violence enacted at Southampton, as “perfected by Divine inspiration,” functions as the kerygma of God’s “coming wrath” and of a new world to come.⁷

Though the violence enacted by the Church functions as a clearing for God’s enemies to be judged upon Christ’s return – indeed this sacramental offering is a conditional requisite for the new world to come⁸ – the Kingdom’s arrival is neither immediate nor known.⁹ The temporal space between the present and its future perfect is carved opened by these emplotted acts of violence. But before all of God’s enemies are to be snatched up and thrown down into the lake of hellfire, the righteous and the disciples/believers must faithfully endure the persecution that proceeds from anticipating the now/not yet arrival of God’s Kingdom. The cosmos remains cleaved; the angels continue to prepare to sound their trumpets.¹⁰

Within the *ongoingness*¹¹ of the days that followed, the enemies of the faithful could not help

² Sultana Afroz argues that the commonly named Baptist Rebellion is incorrect and was informed by the Holy Qur’an. See: “The Jihad of 1831-1832: The Misunderstood Baptist Rebellion in Jamaica,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 21, no. 2 (2001): 227–43.

³ Thomas R. Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, VA. As Fully and Voluntarily Made to Thomas R. Gray, In the Prison Where He Was Confined, and Acknowledged by Him to Be Such When Read before the Court of Southampton; with the Certificate, under Seal of the Court Convened at Jerusalem, Nov. 5, 1831, for His Trial. Also, An Authentic Account of the Whole Insurrection, With Lists of the Whites Who Were Murdered, and of the Negroes Brought before the Court of Southampton, and There Sentenced, &c.* (Baltimore, MD: Thomas R. Gray; Lucas & Deaver, print, 1831), 10. Concerning the recurring motif in the New Testament of the spiritual authority possessed by those with whom the Holy Spirit communicates, see: Christopher Rowland, “Apocalypse, Prophecy, and the New Testament,” in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and Their Relationships*, ed. Lester L. Grabb and Robert D. Haak (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 149–66. Numbers 12:6: “And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.”

⁴ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 10–11. Matthew 6:10; 11:25; 28:18.

⁵ Nat Turner recounts a vision seeing “white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened – the thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood flowed in streams.” In: Gray, 10. See: Matthew 3:1-12; 13:36-52; 25:31-46; Revelation 1:21-22; 20:11-15. Note also here the parlance of Franz Fanon: “Violence is a cleansing force.” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963), 94.

⁶ Nat Turner plead “not guilty” at his trial. Henry Irving Tragle, ed., “Trial of Nat Turner, Southampton County Court Minute Book (1830-1835), November 5, 1831,” in *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 221–28. Following the lead of recent historical scholarship on the matter, including Vanessa M. Holden and Patrick H. Breen, I use Tragle’s compilation of archival material unless otherwise noted. However, the digitized Southampton County Court Minute Books are published online through the Brantley Association of America.

⁷ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 8. Luke 3:7 reads, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.” See also: Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Mark 10:30; Acts 3:21.

⁸ Revelation 20:13-15; 21:8.

⁹ Luke 21:5–36.

¹⁰ Matthew 23:29-36; 24:6-9; 29-31.

¹¹ *Felt (!)* this: Rhaisa Kameela Williams, “Choreographies of the Ongoing: Episodes of Black Life, Events of Black Lives,” *Biography* 41, no. 4 (2018): 760–76.

but to reveal themselves.¹² For example, John Hampden Pleasants, the editor and founder of the Richmond *Constitutional Whig*, writes the following on September 3, 1831:

We therefore incline to the belief that he acted upon no higher principle than the impulse of revenge against the whites, as the enslavers of himself and his race; that, being a fanatic, he possibly persuaded himself that Heaven would interfere; and that he may have convinced himself, as he certainly did his deluded followers to some extent, that the appearance of the sun some weeks ago, prognosticated something favorable to their cause. We are inclined to think that the solar phenomenon exercised considerable influence in promoting the insurrection; calculated as it was to impress the imaginations of the ignorant.

Such we believe to be a summary outline of the Southampton insurrection!—that insurrection reads some salutary lessons; to the whites the propriety of incessant vigilance; to the blacks, the madness of all attempts such as that in Southampton. A few lives they may indeed sacrifice, but possession of the country, even for a week, is the most chimerical of notions. We assert confidently that 20 armed whites would put to the route the whole negro population of Southampton, and we repeat our persuasion, that another insurrection will be followed by putting the whole race to the sword.

To Gov. Floyd, South East Virginia owes a large debt of gratitude, for the prompt and silent energy with which he threw arms and men into all the supposed affected districts; and to Brig. Gen. Eppes, we tender the respects of those lately under his command, for the vigilance and fortitude with which he surmounted difficulties, arising not from the strength of the enemy, but the novelty of his situation, and the alarms and agitation of the inhabitants. To the Ladies of Southampton we want words to express the warmth of gratitude inspired in the breasts of the Richmond Troop, by their unremitting kindness and attention.—All that the troops regrets is, that some occasion had not offered, in which they could have manifested, by deeds, their zeal for public safety, and their devotion to their hospitable and amiable countrymen of Southampton.¹³

The order of operations here are rather astounding. The first move we observe is for Pleasants to reduce (“no higher principle”) what he later characterizes as an “insurrection” to an act of “revenge.” This is followed by simultaneously disavowing the deeply held faith of Turner (“being a fanatic”) while eliding the plurality of reasons belonging to the Church’s congregants (“deluded followers”) that may or may not have actively participated in the halaqa circle during the events in question.¹⁴ And the first sweeping sentence is punctuated by the conjoining of two other dizzying sentences to proclaim, first by suggestion, the whimsical correlation between nature (“solar

¹² Matthew 10:26: “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”

¹³ John Hampden Pleasants, “Southampton Affair,” *Richmond Constitutional Whig*, September 3, 1831.

¹⁴ This characterization of Pleasants is of course an extension of a gendered framing of who participates in violent revolts and who does not. But this is not the case; see: Vanessa M. Holden, “Enslaved Women and Strategies of Evasion and Resistance,” in *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 26–38; Vanessa M. Holden, “Generation, Resistance, and Survival: African American Children and the Southampton Rebellion,” in *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 56–80. See Chapter 2 of this monograph for more on this historiography.

phenomenon”) and the violence enacted by the enslaved (“calculated as it was”), and second by exclamation, the “insurrection” owes to the invocations from the deranged impleors of the psychotic to the willfully dimwitted (“to impress the imaginations of the ignorant” and “the madness of all attempts”). Entreating all white people into permanently policing against any and all future revolts (“to the whites the propriety of incessant vigilance”) waged by black people (“some salutary lessons”), Pleasants avers that even though some whites may die in this pursuit (“few lives they may indeed sacrifice”), the protectorates of the nation will never extend to black people (“the most chimerical of notions”). He concludes his diatribe by yoking the militarized response (“Gov. Floyd” “threw arms and men into all supposed affected districts”) of suppressing the “agitation of the inhabitants” with the communal expectation of participating in the management of the enslaved – whereby the men assumed roles within the militia and the women provided “unremitting kindness and attention” to those militia troops from Richmond who have heeded the call with “vigilance and fortitude.”¹⁵ And this compounding set of relations is animated by ascribing enmity to black people (“the enemy”), against whom genocide is threatened (“putting the whole race to the sword”) in the name of “public safety.”

The scorn with which Pleasants attributed to Turner and his congregants, the harbingers of God’s wrath, was commonplace in the aftermath of the violence enacted by black people against white people and their property. Indeed, this animosity levied against those who struggle against their oppression outside of the approved paternalized means of doing so is illustrative of the *ongoing* material consequences expressed by Pleasants, then as it does now.¹⁶ And though this vituperative venom functions to fulfill the prophecy heretofore outlined in accordance with the Gospel of Nat Turner, the genocidal plinth spewed by Pleasants also demonstrates the means through which power governs and the *ongoing* stakes of struggling against such means. Further revealed here is the figuring of both the violent black rebel and the work performed by this violence; disclosed by Pleasants is the telos through which slave power governs – namely, through the logics of genocide.¹⁷ Bolstered by the capacity of the military to wage war in the name of communal public safety, which black people, enslaved or otherwise, are constructed external to such bonds and veritably represent the internal threat that the community must be protected against. This results in black people, enslaved or otherwise, being placed into an-always-proximate state of domestic warfare. The appellation of enemy facilitates this structurally organized position, but such grammars functioned merely to grease the slippage once the heresy of religious fanaticism was ascribed.

¹⁵ The point being that slave power conscripted whites into the management, punishment, and surveillance of the enslaved regardless if those conscripted owned property in black people or not; this was a cultural dictate. And white women (“the Ladies”) were instrumental in this task. See: Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ 2 Chronicles 36:15-16: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” Luke 16:15: “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

¹⁷ Following Dylan Rodríguez, I do not mean genocide here as “juridical and academic regime” whereby the “reified category/figure of *vulnerable White Being*” constitutes the concept’s horizon of meaning. Rather, I mean genocide as the “anti-blackness and racial-colonial power” that “*preconditions* for the term’s articulation” that in this case, black people, enslaved or otherwise, creatively and collectively struggle against the kill-you-slow everyday quotidian machinations of “liquidation.” See: Dylan Rodríguez, “‘Civilization in Its Reddened Waters’: Anti-Black, Racial-Colonial Genocide and the Logics of Evisceration,” in *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 144, 172, 168; [italics original].

Part I: The Last Shall be First

It is within the same internal epistemic logics that created the conditions for the heretical psychic trespass of the Church that the “plantation town”²⁰ of Southampton County, Virginia, was carved out of the woods.²¹ Partitioned from the densely forested rolling hills, “hardly distinguishable” and “charmless” houses, farms, small plantations, even smaller slave cabins, pungent outhouses dotted the county’s landscape while livestock (e.g., hogs, horses, mules, cows, and chicken) foraged amidst its haystacks and apple orchards.²² Vivisected from the James River and Virginia’s tidewater area, Southampton County in 1831, was a hot, swampy, backwater region in a small, rural southeastern corner of the state. Southampton County, with its southernmost boundary bordering North Carolina, was geographically isolated from Virginia’s larger plantation towns – Richmond, the state Capital of Virginia, was located seventy-five miles north and Norfolk fifty miles to its northeast – while the Dismal Swamp was but a mere twenty miles eastward (see Map 1 in Appendix).

The Nottoway River bisected the county into two civil administrative divisions, Nottoway Parish to the north and St. Luke’s Parish to the south. The county seat of Jerusalem was centrally located on the riverbed between the two parishes (see Map 2 in Appendix). Here, the primary formal legal and political apparatuses were located, the county’s courthouse and constable station. As was the case with all plantation towns, and as is still the case with the “now-time” of history and of living through wake of slavery,²³ adjunctive and ancillary institutions and practices were created

²⁰ Vanessa M. Holden qualifies Southampton County as a slave society while also being careful to point out that twenty enslaved persons laboring on a farm is the “accepted metric” for the “agricultural production” to be designated as a plantation. Holden notes that most farmers in the county “enslaved between ten and fifteen people” and as such, distinguishes between farms and plantations throughout her study. In, *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 15, 129n7. While I retain Holden’s qualification of Southampton County as constituting a slave society, I understand the county to be a plantation town with an assemblage of plantations – including both those farms and plantations according to Holden’s accounting. Here, I am less interested in the quantity of enslaved laborers and more interested in the juridico-socio-cultural and politico-economic logics and forces that relationally structure, produce, reproduce, and maintain the slave society and too, of the different and deviant epistemic modes of thought that may articulate its annihilation. My thinking here is informed by: Sylvia Wynter, “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation,” *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95–102; Katherine McKittrick, “The Authenticity of This Story Has Not Been Documented: Auction Blocks,” in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 65–90; Clyde Woods, “‘Sittin’ on Top of the World’: The Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography,” in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 46–81; McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place.”

²¹ For the tactics of colonial conquest in Virginia and the ongoing struggle against Native genocide against the Cheroenhaka peoples, see: Vanessa M. Holden, “Geographies of Surveillance and Control,” in *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 11–25; Thomas C. Parramore, “The Passing of the Nottoways,” in *Southampton County, Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 1–18.

²² Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner’s Fierce Rebellion* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1990), 1; Holden, *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community*, 34.

²³ *Jetztzeit*, as Walter Benjamin names it, refers to history as “the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.” Reading Jean-Luc Nancy, Leigh Raiford notes that this “now-time” bursts forth with possibility in “the production and performance of what is to come.” That is, even as the institution of slavery sought to mechanize the behaviors, thoughts, and the very souls of the enslaved through any one of its necessarily repressive practices of negation, there is always something in excess of the plantation’s logics. The excess manifests, for example, through enslaved women in the plantation home gossiping and the telling of stories that may have contained life-saving knowledge; or the secrets held by enslaved women even as they lived through “geographies of

and implemented through the Southampton County government to contain and restrict the movement of its black and enslaved population through the codification of slave power's cultural codes of rules, practices, and customs into law. For example, the county government was responsible for the oversight and deployment of slave patrols and its militia.²⁴ As Henry Irving Tragle observes, Southampton County was particularly unique with regards to its militia. "During a period when neither the State nor the nation faced any sort of exterior threat," he writes, "Virginia felt the need to maintain a security force roughly ten per cent of the total number of its inhabitants: black and white, male and female, slave and free!" Tragle deduces from this observation that the county's white people understood the enslaved to constitute "a major threat, and the State had prepared itself to deal with such a threat if it arose."²⁵ *And she laughs at the things to come.*

The relationship between the instrumentalization of the written word into law and its governed adherence through the gun is illustrative of the co-constitutively/reinforcing relationship Sylvia Wynter observes in *Black Metamorphosis*. European culture (e.g., the written word) and its violence (e.g., the guns wielded by the militia) function together "as a weapon of domination, as an instrument of power" such that the "coercive power of the one could be made to imply the coercive power of the other."²⁶ The legal (written codes of negatively and positively sanctioned behaviors) and the political (the governing of the legal) paradigmatically maps onto the state laws of Virginia – from which its geography was annexed and reapportioned, and to which Southampton County was bound – engine the material forces that invented Nat Turner and his compatriots into existence as the antithetical "ruthless savages"²⁷ of the plantation order that "must fall certain sacrifice to their own folly."²⁸ As early as 1669, for example, we observe "An Act about the Casuall Killing of Slaves" stipulating that any recourse taken against the disobedience of an enslaved person by the "master (or other by [the] master's order concerning [the enslaved]) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die," must be acquitted of any crime because, as a matter of law, ipso facto, "it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice [on behalf of the person or appointed person claiming absolute dominion over another person through the logics of private property] should induce any

containment." For it is against such surveillance that Simone Browne names "dark sousveillance" as the epistemological challenge levied by black people against the intended totality of surveillance. Likewise, Christina Sharpe states: "To be in the wake is also to recognize the ways that we are constituted through and by continued vulnerability to overwhelming force though not *only* know to ourselves and to each other *by* that force. Together, and therefore, the *as-was* and the *as-is* represents not only the radical provocations put forth by the rebellious and treasonous plotting of the enslaved, but *as-was*, *as-is* frames continuity and the *to-come* of such annihilatory practices. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (1969), ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2007), 261; Leigh Raiford, "Come Let Us Build a New World Together": SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1144; Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*; Stephanie M. H. Camp, "The Intoxication of Pleasurable Amusement: Secret Parties and the Politics of the Body," in *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 60–92; Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015), 21; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 16.

²⁴ Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁵ Henry Irving Tragle, ed., *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 17.

²⁶ Sylvia Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World" (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 9–10, Institute of the Black World Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Boxes 3–9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.

²⁷ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 19.

²⁸ *Richmond Compiler*, August 24, 1831.

man to destroy his owne estate [sic].”²⁹ And again in 1691, we find “An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves” declaring it lawful “to kill and destroy such negroes, mulattoes, and other slave or slaves by gunn [sic] or any otherwise whatsoever” in the event of having escaped and subsequently having inveighed against the efforts undertaken to be recaptured, including private citizens and government officials.³⁰ Southampton’s plantation economy was secured by this legal and political apparatus.

*Now front to front the armies were display'd
Here Israel rang'd, and there the foes array'd;
The hosts on two opposing mountains stood,
Thick as the foliage of the waving wood;
Between them an extensive valley lay,
O'er which the gleaming armour pour'd the day,
When from the camp of the Philistine foes,
Dreadful to view, a mighty warrior rose;
In the dire deeds of bleeding battle skill'd,
The monster stalks the terror of the field.*³¹

According to U.S. census data in 1830, the enslaved population of Southampton County totaled 7,756 while its white residents numbered 6,573. Nottoway Parish, settled in-between the Nottoway River and the Blackwater River, had a white population of 3,662 (~66% of the county’s total number of white people) and an enslaved population of 3,224 (~41.5% of the county’s total number of enslaved persons). St. Luke’s Parish, nestled between the Meherrin River to the east and the Nottoway River to the west, had an enslaved population of 4,532 (~58.5% of the county’s total number of enslaved persons) and a white population of 2,911 (~44% of the county’s total number of white people).³² Though cotton was more popular in Southampton than anywhere else

²⁹ William Waller Hening, ed., “An Act about the Casuall Killing of Slaves,” in *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight*, vol. II (New York, NY: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), 270; spelling original.

³⁰ William Waller Hening, ed., “An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves (1691),” in *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight*, vol. III (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas Desilver, 1823), 86; spelling original. For a rich thoroughgoing of antebellum law and slavery, see: William Goodell, *The American Slave Code: Its Theory and Practice; Its Distinctive Features Shown by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts* (New York, NY: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1853); Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1850* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, 4 vols. (New York, NY: Negro Universities Press, 1968); Paul Finkelman, “The Centrality of Slavery in American Legal Development,” in *Slavery and the Law*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997), 3–26; Sally E. Hadden, “Colonial Beginnings and Experiments,” in *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6–40.

³¹ Phillis Wheatley, “Goliath of Gath. 1 Sam. Chap. XVII,” in *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral by Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England* (London, UK: A. Bell, 1773), 31; lines 9-18.

³² Historian David F. Allmendinger provides an extensive analysis of census data, tax records, trial records, and of the intrarelationships between white slaveholding families networked throughout Southampton as a result of their buying/trading/selling commodified flesh in black people (and too, the communal ties the enslaved established with each other throughout the county and elsewhere). Southampton County census data can be accessed here: “U.S.

throughout the state,³³ beans, corn, peas, potatoes, various livestock, and from its orchards, the distinctively known apple brandy served as the county's primary market export. Crops were transported by boat to other markets accessible from the river networks;³⁴ black people were bought as slaves and eventually imported into the region in a similar manner. If almost "one-third of Southampton's white families owned no slaves," as historian Stephen B. Oates observes,³⁵ then it is true that almost two-thirds of white families did own slaves. The plantation farms in Southampton were modest in comparison to those that those larger farms associated with the planters of Norfolk and Richmond. It was nonetheless to the cultural and social values of this landed gentry class of planters the Southampton's whites aspired.³⁶ Convinced by the natural order of things and reified by parrying the "enlightened benevolence" that provisioned equally the chances of white people working next to black people in the fields on Saturday and together in church on Sunday. Southampton County was indeed insular and close-knit – the county did not have its own newspaper. The close living/working proximities between its white and enslaved populations, which owed in part to the fact that those who owned slaves were not absented landlords (like those in South Carolina and/or the Caribbean), led Kenneth S. Greenberg to frame the "Nat Turner rebellion" as being "intimate" because "[m]any of the black and white causalities knew personally the people who killed them."³⁷

Setting aside momentarily the utter unremarkability of a black person, enslaved or otherwise, being killed by a white person – irregardless of how many/if any degrees of separation existed between the two, for the existence of shared relations is indifferently immaterial – that its signification of "intimate" becomes so bereft of meaning for a black person to be killed by a white person, that this characterization more closely approaches the zero-point of meaning than it does language itself – gibberish. The land upon which Virginia was materially mapped onto had been ideologically cleaved and geographically dissected in order to secure the accumulation of capital, the nation's founding ideal of freedom. The establishment of the plantation system was predicated upon the production and reproduction of blackness as object and propertyable, while simultaneously both labor and commodity³⁸ – a looped circuit of fungibility and alterity within the framework of the bonds shared by the propertied. Yet, as Katherine McKittrick observes, this "human-object" was also "transformed into a recognizable sign of captivity that turned blackness into an ideological currency that moves beyond the moment of sale." Black people then, are not merely peripheral to the plantation's reproduction, but are mutually constitutive of its (un) | making. The marking of absolute difference requisite for the plantation's reproduction – the symbolic Redeemed/Christian | Enemy of Christ/Heretic – was (un) | made (un) | knowable by the ideological currency of owning this commodity, or the desire thereto. In other words, "the 'slaves' were the

Census, Southampton County, Virginia, 1830," 1830. <http://www.usgwarchives.net/va/southampton/census/1830/>. However, unless otherwise stated, I rely on Allmendinger's careful analysis for demographics. Note that one percent of the total population of Southampton County consisted of free black persons, 907 of which lived in St. Luke's Parish while the remainder 845 lived in Nottoway Parish. David F. Allmendinger, Jr., *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 346–47.

³³ Vanessa M. Holden frames the situation like this: the oppressive summer heat of south Virginia was "kind to cotton and nothing else." *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community*, 26.

³⁴ Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material*, 14–15.

³⁵ Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*, 2.

³⁶ Thomas C. Parramore, *Southampton County, Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1978).

³⁷ Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed., *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents* (1996; repr., New York, NY: Bedford Books, 1996), 7.

³⁸ McKittrick, "The Authenticity of This Story Has Not Been Documented: Auction Blocks," 75, 77.

enemy who, when they gave no trouble were commodities,”³⁹ and it is through the socio-spatial circulation of the en fleshed commodity from the ships to the auction blocks and throughout the waiting plantation – this is where the Nigger was placed and is produced and reproduced by the “discursively naturalizing multiscalar ideologies that justify, local, regional, and national violence and enslavement.”⁴⁰ And it is in this way the whites could intimate “intimate:” the daily and quotidian normalized imputations of symbolic coded difference is placed onto black people as naturalized circulating economic value. They thought they knew who we be. HA HA HA.⁴¹

This parapraxis however, the slippage of meaning derived from the intimate that lingers between the absurd and death, draws us closer to the matter at hand. As Georges Bataille points out, intimacy is violence, and it is destruction. There is nothing innately intimate about death itself; rather, “death disturbs the order of things and the order of things” holds us. “Death suddenly shows the real society was lying. Then it is not the loss of the thing, of the useful member, that is taken into consideration. What the real society has lost is not a member but rather its truth.” Writing further, he adds, “death reveals life in its plentitude and dissolves the real order.”⁴² The slaveholders in Southampton – those “who own slaves [and] honor God’s law in the exercise of [their] authority” – were faced with the keen awareness of encountering their own desecration from “the scenes of slaughter.”⁴³ Precarity, as Judith Butler names it, made present by the absence of their once-perceived security.⁴⁴ The ascribed intimacy is rather the realization of having been devalued and betrayed by their own *inaugurated* symbolic codes of life. Conversely, the *exaugurated* Nigger laughs. Consider briefly the relationality of the intimacy associated with the “intimate rebellion.” Allen Crawford, a formerly enslaved person interviewed by the Works Progress Administration, born and raised three miles from the location of Turner’s work of death and pillage, recounts the following story:

Ole Nat den went on out to Miss Venie Frances, a lady’s house close to what I was born and he asked ef ole man Nelson was dar – a colored man. She said, “No.” Den he went through orchard, going to the house – met a school mistress – killed her. Miss Frances ran in de house skeer’d after he left and hid herself in a closet between lathes and plastering. Dar was two house gals, Lucy and Charlotte. They thought this woman teacher was their missus kilt after nobody could find her. Ha, ha, ha, so dem gals was standing dar ’viding her clothes – arguing who should have dis and dat [...].⁴⁵

Crawford’s laughter is caused by the “magical subversion” and “rupture” induced by violence and the inversion of relations that rendered Miss Frances powerless to stop Lucy and Charlotte from taking whatever they wanted from her.⁴⁶ In this intimate Fanonian sense of knowing, black laughter

³⁹ Wynter, “Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World,” 65.

⁴⁰ McKittrick, “The Authenticity of This Story Has Not Been Documented: Auction Blocks,” 79.

⁴¹ “THEY COULDN’T POSSIBLY KNOW.” Listen: DMX, *Who We Be*, The Great Depression (Yonkers, NY: Ruff Ryders Entertainment, 2001).

⁴² Georges Bataille, “Laughter,” in *The Bataille Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997), 60, 61.

⁴³ “Insurrection in Southampton,” *American Beacon*, August 26, 1831.

⁴⁴ “James C. Furman to W. E. Bailey” (Letter, Greenville, South Carolina, December 18, 1848), Furman Family Papers, Furman University; Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York, NY: Verso, 2009).

⁴⁵ Charles L. Perdue Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., “Allen Crawford (b. 1835),” in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (1976; repr., Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 76.

⁴⁶ Bataille, “Laughter,” 62.

mocks and degrades the pretended superiority of the culturally orthodox.⁴⁷ From the epistemological ground to where blackness was relegated, its heretical laughter – a counter-communicative representation of reality – bursts forth to deracinate and rendition the ruling order back down to earth. And this is the work of violent black rebellion: annihilation according to the order's own portended logics of annihilation – the requisitioning of its violent means to be harnessed and its meanings re-made and re-invented.

*Before the monarch dauntless he began,
 "For this Philistine fail no heart of man:
 'I'll take the vale, and with the giant fight:
 'I dread not all his boasts, nor all his might."
 When thus the king: "Dar'st thou a stripling go,
 "And venture combat with so great a foe?
 "Who all his days has been inur'd to fight,
 "And made its deeds his study and delight:
 "Battles and bloodshed brought the monster forth,
 "And clouds and whirlwinds usher'd in his birth."
 When David thus: "I kept the fleecy care,
 "And out there rush'd a lion and a bear;
 "A tender lamb the hungry lion took,
 "And with no other weapon than my crook
 "Bold I pursu'd, and chas'd him o'er the field,
 "The prey deliver'd, and the felon kill'd:
 "As thus the lion and the bear I slew,
 "So shall Goliath fall, and all his crew:
 "The God, who sav'd me from these beasts of prey,
 "By me this monster in the dust shall lay"⁴⁸*

On the Work of the Great Work of Death and Pillage

Nat Turner looked to the heavens and the will of God was revealed unto him through the Holy Spirit. "Ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty" and anointed by the "communion of the Spirit" that was derived from continually seeking "true holiness" through fasting, praying, studying the Word, and from remembrances of things past, the "Holy Ghost was with [Turner]" and "true knowledge of faith [...] made plain the miracles it had shown [him]." And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, the beginning of things to come: "white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened--the thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood flowed in the streams." And it came to pass, a solar eclipse on February 12, 1831 – the moon's passing between earth and the sun – vouchsafed that just "as the blood of Christ had been

⁴⁷"The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory. [...] The violence with which the supremacy of white values is affirmed and the aggressiveness which has permeated the victory of these values over the ways of life and of thought of the native mean that, in revenge, the native laughs in mockery when Western values are mentioned in front him." In: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963, 43.

⁴⁸ Wheatley, "Goliath of Gath. 1 Sam. Chap. XVII," 35–36; lines 88–108.

shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners [...] plain to me [Turner] that the Saviour [sic] was about to lay down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand.” With this sign, Turner and his comrades commenced collaboratively plotting for the fulfillment of “the great promise that had been made”: near was the time “when the first should be last and the last should be first.” For the next six months, plans were made and unmade, schemes were hatched only to be halted; the plots redoubled, the collective plotting continued.⁴⁹ Turner watched, prayed, and like Christ, he waited for another sign.⁵⁰ *In your patience possesses ye your souls.*⁵¹

The awaited omen came in the form of a global ecological phenomenon. In July 1831, Ferdinandea, a submarine volcano located in the Mediterranean Sea between Tunisia and Sicily, erupted and sulfuric aerosol was ejected from the depths of the earth into the heavens. Observed from Ukraine to East India, and New York to Louisiana, the atmospheric transportation of the volcanic plume made the sun appear virescent. In a letter to the *Washington National Intelligencer* dated August 13, 1831, schoolteacher⁵² and novice scientist, Benjamin Hallowell reports the sun possessing “a greenish blue appearance” in Alexandria, Virginia. And just prior to its setting, he noted the sun having a “black spot near the center [sic], discernable to the naked eye, apparently the of the size of a walnut.”⁵³ Turner understood “the appearance of the sun [...] was positive proof” of the

⁴⁹ “Many were the plans formed and rejected by us. [...] and the time passed without our coming to any determination how to commence – Still forming new schemes and rejecting them [...]” Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 11. This plotting was made possible by the extensive and intimate communal networks created and fostered by black people in Southampton, VA, enslaved or otherwise. Vanessa M. Holden reveals the gendered and generational practices of this community’s praxis of survival constitutive of grief and rebellion. And by thinking through the meanings as to the role black children played throughout the attendant scenes, Holden also illuminates that the enslaved possessed a deep understanding of violent rebellion transcendent of its present enactments and towards an imagined future. See: *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner’s Community*. It is in this vain that Leigh Raiford conceives the term “critical black memory.” Building from Walter Benjamin and Houston Baker, critical black memory is a resource, configured at the sites of political, social, and cultural struggle, from which black cosmologies can be gleaned from history for the present. Raiford writes, “critical black memory emerges out of and is motivated by both survival and failure;” memory is not merely a repository of events recollected, but black “memory [challenges] official stories and gives voice to historical silences. It has attempted to suture continuity in the face of rupture and fragmentation. It has proffered futurity woven out of the ‘ineffable terror’ of the past. As living entity, memory [proves] critical to identify formation and self-creation.” Continuing by citing W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Raiford adds that “the rituals of black memory represent a form of cultural resistance.” See: Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 62–63; and throughout. Thus observed here, through the work of Holden and Raiford, the capaciousness of violent black rebellion – as theory and praxis – as destruction and invention – operates through a past-present-future tripartite.

⁵⁰ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 11. See Matthew 22:1-14 on Christ waiting for a sign from his heavenly Father. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, 3rd ed. (1967; repr., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86. See: Mark 13.

⁵¹ Luke 21:19.

⁵² Patrick H. Breen notes that one of Hallowell’s students was Robert E. Lee, the General of the Confederate Army; see “Nat Turner’s Revolt: Rebellion and Response in Southampton County, Virginia” (Dissertation, Athens, GA, University of Georgia, 2005), 39–40.

⁵³ Benjamin Hallowell, “The Solar Phenomena, August 13, 1831,” *Washington National Intelligencer*, August 13, 1831, sec. Communication to the Washington National Intelligencer. For the range of similar reports, see: Henry S. Washington, “Article VIII. The Submarine Eruptions of 1831 and 1891 Near Pantelleria,” *American Journal of Science* 27, no. 158 (February 1909): 130–50; Louis P. Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2001); Christopher Garrison et al., “The Blue Suns of 1831: Was the Eruption of Ferdinandea, Near Sicily, One of the Largest Volcanic Climate Forcing Events of the Nineteenth Century?,” *Climate of the Past* 17, no. 6 (December 2021): 2607–32. Walter C.

anticipated sign and he determined “not to wait longer.”⁵⁴ *So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*⁵⁵ The Church convened on Sunday morning, the 21st of August at Cabin Pond to finalize their plan to “kill all the white people.”⁵⁶ It was resolved that until the conspirators were adequately “armed and equipped” with “sufficient force, neither age nor sex was to be spared.”⁵⁷ But before commencing their plan, the congregation of co-conspirators shared one last meal together – held together by any one of the myriad of shared and unshared reasons that surreptitiously conjoined each of them to this clandestine sermon in the woods, somewhere on the precipice between life and death, heaven and hell, this life and the next – they laughed over the stolen food they ate and the brandy they drank; and they were sustained by and for each other.⁵⁸ A curtsy to life and death.

*Ye martial pow'rs, and all ye tuneful nine,
Inspire my song, and aid my high design.
The dreadful fences and toils of war I write,
The ardent warriors, and the fields of fight:
You best remember, and you best can sing
The acts of heroes to the vocal string:
Resume the lays with which your sacred lyre,
Did then the poet and the sage inspire.*⁵⁹

Henceforth from “about two hours in the night” on Monday, August 22, 1831, and into the following summer’s eve on Tuesday, August 23, 1831, Nat Turner and his co-conspirators launched the deadliest revolt of the enslaved in the history of the United States, killing fifty-five white people – men, women, and children. It is of fundamental importance to note that Nat Turner did not refer to the ensuing events with the common appellations used to describe them. While much of the historiography typically deploy such descriptors as “insurrection,” “revolt,” and/or “rebellion” to name that which occurred during these three summer nights in Southampton County, such categorizations ignore the fact that Nat Turner himself disavowed such a classification. The first recorded sentence of the confession he proffered to Thomas Gray between November 1-3, 1831, begins by restating the prompt to which he was responding and ends by eschewing Gray’s terms. “You have asked me to give a history of the motives which induced me to undertake the late insurrection, *as you call it.*” Rather, Turner described it as “the work of death and pillage” and its modus operandi was to “*slay my enemies with their own weapons*” and “to carry terror and devastation wherever we went”⁶⁰ – to *return the devil’s fire*. Rather than rehearse the archival recording of the violence enacted, below is a visualization of the *work* of the violence. The Church’s enacted

Rucker also notes the occurrence of a lunar eclipse on August 23, 1831. See: *The River Flows on: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), Chapter 6, Footnote 41.

⁵⁴ “Communication. For the Whig. Southampton Insurrection. Jerusalem, Sept. 17, 1831,” *Richmond Constitutional Whig*, September 26, 1831, Evening edition; Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 11.

⁵⁵ Luke 21:31.

⁵⁶ Henry Irving Tragle, ed., “Jack’s Trial, Southampton County Court Minutes,” in *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 195–96.

⁵⁷ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 12. See Ezekiel 9:5b-6a: “Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women.”

⁵⁸ Tragle, “Jack’s Trial,” 1971, 196; Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 11–12.

⁵⁹ Wheatley, “Goliath of Gath. 1 Sam. Chap. XVII,” 31; lines 1-8.

⁶⁰ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 7, 14, 11; italics my own.

violence is an act of reversal, re-invention and re-creation; and the performance of the text apposed against the intersubjectivities imagined while reading the violence, and the reversal of meaning played back to the source. This reading is therefore an attempt at, or an effort to, visualize not only the reversal of the symbolic codes embedded and dispersed through the Church's violence, but to also imbue the archival text with a similar mode of inventive action.

We remained at the feast until about two hours in the night, when we went to the house and found Austin; they all went to the cider press and drank, except myself. On returning to the house, Hark went to the door with an **axe**, for the purpose of breaking it open, as we knew we were strong enough to murder the family, if they were awaked by the noise; but reflecting that it might create an alarm in the neighborhood, we determined to enter the house secretly, and **murder them whilst sleeping**. Hark got a ladder and set it against the chimney, on which I ascended, and hoisting a window, entered and came down stairs, unbarred the door, and removed the **guns** from their places. It was then observed that I must spill the first blood. On which, armed with a hatchet, and accompanied by Will, I entered my master's chamber, it being dark, I could not give a death blow, the **hatchet** glanced from his head, he sprang from the bed and called his wife, it was his last word, **Will laid him dead**, with a blow of his **axe**, and Mrs. Travis shared the same fate, as she lay in bed. The **murder** of this family, five in number, was the work of a moment, not one of them awoke; there was **a little infant** sleeping in a cradle, that was forgotten, until we had left the house and gone some distance, when Henry and Will returned **and killed it**; we got here, four **guns** that would shoot, and several old **muskets**, with a pound or two of **powder**.

Putnam Moore (10, unknown); 4. Joel Westbrooke (16, unknown); 5. Travis infant (1, Will Francis, Henry Porter); 3. Travis House: 1. Joseph Travis (30, Will Francis, Nat Turner I); 2. Sarah (Francis) Travis (30, Will Francis); 8. We remained some time at the barn, where **we paraded**; I formed them in a line as soldiers, and after carrying them through all the manoeuvres I was master of, marched them off to Mr. Salathiel Francis', about six hundred yards distant. Sam and Will went to the door and knocked. Mr. Francis asked who was there, Sam replied, it was him, and he had a letter for him, on which he got up and came to the door, they **immediately seized him**, and **dragging him** out a little from the door, he was **dispatched by repeated blows on the head**; there was **no other white person in the family**. Salathiel Francis House: 6. Salathiel Francis (28, Will Francis, Sam Francis)

We started from there for Mrs. Reese's, **maintaining the most perfect silence on our march**, where finding the door unlocked, we entered, and murdered Mrs. Reese in her bed, while sleeping; her son awoke, but it was only to sleep the **sleep of death**, he had only time to say who is that, and **he was no more**.

Reese House: 7. Piety (Vick) Reese (59, unknown); 8. Joseph William H. Reese (18, unknown)

From Mrs. Reese's we went to Mrs. Turner's, a mile distant, which we reached about **sunrise**, on Monday morning. Henry, Austin, and Sam, went to the still, where, finding Mr. Peebles, **Austin shot him**, and the rest of us went to the house; as we approached, the family discovered us, and shut the door. **Vain hope!** Will, with one stroke of his axe, opened it, and we entered and found Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Newsome in the middle of a room, almost frightened to death. **Will immediately killed**

Mrs. Turner, with one blow of his axe. I took Mrs. Newsome by the hand, and with the sword I had when I was apprehended, I struck her several blows over the head, but not being able to kill her, as the sword was dull. Will turning around and discovering it, despatched her also. 11. Sarah (Turner) Newsome (36, Will Francis, Nat Turner I); Turner House: 9. Hartwell Peebles (adult, age unknown, Austin Edwards); 10. Elizabeth Turner II (37, Will Francis)

A general destruction of property and search for money and ammunition, always succeeded the murders. By this time my company amounted to fifteen, and nine men mounted, who started for Mrs. Whitehead's as we approached the house we discovered Mr. Richard Whitehead standing in the cotton patch, near the lane fence; we called him over into the lane, and Will, the executioner, was near at hand, with his fatal axe, to send him to an untimely grave. As we pushed on to the house, I discovered some one run round the garden, and thinking it was some of the white family, I pursued them, but finding it was a servant girl belonging to the house, I returned to commence the work of death, but they whom I left, had not been idle; all the family were already murdered, but Mrs. Whitehead and her daughter Margaret. As I came round to the door I saw Will pulling Mrs. Whitehead out of the house, and at the step he nearly severed her head from her body, with his broad axe. Miss Margaret, when I discovered her, had concealed herself in the corner, formed by the projection of the cellar cap from the house; on my approach she fled, but was soon overtaken, and after repeated blows with a sword, I killed her by a blow on the head, with a fence rail. 21. Catherine Whitehead (59, Will Francis); 22. Margaret Whitehead (37, Nat Turner I); Whitehead (25, unknown); 19. Mary Ann Whitehead (23, unknown); 20. Mourning Ann Whitehead (19, unknown)

By this time, the six who had gone by Mr. Bryant's, rejoined us, and informed me they had done the work of death assigned them. Elizabeth (Balmor) Bryant (22, unknown); 14. Bryant Infant (1, unknown); 15. Mildred Balmor (60, unknown); 13. Doyel House (Near): 23. Augustus F. Doyel (35, Hark Moore)

We again divided, part going to Mr. Richard Porter's, and from thence to Nathaniel Francis', the others to Mr. Howell Harris', and Mr. T. Doyles. On my reaching Mr. Porter's, he had escaped with his family. I understood there, that the alarm had already spread, and I immediately returned to bring up those sent to Mr. Doyles, and Mr. Howell Harris'; the party I left going on to Mr. Francis', having told them I would join them in that neighborhood. I met these sent to Mr. Doyles' and Mr. Harris' returning, having met Mr. Doyle on the road and killed him; and learning from some who joined them, that Mr. Harris was from home, I immediately pursued the course taken by the party gone on before; but

knowing they would complete the work of death and pillage, at Mr. Francis' before I could there, (21, unknown) 28. A. (or Henry) Doyel (21, unknown) 26. John L. Browne (3, unknown); 27. Samuel T. Browne (7, unknown); 28. A. (or Henry) Doyel (21, unknown) I went Nathaniel Francis House: 24. Louisa (Turner) Williams (20, unknown); 25. Williams infant (1, unknown) to Mr. Peter Edwards', expecting to find them there, but they had been here also. I then went to Mr. John T. Barrow's, they had been here and murdered him. (26, unknown) 29. John T. Barrow (26, unknown); 30. George Vaughan (19, unknown) I pursued on their track to Capt. Newit Harris', where I found the greater part mounted, and ready to start; the men now amounting to about forty, shouted and hurraed as I rode up, some were in the yard, loading their guns, others drinking. They said Captain Harris and his family had escaped, the property in the house they destroyed, robbing him of money and other valuables. I ordered them to mount and march instantly, this was about nine or ten o'clock, Monday morning. I proceeded to Mr. Levi Waller's, two or three miles distant. I took my station in the rear, and as it 'twas my object to carry terror and devastation wherever we went, I placed fifteen or twenty of the best armed and most to be relied on, in front, who generally approached the houses as fast as their horses could run; this was for two purposes, to prevent their escape and strike terror to the inhabitants--on this account I never got to the houses, after leaving Mrs. Whitehead's, until the murders were committed, except in one case. I sometimes got in sight in time to see the work of death completed, viewed the mangled bodies as they lay, in silent satisfaction, and immediately started in quest of other victims--Having murdered Mrs. Waller and ten children,

(10, unknown) 9. Unidentified boy (10, unknown); 35. Thomas Waller (13, unknown); 36. Waller son (9, unknown); 37. Waller son (7, unknown); 38. (4, Sam Francis, Daniel Porter, Aaron Porter); 38. Waller daughter (26, unknown); 34. Waller infant daughter (1, Waller House: 31. Martha (Kindred) Waller (45, Sam Francis, Daniel Porter, Aaron Porter); 32. Martha Waller II we started for Mr. William Williams'--having killed him and two little boys that were there; while engaged in this, Mrs. Williams fled and got some distance from the house, but she was pursued, overtaken, and compelled to get up behind one of the company,

who brought her back, and after showing her the mangled body of her lifeless husband, she was told to get down and lay by his side, where she was shot dead.

William Williams House: 42. William Williams (26, unknown); 43. Miles Johnson (14, unknown); 44. Henry Johnson (12, unknown); 45. Rebecca (Ivy) Williams II (18, unknown)

I then started for Mr. Jacob Williams, where the family were murdered--Here we found a young man named Drury, who had come on business with Mr. Williams--he was pursued, overtaken and shot.

Jacob Williams House: 46. Edwin Drury (21, unknown); 47. Nancy (Pope) Williams (36, unknown); 48. Williams child (4, unknown); 49. Williams child (2, unknown); 50. Williams child (1, unknown); 51. Mrs. Caswell Worrell (21, unknown); 52. Worrell infant (1, unknown)

Mrs. Vaughan was the next place we visited--and after murdering the family here

Vaughan House: 53. Rebecca Vaughan (47, unknown); 54. Ann Eliza Vaughan (19, Tom, or "Marnaduke"; 55. William Arthur Vaughan (16, unknown)

I have nothing more to say.
I have nothing more to say.

Part II: “... And Even Before I Was Born”

IX. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That no negroe, mulattoe, or Indian, altho’ a Christian [...] or other infidel, shall at any time purchase any christian servant, nor any other except of the own complexion; or such as by this act are declared slaves: And if any of the persons aforesaid shall, nevertheless, presume to purchase a christian white servant, such servant shall immediately become free, and be so held, deemed and taken

– *An Act for the Better Government of Servants and Slaves*, General Assembly of Virginia, November 1753

What strikes us as the most remarkable thing in this matter is the horrible ferocity of these monsters. They remind one of a parcel of blood-thirsty wolves rushing down from the Alps. Nothing is spared; neither age nor sex is respected—the helplessness of women and children pleads in vain for mercy. The danger is thought to be over—but prudence still demands precaution. [...] The case of Nat Turner warns us. No black man ought to be permitted to turn a Preacher through the country. The law must be enforced or the tragedy of Southampton appeals to us in vain.

A fanatic preacher by the name of Nat Turner who had been taught to read and write, and permitted to go about preaching in the country, was at the bottom of this infernal brigandage. He was artful, impudent and vindictive, without any cause or provocation, that could be assigned. [...] Upon their nefarious expedition... They were mounted to the number of 40 or 50; and with knives and axes—knocking on the head, or cutting the throats of their victims. [...] These wretches are now estimated to have committed *sixty-one murders!* Not a white person escaped at all the houses they visited except *two*. [...] Nat, the ringleader, who calls himself General, pretends to be a Baptist preacher – a great enthusiast—declares to his comrades that he is commissioned by Jesus Christ, and proceeds under his inspired directions—the late singular appearance of the sun was the sign for him, etc., etc., is among the number not yet taken.

– *Richmond Enquirer*, August 30, 1831

We shall attempt to obtain as accurate account as possible of this murderous Bandit.

– General John Floyd Sr., Governor of Virginia, *Richmond Enquirer*, November 4, 1831

Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

– Acts 24: 12-14⁶¹

⁶¹ William Waller Hening, ed., “An Act for the Better Government of Servants and Slaves,” in *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. The Statutes at Large; Being a*

Nat Turner eluded capture for sixty-seven days.⁶² As he hid in a hole he dug “under a pile of fence rails,” subsisting only upon the provisions he could steal from his legal claimant, the largest manhunt in colonial history waged on above ground. Understanding that Southampton County was “a scene of war,” the Governor of Virginia, John Floyd, distributed arms to more than one thousand members of the local militia and helped coordinate the intra/inter-colonial assemblage of militia troops, comprised of both civilians and government agents, that would later total in excess of three thousand (known) white persons marching on Southampton to restore their notion of peace and order to the area.⁶³ A vision for such was administered through vigilante white terrorism; an irony not lost on Harriet Jacobs, who would later refer to this “spectacle of a civilized country” in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) wrought by only those who would “assume to be the administrators of justice” in the first instance.⁶⁴ So gratuitous the spectacle of indiscriminately killing, beheading, whipping, and the otherwise torturing of black people within the first two weeks following the Church’s Sermon, a declaration of martial law was required to cease further such actions. General Richard Eppes, commanding officer of the 9th Brigade Militia, ordered by “the rigors of the articles of war,” for “all descriptions of person to abstain in the future from any acts of violence to any” black people, enslaved or otherwise.⁶⁵

Exhortations to a superior code of morality, the venerability of the rule of law, and the inextinguishable right to private property in black people provide the all too familiar reasons given for such a decree. And while this corrective signifies the stakes associated with the *work* of violent black revolt, of which its significance will be later discussed, extant here in the specific order issued by General Eppes and throughout, is a particular narration that subtends the wrongness of the violence enacted by the Church. Namely, that Turner’s religious practice was deviant; he was neither a true Christian nor did he possess the spiritual and mental faculty to interpret signs provided to him by God. Instead, the missionizing *work* enacted from the Church’s pulpit owed to the delusions and superstitions inherent in the imaginings of black people. Take for example, this very issuance of martial law. Eppes makes the narrative move to characterize Nat Turner as a “fanatical desperado.” And this is the same logic that drives this section’s second epigraph; and in both instances, the appellation of criminality (“Bandit” and “desperado”) punctuates the attribution of religious impiety. Why? One might suggest that ascribing psychosis to violent black insurrectionists is a counterinsurgent tactic that enables slave power – as it was constituted then and as it remains constituted today – to minimize the collective yearnings such a praxis expresses. One might further

Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight, vol. VI (Richmond, VA: Franklin Press, 1819), 356–57; “The Banditti,” *Richmond Enquirer*, August 30, 1831; Gen. John Floyd, “Gen. Nat Turner Apprehended,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, November 4, 1831.

⁶² The events associated with what has come to be named the Southampton Insurrection took place August 21–23, 1831, and Turner was captured on October 30, 1831. “If accident had not betrayed” him, he states, “I know not how long I might have led this life.” In: Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 17. An example of the civilian and militarized cooperative response to suppress the Insurrection, see: “The Insurrections,” *Petersburg Intelligencer*, August 26, 1831; “Insurrection in Southampton.”

⁶³ John Floyd, *The Life and Diary of John Floyd: Governor of Virginia, An Apostle of Secession, and the Father of the Oregon Country*, ed. Charles H. Ambler (Richmond, VA: Richmond Press, Inc., 1918), 156 (Diary Entry for August 24, 1831); John Floyd, “John Floyd to James H. Gholson,” Letter, August 24, 1831, Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Library of Virginia; William Sidney Drewry, *Slave Insurrections in Virginia, 1830–1865* (Washington, D.C.: The Neale Company, 1900), 156.

⁶⁴ Linda Brent [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston, MA: Author, 1861), 98–99; 102.

⁶⁵ *Lynchburg Virginian*, September 8, 1831.

argue this imputation of lunacy, madness, or an otherwise Lack, functions to also disregard any theoretical provocations explicated by the insurgents, and as such, any and all political meanings and attendant implications that may have been gleaned by the general population have been mobilized, weaponized, and reduced to the realm of illegitimacy and derangement.

By the time of Turner's eventual capture on October 30, 1831, having outlived many of his friends and fellow members in the Body of Christ that had already been executed, both legally and extralegally, the newspaper reports continue to narrate this motif of religious heresy. For example, the November 2nd issue of the *Beacon* reports that Nat Turner "was taken alive" and upon being delivered to the Justices of the court, "he was actuated to do what he did, from the influence of fanaticism" and that "he is now convinced that he has done wrong, and advises all other Negroes not follow his example."⁶⁶ Two days later in the *Norfolk Herald*, commenting on the statements provided by Turner, the author characterizes him as a "cruel fanatic" and a "blood-stained monster" whose actions were "instigated by the wildest superstition and fanaticism, and was not connected with any organized plan of conspiracy beyond the circle of the few ignorant wretches whom he had seduced by his artifices to join him." From these statements, the counterinsurgent tactics described above as part and parcel of a larger strategy of preventing violent black rebellion makes sense; and this is especially true given the extant ventriloquizing that projects a fear of future uprisings ("advises all other Negroes"). But the *Herald* continues and says this:

He still pretends that he is a prophet, and relates a number of revelations which he said he had, from which he was induced to believe that he could succeed in conquering *the county of Southampton* (what miserable ignorance!) as the white people did in the revolution.

He says the idea of an insurrection never crossed his mind until a few months before he started with it; and he considered *the dark appearance of the sun* as a signal for him to commence! His profanity in comparing his pretended prophecies with passages in the Holy Scriptures should not be mentioned, if it did not afford proof of his insanity. Yet it was by that means he obtained the complete control of his followers, which led them to the perpetration of the horrible deeds of the 22d August.⁶⁷

And even Jeremiah Cobb, the judge that presided over Turner's trial on November 5, 1831 – the last of all such persons to be tried in court for the Sermon preached earlier in late August – proselytizes Turner's religious beliefs to the realm of perverted heterodoxy by stating, "you were led away by fanaticism" and Turner's "only hope must be in another world." In sentencing Turner to die on November 11, 1831, Cobb tells him that he will "be hung by the neck until you are dead! dead! Dead."⁶⁸ Cobb's repeating invocation of death here is illustrative of something more than mere counterinsurgency.

When we consider the calls for exterminating all black people, as advocated in several newspapers, to be suggestive of an already extant pre-justification for the genocide of black people – whether they were to have been found to partake in the violent insurrection or not – while also considering that Southampton County exported more black people to Liberia through the American

⁶⁶ *American Beacon*, November 2, 1831.

⁶⁷ "Nat Turner Certainly Taken!," *The Norfolk Herald*, November 4, 1831.

⁶⁸ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 21.

Colonization Society in December 1831 than it ever had done so prior and afterwards.⁶⁹ When such actions are taken together – the repeated identification of religious deviance, the symbolic meanings of enmity imputed and ascribed to the black of black people, and the threat of both that produces a finality in being burned, killed, or exiled – a parallaxic understanding begins to emerge as to how Virginia, Colonial America, and these United States govern against the threat of violent black rebellion.

The argument put forth in this chapter's section is rather simple: black people – as marked from the moment of captivity and later constructed as potentially-always-incipiently-about-to-violently rebel – as configured by and through the religious orthodoxy upon which Virginia (and therefore the rest of its settler apparatus) was founded – constitute an apocalyptic threat to the orderly, rigid, and stable construction against/through which the national community coheres. The Gospel spread in Southampton in 1831 then, reveals not only is the Church heretical, but also that the social, cultural, and judicial production of such reflects the logics of the European Inquisitions from which the “pilgrims” were seeking to escape. The production of black people as an internal other and of blackness as culturally deviant, to be identified and isolated by the (white) community, is articulated in three moments that mirror the inquisitorial process that characterize the infidel, the heretic, and the impenitent (e.g., the utter unrepentant).⁷⁰ And it is with/against this continual threat of unfathomable sacrifice and catastrophe – and the psychic trespasses induced by the heretical non-norm modes of knowing and being evoked through the violent desecration of the symbols that govern our lives – that the axiomatic/underlife cultural expressions of blackness elicits the possibility for counter-significations and new meanings to emerge.

To begin unknotting this section's argument, which unfolds and sinews into the proceeding chapters of this dissertation, the starting point provisioned by Nat Turner proves generative. While awaiting to stand trial for the crime of “conspiring to rebel and making insurrection”⁷¹ on November 5, 1831, he is interrogated by Thomas R. Gray between November 1-3; the result of such being *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Gray begins by asking Turner to provide “a history of the motives” that compelled the Church to enact its *work*; to which Turner responds that to do so, he “must go back to the days of [his] infancy, and even before [he] was born.”⁷² And so too, we must also make a *return* – to the time before the existence of a South or a nation – a *return* to the etiological roots of the genesis of Virginia.

⁶⁹ Roughly 350 people boarded the *James Perkins* en route to Liberia, of whom it is estimated 300 were from Southampton. John McPhail, “John McPhail to R. R. Gurley,” Letter, October 28, 1831, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress; John McPhail, “John McPhail to R. R. Gurley,” Letter, December 7, 1831, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress; John McPhail, “Letter to the American Colonization Society,” *Richmond Enquirer*, December 15, 1831; Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2008); Vanessa M. Holden, “Surviving Southampton: Geographies of Survival,” in *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 81–120.

⁷⁰ For the mirroring logics associated with governing against the violent black rebel and those logics associated with the inquisitorial processes of Europe, I draw heavily from Deborah Root's essay entitled, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” *Representations* 23 (1988): 118–34.

⁷¹ Southampton County Court, “Trial of Nat Turner I, Southampton County Court Minute Book, 1830-1835” (Richmond, VA, November 5, 1831), 123,125, Southampton County (VA) County Records Collection, Library of Virginia, https://brantleyassociation.com/southampton_project/gallery/min_bk_1830-35/index.html.

⁷² Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 7.

The Crusading Mission of Virginia

Like the symbolic death-demarcating line of Europe's medieval system of knowledge that mapped hierarchal differences from the heavens onto earth (Celestial|Terrestrial; Heaven|Earth) according to distinctions between Spirit|Flesh – which would serve as the etiological foundation for the epistemological rupture that legitimated its cultural (and therefore material) conquest of the world vis-à-vis the newly invented grammars of European Enlightenment wherewith its systemic ordering of knowledge remapped the earth into habitable|uninhabitable realms of being so to effect a new general order of existence according to the symbolic Life|Death codes of Civilized/White/Christian/Propertied|Savage/Nigger/Devil/Savage/Property – plantations were also mapped onto the *terra nullius* wilderness according to the discursive and material violence sanctioned by the systemic order of European knowledge that reasoned and rendered black people as enslavable and propertyable.⁷³ The locus of this sea-change transformation was the *inauguration* of the plantation system and its cultural sphere, which required the *exauguration* of multi-cultural/ethnic/lingual/tribal Africans into both the Nigger commodity and the Nigger enslaved labor unit.⁷⁴ And as England's colonization of Virginia illustrates,⁷⁵ this metamorphization is articulated through religious terms and implemented by the inquisitorial processes inhered from England's governance.

Firstly, black people are constructed as infidels, the enemies of Christianity. Infidelity is elaborated by the religious and social institutions of the colony, and phenotype serves to highlight (and underscore) difference. Secondly, the established law, both ecclesiastical and canonical, provides the legal definition for the community to interpret and exact its power through heresy. Heretical behavior, ideas, practices, and customs that did not align with the law's proscribed social and religious orthodoxy, according to the logic here, deviance was understood as a public act subject to public jurisdiction that posed a threat to both the state's authority and to the Christian community. The polity of colonial Virginia, and indeed the ends through which the eventual United States would govern, was forged by conscripting the norm/orthodox to surveil and police the non-norm/heretical.⁷⁶ As such, orthodoxy is identified and imposed by the production of heterodoxy. Lastly, the re/produced symbolic codes of meaning imputed onto black people therefore facilitates an onto-epistemological understanding of black people, and of blackness, which portends the figuration of black as being utterly unrepentant and therefore, unforgivable. Just as it was the case

⁷³ Sylvia Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the Propter Nos," *Annals of Scholarship* 8, no. 2 (1991): 251–86; Sylvia Wynter, "'A Different Kind of Creature': Caribbean Literature, the Cyclops Factor, and the Second Poetics of the Propter Nos," in *Sisyphus and Eldorado: Magical and Other Realisms in Caribbean Literature*, ed. T. J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 143–68; Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for Our Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Dêsetre: Black Studies toward the Human Project," ed. Lewis R. Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 107–69; Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1970). See also: Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁷⁴ Sylvia Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World" (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 1–2, Institute of the Black World Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Boxes 3–9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division; Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the Propter Nos," 257.

⁷⁵ James S. M. Anderson, *The History of the Church of England in the Colonies and Foreign Dependencies of the British Empire*, vol. I, III vols. (London, UK: Francis & John Rivington; Robert Folthorp & Co. Brighton, 1845).

⁷⁶For example, consider the *Fugitive Slave Act* 1850) and also Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*.

with the Inquisitions, the always and already extant proximity to state sponsored extra/legal and/or extra/juridical death black people continue to endure. It follows that, in the name of public safety, the community needs to be cleansed from the evil and monstrous and whether burned, exiled, or otherwise all together exterminated, the purity and sanctity of the polity needs to be preserved by amputation. These mutually reinforcing processes create the pretext for state-sponsored annihilation of entire populations; and King James I of England, formerly known as King James IV of Scotland, was no stranger to orchestrating genocidal executions in the name of preserving the community.⁷⁷

The “Ancient Charters,” written by King James I of England, stipulate the precise mechanisms by which Virginia was to be colonized, and subsequently, the desired behavior-inducing processes that are to be obeyed. Of fundamental importance here is the co-constitutive transplantation of both England and its Church implement Virginia’s establishment. The following excerpted passages are quoted at length because when taken together, it becomes clear that there was no clear division between church and the monarch(/state). Rather, the colonial governing apparatus moves *pari passu* with church to first declare its political and religious sovereign claim over the land and its people and in the second instance, demarcate the boundaries of the Christian community, which is to also delineate who can be enslaved and why. At once, the laws of England are extrapolated into the colony, which sanction the legal mandate for Virginia’s missionizing function, the Church of England becomes inextricably interlaced into Virginia’s constitution.

I. [...] that we would vouchsafe unto them our licence, to make habitation, plantation, and to deduce a colony of sundry of our people into that part of America, commonly called Virginia, and other parts and territories in America, ether appertaining unto us, or which are not now actually possessed by any christian prince or people, situate, lying and being all along the sea coasts [sic];

III. We greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of his divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian religion to such people, as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages, living in those parts, to human civility, and to a settled and quiet government;

VII. And we do also ordain, establish and agree, for us, our heirs, and successors, that each of the said colonies shall have a council, which shall govern and order all matters and causes, which shall arise, grow or happen, to or within the same several colonies, according to such laws, ordinances, and instructions as shall be in that behalf, given and signed with our hand or sign manuel, and pass under the privy seal of our real of England [sic]

⁷⁷ Root, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain.” Then known as King James IV of Scotland, believed it was his God-given duty and obligation to identify and extirpate witchcraft in both Scotland and England. For more on the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see: Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York, NY: Autonomedia, 2004); Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11, no. 1 (2013).

[...] wee doe specially ordaine, charge, and require, the said presidents and counsell, and the ministers of the said several colonies respectively, within their several limits and precincts, that they, with all diligence, care, and respect, doe provide, that the true word, and service of God and Christian faith be preached, planted, and used, not only within every of the said several colonies, and plantations, but alsoe as much as they may amongst the salvage people which doe or shall adjoine unto them, or border upon them, according to the doctrine, rights, and religion now professed and established within our realme of England, and that they shall not suffer any person, or persons to withdrawe any of the subjects or people inhabiting, or which shall inhabit within any of the said several colonies and plantations from the same, or from their due allegiance, unto us, our heires and successors, as their immediate soveraigne under God [sic]⁷⁸

For our purposes, the circumscription of the infidel is of particular importance. Observed thusly is that at the moment of conquest (“to make habitation, plantation, and to deduce a colony”), as legitimated by the Divine (“the providence of Almighty God”), and written into law (“sign manuel and pass under the privy seal of our real England [sic]”), the enslavable/enslaved emerges as those to whom “live in darkness and miserable ignorance” in need to be brought into “human civility.” Given that Europeans did not enslave other Europeans, and in the same vein, Christians were not to be enslaved by other Christians, the culturally-specific and epistemologically instituting systems of representation⁷⁹ dictated only infidels were to be enslaved. The infidel is configured as external to the communal bonds of the Christian polis while simultaneously, as is the case with the enslaved in Virginia, elementally necessary for said community to cohere. As the slave trade proliferated alongside the propagation of Christians buying and selling black people, heresy becomes produced through the repetition of infidelity being reproduced.⁸⁰ For example, when the Virginia General Assembly in 1667 declared that the baptismal of the enslaved does not alter their status of property – those black people who would eventually become Christian, like Nat Turner, were heretically Christian and now located within the confines of the Christian community.⁸¹

Having now explained how infidelity and heresy are operative within the inquisitory process embedded within Virginia’s founding, the final mechanism within the inquisitory process, which provides the grounds for the state’s death-making function, whether through the symbolic meanings attached to expulsion,⁸² and/or through obliteration. Upon the epistemological encodings attributed to black people vis-à-vis the conflating of infidelity with heresy, as described above, the meanings ascribed to the enslaved again become transmuted through this terminological slippage. The

⁷⁸ William Waller Hening, ed., “Ancient Charters, Relating to the First Settlement of Virginia,” in *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight*, vol. I (New York, NY: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), April 10, 1606; November 20, 1606.

⁷⁹ William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Wynter, “Columbus and the Poetics of the Propter Nos,” 284–85; Bede, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of England*, ed. A. M. Sellar (731; repr., London, UK: George Bell and Sons, 1907).

⁸⁰ Root, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” 119.

⁸¹ William Waller Hening, ed., “An Act Declaring That Baptisme of Slaves Doth Not Exempt Them from Bondage,” in *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight*, vol. II (New York, NY: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), 260.

⁸² Cancel culture is white supremacy.

enslaved that became Christians through their faith and actions, as signaled through baptismal, were now configured as both enemy and heretical – an internal threat that required the surveillance and policing of their speech and social actions; the first and third epigraphs to this section are illustrative of this precise point. Cultural orthodoxy was the measurement against which black heterodoxy was produced from such enforcements. But the utter irredeemability of being black – the meaning white people ascribed to blackness and the social and cultural norms that reified the heresy of blackness ultimately proved to trump religious values. In turn, the ways in which religious heterodoxy charged against white people could be reformed, black people, free or otherwise, were bound to be beyond such redemption.

[...] and if they shall find within any of the said colonies and plantations, any person or persons soe seeking to withdrawe any of the subjects of us, our heires or successors, or any of the people of those lands or territories, within the precincts aforesaid, they shall with all diligence, him or them soe offending cause to be apprehended, arrested, and imprisoned, until he shall fully and throughly reforme himselfe, or otherwise, when the cause soe requireth, that he shall, with all convenient speed be sent into our realme of England, here to receive condigne punishment for his or their said offence or offences; and moreover wee doe hereby ordaine and establish for us, our heires and successors, that all the lands, tenements, and hereditaments to be had and enjoyed by any of our subjects within the precincts aforesaid, shal be had and inherited and injoyed, according as in the like estates they be had and enjoyed by the lawes within this realme of England; and that the offences of tumults, rebellion, conspiracies, mutiny and seditions in those parts which may be dangerous to the estates there, together with murther, manslaughter, incest, rapes, and adulteries committed in those parts within the precincts of any the degrees above mentioned (and noe other offences) shal be punished by death [sic]

The construction of whiteness in Virginia, and indeed the eventual United States, was also the production and interpretation of cultural and racial differences. The degree of alterity marked upon black people is observed in Thomas Jefferson's provocation, for example, whereby he suggests a *mere suspicion* that white people are altogether a different species of being whose superiority over black people is cognate with all world-historical experience.⁸³ The second epigraph to this section bears this out: the move to characterize the parishioners in the Church of Nat Turner as "blood-thirsty wolves" can only end with the material consequences inhered from the inquisitorial process England transplanted into Virginia: expulsion and/or extermination. Within this systemic instituting schematic of meaning, black people – enslaved or otherwise – are constructed as utterly unrepentant in the religious terms undergirding Virginia's constitution, and from its laws, are culturally and/or legally adjudicated as such. As such, blackness – imbued with the meanings heretofore explicated – created the disorder the Church of England needed to establish order against.

Colonial Virginia's government was predicated upon strict adherence to the doctrinal and disciplinary practices of the Church of England. Religious ritual forged the nascent and fragile

⁸³ Thomas Jefferson writes the following: "To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications." In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 150.

community. So intertwined was the government and religion, every Virginian was required to attend weekly church services, punishable by threat of being “compelled to leave the colony.”⁸⁴ The church functioned as the glue to mold and hold an otherwise isolated community together. Providing the important functions of facilitating identification with the community by consecrating and ritualizing life’s transitions and traumas, the church provided a sense of security and stability. Similarly, the church organized the societal and communal relationships through uniformity, deviation from which impelled a challenge to both the clerical and colonial authority, which by extension, also constituted the invocation of heresy. The importation of the Church of England was designed to “be a sure means always to prevent Dissentions, or Heresy, or Schism, or Irreligion;” and by meticulously defining the proper conventions of sociality and of attitude the colonists ought to possess, the ever-present infidel or savage enemy might be subdued and domesticated.⁸⁵

This was the foundation of the formal liturgy of colonial churches, as William Seiler (1959) points out. Though the formal theology posited God existed external to human understanding and any layperson’s claim to receiving divine revelation was understood through the framework of heresy, God’s care was made manifest through the transformation of their own lives and the lives of those with whom they shared community. The belief that the world was fundamentally a place of disorder, Christians were called to bring order by establishing proper social relationships predicated upon intimate communal discipline with an omnipresent gaze upon the personal, private, and public aspects of each other’s lives.⁸⁶ Achieving this-worldly goal required vigilantly surveilling and disciplining any heretical behaviors; for heresy is the threat to this-worldly community that necessitates the constant fight against Satan’s machinations to receive other-worldly eternal salvation. Piously armed with the understanding that it was not their own community of slave owners, rapists, pedophiles, hatemongers, hypocrites, and any other form of venal scum that needed to be purified and destroyed, the colonists turned their disciplining drive towards the black people within their midst – enslaved or otherwise.

Entitled, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes. In the United States*, slaveowner and minister Charles Colcock Jones publishes a curriculum for this very cause. While published later than the time period being discussed (1842), he articulates the extant disorder, undisciplined, and deviant behaviors throughout the entire black race. Trafficking in grammars of historical truth and righteousness, Jones enumerates the problems inherent to the Negroe and posits that it is only through the ecclesiastical teaching of religion might the black be able to sincerely repent for their heresy. Jones cites superstition, beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery “brought from Africa” as the basis of their “Satanic influence.” The summative thrust of Jones’s work here is to give a historical and anthropological explanation of the heresies exhibited by black people, enslaved or otherwise, and to make the case that not only will the heretical behaviors of black people be destroyed, but moreover the likelihood of the enslaved insurrecting will be severely decreased – of which Nat Turner was not

⁸⁴ William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight*, vol. I (New York, NY: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), 277; 123, 144, 149, 155, 180, 240.

⁸⁵ George Maclaren Brydon, *Virginia’s Mother Church and the Political Conditions under Which It Grew: An Interpretation of the Records of the Colony of Virginia and of the Anglican Church of That Colony, 1607-1727*, vol. 1 (Richmond, VA: Virginia Historical Society, 1947), 396; 37, 426–42; 97–105.

⁸⁶ William Seiler, “The Anglican Parish in Virginia,” in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. James Morton Smith (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 119–42.

properly instructed into the orthodoxy of Christianity.⁸⁷ His solution is to allow black people to be formally educated, albeit separately from whites, and only when the conditions do not allow for this division, that they be brought into the fold of the church because doing so “creates a greater bond of union” and “tends to increase subordination.”⁸⁸ I introduce this text not so much to provide a rehearsal of its contents, but rather to illustrate the heresies exhibited by black people to suggest that by the time of its publication, the heretical modes of knowing and being of black people, enslaved or otherwise, continue to remain in excess of the efforts undertaken by white people to prevent and eradicate such disorder. The other reason for introducing this text is to briefly illustrate how the heresies espoused therein are part and parcel the same composite sketches of black people that are culturally reified in plantation schoolhouses, the primary site at which the infidelity of blackness is reproduced and made visible to children.⁸⁹ The implication here being that all enemies come to resemble each other;⁹⁰ and black people once again become the deviant sinister figure of Satan that must be rooted out and destroyed.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Charles Colcock Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes. In the United States* (Savannah, GA: Thomas Purse, 1842).

⁸⁸ Jones, 274.

⁸⁹ Sylvia Wynter: “Empire’s most powerful apparatus is the education system. It initiates us into a culture and knowledge system that instructs us to want to be of a specific ethnoclass of humanity [...] The tragedy of this is that whilst this particular idea of being optimally human holds us together, as Americans, it can do so only in terms of the “us” and “the not us.” . . . it is a version of reality in which the American White middle class, or the “Cosby-Huxtable” variants of this, as I wrote in my open letter after the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings, is represented, or rather overrepresented, as the reference point for what a human is supposed to be [...] We cannot give up writing stories about what it means to be human that displace those that are at the foundation of Empire. There is no order in the world that can exist or hold together, including an empire, without a founding story. Now the question for academia in the twenty-first century is, will you make space within it to be able to write a new foundation?”

⁹⁰ Root, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” 127.

⁹¹ “There would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom. Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior?” Carter.G Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1933), 3.

Part III: The First Shall be Last

In a similar intellectual striving expressed by Nat Turner anent the planning and re-planning of the *work*, this chapter's conceptualization underwent a parallel iterative process. And I struggled.⁹² "How can I write the most gangster and sharp piece about Nat Turner," I thought to myself, "how can I create something so genre shattering that the *work* of violence discussed throughout this project enacts the same kinds of openings and detours and nonmeanings away/from/towards/with/against the modes of thought and feelings with which you, dear reader, find meaning and make meaning?" Such aspirations for creating something new and something we have yet to feel crashed all around me with the fear of not being able to secure a nice middle class job if the final outcome wandered too far past the line of legibility. Attempting to reconcile this perceived mutually exclusive relationship had me stuck.

As I so often do in such situations, I turned to Sylvia Wynter. This time, it was her 1968 essay entitled, *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk a Little Culture*, Sylvia Wynter puts forth "The Pleasures of Exile" by George Lamming as "the highest function of criticism. The reading she provides elucidates a method of cultural criticism, a practice of repeated dialogical reinvention and redefinition of the symbols of power through which our relations our constituted and lived. Quoting Lamming, Wynter writes that "since colonization had been a reciprocal process, decolonization must be equally so." "Word, Sylvia; say less," I thought to myself. But the reciprocity being invoked here, its fullest and most full expression does not begin with *returning the devil's fire*, despite all my efforts to make it fit. Rather, it is awareness of how I am also constituted by the "same stable of knowledge feeding on the same belief" trapped in the same canonical texts that ensnare my desires, relations, and systems of belief to the same set of desires, relations, and systems of belief that I am attempting to undo through this project, through the classes I teach, and through my relations of being with people.⁹³ And not unlike all doctoral students who find themselves writing their dissertation, I found myself located at some strange precipice in time and space wherein. Cognate with Ralph Ellison's explanation, this was not the "swift and imperceptible flowing of time" but rather the acute awareness "of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around."⁹⁴

Realizing the overwhelming task of gaining employment in the nearing future – which first requires in equal parts the management of those loud voices in the back of my head that rigorously interrogates my ability to produce a dissertation project that honors the task; the questioning of whether what appears in writing, here and throughout, adequately performs the *proving* of belonging that anxiously shadows nearly every aspect of the academy; and determining the logistics of how and where to even begin the job search – I so desperately wanted this chapter to be a legible writing sample for history departments. I tried and tried and tried some more to make fit the ideas presented here into a neatly contained story. For, if none of the other chapters of this dissertation project were readily legible to any other field of study than black studies, I hoped this chapter would be. How might I use these words and analytical concepts against the same epistemological systems

⁹² "You have to insert yourself into that narrative. That narrativity is part of the code literally of society. [...] It's almost as if there's a specification for being. But for this specification to become embodied and dynamic you have to insert yourself in it. [...] It is very fragile. It's very deterministic, but it's very fragile [...]" Sylvia Wynter and Van Piercy, "Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *The Berkeley Graduate*, April 1987, 14.

⁹³ Sylvia Wynter, "We Must Learn to Sit down Together and Talk about a Little Culture: Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism, Part One," *Jamaica Journal* 2, no. 4 (1968): 31.

⁹⁴ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1952), 8.

of thought that unceasingly negates such meanings, as Wynter taught me how to do, while also not negating the *work* of such out of fear? Weeks turned into months into semesters and every conscious attempt I made towards legibility, or the perception thereof, simultaneously brought into focus the vastness of the enduring empty white space of this word processing software and the compounding sense of losing of time. I wonder what the congregation of the Church felt as they were racing against time.⁹⁵

*Still forming new schemes and rejecting them, when the sign appeared again, which determined me not to wait longer.*⁹⁶

Serving as reminders, several sets of events occurred from which I took to be a sign. Perhaps the most auspicious of such came shortly after having worked tirelessly for weeks to describe the work of my dissertation project in each-of-the-too-many-required-documents in legible terms for committee that would be reviewing my fellowship application. Upon reading one reviewer's comments, which asked the extent to which my project addressed "black-on-black violence," for a week or two I remained puzzled as to how I could have failed so terribly at communicating the stakes of the monograph whereby such an inquiry could be logically posited ... until I was in class one day teaching Christina Sharpe's, *In the Wake* (2016). While seeking legibility for this chapter's narration, I was reminded of the deep sense of an-already-known-but-not-able-to-put-into-words knowing that was made clear that day in class: legibility is a disciplining mode of thought that disciplines the very questions that are possible to ask. As Sharpe writes,

We are expected to discard, discount, disregard, jettison, abandon, and measure those ways of knowing and to enact epistemic violence that we know to be violence against others and ourselves. In other words, for Black academics to produce legible work in the academy often means adhering to research methods that [...] do violence to our own capacities to read, think, and imagine otherwise. [...] The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archive of slavery, of undoing the 'racial calculus and political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago' and that live into the present.⁹⁷

And it would Dylan Rodríguez's "counter-tracing of White Being" that reminded me why I was not concerned about the other chapters of this dissertation project being legible in the first place. Though his dissertation (2001) was the first of such I would read in graduate school (my second semester), my questions harkened me back to his work, which eventually led me to his book, *White Reconstruction* (2021). Here, he offers the following on counter-narrating "White Being's epistolary authorship" as a ("precarious") methodology:

An experimental narrative approach to primary research that does not rely on (much less prescribe) a formulaic way of engaging/building/re-narrating the archive. [...] to visit and counter-narrate White Being's archival memoir is to momentarily irrupt white racial

⁹⁵ *Disaster*. Katherine McKittrick, "Failure (My Head Was Full of Misty Fumes of Doubt)," in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 120.

⁹⁶ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 11.

⁹⁷ Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, 12–13. Sharpe is quoting Saidiya Hartman: "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 6.

transparency, and to subject the theoretical and cultural production, as well as the public policy and state-making activities of the racist state's architects to a creative, disloyal, and at times undeservedly generous scrutiny and theoretical meditation. [...] Those of us aspiring to participate in some combination of critical intellectual labor and radical praxis are not only entitled to creatively read and irruptively re-narrate the archive of White Reconstruction's organic intellectuals, state-building figures, ideological architects, and social visionaries, but are *obligated* to use such archives disloyally, treasonously, and against their racial and political grain.⁹⁸

Together – against the claptrap of perceived legibility⁹⁹ and towards an irruptive reading of the archive that, through the reversal of its symbols, its own logics made to turn against itself – the grounds of this chapter's methodological approach comes into view. And this reversal is constitutive of the *work* of the violence enacted by the Church. As gleaned from Sylvia Wynter's framing of slavery and anti-slavery being a reciprocal process – the created myths and the attendant assignation of respective roles must be dialogically brought together to be re-invented and re-defined in an equally reciprocal process.¹⁰⁰ For if “a single case can illustrate the importance of context to analysis of slave plots or rebellions,” as historian Philip J. Schwartz contends in *Twice Condemned* (1988),¹⁰¹ then the case of Nat Turner is demonstrative of Sylvia Wynter's conceptualization of the violent revolts of the enslaved as a countercultural struggle.¹⁰² And this counterstruggle takes as its function “to deconstruct and subvert the cultural signifying system of the dominant order” by re-coding its “signifying chain and its symbols.”¹⁰³ As such, the sections of this chapter are narrated in reverse order and in contradistinction to the hegemonic mode of academic inquiry/storytelling with the dual purpose of illustrating the propitious *work* of both (a) the heretical non-norm attributed to blackness in general, and to violent black rebels in particular, and (b) the capacity of the “violence” of violent black revolt to reverse the symbolic, which is the weaponization of slave power's own logics – *to return the devil's fire* – pitted against itself towards its own annihilative ends.

A (Brief) Historiography: In the Beginning

The historiography of the Southampton Insurrection is rich, extensive, and explores a wide range of divergent themes with differing modes of inquiries. And even when curiosities converge, contrastive conclusions are conveyed. Yet, in all of ways in which the Gospel of Nat Turner continues to circulate in our current historical moment, nearly two hundred years later, the primary reference point nearly always begins with and/or to varying degrees, works from Thomas Gray's

⁹⁸ Dylan Rodríguez, “Goldwater's Tribal Tattoo: On Origins and Deletions of Post-Raciality,” in *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 114; 133–34.

⁹⁹ Thank you, Dr. Taylor.

¹⁰⁰ I am paraphrasing what she frames as colonization and decolonization. “Since colonization had been a reciprocal process, decolonization must be equally so. Since it is Prospero who created the myth and assigned the respective roles, the process of demythologization must take place between himself and Caliban. Caliban, must in a dialogue, re-invent, re-define the relation.” In: Wynter, “We Must Learn to Sit down Together and Talk about a Little Culture: Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism, Part One,” 31.

¹⁰¹ Philip J. Schwarz, *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 255.

¹⁰² Wynter, “Sambos and Minstrels,” 156.

¹⁰³ Sylvia Wynter, “‘We Know Where We Are From’: The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley” (Paper Presentation, The Joint Meeting of the African Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association, Houston, TX, November 1977), 48–49.

Confessions of Nat Turner.¹⁰⁴ For reasons seldom attributed to the logics of enslavement or incarceration, the authenticity of Turner's voice within the *Confessions* have long been the fodder for debate.¹⁰⁵ The conversation turned controversial however, when, in 1967, William Styron published a novelized version bearing the same name, for which he was awarded with the Pulitzer Prize. Nat Turner, as a historical figure possessing cultural significance, was undergoing a Revival of sorts.¹⁰⁶ I do not enter into these debates. My reading of the *Confessions*, while noting the obvious commentary Gray provides throughout the text, follows Eric Sundquist's analysis wherein he concludes the strong presence of Nat Turner's voice.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, as a matter of historical inquiry, whereby new archival material is presented, this chapter is not and does not. Seminal texts have been recently published that have unearthed new archival materials to expand our understanding of the world into which the Church intervenes.¹⁰⁸ Because our methodological task is to weaponize the logics of power embedded within the archive, which is also therefore the weaponization of the subsequent archival materials themselves, our reading of such is not contingent upon debating the veracity of

¹⁰⁴ One historian even goes so far as to say, "*The Confessions of Nat Turner* [...] may be the most important work on slavery written and published in the slaveholding South." Patrick H. Breen, *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

¹⁰⁵ For such conversations, see: Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion: Together with the Full Text of the So-Called "Confessions" of Nat Turner Made in Prison in 1831* (New York, NY: Humanities Press, 1966); Seymour L. Gross and Eileen Bender, "History, Politics and Literature: The Myth of Nat Turner," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1971): 487–518; Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*; Albert E. Stone, *The Return of Nat Turner: History, Literature, and Cultural Politics in Sixties America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Daniel S. Fabricant, "Thomas R. Gray and William Styron: Finally, a Critical Look at the 1831 Confessions of Nat Turner," *American Journal of Legal History* 37, no. 3 (July 1993): 332–61; Tony Horowitz, "Untrue Confessions: Is Most of What We Know About the Rebel Slave Nat Turner Wrong?," *The New Yorker*, December 13, 1999; Ariela J. Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Courtroom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "The Construction of The Confessions of Nat Turner," in *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*, ed. Kenneth S. Greenberg (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24–42; Scot French, *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ See: John Henrik Clarke, ed., *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968).

¹⁰⁷ This is cognate with more contemporary studies of Gray's *Confessions*. Two scholars present differing views on this matter. Thomas C. Parramore presents an outlying example of contemporary scholarship that returns to Gray's *Confessions* to determine its authenticity, he concludes that both Turner and Gray worked together "as a joint enterprise" to produce the pamphlet because, as Parramore suggests, "calling for the abolition of over two centuries of affliction." In: Parramore, *Southampton County, Virginia*. Scot French comments that Gray's *Confessions* are too compromised for historians to attend to the text in any meaningful way concerning Nat Turner. French, *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory*, xi–xii. Perhaps varying by method, such scholars as David F. Allmendinger, Anthony E. Kaye, Kevin Pelletier, and Eric Sundquist, each in their own way, conclude that Turner's voice is extant and definitive within Gray's transmitted confessions from Turner. See: Allmendinger, Jr., *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*; Anthony E. Kaye, "Neighborhoods and Nat Turner: The Making of a Slave Rebel and the Unmaking of a Slave Rebellion," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 4 (2007): 705–20; Kevin Pelletier, "David Walker, Nat Turner, and the Logic of Sentimental Terror," in *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature*, by Kevin Pelletier (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 35–58; Eric J. Sundquist, "Signs of Power: Nat Turner and Frederick Douglass," in *To Awaken the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 27–134. For a recent textual analysis, see: Christopher Tomlins, "Confessions: Of Text and Paratext," in *In the Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 27–50.

¹⁰⁸ The compiling of primary texts in Tragle's book is essential: *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material*. These seminal texts, and those from which I draw most heavily throughout this chapter, include: Allmendinger, Jr., *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*; Breen, *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt*; Holden, *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community*. For a survey of historical inquiries into the matter, see: David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "A Note on Historiography: Rebellion and Local History," in *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 301–6.

“historical truth” nor archival discovery. However, **what is of concern here is the treatment of violence within the historiography.**

The very same logics of paternalism that functioned to legitimate the white protectorate position of whites over blacks similarly operates in much of the thinking about violent black rebellion; and this was true for white abolitionists and black abolitionists alike.¹⁰⁹ In the wake¹¹⁰ of the violence enacted by The Fellowship of Nat Turner, when important details like the heads of ten slave-owning households had been bludgeoned, axed, hacked, and shot – all having been sent to their Creator to receive their second death, for their names were certainly nowhere to be found in the book of life, they all having been cast into the lake of fire¹¹¹ – William Lloyd Garrison writes in the *Liberator* on September 3, 1831 that they [the white, northern abolitionists] were not to blame for the violence wrought to Southampton. Rather, they

have preached to the slaves of the pacific precepts of Jesus Christ. We have appealed to Christians, philanthropists, and patriots, for their assistance to accomplish the great work of national redemption through the agency of moral power – of public opinion – of individual duty. How have we been received? We have been threatened, proscribed, vilified, and imprisoned – a laughing-stock and a reproach.¹¹²

The precepts taught by the white, northern abolitionists were not those found in the Gospel according to Nat Turner; instead, this was the “servants obey your masters” and “the meek shall inherit the Earth” doctrines found in the same text that had been reversed and weaponized against those who claimed to be masters. The *Liberator’s* response not only poisted the need for paternal oversight (“for their assistance”) of black people, enslaved or otherwise, but as Lenora Warren points out, it “speaks to an essential truth about the place of the formerly enslaved and free blacks within the abolitionist movement: [...] they could not become agents who could play an active role in securing their own freedom.” Furthermore, the ways in which the enslaved were represented within the abolitionist movement, “as either victims and/or useful members of society” alongside the framing of slavery and the slave trade as inherently violent, together the ex-slave was therefore always “ripe for civilizing.” Yet because “all slave revolts, including the Haitian Revolution – went against [this] prevailing narrative,” as Warren continues to write, all violent black rebels are castigated to the realm of “driven to madness by slavery” and “slave insurrection would remain the realm of the ‘maladjusted’ and ‘deviant’ blacks.”¹¹³ And this logic was held by black abolitionists, too. William Wells Brown and W.E.B. Du Bois are two such examples.

William Wells Brown, born into slavery and later escaped from Kentucky to settle in Boston, writes in 1863 that Nat Turner possessed “the most intense hatred of the white race” and as a consequence of his grandmother’s advice, whom Brown characterizes as “pious but ignorant,” resulted in the attempted “overthrow of the whites.” Here, not only is Lydia,¹¹⁴ Nat Turner’s grandmother relegated to the realm of the mentally inferior, which she was not, Brown completes

¹⁰⁹ See the treatment of violent black insurrection by white abolitionists in Lenora Warren’s brilliant monograph and compare to Kelly Carter Jackson’s black abolitionists: Lenora Warren, *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019); Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

¹¹⁰ “Wake; in the line of recoil of (a gun).” Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, 93; [italics original].

¹¹¹ Revelation 20:11-15.

¹¹² William Lloyd Garrison, “The Insurrection,” *The Liberator*, September 3, 1831, Volume I., Number 36 edition.

¹¹³ *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886*, 80.

¹¹⁴ Allmendinger, Jr., *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 107.

the move to disavow violent struggle and to affirm Turner's fanaticism:

Thus died Nat Turner, at the early age of thirty-one years – a martyr to the freedom of his race, and victim to his own fanaticism. He meditated upon the wrongs of his oppressed and injured people, till the idea of their deliverance excluded all other ideas from his mind, and he devoted his life to its realization.¹¹⁵

W.E.B. Du Bois, forty years later in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), would punctuate these sentiments by foreclosing any possibilities associated with violent black rebellion: "The death [...] of Nat Turner proved long since to the Negro the present hopelessness of physical defense."¹¹⁶

Such narrative articulations of violent black rebellion would later come to haunt even the most "radical" of scholars and their work. C.L.R. James for example, defines Haiti as the only successful slave revolt in history.¹¹⁷ The telos of capturing the state therefore becomes the metric by which most investigations into the use of violence by the enslaved were measured: the privileging of violent revolt as a matter of success or failure as constitutively dependent upon merely inverting power through the state. This framing serves to only reify the very same grammars of freedom and liberty that made possible for the condition of enslavement to exist *ab initio*. It is this kind of historiography that Ranajit Guha characterizes as "still trapped in the paradigm which inspired the ideological contrary" because "even of the most radical variety [...] it becomes easy for the historian to abdicate responsibility he has of exploring and describing the consciousness specific to that rebellion and be content to ascribe to it a transcendental consciousness" wherein the insurrectionists are disallowed "as the subject of his own history."¹¹⁸ It is therefore, but a *mere suspicion* that in our collective ongoing struggles to think and to practice forms of livingness beyond that which this world has proscribed, "radical" scholars and the scholarship that follows from such, are complicit in the burying the possibilities opened by violent black rebellion. It is but a *mere suspicion* that scholarship bearing the name of a "black radical tradition" stemming from Cedric Robinson's 1983 text, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, seldom depart from his essentialized and overdetermined characterization of black people, free or otherwise, as always more likely to choose "a politics of disengagement and retreat" than to use violence. It is but a *mere suspicion* that when Robinson juxtaposes the physical nature of using violence with an "always *its focus was on the structures of the mind. Its epistemologically granted supremacy to metaphysics not the material*" to privilege escape and marronage as the "always" overdetermined and essentialized chosen forms black people used to struggle against their conditions of unfreedom – that this functions to further disavow, elide, and demonize those who choose violence.¹¹⁹ It is but a *mere suspicion* that this is why academic inquiries into black rebelliousness conceived through clunky metaphors like fugitivity and pessimism have cache: the violent praxis of black people, enslaved or otherwise, and the this-world-or-the-next-world-to-come possibilities created through such life-affirming insurrectionary undertakings have unwittingly been narratively condemned by those writings attempting to undue the same narrative

¹¹⁵ William Wells Brown, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (Boston, MA: Thomas Hamilton, 1863), 61, 63, 71.

¹¹⁶ W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago, IL: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 138.

¹¹⁷ James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*.

¹¹⁸ Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 82.

¹¹⁹ Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London, UK: Zed Press, 1983), 244; 242–46; 444; [italics original].

condemnation.¹²⁰

*The affirmation of the desire for freedom is so inhabited by the forgetting of its condition of possibility that every narrative articulation of freedom is haunted by its burial.*¹²¹

While most scholarly inquiries post-1960s concerning the Church fail to traffic in grammars quite as reductionist as Eugene D. Genovese, stating that the attendant killings were the function of a “hate-driven madman,”¹²² tethering violent praxis of the Congregation to means/ends distinctions, particularly to the category of revolution – ends to which Turner did not ascribe himself – the *work* of violence becomes conscripted into statist notions of liberal rights and justice. This framing functions to denude the *work* of the violence; smuggled in through such grammars of “revolutionary,” “resistance,” and “agency,” for example, presupposes the state’s legitimacy to bestow or abrogate one’s collective existence in the name of juridical rights.¹²³ In cases where such characterizations of the Gospel according to Nat Turner are interpreted through this liberal paradigm, the violent praxis becomes normalized and conflated with non-violent and non-criminal forms of protest that performs what Kellie Carter Jackson describes as “an opportunity to perfect [the nation’s] democracy.”¹²⁴ One such example that typifies this characterization is observed in Karl W. Lampley’s text. “As with the patriots of the American Revolution,” Lampley writes, “Turner fought for his inalienable right to freedom, life, and liberty.” And collapsing the material distinctions between il/legal and il/legitimate, he writes further that “Nat Turner was fighting a legitimate war and revolution for his freedom and that of other black slaves [...] and to achieve freedom for blacks in America.” David F. Allmendinger, perhaps the most careful of all historians concerning the archival records, also conscripts the Gospel of Nat Turner into this frame by stating that the Church “saw themselves mounting a revolution.” Elsewhere and perhaps less obvious, Eric J. Sundquist frames the Southampton Insurrection as “a wild revolutionary outbreak against the enslavement of African Americans” in the name of “revolutionary democracy.” And Thomas C. Parramore describes this “wild outbreak” as being a tactical and strategical failure because its leader “was a lifelong mystic and, it seems, incapable of devising a feasible plan.”¹²⁵

Embedded within the characterizations of Lampley, Allmendinger, and Sundquist is the *a priori* assumption that teleologically maps the enacted violence to the perceived values inherited from the Enlightenment notion of “revolution.” The horizon of being inherited through the juridical

¹²⁰ Sylvia Wynter, “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” *Voices of the African Diaspora* VIII, no. 2/Fall (1992): 70.

¹²¹ Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann L Stoler (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 106.

¹²² Eugene D. Genovese, “William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner: A Meditation on Evil, Redemption, and History*,” in *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America’s Past (and Each Other)*, ed. Mark C. Carnes (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 210.

¹²³ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113–24; Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Anthony E. Kaye, “The Problem of Autonomy: Toward a Postliberal History,” in *New Directions in Slavery Studies: Commodification, Community, and Comparison*, ed. Jeff Forret and Christine E. Sears (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 150–76.

¹²⁴ Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 5.

¹²⁵ Karl W. Lampley, *A Theological Account of Nat Turner: Christianity, Violence, and Theology* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18, 17, 11; Sundquist, “Signs of Power: Nat Turner and Frederick Douglass,” 83; 49; Thomas C. Parramore, “Covenant in Jerusalem,” in *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*, ed. Kenneth S. Greenberg (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63; Allmendinger, Jr., *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 97.

bestowment of rights and its attendant anacletic axioms like equality and citizenship are abessive throughout Turner's confessions. Likewise, Parramore's imputation of ineffective planning is only legible by assuming the desired ends of the Sermon's violent means is to free the enslaved within the ideological framework of the American Revolution. However, also absent is any averred desire by Turner to free the enslaved in a manner homologous with Parramore's abduction. When the violence enacted by the Church is conscripted and assimilated into revolutionary explanatory schematics, the *work* of said violence is equiprimordially flattened to constructive state-making and state-perfecting ends; which is to say, the *work* of the violence eventuates a revolution, in the Copernican sense of the word, and is proselytized and congealed back to the status quo and/or its facsimile.¹²⁶ Perseverating back to Parramore's deployment of the word "mystic" may provide a path to greater understanding.¹²⁷

Nat Turner tells us in the *Confessions* that he spent most of his time fasting, praying, and seeking the Lord's wisdom. "For two years," Turner tells Gray that he "prayed continually." And from the encouragement he received from his mother and father as a child – but mostly benefiting from the relationship he had with his grandmother – "who was very religious" and to whom he tells us he "was very much attached" – encouraged him to discover the great purpose for which he understood to be his calling. The appellation of "mystic," though I suspect takes on a negative connotation in Parramore's sense of the word,¹²⁸ proves generative when paired with Turner's avowal of "studiously avoiding mixing in society" to share in "the communion of the Spirit." For it is through this communion with the Holy Ghost, which revealed the will of God unto Turner, and when the sign shown, "the great work laid out for me to do," Turner tells Gray, he "determined not to wait longer."

And now the Holy Ghost had revealed itself to me, and made plain the miracles it had shown me--For as the blood of Christ had been shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners, and was now returning to earth again in the form of dew--and as the leaves on the trees bore the impression of the figures I had seen in the heavens, it was plain to me that the Saviour [sic] was about to lay down the yoke he had

¹²⁶ By a facsimile of the status quo's return, I mean to signal the enduring epistemology governing the original organizing schema returns in a different form but its antecedental logics remain. This is why Saidiya Hartman refers to the event of emancipation as a nonevent: "changes wrought in the social fabric after the abolition and with the nonevent of emancipation insinuated by the perpetuation of the plantation system and the refiguration of subjection." Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 116. Said differently, Sylvia Wynter writes, "[A] change in the superstructure of the plantation, a new Constitution, even Independence, were changes which left the basic system untouched; and which only prolonged the inevitable and inbuilt confrontation between the plantation and the plot; [...] reflected here in this conference, on different levels of awareness, between those who justify and defend the system; and those who challenge it." Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 102. And this blanching of violence, serves as a cautionary tale too – even for those who have used such means to achieve their stated revolutionary ends. Echoing Mars Prince, Wynter observes the following of the Haitian Revolution: "After Haiti's successful war of Independence against the French, she was faced with the problem of founding a new state based on free labour [sic], of creating a new nation. The easiest way out was to copy the model of her former masters. She succeeded. Haitians became magnificent coloured [sic] Frenchman." Sylvia Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as Cultural Process," *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34.

¹²⁷ Isaiah 40:13-15.

¹²⁸ "a person who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to obtain unity or identity with or absorption into the Deity or the ultimate reality, or who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the understanding" defined in Della Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Ninth Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 1995), 900.

borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand.¹²⁹

Communicated through the Holy Spirit, the will of God instrumentalized the Fellowship of Nat Turner to hasten God's wrath against the unrighteous. Obedient unto the Lord and faithfully carrying out the *work* with which he has been dutifully charged to make bare through violence, Turner immediately disavows Gray's naming of such as an "insurrection." Unveiled here then, is a violence enacted not in the vein of a political strivings for a more perfect democracy; the violence enacted is also neither towards the reformation of the state nor its capture. Rather, **the violence enacted – its *work* – is a catastrophic confrontation between good and evil and external to the human realm altogether.**

Jihad: A Conversation with God

Most of the historiography attends to Turner's faith, but like the aforementioned examples concerning the problematics of conflating revolutionary aims Turner's aims, ultimately tends to fall back into the axiomatic frame of this-world's earthly political realm. Sundquist for example, whom we have already discussed, attempts to bring Turner's apocalyptic visions together with the juridical abolishment of slavery when he discusses the *work* as being "revolutionary terror."¹³⁰ But this framing may more closely adhere to the terror instituted by the French government to prevent the impending revolution, that is, state terrorism. Moreover, and for our purposes, "revolutionary" here still seems too closely tethered to the secular, even if not intended to conjure the French Revolution.¹³¹ While not the sustained focus of their studies, scholars have referenced various passages from the Holy Bible as Turner's inspiration – including Exodus, Mathew, Luke, and Revelation. Christopher Tomlins, in *In the Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History* (2020), is perhaps the most careful in providing a sustained and attentive analysis of the Gospel according to Nat Turner.¹³² Tomlins's reading for Turner's voice throughout the *Confessions* alongside the Gospel according to Luke has proven to be enormously generative for my own thinking throughout this chapter. Though he provides a rigorous reading – while consistently urging the violence enacted as a manifestation of serious faith possessed by Turner – even trying to reconcile Walter Benjamin's bloodless "divine violence" with the blood that was shed in Southampton – Tomlins's analysis falls back to earth in Part III of his book when he argues: "Turner's rebellion was an instance of countersovereignty, violence deployed in the hope of changing a regime." For to play the game of sovereignty is not only a politics of this world, but it is to also traffic in the grammars of legitimacy, which is to therefore legitimate the very lexicon created by power to ensure its victory.¹³³ The play, however, only chips away at the lining of the structure, which is why the Church was determined to snatch the foundation.

I offer here that the Gospel according to Nat Turner is a praxis of pure means, the violent eschatological reversal with its ends external and indecipherable to the this-worldly plane. This

¹²⁹ Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, 9, 7, 8, 10–11.

¹³⁰ Sundquist, "Signs of Power: Nat Turner and Frederick Douglass," 81.

¹³¹ Eugene Genovese on the violence deployed by the enslaved at Southampton: "the accents of the Declaration of Independence and the Rights of Man." Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, 49.

¹³² Notwithstanding such blind spots as those already mentioned here: Vanessa M. Holden, "Review of In The Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History, by Tomlins Christopher," *Journal of Social History* 55, no. 1 (2021): 257–59.

¹³³ See: imperial concepts like "terra nullius" in: Saidiya Hartman, "The Plot of Her Undoing," *Feminist Art Coalition Notes on Feminisms*, no. 2 (2020): 1–6.

chapter's argument unfolds into three parts. Part One puts forth the means by which the violence enacted by the enslaved at Southampton functions deracinate and annihilate the symbolic codes of meaning that taught the enslaved to "seek first the kingdom of God" in the first place. In thinking with the Gospel according to Nat Turner, Sylvia Wynter, Jean Baudrillard, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, I read the *work* of the enactments of violence against itself and posit that neither the gun nor the whip in the hands of slaveocracy fuels the means by which their power is absolute. On the contrary, these mere objects in and of themselves are metal and leather. It requires more to inflict a living death. Symbols, signs, and other worldliness enables the Church to pull back the veil to see, feel, and know that another world is coming. Thus, the violence of these objects is emptied and replaced with the heretical scripts that provide a new understanding to Revelation. Part Two locates the etioloical roots of heresy and the black infidel within the makings of colonial Virginia. Here, the intimate world of the enslaved and their enslavers are winnowed through a plantation schoolhouse. And the denouement of this chapter occurs in Part Three.

¹³⁴Ti esrever dna ti pilf, nwod gniht ym tup / / Ti esrever dna ti pilf, nwod gniht ym tup

¹³⁴ Missy Elliott, *Work It*.

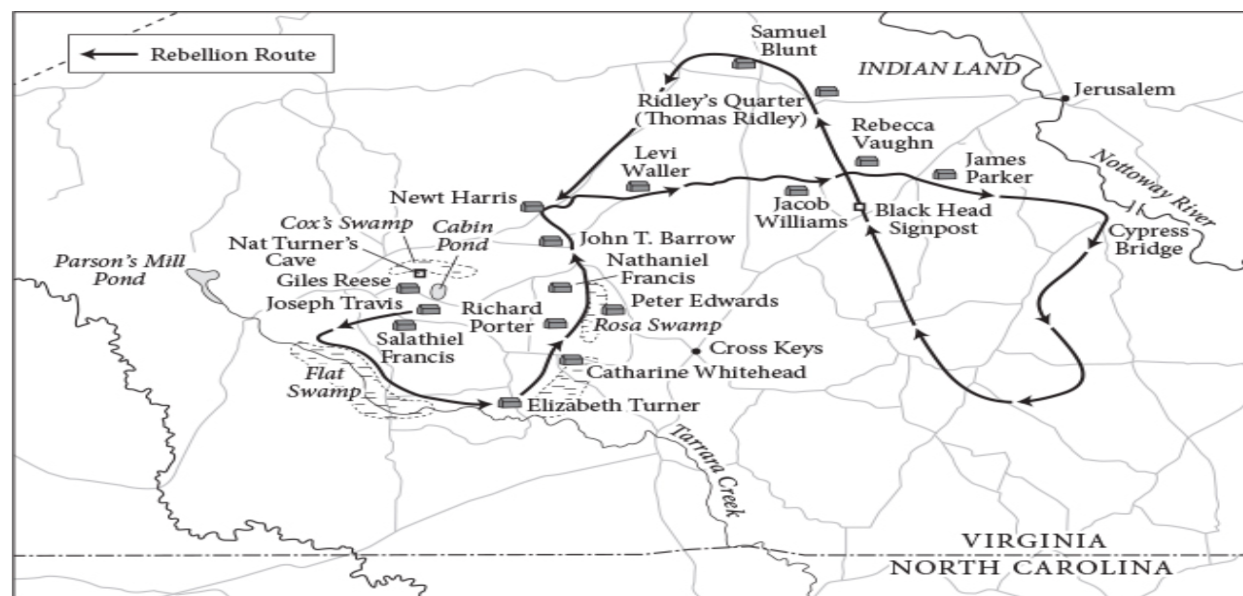
Appendix



Map 1: "Virginia and Southampton County, ca. 1831" Map by Bill Nelson. From: *Surviving Southampton* (2021) by Vanessa M. Holden.



Map 2: "Southeastern Virginia, 1831." Map by Glen Pawelski. From: *The Land Shall be Deluged in Blood* (2015) by P.H. Breen.



Map 3: "The Rebellion Route." Map by Bill Nelson. From: *Surviving Southampton* (2021) by Vanessa M. Holden.

2

They Came with Guns and Swords to Question the Proleptic Plot Authored by the “Strange Presences” of Ciceronian Citations

Violent Black Rebellion Composes a New Story; Or, Towards a Piratical Praxis “In the Hope of Better”

History, then, these things that happen, is, in the plantation context, itself, fiction; a fiction written, dominated, controlled by forces external to itself. It is clear then, that it is only when the society, or elements of the society rise up in rebellion against its external authors and manipulators that our prolonged fiction becomes temporary fact.

– Sylvia Wynter, *Novel and History, Plot and Plantation*, 1971 (p. 95)

[...] and that flimsy, haphazard way people spoke about the past.

Back then.

A long time ago.

[...] *That was the year everything changed [...]*

Changed how? What precise unfolding of events? Was it really *that* year, or the year before? Or one event then, and another event several years later, with 1,018 tiny indications in the in-between?

– Rivers Solomon, *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, 2017 (pp. 48-49)

...there is no social relation among them all more close, none more dear than that which links each one of us with our country.

– Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, 44 BCE, Book I [57]

But we have no country.

– A runaway slave, 1851

Nobody knows (Nobody knows)

All my sorrow (All my sorrow)

Glory! (Glory!) Glory! (Glory!) Glory! (Glory, Hallelujah!)

Glory! (Glory!) Glory! (Glory!)

(Glory, Hallelujah!)

(Glory! Glory! Glory, Hallelujah!)

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

Nobody

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

Nobody

(Nobody, nobody, nobody)

– Pastor T.L. Barrett and the Youth for Christ (Choir), “Nobody Knows,” 1971

Prologue

She was a keeper of secrets.

She appeared to me only in passing. Subordinated to the syntax of the lone sentence in which she appears, which, knowing what I know now about the text, the stories it tells, its purpose(s), and still only being able to decipher some of its code(s), it might be inferred that even this single mention of her may have been giving away too much. In 1866, William Parker publishes his narrative, *The Freedman's Story: In two Parts*, and he introduces me to her in this way:

After the fight, my wife was obliged to secrete herself, leaving the children in care of her mother, and to the charities of our neighbors.²

Parker's brief textual introduction, though she was still only known to me as "mother," allowed me to make a series of inferences and deductions from the pieces of the story already told to that point within Parker's narrative.

She was the mother to two daughters. Her oldest daughter was named Eliza and she is the "wife" to whom Parker alludes. Her youngest daughter, and Eliza's sister, was named Hannah. The "children" Parker references are those belonging to her and Eliza, which meant "mother" was also a grandmother. In the paragraph immediately preceding my introduction to her as "mother," Parker informs us that her daughters, Eliza and Hannah, both killed the man who arrived at their doorstep to hunt and return escaping private property: *The women put an end to him.³*

She was a grandma.

She was the mother of Eliza and Hannah.

Eliza and Hannah were both runaway slaves. Escaping.

She mothered two daughters who killed the man attempting to re-enslave other men.

Mapping these relations piqued my curiosity about her.

She was a keeper of secrets.

In the hope of learning more about her, I turned to the stories written by historians. But she was elusive. Perhaps owing to the ways in which history comes to be written in that flimsy and haphazard manner, to which the second epigraph of this chapter alludes, or perhaps owing to the always insufficient information from which the historian traffics in claims of historical facts as truth,⁴ with phrases like "a true story" performing a certain kind of tell that evinces the errors of factual dogma the phrase itself attempts to elide, if her story emerges at all from these historical narratives, it does so in pieces, glinted and fragmented. In the one hundred years of historical time that passed since Parker first introduces me to her, historians collected and compiled troves of court documents and published three books exclusively dedicated to narrating the historical record associated with the events that have come to be commonly known as the Christiana Riot of 1851.⁵ Yet, she was nowhere to be found.

Scant material traces.⁶

Fugitive

But then, in 1974, she appears most substantively as a footnote to the historian's story. And it was here that I first learned her name. Or, so I thought.

*“Catherine Warner,” age fifty, “black,” place of birth “Unknown.” She was married to Isaac Warner, age seventy, “black,” a laborer, place of birth “Unknown.”*⁷

The passage to which this footnote is attributed tells the story of “the mother of Eliza and Hannah.” The ambiguity with which her story is told is rather quite remarkable. Below are some of the author’s direct words and phrases used to describe her. I have italicized and demarcated the conjunctions by which these words and phrases are connected so to further illustrate precisely how ambiguous her story appears here, except the seeming finality of a certain form of annihilation as indexed by the conjunctive “and:”

*named Cassandra \\ or \\ Catherine Warner
arrested \\ or \\ voluntarily surrendering to slave-hunting officers \\ or \\ requested to return to slavery
old woman, called ‘Cassy’ // and // awarded to slave owner // and // was not heard from afterward.*⁸

This ambiguity follows the same form in the stories narrated by even the most rigorous of historical inquiries. For example, the two foundational stories on the Christiana Riot of 1851 both disagree about her name: one refers to her as Cassandra Harris and the other as Cassandra Warner.⁹ Likewise, the most basic and simple biographic information was reconditely limned through the citational references from which these historians wrote their stories of her. Some newspapers called her “Cassandra Warner” while others called her “Carry” or “Casey” or “Cassy.” In lieu of her name, other newspapers, conceivably deciding that her name was unimportant and/or unnecessary, referred to her using phrases like “old woman” or “old lady” and even “useless.” And when attempts were made to quantify “old” with a number of years, her age ranges from “50” to “probably about 60 years of age” to “between 60 and 70 years of age.”¹⁰

*The cloudy knowledge of mankind.*¹¹

Even as I know that one’s name is not the real them; that the true nature of anyone can neither be captured nor reduced to the name on a birth certificate or on a slave register or in census tract;¹² and even as I have come to learn and understand the impossibility of the archive to answer the questions to which I was seeking answers – both in the general sense of my academic inquiries and in a very specific sense as it relates to my desire to know more about the *esse* of who Eliza and Hannah’s mother was – I grew disquiet with the way her biographic information began to feel like her story was little more than a narration of necrology.¹³

It felt like *an unnecessary insult.*¹⁴

As I sat with these feelings and really commenced the work of wrestling with these absences and elisions, tracing the foreclosures authored by historical narratives, and thinking seriously about the meaning(s) of how even her name remained largely a secret to the inquiries of history, I thought about how little William Parker discloses of her and of her story in his narrative (If she was arrested and returned to slavery, as the historical stories were told, does that mean she was also escaping like her daughters? Being on the run was certainly not inconsequential; secrecy would be a must. Likewise, being charged with treason was no trivial matter. And given that William Parker, and 40 other comrades of his and Eliza’s were subsequently charged with treason for violently rebelling against slave power, secrecy here would also be a must.). I thought about the power necessary, perceived or otherwise, to characterize someone as “useless” and subsequently began to interrogate the directionality of such an adjective (Useless to whom?); and then I began to wonder:¹⁵ what does it mean to live inside of a secret like this? My questions were beginning to shift and in this way, she was teaching me.¹⁶

The “1,018 tiny indications in the in-between” in the second epigraph to this chapter points to a generative and productive space for thinking about the mother of Eliza and Hannah. This

space of the in-between provides for the past conditional temporality of reconstellating a world of possibilities that have been foreclosed by historical narratives – and the citations provided to legitimize them – to imagine a different kind of knowing that might have been and therefore, to also imagine a different kind of futurity.¹⁷ The “tiny indications” also gestures towards the small or minute movements that draws attention away from preoccupations with the grand and dominant – those stories often collected, told, and re-told within the amassed archives of the powerful – capacitating an imaginative site of analysis to begin asking different questions. What could have been? What was lost? What is being disguised and what must remain a secret?

Against the crushing totality of her story, as it appears within historical narratives, and thinking about the “1,018 tiny indications in the in-between,” the mother of Eliza and Hannah was teaching me about what it means to think in relation to the totality of the historical story while understanding both the impossibility of this knowing while imagining the attendant possibilities for a different kind of knowing – an epistemic modality of being that moves beyond the historical narrations that begins and ends with obscurity and slavery and towards *something else*. She was teaching me about the multiplicity abundant within opacity and how these silences offer the opportunity for me to hear the ROAR.¹⁸ Braiding the elisions and impasses of her story – the *somenbat secret and the somenbat unknown* – with the limits of what can be known of the underground – *through the opposition of voluntary secrecy and forced exposure* – indicates the in-between of her story: the space wherein nonlinearity and differential repetition provides a sort of epistemological insurrection to thus narrate a different story.¹⁹

*Dark and thorny is de desert,
Through de pilgrim makes his ways,
Yet beyon' dis vale of sorrow,
Lies de fiel's of endless days.*²⁰

She was a keeper of secrets.

Two days after her daughters killed Edward Gorsuch, the man who sought to return the loved ones of Eliza and Hannah back into slavery under the legal dictates of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, United States President Millard Fillmore unleashed the country's military forces to scour the area of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to capture and arrest all parties associated with Gorsuch's death. Fillmore's response to enlist all the powers vested to him as President to squash any insurrectionary actions against the laws of the country, and particularly those laws provided for by the Constitution as outlined by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, was presaged in a “Special Message” he delivered to the United States Senate on February 19, 1851. Drawing from the citations that created the legal precedent necessary for him to argue that the Office of the President can and must call upon its national armed forces (and state militias) to militate against rebellious actions threatening the preservation of the Union and the maintenance of its laws, Fillmore promises that “all forcible opposition to [the Fugitive Slave Act] will be suppressed ... [with] the employment of the Army and Navy of the United States” because Congress and the (Northern) states have no authority to limit executive power to ensure “the laws faithfully executed.”²¹ And he was true to his word. Nearly seven months after this edict, evidencing the failure of United States Marshals to “sustain the law by civil authority” in and around Christiana, Pennsylvania, President Fillmore deployed between 50-100 United States Marines to both ensure and enforce the unqualified and absolute right to private property in black people (fugitive or otherwise).²² It would be through the efforts of this federalized and militarized dragnet, a posse of brigands on the prowl to safeguard

against any further seditiously insurgent activities enacted by recalcitrant and rebellious private property, that the mother of Eliza and Hannah was captured.

The juridical encodings of absolute rights to private property in black flesh, nay, black people, and the militarized protection of this right, which legally conscripted and mandated all the country's citizens to both hunt and return escaping private property, is but only one piece of the story. For if power is being operationalized here through the laws and its governing apparatuses to classify the mother of Eliza and Hannah, Eliza and Hannah themselves, and ostensibly everyone they loved as slaves in the first instance, and power in the second instance owing to their attempts to escape their condition of enslavement, which also labels them as that which must be hunted, arrested, and returned to their rightful legal owner, then power is also being operationalized before the very events in the above paragraph could be narrated. Thus, the citations necessary to tell this story is just as important as the story itself.

The direct quotes from President Fillmore signal not only the power necessary to create and assemble the documents from which they are derived, but they also point to the materiality of an epistemic project carried on through the citational referents made possible by institutional storytelling.²³ For example, when Millard Fillmore in 1862 provides the inaugural address for the Buffalo Historical Society, of which he was the organization's first president, primary benefactor, and a founding member, says "let this institution [the Buffalo Historical Society] be the grand repository of everything calculated to throw light on our history ... in building up this society,"²⁴ he is alluding to the production of that which is considered history/historical fact ("everything calculated") and of the power, which is constitutive of its narrative, embedded within the epistemological codes that prescribes the remaking of the world over in its image ("building up this society"). History/historical fact then, is itself an epistemological project, a project that cannot be divorced from the episteme that legally codified and indexed black people as property. But these ideas ("our history") require the power of organization(s) to move. And this necessity of colonial power to create the organized infrastructure to tell stories through its institutions, is evidenced by the fact that instituting such organizations was often among the first acts of Western colonization.²⁵ The history of the university in the new world, through the transportation of Europe's humanist studies and its goal of creating the ideal subject/ideal behaviors vis-à-vis an epistemological project predicated upon distinctions of freedom/slavery attest to this necessity.²⁶

The two interrelated points that I am making here are as follows: 1) as minor of a figure Millard Fillmore is considered to be by Historians, the epistemological project to which he belonged and helped in its advancement and maintenance, namely the federalized and militarized protection of private property in black people, is not inconsequential, as will be later shown; and 2) the same institutional storytelling that functions to organize and move the ideas embedded within this epistemological project, which also functions to keep the mother of Eliza and Hannah a secret, is carried out by the making of sources, archives, and narratives – and indeed that which becomes historically significant moves *pari passu* with the citational referents that construct these narratives.²⁷ "The myth of history was used by the plantation to keep its power secure."²⁸ Against this epistemological project that determines significance through *calculation*, her secret is a concealed plot. And these citations that render the biographical record of Eliza and Hannah's mother to be almost always indifferent, are part and parcel of the same project that finds the biographical record of Millard Fillmore to be copious in quantity and profuse in its production. Books and assorted addresses, correspondences, and papers are compiled in libraries and housed in various archives throughout the country; and other institutions like hospitals and schools, state parks, and neighborhoods – and the roads through them – continue to bear his name to this day. The citations are evidence of an ongoing epistemological project, a conspiracy of sorts, that authors an *impossible*

reality²⁹ against which the mother of Eliza and Hannah plots to compose a different story. *A maze of plots.*³⁰

*Please, a definition: A hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action.*³¹

plot *n.* & *v.* • *n.* **2** the interrelationship of the main events in a play, novel, film, etc. **3** a conspiracy or secret plan, esp. to achieve an unlawful end. • *v.* *tr.* (**plotted, plotting**) **1** make a plan or map of (an existing object, a place or thing to be laid out constructed, etc.). **2** (also absol.) plan or contrive secretly (a crime, conspiracy, etc.). **5** devise or plan. [Old English and from Old French *complot* 'secret plan': both of unknown origin]³²

She was a keeper of secrets.

Millard Fillmore was born near Buffalo, New York in 1800. He spent his adolescence between laboring on his father's farm and learning several trades. And, as the story goes, it would be through gaining access to a circulating library of books and his study of the dictionary, and the words it contained, that would prove to be transformative.³³ During the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, he taught at a country school in the area while studying to become a lawyer. Fillmore was admitted to the bar in 1823, and over the course of the next several years, he achieved significant political prominence in Western New York working in the New York State Supreme Court and eventually becoming elected to serve three terms in the New York State Assembly. And as a point of fact, Millard Fillmore is credited with being among those who drafted the city's first charter to incorporate Buffalo as a city in 1832.³⁴

Between the years of 1833 and 1843, Millard Fillmore served four terms in the United States House of Representatives from the 32nd congressional district of New York State. From 1841-1843, he served as the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, a powerful role that oversaw the country's finances as it relates to taxation and spending. In this role, Fillmore was instrumental to expanding New York State's juridical control of Native Territory vis-à-vis disinvestment from federal funding and the continuation of building bridges, roads, throughways, and canals over and through and under Native Reservations in Western New York. Swindling the Seneca Natives out of more than 4 million acres, the Third Treaty of Buffalo Creek (1842) all but paved the way for the annexation of most Native lands to New York State, thereby enabling the Great Lakes port city of Buffalo to flourish, Fillmore's hometown and the primary constituency base in this role.³⁵ Indeed, it was upon this purloined land that Millard Fillmore's legacy as a great and honorable humanitarian, philanthropist, and an exemplar par excellence of a public-spirited citizen would be concretized and institutionalized. In 1846, Millard Fillmore founded what is now known as the University at Buffalo, the flagship university of the State of University of New York (SUNY), which is the largest comprehensive system of colleges and universities in the country. His first Chancellor's address jubilates about the promise of a university education to raise a city and its members "from despondency to hope, from weakness to power, and from childhood to manhood" for which future generations and the yet "unborn millions" of people of Buffalo will find the "institution eminently useful" serving as the city's "pride and ornament."³⁶ Fillmore served as the university's first chancellor from 1846 until the year of his death in 1874.³⁷

The university is the intellectual arm of State power.

Black American history prepares Black people to believe that true history is hidden and destroyed, or that history results from a logical bundling of lies that mutilate and kill. We have been prepared, by our American experience, to believe that civilization festers between opposite poles of plunder and pain. And still, the university waits, unavoidable, at the end of compulsory education, to assure the undisturbed perpetuity of this civilization.

We have learned to suspect and to beware the culture belied by phrases such as “the two-car family,” or “job security,” or “the Department of defense,” or “law and order.” We do not deride the fears of prospering white America.

***A nation of violence and private property has every reason to dread the violated and the deprived. Its history drives the violated into violence and, one of these days, violence will literally signal the end of violence as a means. We are among those who have been violated into violence.*³⁸**

While Millard Fillmore was working to create the University at Buffalo to be a primary progenitor of articulating the values of power to be reflected in the political and civil spheres of society for/through future generations,³⁹ Zachary Taylor was engaged in a more obvious form of nation-building: war. Prior to being elected the 12th President of the United States in 1848, Taylor spent the majority of his life on the front lines of American expansion as an officer in the United States Army. Building from his long record of killing and policing Indigenous populations wherever the border was expanding including the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War of 1828, and the Second Seminole War of 1835, Taylor garnered national acclaim as a war hero in his capacity as a United States Army General in the Mexican-American War from 1846-1848.⁴⁰ And it would be upon this reputation that he would later launch a successful campaign to secure the Whig party nomination for President, with Millard Fillmore serving as his Vice President, together they were considered by one Historian, to be “part of an impressive company of leading men” who would lead the country through the impending crisis that was beginning to fully percolate by the time of their election in 1848.⁴¹

Whereas Millard Fillmore was governing through his values of preserving the United States Constitution and expanding the Union during his tenure in the House of Representatives and other political offices, Zachary Taylor was a peculiar candidate for president because he never held political office prior to being elected President of the United States. Perhaps less peculiar, Taylor would join the long list of those presidents who owned private property in black people. This list includes ten of the first twelve presidents and twelve of the first eighteen presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James K. Polk, Zachary Taylor, Andrew Johnson, and Ulysses S. Grant.⁴² Taylor was born on a slave plantation in Virginia and raised on another slave plantation in Kentucky. Having “owned over a hundred slaves,” he would lease portions of his enslaved property to other military personnel during the Mexican-American War.⁴³ In 1842,⁴⁴ future United States President, Zachary Taylor already having owned two plantations, one in Mississippi and another in plantation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, purchased another plantation in Mississippi called Cypress Grove Plantation for \$95,000 (\$3.14 million in 2021 dollars), which he continued to manage during his time as president and until he died. Richard Taylor, his son and eventual commander in the Confederate Army, continued to manage the property after his father’s death. Taylor’s Cypress Grove Plantation sprawled more than 1,900 acres along the Mississippi River,⁴⁵ and according to the deed of sale, came with farm tools, cattle, horses, mules, hogs, “and other

property.” Unlike the farming utensils, this parcel of property possessed names. The 81 names included on the deed of sale read as follows:

Nelson, Milley, Peldea, Mason, Willis, Rachel, Caroline, Lucinda, Ramdall, Wirman, Carson, Little Ann, Winna, Jane, Tom, Sally, Gracia, Big Jane, Louisa, Maria, Charles, Barnard, Mira, Sally, Carson, Paul, Sansford, Mansfield, Harry Oden, Harry Horley, Carter, Henrietta, Ben Charlotte, Wood, Dick, Harrietta, Clarissa, Ben, Anthony, Jacob, Hamby, Jim, Gabriel, Emeline, Armstead, George, Wilson, Cherry, Peggy, Walker, Jane, Wallace, Barlett, Martha, Letitia, Barbara, Matilda, Lucy, John, Sarah, Bigg Ann, Allen, Tom, George, John, Dick, Fielding, Nelson or Isom, Winna, Shellod, Lidney, Little Cherry, Puck, Sam, Hannah or Anna, Mary, Ellen, Henrietta, and two small children.⁴⁶

She was a keeper of secrets.

Eliza, Hannah, and indeed their mother – like Cherry and Little Cherry; like Henrietta, Henrietta, and Harrietta; like Hannah *or* Anna and Nelson *or* Isom; like Wood and the other persons so named in Zachary Taylor’s deed of sale – were legally classified as chattel, indexed and catalogued, with blithe disregard for the cosmogonies they possessed, within the long American project of generating wealth through private property. For more than 250 years, since the early 1600s, the conquest of natives through treaties, occupation, and genocide while simultaneously enslaving black people to perform various forms of labor – through and against the purported ideals of freedom and democracy inhered in Thomas Jefferson’s project of revolutionary nationalism, which includes loaded and mythologized juridical terms like “freedom” and “democracy” that continue to ensnare our political imagination, as if the piecemeal reform initiatives that can only come to reinscribe the sovereignty of the state was the horizon of our dreams,⁴⁷ was constructed, maintained, and advanced – so to engine more than seventy-five percent of America’s wealth.⁴⁸ Whether it was the removal of natives to build a city with its own university to teach the Enlightenment values of property rights, or whether it be the militarized expansion of a nation’s borders to ensure the continued economic prosperity of a nation predicated and built by slave labor and the crops produced from such, Millard Fillmore and Zachary Taylor, respectively, both contributed to the citational chain of this project’s epistemological foundation that protects private property in black people. Or, in other words, the amalgamation of their life’s work, which cohered around such maxims of protecting the United States Constitution and perpetuating (and expanding) the Union, was in service to protecting the right of private property in black people – just as both the Constitution and the Union were written and formed, respectively, in service to the same. And while much of the historical narratives written characterize the impending crisis to which they were elected to govern coalesces around sectional divides related to whether the newly annexed lands of the west ought to recognize the right to own property in black people, this only comprises one aspect of the story.⁴⁹

If the freedom to own property in black people is to live in a dueling state of war with this property, as one such thingified person once wrote,⁵⁰ and if it is also true that protecting the state necessitates governing through compromise and accommodation as a result of the conflicts inherent to this distinction⁵¹ (e.g., the *impossible reality* of treating people like property given that property cannot write books just as it also can neither run away nor organize other pieces of property to plot the murderous demise of its claimants), then it must also be true that the violent uprisings of property against its owners premonishes a threat to the state. It was this precise scenario into which Taylor and Fillmore entered office: *the spasmodic cries*⁵² and *the roar*⁵³ evoked through the violent

insurrections of the enslaved educed a warning signal. With every plot made in the offing and every instantiation of insurrection aboard slave ships; with every escape from the plantation and every rumor of large-scale rebellion; with each bullet fired into the flesh of a slave owner and with *each and every single* incision carved into the body of a slave owner by the hands of the enslaved; the grip of slave power was being loosened and new technologies of governing had to be invented to tourniquet the bleeding of state power. *Recalcitrant property*.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 granted legislative power to Congress to devise the implementation process of the Fugitive Slave Clause in the United States Constitution (Article IV, Section II). The Act of 1793 delineated the process by which owners of enfleshed property ought to hunt, and subsequently, to return black people into slavery. State governments proceeded to pass legislation to supplement the Act's provisions and as a result, an overlapping system of federal and state law worked together to protect the Union from sectional conflicts by ensuring the rights of private property in black people were protected in Southern states.⁵⁴ However, both the North and South would develop a cathexis of imagined paroxysmic possibilities – whether real or imagined – wrought by the violent uprisings of slaves.

Identifying one of the founding fathers as the target of kidnapping, and murder if necessary, the Gabriel Prosser Conspiracy of 1800 demonstrated the capacity of the enslaved to organize and plot an insurrection on a large scale. Between the years of 1791-1804, an army of slaves captured and destroyed the world's wealthiest plantation economy; indeed, the massacre of over 5,000 white people, which signaled the inauguration of the Haitian Revolution, articulated a narrative that black people had learned from the colonists and planters that the only terms by which concepts like freedom and liberation are achieved is through violence. And the *common wind* of violent insurrectionary uprisings pandiculated back and forth throughout/between the West Indies and the United States.⁵⁵ The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 resulted in the death of planters and the burning of plantations throughout Cuba and Trinidad. Upwards of 500 enslaved and formerly enslaved persons, with some of the latter having been rumored to also fighting in the Haitian Revolution, marched with drums and an assorted array of weapons going from plantation to plantation killing white men, women, and children for two days in Louisiana. And the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy of 1822, while the facts of the matter remain undiscernible, reflecting on the plot of insurrection, one wealthy planter of South Carolina remarked the following: "the subsequent investigation proved a Scene of Guilt, and murder, to be intended, unparalleled even exceeding if possible, the *Demons*, of St. Domingo!!!" [capitalization, italics, and punctuation original].⁵⁶ Nine years later in 1831, the Nat Turner Rebellion raged across Southampton, Virginia and the Great Jamaican Slave Revolt of the same year mobilized the largest slave insurrection in all of the British West Indies.⁵⁷ And these revolts were occurring as the maroons of the Dismal Swamp in North Carolina, between 1700-1865, were constantly utilizing violence as a matter of quotidian survival.⁵⁸ Together – the capacious and always lurking fugitive slave plotting to ignite a murderous insurrection coupled with the still-haunting-demonic-torment wrought from property in arms against so-called owners – fugitive slaves and slave revolts constituted slave power's "greatest nightmare."⁵⁹ *The memory of past slave and native revolts haunt the fringes of the civilizer's consciousness.*⁶⁰

In the wake of such nightmares becoming a living reality, Southern slave power grew defensive. The growing public executions of those perceived to have participated in violent insurrections, the racial quarantining of the southeast coast inaugurated by the Negro Seaman Acts, and the South Carolina nullification crisis which flamed threats of secession for years to come – evinced a strain on the then extant system of overlapping federal and state laws that governed slavery amidst increasing sectional tensions.⁶¹ And in 1842, when the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government possessed sole jurisdiction in the matter of hunting/returning fugitive slaves in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, slave power turned to the federal government to do more to protect their right

to private property in black people; and this is what was at stake in the United States presidential election of 1848.⁶² The issue of admitting the newly conquered territories into the Union as slave states or as free states was but merely the punctuation to an otherwise longer history of runaway property and violent insurrection upon which the grip of slave power was now struggling to maintain.

Campaigning on strong nationalist and constitutionalist values, Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore ascended to the Office of President in 1848. In practice, these values translated to acquiescing to the demands of Southern slave power for a federal government more responsive to the protection of private property in black people. In 1847, Zachary Taylor writes the following:

While I would on the slavery question, respect the opinions and feelings of the North and be careful not to do any act which would interfere with legal rights as regards the same, I would be equally careful that no encroachments were made on the rights of citizens of the slaveholding states as regards that description of property or anything else. I will not say interested, for those of the non-slave holding states have no interest in the matter. Let them go on to discuss the institutions of the South without notice as regards the matter in question, without its being noticed, but the moment they go beyond that point where resistance becomes right and proper, let the South act promptly, boldly and decisively with arms in their hands if necessary, as the Union in that case will be blown to atoms, or will be no longer worth preserving.⁶³

Though Taylor was only president for sixteen months – he died in office on July 9, 1850 – this was the mandate with which he and Fillmore entered office. Taylor's Vice President, Millard Fillmore, thus became the country's 13th President of the United States and after just ten weeks in office, instrumentalizing the same mandate to preserve the Union and its Constitution, signed into law the Compromise of 1850, a series of five bills that delineated the borders of the territories ceded from the Mexican-American War; the process by which the territories would determine whether or not private property in black people was permissible; the cessation of slave trafficking in Washington, D.C., though not the actual practice of slavery; and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Fillmore, in his first annual message on December 2, 1850, provides the following remarks on the Compromise:

I believe those measures to have been required by the circumstances and condition of the country. I believe they were necessary to allay asperities and animosities that were rapidly alienating one section of the country from another and destroying those fraternal sentiments which are the strongest supports of the Constitution. [...] I can not doubt that the American people, bound together by kindred blood and common traditions, still cherish a paramount regard for the Union of their fathers, and that they are ready to rebuke any attempt to violate its integrity, to disturb the compromises on which it is based, or to resist the laws which have been enacted under its authority.

The series of measures to which I have alluded are regarded by me as a settlement in principle and substance – a final settlement of the dangerous and exciting subjects which they embraced.⁶⁴

Though for as much as he and his fellow countrymen may have wished for the finality of the dangerous and exciting pieces of property to be settled, the enslaved – fugitive or otherwise – continued to rebuke, violate, and disturb the authority of state power.⁶⁵ However, Millard Fillmore remained resolute in protecting the right to private property in black people, because after all, this is indeed the common tradition that binds the American people and the Union. For the remainder of

Fillmore's presidency, he militantly enforced the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and provided the juridical framework, through citation, for the next three presidents to do the same.⁶⁶

The federal government's power to conscript individuals into performing the work of the state, otherwise known as the *posse comitatus* doctrine, is of fundamental importance to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850: not only did the Act of 1850 federalize the ways in which Southern states were already policing the enslaved by compelling private citizens to ward against insurrections and the possibility of escape,⁶⁷ but it also transformed the doctrine's invocation from times of emergency to the quotidian every day. The *posse comitatus* doctrine is seen here, in section 5 of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850:

And all good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required, as aforesaid, for that purpose; and said warrants shall run, and be executed by said officers, any where in the State within which they are issued.⁶⁸

With the aid of individual private persons, the Act of 1850 was enforced by United States Marshals. The Marshals were thus empowered to "summon and call to their aid the bystanders, or posse comitatus of the proper county, when necessary to ensure a faithful observance of the clause of the Constitution referred to, in conformity with the provisions of this act."⁶⁹ This Act expanded the federal court system and created the position of United States Commissioners, which were one part judicial in function and another part administrative, to adjudicate and process fugitive slave cases. It was one such Commissioner, Edward Duncan Ingraham, who would eventually remand the mother of Eliza and Hannah back into slavery in 1851. She told no secrets.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 mapped the South's desire for a slaveholding republic onto the entirety of the Union by creating a nationalized compulsory system that legally conscripted citizens to engage in the hunt/return of absconding private property; accordingly, there was no North and South, no free states and no slave states – the slave power of the South and the federal government were now uncompromisingly and unambiguously unified in the legal protection of private property in black people.

She was a keeper of secrets.

Similar to the way in which bullets create ripples through time and space with the capacity to change everything, secrets – those pieces of the story that are not meant to be known or seen – necessarily alter or transform the assumed meanings, beginnings, and endings of a story. *Secrets are magic bullets.*⁷⁰ The story of Eliza and Hannah's mother, as told by reporters and journalists in 1851 and cited as such to create the stories written by Historians, produces a strictured narrative delimited of possibilities external to a telos that begins and ends with enslavement. *Secrets are magic bullets.* Reconstellating her story from the available sources and citations gestures towards *the possibility of an otherwise.*⁷¹ The secrets of Eliza's and Hannah's mother pierces through the foreclosures of historical narratives and leaves traces of new textual representations with new memories.⁷² *Secrets are magic bullets.*

On September 11, 1851, Edward Gorsuch, a slaveowner from Maryland, was killed in the process of attempting to reclaim runaway property in Pennsylvania under the legal dictates of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. These events, considered by one historian to be the most violent of all resistances to the Act of 1850,⁷³ have come to be known as the Christiana Riot or the Christiana Rebellion. Eliza and Hannah killed Edward Gorsuch. In the hours and days that followed, Millard

Fillmore harnessed all of the available resources provided for through his Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and all of the political support he could from the Office of the President to assist United States District Attorney John W. Ashmead.⁷⁴ The *posse comitatus* doctrine was activated and in addition to those citizens from Maryland and the surrounding counties of Pennsylvania who ardently believed such credos like freedom, justice, and liberty were mutually constitutive of the right to private property in persons,⁷⁵ United States Marshals, sheriffs, police deputies, and the United States Marines all invaded Christiana, Pennsylvania and the surrounding area to capture and arrest those involved in the Rebellion or those whom might otherwise still be inciting insurrection against the United States and its laws. With the help of their comrades – both white and black – Eliza, her sister Hannah, and Eliza’s three children – the children whom William Parker mentions in his *Story* as having been secreted away before the Riot by their grandmother, the mother of Eliza and Hannah – were already in the (soon to be very arduous)⁷⁶ process of escaping the area and into Canada. So, when Fillmore’s motley crew of militarized and federally deputized posse of slave hunters arrived, the only person they found immediately and intimately associated with those closest to the Parker Crew was the mother of Eliza and Hannah. Where History and its writers have cared enough to mention the mother of Eliza and Hannah, they cite the same varying newspaper articles that range in dates from September 24, 1851 through October, 17, 1851 and in so doing, reinscribe the same logics of containment and death already emplotted and proscribed to her by the same epistemological project that she dedicated her life to subverting. In the paragraphs that follow, her story is reconstellated from these sources and read differently – a *detour* or a redirecting from the logics of the plantation that seeks control through containment, fixity, and the perceived durability of the epistemology upon which the right to private property in black persons was constructed and towards the silences and the secrets that burst through these narratives vis-à-vis the *symbolic evocation of situations disguised beneath the symbol, working to say without saying*.⁷⁷

Though contradictions exist on this matter and vary according to the political leanings of the newspapers, it is believed that she willingly surrendered to the agents belonging to Fillmore’s posse of slave hunters and requested that she be renditioned back to Maryland as a slave. Though unsure of her name and of her age, they were sure of three things: 1) she was a fugitive slave; 2) she was the property of Albert Davis; and 3) she was useless. Commenting on her arraignment before Commissioner Edward Ingraham, the *New York Times* states that her “case presented the singular anomaly, of a determination on the part of the fugitive, to return to her master, and indifference on the part of the master to receive her.”⁷⁸ Advocates of protecting private property in black persons pounced on this situation with the dual purpose of also capturing her daughters and to advance a story about why the condition of chattel was best for black people using her surrender and request as their prime example. *But she was useless*. Abolitionists used this scenario to decry the conditions of enslavement and highlighted the suffering and pain the mother of Eliza and Hannah must have been enduring to make such a request. *But she was useless*. Her claimant, Albert Davis, said as much himself when he apprised the story to Commissioner Ingraham. Though she nursed him, his siblings, and many of the other children on the plantation, she was beginning to age beyond “usefulness.” He explained to the Commissioner that she had four children of her own and despite the kindness shown to her and her children by he and his family, all four of her children ran away. First, her two sons ran away and then later, her two daughters, Eliza and Hannah, followed suite. The kindness of he and his family betrayed by her four runaway children, and by the obstinance of their mother to tell their claimants where they were, Davis informs the Commissioner that he kicked her out of the house and told her that the only way she could return was with her four children. When she was remanded back to his custody, the kindness so sincerely perceived to have been exhibited to the person who nursed him as a child manifested through words of contempt (and ignorance): “whether the woman has any other object than to quarter herself on her old master for

support is not known.” These concerns of Davis communicated to the Commissioner, she was returned into slavery, presumably where she was to die.⁷⁹ *But she was useless.*

*In a colonial regime, [...] the reality of the “nigger” is not to lift a finger, not to help the oppressor sink his claws into his prey.*⁸⁰

She was a keeper of secrets.

She raised four children, two sons and two daughters. She raised them all to be useless. She raised 4 runaway slaves. When refusing to give up her children’s whereabouts, she was evicted from the Maryland plantation. Yet, she knew where her children were and made her way to them near Christiana, Pennsylvania. When Eliza and her husband, William Parker, engaged in violent rebellious activities against would-be kidnappers and slave hunters in the surrounding area of where they all lived, it was she who ensured her grandchildren were safe. When word was received that Gorsuch and his hunt/return party were coming to compel the comrades of Eliza, Hannah, and William to peacefully surrender to the dictates of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and acquiesce to being renditioned back to Maryland, she secreted her grandchildren away to safety because she knew what kind of daughters she raised. For it was her daughter Eliza who declared to all her comrades on that fateful morning that she herself would “cut off the head of the first one who should attempt to give up.”⁸¹ She raised two daughters that practiced a form of community feminism⁸² for which they would kill to protect, as they demonstrated by killing Edward Gorsuch.

And in perhaps her most harrowing act of secrecy, she created a ruse designed to ensure her grandchildren and her children could make their escape further north into Canada. So desirous of their freedom and of their well-being, she surrendered herself back into slavery with the hope that doing so might create just enough of a distraction to cloak the escape of her dearly beloved. This kind of love and selflessness could neither be beat nor whipped out of her when interrogated as to the location of her daughters, though they tried. She kept their secrets even as she was being renditioned back into slavery. Her secret remains unfinished.

*rupture, the outcome of annihilation, as a way of knowing and belonging capaciously and generously*⁸³

The condition of being enslaved and indexed as private property, to be used of and disposed of in any manner deemed appropriate by the people or persons that claim ownership, is its own form of horror so impossible of description that it can only be lived through. Try if you can, dear reader, to imagine the kind of love required to make this sacrifice, the kinds of dreams she must have had for her children and grandchildren to know something beyond enslavement, the kind of longing hope that her children and grandchildren might materialize in their own lives something greater than the clumsy appellations of liberty and freedom, even if she herself might never. A parent’s dreams for a child’s hope: a plot against the past while going back to a past of un/certain death but with a future borne somewhere else dreamt through the lives of her children and her children’s children. Unlike so many other things that were stolen from her, in this tiny way, these dreams and hopes could never be stolen from her. For *in the hope of better things*, she was a keeper of secrets.⁸⁴

The above palindromic narrative is suggestive of the way in which violent black rebellion intervenes in the form of a question mark to transmute the teleology of historical narratives that foreclose the possibilities violent black rebellion opens. Similar to this section, though tethered, existing external to, and in excess of, the preceding palindrome, the future lives of Eliza, Hannah, William, and their children were lived beyond the confines of those coalescing narratives that categorize them as parcels of private property. And this was only made possible through violent rebellion. Indeed, this *is* the work of violent black rebellion: an opening.

The mother of Eliza and Hannah appears to have been named Cassandra. Eliza and William Parker named their third child Cassandra after her grandmother. Another child of Eliza and William, Francis, decided to name his daughter after his great grandmother. Together, Eliza and Hannah and William and a couple of their comrades from the Riot along with their children, grew old in Buxton, Ontario where some of the descendants of Cassandra still reside to this day.⁸⁵ And herein lies the argument that unfolds in this chapter: the form of violent black rebellion intervenes to question the already assumed proleptic plot and in so doing, capacitates the creation of new citations that author new stories with new memories. In thinking through the provocation of the question, we are forced to acknowledge the deeply life-affirming desire to *be*.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that Thomas Jefferson's conceptualization and positioning of the violent black rebel, enslaved or otherwise – as always incipiently and potentially in the process of violent revolt – provides a political mythology to inaugurate revolutionary nationalism in the New World whereby the violent black rebel – the internal enemy – constitutes an apocalyptic threat to the orderly, rigid, and stable construction against/through which the anglo identity and community coheres. The basis of this mythology is predicated upon the discursive legitimization of a right to hold private property in black people, and it is these stories that create and maintain state power to which this chapter turns. In this chapter, I think with Sylvia Wynter's work on narratives, origin stories, and storytelling to grapple with the unimaginable evils authored by the founding fiction of Jefferson's nationalism and of the socio-politico-juridical conditions necessary for the maintenance of a nation-state premised upon the liberal values of freedom and justice, which most precisely constitutes the protection of private property in black persons, vis-à-vis the *long* intellectual history of citational referents encoded with signified classificatory schematics of sameness/difference (e.g., free/unfree or friend/enemy). Moreover, I extend Wynter's work here to explore the ways in which violent black rebellion – as both theory and praxis – intervenes – in the form of a question mark – to both challenge the propertied regime by questioning the proleptic plot narrated by these epistemological orderings (e.g., white/slave) to consider how violent black rebellion – specifically enacted by fugitive slaves, that is, by runaway property – again, as theory and praxis – capacitates the possibility for new memories to engender the writing of new (and unfinished) stories with new treatises that demand different conceptualizations of freedom and livingness.

This is, in effect, the essence of this chapter's story. However, within the ambit of this story exists many moving pieces – stories within stories – and just as the narratives herein composed unfold in multiple scales on multiple registers, the narrative form of this chapter functions to perform the work associated with the question mark posited by violent black rebellion, or at least gestures towards its semantical function. In other words, this chapter's textual form narrates the intervention of violent black rebellion and is mutually constitutive of the amalgamated story; therefore, the stories and their narrative form are irreducible to one or the other because they move *pari passu* with each other.

Terrain

The Christiana Rebellion of 1851, and the attendant stories produced from such, situates this chapter's primary site of analysis. William Parker's narrative about these events, *The Freedman's Story in Two Parts*, though published fifteen years later in 1866, provides a first-hand account of the violent revolt from the perspective of a runaway slave. This revolt precipitated the largest simultaneous indictment for treason in the history of the United States: a total of forty-one people, which includes thirty-six black and five white, were thus charged for the high crime of attempting to "levy war against the United States, and in adhering to their enemies, by giving to them aid and comfort."⁸⁶ Due to the rebellion's conspicuousness, owing to both the resultant death of a slave owner and the subsequent treason indictments and trial, a copious amount of archival sources in the form of court transcripts, political speeches, newspaper articles, and biographical accounts were written and as such, are also primarily sited within this chapter's story.

The structurally organizing and positioning of William Parker and his comrades – as enslaved, as runaways, as violent rebels, and again as runaways – materially manifest through the political writings and stories, and the ensuing institutionalization of the legal and juridical

frameworks therewith required, of such thinkers commonly associated with the nation's founding including Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay in *The Federalist Papers*, John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. One thread of this chapter argues that these stories of democracy, justice, and equality – liberalism – are predicated upon fables and myths and have been textually transplanted “from memory to memory until our own days”⁸⁷ on a closed citational loop subtended by the stories written by Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE), a Roman philosopher and politician. My reading reveals the “strange presences”⁸⁸ of Ciceronian thought that coalesces around the concern for the protection of private property as structurally oppositional to his conceptualization of the pirate, the enemy of all mankind. While Cicero's pirate has taken various forms throughout the writings of those mentioned, the figure appears, as if connaturally, with their discussions on conceptions of justice, the sovereign's right to war, and the right to revolution. Taken together, I argue that Cicero's conceptualization of the pirate animates the positionality of the enslaved, which more closely relates to the status of an illegitimate enemy than a citizen endowed with rights that obliges the State to protect and observe.

Both the stories I read and write throughout this chapter are grounded in the works of Sylvia Wynter. I specifically draw from, and move through, these following pieces: *Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Parts I-IV]* (1969-1970), *Novel and History, Plot and Plantation* (1971), *On Disenchanting Discourse: "Minority" Literary Criticism and Beyond* (1987), *Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles* (1989), *Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables that Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters* (1997), and *Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man* (2000). Her work here helps me to think through the ways in which epistemological codes – that which ontologizes us in the form of rules, categories, images, and concepts that govern how we think, and consequently, how we behave – are legitimated through the stories we tell. Reflecting upon the origin stories authored by the above state-makers, and the constitutive negatively ascribed textual representations the origin story narrates, Wynter's work helps me cogitate upon the citational/referential systems of thought narratively inscribed and re/produced by the epistemological orders they construct. But because Sylvia Wynter is always telling two stories at once – both the ways in which we came to know each other and also how we could know each other – I am also reading and writing the violence at Christiana, Pennsylvania through the dual lens of her work. Another goal of this chapter is therefore to illustrate how these ideas/stories dissembled within juridical and political thought shape the material world(s) into which the violent rebels (and their comrades) question. The violent rebellion enacted by runaway slaves against the epistemological codes points towards a piratical praxis anchored in what Frances M. Beal characterizes as living for the worlds we (i.e., those of us consigned to the genre categories of colonized, black, the global poor) desire now, as if these worlds were already at hand.⁸⁹

My goal is not to reconstruct a play-by-play accounting of the events narrated throughout this chapter.⁹⁰ Rather I am attempting to provide a deictic accounting of these events in order to narrate the stories told; I am reading the extant records deictically so to invoke the bi-directional structure of relative position and orientation regarding perceptual relations anent power and legitimacy without assuming its vantage point.⁹¹ This chapter is a story about a story; not *the* actual story per say, and certainly not just one story – but rather the *idea(s)* of a story comprised within the miscellanea⁹² of the long intellectual project of political thought anent state-making; it is a story of the stories (fiction! fantasies! gammon!) told to legitimate the state's creation and too, of the stories told to maintain its legitimacy. *The fictions of race are a lived reality.*⁹³ This chapter is a story about the epistemes espoused by the propertied regime and the long intellectual project they have authored while only managing to dream of a world wherein power perpetually remains the hands of a few while a glissando of misery and the mere illusion of freedom befall everyone else. *We are functioning on borrowed terms.*⁹⁴ This chapter is a story about making these epistemological excrescences bleed

out. This chapter is a story about “becoming dangerous”⁹⁵ and how violent black rebellion plots “a new form of writing,”⁹⁶ which animates “the hope of something else”⁹⁷ beyond the encystation of our current epistemological order and the gehenna it prescripts for us.

The itinerary of these stories unfolds as a pentptych. The first of five sections outline the stories already written by Historians about the Christiana Rebellion. This portion of the story serves to conceptually frame the remainder stories with regards to how I am telling the stories I tell and how I am thinking about the violence enacted by fugitive slaves. This conceptualization of violent black rebellion, which begins in the form of a question mark, is to cast an aspersion on that which precedes it; and as is the case with questions, openings emerge – and sometimes, these questions elevate to unsettling that which has been naturalized, moving that which has been transfixed, and imagining that which exists beyond conventional realms of reason. This conceptualization underwrites much of what is composed throughout this chapter. The second part of the story narrates the scene(s) prior to the enactment(s) of violence while the third part explores the interstice of William Parker’s *Story in Two Parts*. Just as the plot begins to crescendo and death seems inevitable, Parker tells us that he and the legal claimant of runaway property, Edward Gorsuch, proceed to debate each other about the epistemological significance of various bible scriptures. This interstice schematizes a cascading series of relationships that illustrates the world into which the soon-to-be violent, malfunctioning, and runaway property intervenes. Subtended by Cicero’s origin story, I trace the meaning/role of law for protecting private property, the citations required to transume this episteme, and the myths needed to legitimize the epistemes transumed to make possible, *imprimis*, the conditions enabling the protection of private property in black people, Gorsuch’s legal claim to hunt/return absconding property, and the violence therewith authored by runaway slaves against the proleptic plot already narrated for them. The fourth scene contends with the aftermath of the violent insurrection, namely the stories narrated by/through the treason trial. In the amalgamate, parts three and four contend that the violence deployed by the brigand of fugitive slaves was the only way to question and to ultimately betray the proleptic plot already assumed by the hunt/return party. Part five, the last plot of the story, returns to the violence of the insurrection and meditates upon the episteme emplotted by the fugitive slaves (and their comrades). The chapter then draws to a close by reflecting on the epistemological valences narrated by this violence and the ways in which we may consider this violence – as both theory and praxis – a starting point for new stories.

Composition

The *what* of our story now briefly identified and the *where* of its terrain now sketched, I want to shift to the *how* of this story’s narration. In her 2011 essay, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” Katherine McKittrick argues for a different methodological approach that does not merely evidence black suffering/abjection/brutalities and reminds us that these sites of “deliberate annihilation” are the material conditions of “black geographic *life*” that also provide us with the intellectual mandate to honor the ways in which black people find ways to struggle and survive over/against brutal abjection; she argues that black people are more than the structural conditions that produce dispossession and racial violence and our conceptual frames/methods/narratives must account for this both/and of black living. Thinking with Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s “doomed methods of analysis,”⁹⁸ McKittrick asks the following question: “What if our analytical questions did not demand answers that replicate racial violence?”⁹⁹ At stake here is the way in which even the most well-intended analyses often reinscribe the very abjection/brutality/death attempting to be rectified because linear narratives comprised of descriptive statements come to stand-in for the conceptualization of black life itself. “The language and process of explicating racial violence tend to

fall back on an axiomatic frame of survival, wherein the suffering body and the dying have always been the racial Other to the white Western-liberated human norm, precisely because *black death proceeds and is necessary to the conceptual frame*” [italics original].¹⁰⁰ The composition of this chapter is guided by McKittrick’s question and apposed with Lenora Warren’s observation that violent black rebellion, and the narratives it produces and is produced by, can often become “methods of containment”¹⁰¹ for the otherwise propitious possibilities therewith imagined. Taking these ideas together and stretching them, I wonder then how might we tell stories of violent black rebellion that did not reproduce and replicate the same telos of slavery → death? What if our stories of violent black rebellion could illustrate the work of violent black rebellion itself? Or more precisely yet, what if violent black rebellion could be written in accordance with the same semantic properties as a question mark? The form through which the stories herein narrated are in service to exploring how the narratives of violent black rebellion disrupt.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that words alone possess the ability to kill, shoot, slash and/or stab people,¹⁰² that violent black rebellion is merely intellectual fodder over which to ruminate, ponder, and pontificate, or that life-taking is something one can ever be truly conditioned to/for even as death haunts.¹⁰³ Conversely, I am not implying that words do not traffic in poisonous paragraphs¹⁰⁴ or that the stories we tell of violent black rebellion are necessarily denuded of analytical heft even as they may trade on the grammars of heroism and redemption. To borrow a phrase from Stuart Hall, I am instead signaling the “deadly seriousness”¹⁰⁵ of violent black rebellion and conceptualizing the “violence” of black rebellion as a discourse-constitutive formation that is imbued with epistemic capability – that the violence of black rebellion capacitates knowledge-making. And this sentiment remains, even as the *theory* of violent black rebellion is grounded in the understanding that domination is contested “without guarantees,”¹⁰⁶ to borrow another phrase from Stuart Hall, and its *praxis* comports to a suicidal opposition to unfreedom.¹⁰⁷ I am neither interested in what linguists C. L. Baker names as “simple truth-value questions” (e.g., Are black people oppressed?) nor am I interested in the formulaic conceptualization that Lauri Karttunen offers in the form of standardizing questions “that jointly constitute a true and complete answer to the question” in the form of a declarative statement (e.g., The Buffalo Bills will win depending on who they play).¹⁰⁸ In other words, the syntactic distribution of meaning I am seeking here anent the question mark of violent black rebellion is the space opened for something else, the suspicion of and detour away from the declarative and naturalized.

The experiment in compositional arrangement that drives the narration of this chapter, which attempts to perform the work of violent rebellion through the semantic form of a question mark, is an exercise in revaluation, suspicion, and seeking – it is an attempt to illustrate the possibility of an opening to an elsewhere neither pre-determined nor pre-configured. The narrative form of the amalgamated story here, like the narrative form of violent black rebellion conceptualized and narrated throughout this chapter, is a re-routing or a turning point away from pre-established norms/traditions – and of the epistemic order by which they are constituted – that ensnares the perceived horizon of our imaginations and gestures towards its transmutation whereby the semantic function of the question mark is not resolved by an answer derived from the same citational referents that made the question possible in the first instance. The question mark, both embedded within the form of this chapter’s narration and attached to the work of violent black rebellion, is therefore what Rivers Solomon describes as “a fluke of the narrative”¹⁰⁹ that moves in accordance with the gatherings, the openings, the continuities, and the scatterings – towards “the unpredictable and the unheard”¹¹⁰ of an otherwise unfinished story.

On the semantic import of a question mark, take for example an organizing question to Anna Julia Cooper’s dissertation: “What would the blacks do after that?”¹¹¹ This question is

contextually located in her discussion of the philosophical ideals of the French Revolution reaching the colony of San Domingo and is foundational to her project of wresting away France as the epicenter of republican notions of freedom and locates the formerly/enslaved of San Domingo as the true progenitors of their own motto, “liberté, égalité, and fraternité.” The question Cooper posits here signals the presence of a different kind of insight, grounded in a different modality of being, that reevaluates the epistemic ground upon which white/male historians could unironically exalt the French Revolution for its ideals of freedom without examining how freedom was constituted by the right to own property in black people. Her question moreover enabled different stories to be written about the Haitian Revolution that did not center France.¹¹² One such story is “The Black Jacobins” by C. L. R. James originally published in 1938, fifteen years after Cooper’s dissertation. Reflecting on France’s Colonial Authority’s proposed plan to gradually relinquish the right to property in black persons in San Domingo, the world’s wealthiest plantation economy, James asks, “But when did property ever listen to reason except when cowed by violence?”¹¹³ This question not only signals the suspicion of an existing plot against the enslaved that would contentedly forget them to the machinations of unchanging reform initiatives, but it also reveals a turning point away from seeking liberation from those whom authored their condition, *imprimis*, and moves towards the possibility of something else. As a final illustration of the semantics I am attempting to convey through the narrative form of this chapter, consider the questions posited through the violence enacted at Christiana. The aftermath of the violent insurrection found life-maintaining plasma and cells leaking out of Edward Gorsuch and into the earth; his son Dickinson Gorsuch, was also lying in his own pool of blood in a nearby field. The eighty squirrel shot pellets fired from shotguns now lodged into his lungs, arms, and torso made it difficult to breathe. Joseph P. Scarlett, a friend and neighbor of the Parkers came to his aid, and as he was clinging to life, Dickinson Gorsuch managed to utter the following: “I did not think our boys would have treated us in this way.”¹¹⁴ The subjunctive “would have” precisely reveals the semantic totem I am illustrating. The lodged squirrel shot represents the fusillade of question marks levied against the epistemological order that makes it possible for the members of the hunt/return party, Dickinson and Edward Gorsuch included, to think they *could* be treated in the manner in which they were treated: that the hunt/return party *could* be met by death just as those they were hunting were in the process of escaping the very epistemological project that facilitated their living through death as proscribed by their status of private property. The enacted violence is neither simply an opposing response to the categorization of being private property nor is it merely a riposte to the subsequent objecthood that follows from this appellation. Rather, the fusillade of question marks in the form of squirrel shot¹¹⁵ questions the very foundation upon which the world was made knowable to Dickinson Gorsuch – namely, who is killable and who is not;¹¹⁶ the violence of fugitive slaves against members of the hunt/return party operationalizes a pedagogical valence that gives pause – however momentarily – to reveal a different form of knowing in contradistinction to the perceived telos of how this story at Christiana was going to end. *An opening*

*An
opening*

*An
opening*

An

o p e n i n g

The question mark heretofore explained intervenes into the epistemological contest of domination.¹¹⁷ The story moves back and forth through time, resisting the narrative temporality associated with history and its linear progress.¹¹⁸ The question mark also elicits a multimodal and polyphonic mode of narration that refuses simple diagnostic ends and seeks to forever imagine the flux of disorder and chaos – an endeavor that strives to open the possibility of something new. This is why the endnotes of this chapter are composed the way they are; the in-between of the rustling back and forth between the text above the endnotes and back to the endnotes, or its compartmentalization wherein one component of the text is read and then the other, or in some other combination thereof, is an attempt – however quixotic – to dislodge not only the presupposed telos of academic writing wherein a hierarchical narrative articulates knowable facts, but to suspend this assumed knowing to make room for other ideas and thoughts that may lead elsewhere – to once again illustrate the semantics constituted by the question mark – to provide an opening.¹¹⁹ In this way, the endnotes and the text that proceed them are mutually constitutive of the story being narrated and the narrative form of this chapter is thus an attempt at displacing the episteme that naturalizes hierarchized storytelling – just as violent black rebellion moves in this direction.¹²⁰ The evocation of an opening attempting to be elicited through the form of this chapter's narration is chaos. But as Glissant reminds us, chaos is not chaotic because chaos is “the impassioned illustration and refutation” of assumed preestablished norms; it is “neither fusion nor confusion: it acknowledges neither the uniform blend – a ravenous integration – nor muddled nothingness.” For to question in this manner is to conjure the possibility to deepen, extend, and possibly transform that which we know and how we know. The semantics embedded within the question mark signals the possibility to “destructure” the facticity and movements of the very elements and forms deemed legitimate; it is to “declare them void [and to] replace” the conditions of knowing, and of being, with something different. To “REINVENT THEIR MUSIC” is only capacitated by the semantics of a question mark [capitalization my own].¹²¹

In her 2016 essay entitled, “Rebellion/Invention/Groove,” reading from Dionne Brand, Katherine McKittrick writes “black music leaves you open, and up in the air and that this is the space that some of us need, an opening to another life tangled up in this one but opening.”¹²² This opening and the opening(s) heretofore illustrated anent the composition of this chapter, *together*, is the opening I am attempting to signal throughout this chapter. And sometimes, these openings need to be provoked through an unsettling or discomfort – whether through violence or through questions that carry with them the possibility to disrupt. The placement of sheet music throughout the chapter are in service to this end. *An opening*. Whether it is the sheet music, the lyrics to music, and/or the stanzas of poetry, their purpose and placement into the text functions to carry on the narrative, like that old negro tradition of call-and-response, or functions to serve as a disruption to the narrative. In some cases, they function to do both: to carry on by disruption. Echoing Aimé Césaire, Sylvia Wynter says “an original handling of the word can make possible at any moment a new theoretical and heedless science that poetry could aired give an approximate notion of.”¹²³ And it is with this aim we move onto Part I of our story.

Part I. Framing the Narrative at Christiana: A Prolegomenon

The middle of the nineteenth century finds the United States and many of its citizens ingurgitating land, power, and wealth – indeed manifesting the destiny of “God’s plan.”¹²⁴ Southward, the United States “incite[d] uprisings” and ultimately annexed Texas from Mexico in 1845¹²⁵ and by the following year in 1846, the Mexican-American war had commenced, eventuating the ceding of what is now New Mexico and California from Mexico into the borders of the United States.¹²⁶ Westward and in search of gold, settlers armed with the law (disease, too) and the violence it condoned, rampaged and ravaged the Western Territories, accelerating the genocide through which Native Americans are *still surviving*. The Congressional Compromise shortly followed in 1850, which in addition to determining how the war-gained territories would enter the Union, whether as free/slave states, it also facilitated the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, strengthening the 1793 Act.¹²⁷ And despite the optimism and pride held by Americans concerning the possibilities of European revolutions being waged (by whites) during this time for grand ideals dearly held like self-determination and national unity,¹²⁸ the United States of America was assiduously working to repress and prevent any efforts of those on “the darker side”¹²⁹ seeking the same independence – this is true of both its enslaved population and of those inhabiting foreign nations. For example, by 1851, seventy-five years after the United States declared its independence from British rule, still rejoicing and remembering its own heroes of national independence, not content with its southward and westward expansions, America further spread its imperial tentacles to the Caribbean Sea with the goal of annexing Cuba to make it a new slave state.¹³⁰ The 1850s can be seen as the antechamber to our present condition – a civil war that managed to leave the values of the plantation (private property and capital) intact,¹³¹ thereby extending the telos of American politics, extending back to the arrival of Columbus, the institutionalization of slavery and the exploitation of the black woman’s womb, which made the settler colonial apparatus possible, and forward through time into our “colonial present.”¹³²

Yet despite the historical and political conjunctures of this era, and the national attention the events associated with the Christiana Rebellion received at that time notwithstanding, until the middle of the 1970s, there were only four published works that exclusively examined said events; this scant record led one historian to characterize these events as a “non-event” and its participants as “non-person[s].”¹³³ W. A. Jackson in 1852 published *History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others for Treason at Philadelphia in November, 1851*. Jackson’s retelling of the story relied solely upon the testimonies provided at trial. William Parker published his narrative entitled, *The Freedman’s Story*, fifteen years after he escaped from Christiana and a year after the Civil War’s conclusion in 1866. Significantly, this text provided first-hand experiences of those black persons involved in the insurrection. Thirty-two years thereafter in 1898, David Forbes published his study, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*, which compiled much of the same testimonial sources Jackson provided in his text and included Parker’s narrative as well. William Hensel, who accused the work of David Forbes as being too prejudicial in the favor of abolitionists, unsurprisingly and non-ironically published a veiled pro-slavery accounting of the events in 1911 entitled, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*. The scenes at Christiana went largely unremembered until 1974 when Jonathan Katz published *Resistance at Christiana*. Essentially an account narrated by documents, little interpretation of the events were offered. It would not be until 1991 and Thomas Slaughter’s publication entitled, *Bloody Dawn*, whereby the Riot at Christiana was aggrandized and analyzed within the context of nation, law, culture, violence, and the social and political meanings that may be gleaned from such. Ella Forbes published *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance* in 1998 and intervenes to provide an “African centered” perspective on the events. Her

study provides the most complete picture of the rebellion, which includes exhaustive archival research on the lives and families of those involved post-Christiana and of their now-living ancestors.¹³⁴ Other than these texts, much of what has been written on the matter treats the affair as a footnote to war rather than its prologue.¹³⁵

Now for our purposes, a couple of points ought to be addressed before moving forward. First, the historical record's seeming unremembrance of the events at Christiana, Pennsylvania does not allude to insignificance. Quite the contrary is true. State Senator Alexander K. McClure locates the battle at Christiana as the first of two to precipitate the Civil War, the other being John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in 1859.¹³⁶ Jonathan Katz describes it as a series of firsts: "the first nationally publicized, armed, and fatal resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850" and the "first blow to the Civil War" that "pierced the South's soul" and continues to provide "a microcosm of the present conflict between black people and white."¹³⁷ Historian Roderick Nash points out that Southerners perceived the Riot at Christiana "as an example of Northern defiance of the law and an attack on property rights" which, as Quaker historian Frances W. Brown argues, hastened "disunion and secession [which] were bound to occur if slaveholders in pursuit of their legal property could not come North without being murdered."¹³⁸ And it is precisely for this reason – the murder of a slaveowner at the hands of fugitive slaves – that leads historian Ella Forbes to characterize the rebellion at Christiana as important: Edward Gorsuch's violent death was carried by "most of the newspapers in the nation" and received "almost as much attention on the front pages of the *New York Times* as the August 1851 failed attempt by Cubans and southern slaveholders to invade Cuba."¹³⁹ And on the materiality of mattering, the federal government, moving in concert with the sentiments expressed by Southern newspapers and politicians, publicly scorned the revolt at Christiana, characterizing it as "diabolical" and "outrageously atrocious." Between 50-100 marines were deployed to descend onto Lancaster County. By September 13th, two days after the fact, the Marines and a riotous civil mob, county constables, deputy U.S. Marshals, vigilantes, and Philadelphia police officers all conjoined in a united front to scour the area to make arrests. The ensuing outcome of their efforts resulted in 41 persons charged with the high crime of treason – the most amount of people ever simultaneously tried for treason.¹⁴⁰ Despite the fact that the federal government spent fifty thousand dollars¹⁴¹ (\$1.75 million in 2021 dollars) to protect Slave Power, the murder of Edward Gorsuch ultimately went unpunished; and neither the violent black rebels nor their comrades were killed or returned to slavery that day by the hunt/return party.

The second matter at hand that needs to be discussed is the appellation of the insurrection at Christiana. The attentive reader will have already noted that I have been using such words as "riot," "rebellion," and "insurrection" interchangeably to describe the events at Christiana, Pennsylvania on September 11, 1851. Early publications like newspapers and court reports referred to these events as a "tragedy."¹⁴² For the obvious directionality of which this word "tragedy" refers, implying the sentiments associated with Slave Power and the murder of a Christian slaveholder and the inability of the law to protect those on the hunt/return for malfunctioning and absconding property, I have no interest in deploying this characterization here. Much of the extant literature, both that which has been produced locally in Pennsylvania and regarding historical scholarship more generally, refers to the event as a "riot."¹⁴³ Thinking through the riot as a generative site of analysis, Kellie Carter Jackson in *Force and Freedom* writes the following: "Riots are public. Riots are chaotic. Riots have a way of magnifying not merely flaws in the system but also the strength of those in opposition."¹⁴⁴ Though I retain "riot" for reasons similar to Carter Jackson's understanding of the word throughout this chapter, historian Ella Forbes prefers the word "resistance" instead of "riot."¹⁴⁵ The word "riot," for Forbes, "implies anarchy, chaos, out of control" while "the term [resistance] shows that the insurrectionists were struggling against oppression in an organized, thoughtful way."¹⁴⁶ For our purposes I do not find the word "resistance" to possess much analytical heft – is it still resistance if

the oppressed resisted sporadically and in an unorganized manner? I also find the word to be axiomatic (*Of course the oppress resist!*) and incapable of capturing suicidal behaviors.¹⁴⁷ I do not therefore use the word “resistance” to describe the insurgent, riotous, rebellious, and ultimately violent events at Christiana. However, the work of both Ella Forbes and Kellie Carter Jackson anent the violent black rebellion at Christiana – the only two texts that engage in a sustained analysis of violence on the matter – brings us to the third point I want to discuss before moving forward: the ways in which violent black rebellion is analyzed in their discussion of Christiana and the proceeding projects narratively inhered from such.

Ella Forbes published her book, *But We Have No Country*, in 1998 and attends to the Eurocentric “sanitized version of American history which eliminates or distorts the history of African Americans by downplaying the significance of the period of enslavement,” Forbes is writing against the narratives of History that perpetuate the myth of “African passivity and docility” and towards a historiography that “demonstrate[s] there would be no fabric of American culture without the contributions, however uncomfortable, of African Americans.” For her, the Christiana Resistance illustrates “the spirit of human resistance” in the face of America’s “contradiction between the theory of the American creed” and “the reality of the practice of the enslavement and oppression of Africans.”¹⁴⁸ Her text is important because not only is it the first comprehensive book on the matter to center the lives and the stories of those black rebels involved in the Christiana revolt, but through census research and the compiling of rich oral histories, we are afforded the opportunity to learn what became of the Parkers, their comrades, and their progeny. Moreover, Forbes locates violent insurrection within a particular axiology of the enslaved “understanding completely that they were at war” and frames their use of violence as “both retributive and retaliatory.”¹⁴⁹ Her gesture towards thinking through violent black revolt beyond conceptions of self-defense as relationally tethered to the positionality of the enslaved, and their progeny, looms large for my own thinking throughout this project.

I am similarly indebted to Kellie Carter Jackson’s work in *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, published twenty-one years after Ella Forbes, narrates a similar story, though from a parallaxic view. Contributing to a growing body of literature that foregrounds and privileges black women insurrectionists,¹⁵⁰ Carter Jackson’s project examines “the complex and varied ways violence was deployed by antebellum black activists” and puissantly demonstrates “black women cannot be separated from the telling and sanctioning of political violence.”¹⁵¹ Centering the role of black abolitionists, Carter Jackson locates the insurrection at Christiana as a response to the recently passed Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and illustrates how this law both “made violence a necessary alternative” and contributed to “the acceleration of antebellum political violence.”¹⁵² What I find particularly generative is her conceptualization of violence “as a language” and its ability to “inflict its own form of terror” such that the violent rebellion of the enslaved, and their progeny, constitutes “a tool to combat powerlessness.”¹⁵³

Taken together, the stories narrated by both Forbes and Carter Jackson help make my project and the stories that follow here and throughout possible; the questions orienting their work anent Christiana allows me to explore the use of violence by the fugitive slaves at Christiana in relationship to their structural and epistemological positionality as enemies of the State. Furthermore, their work enables me to understand the violence deployed by the enslaved, and/or their progeny, as an epistemological formation imbued with narrative properties and possessing distinctly autonomous semantic and material characteristics. There are however a couple points of departure worth noting. Firstly, Forbes’s project is very much in concert with the scholarship African American History produced during the 1970s through the 1990s. As such, a considerable amount of effort is expended ascribing agency to the violent black rebels and grounding the text to narratives of humanity, redemption, and righteousness. The work of these scholars from this period

enable me to take at a starting point how the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, courageously challenged their “narratively condemned status”¹⁵⁴ rather than arguing that their use of violence to do so righteously redeems them for the lives taken as a result of such.¹⁵⁵ Secondly, Carter Jackson characterizes her study of violence as “an analysis of last resorts” and argues that “political violence” from black abolitionists “was about asserting one’s humanity [...] before the eyes of God and under the protection of the law.”¹⁵⁶ On this matter, I conceptualize violence not necessarily and exclusively as reactionary or as the final straw, but allow for the understanding that regardless of whether the violent actions propagated by black insurrectionists are either intentional or instantaneous, or both, the epistemological valences emplotted within such acts remain extant.¹⁵⁷ My third point of departure, and most crucially, I do not conceive violent black rebellion within a teleological narrative.¹⁵⁸ As is the case in the previous quote regarding Carter Jackson’s move to place violence within the realm of the political, which teleologically tethers the inclusion of the enslaved, and/or their progeny, into the juridical protection of the State, Ella Forbes’s project makes similar moves to argue violent black rebellion functions as a sort of remedy for the exclusion of legal protections for the enslaved. Consider the following from Carter Jackson: “[violent] black resistance to slavery offered Americans an opportunity to perfect democracy.”¹⁵⁹ Now, consider this from Forbes: “[the Christiana Resistance] is representative of what happens when a nation does not live up to the creed of law and order it espouses and when the law alienates a portion of the population from its substance and protection.”¹⁶⁰ Here, I am neither concerned with locating the violence of the enslaved, and/or their progeny, within the realm of liberal politics nor am I interested in thinking through the perceived efficacy of such deployments of violence in teleological grammars. Rather, I assess violence without a lexicon of legitimacy and without a predetermined teleological endpoint. I take seriously William Parker’s assertion that “we have no country.”¹⁶¹ Therefore, the violence deployed could not be/cannot be tethered to assimilative ends. Moreover, and like Saidiya Hartman, I understand the positionality of the enslaved, and/or their progeny, renders them excluded from the inclusion into liberal formations of justice and liberty: the State cannot offer redress due to this positionality, as the origin story of America, and the citational referents of thought animating this long intellectual project make clear.¹⁶²

Part II. A/[To] Plot Against the Plot: Right Now, Right Now, Right Now[!]

On the night of September 10, 1851, roughly fifty miles west of Philadelphia and twenty miles north of the Maryland border in a small farming community in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, nestled on a hill that overlooks the Chester Valley and the Delaware River, a secluded two-story stone house was the site of much merriment: an apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves.¹⁶³ The runaways danced around the fire and sang songs of freedom and ate apple butter until their heart's delight. This house was home to Eliza Ann Elizabeth Howard and her husband William Parker and their children, Maria, John, and Catherine. Eliza's sister, Hannah, and her husband, Alex Pinckney, also made this house their home.¹⁶⁴ Having all escaped from slavery, and indeed still escaping, they opened their home to other fugitive runaways who were in search of shelter as they were making their way north, to those who lived nearby and needed to wash clothes in the river, and/or to those weary runaways, "intoxicated with dreams and freedom"¹⁶⁵ who sought to channel all of their heartbreak through "the powerful rhythm of the drum"¹⁶⁶ seeking to experience "something akin to freedom."¹⁶⁷ And though it was reported that these trysts between fugitive families, friends, and comrades were a common occurrence at the homestead, this night would be the last; an overgrown field is now all that remains.¹⁶⁸

As the stars began to fade into morning, the hunt/return party arrived to apprehend absconding property around 4am.¹⁶⁹ Acting on a warrant pursuant to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, issued two days prior on September 9, 1851 by United States Commissioner Edward D. Ingraham, Esq for the arrest of four persons named George Hammond, Joshua Hammond, Nelson Ford, and Noah Buley – all of whom were legally charged as "being persons held to service or labor in the State of Maryland"¹⁷⁰ – Edward Gorsuch, to whom such service or labor was owed, believed his property "wanted to come home."¹⁷¹ Initially informed as to the whereabouts of his runaway property, and eventually guided to the Parker homestead by William Padgett, a member of the local Gap Gang known for kidnapping black people – free or otherwise – in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and selling them into slavery in Maryland,¹⁷² the hunt/return posse consisted of Edward Gorsuch and eight other men: Henry H. Kline, United States Deputy Marshal and notorious slavecatcher; Mr. Agan and Mr. Tully, both of whom were sheriffs from Philadelphia; Dickinson Gorsuch, son of Edward Gorsuch; Joshua Gorsuch, nephew of Edward Gorsuch; Dr. Thomas Pearce, brother in-law of Edward Gorsuch; Nicholas Hutchings, neighbor of Edward Gorsuch; and Nathan Nelson, another neighbor of Edward Gorsuch.¹⁷³ After identifying a two-story house made of stone and a shingle roof to the posse, Padgett flees the scene. The house identified, adorned by a rusting and janky awning above the front door, with two windows on the ground floor and two more windows on the second floor, belonged to the Parker Crew. William Parker notes the following people stayed the night: he and his wife, Eliza; Eliza's sister, Hannah Pinckney; Alexander Pinckney, Hannah's husband; Abraham Johnson; Samuel Thompson; and Joshua Kite.¹⁷⁴ They were all *still* escaping.

Prior to the break of dawn, at an orchard facing the Parker's home, ensconced in legal authority and dense, low-lying fog that veiled their presence, those on the prowl to hunt black flesh prepared. They loaded their guns. They ate cheese and crackers.¹⁷⁵

Around the same time the hunt/return party began walking up the short lane towards the Parker home, Joshua Kite, known to the hunt/return posse as Nelson Ford, set off for work along the short lane leading away from the Parker's home. The sun was beginning to make promises outside and Joshua was walking and singing; his song portended the trouble the hunt/return party neither anticipated nor expected.¹⁷⁶ Having "heard someone singing," Edward Gorsuch's nephew alerted the others.¹⁷⁷ Joshua Kite sees the posse walking towards him. Startled at the sight of the

hunt/return party, and instantly recognizing Edward Gorsuch, Joshua turns around and runs as fast he can back to the Parker home while half of the hunt/return party give chase as the other half begin surrounding the home. Bursting through the front door and racing up the stairs, Joshua Kite shouted, “O William! kidnappers! kidnappers!” In his haste to alert the rest of the Parker Crew, the front door remained open and within a few short minutes, there would stand U.S. Marshal Kline, Edward Gorsuch, and Dr. Pearce.¹⁷⁸

As historian Thomas P. Slaughter notes, the precise sequence of events that transpired for the next couple of hours are difficult to ascertain.¹⁷⁹ However, what is clear – from William Parker’s narrative and the testimonies provided in the subsequent court proceedings, which include the treason trial testimonies – is the initial response of the Parker Crew, and later, their comrades. Having gathered their weapons and stockaded themselves on the home’s second floor, atop a narrow staircase that only permitted its traversal one person at a time, barricaded with no clear line of fire from the ground could be had by the hunt/return party. The Parker Crew, comprised of fugitive slaves, with the would-be hunters in their clear line of sight, stood on the precipice of annihilation. Already out-lawed and belonging to the status of persons unincorporable into the legal fabric of society, exterior to the commonwealth of public society cohered together by the bestowal of rights, thus outside and beyond the realm of constituting a just or legal enemy status to whom rights are also afforded – *chattel, enfleshed property, thing-ified, niggers* – the Parker Crew was ready for war.¹⁸⁰ For it was the sound of bullets being loaded into guns that first greeted U.S. Marshal Kline upon entering the home of the Parkers.¹⁸¹

Standing at the home’s landing, the intruder demands to speak to the owner of the house. William Parker appears and asks, “Who are you?” to which Kline replies, “I am the United States Marshal.” Upon hearing the sounds of property loading guns intended to be aimed at him and the others in the hunt/return party, Kline says he “did not wish to harm any body” but wanted to arrest two of the house’s occupants, for whom he had warrants. Parker’s bellicosity on display, promises to “break his neck” if “he took another step.” Attempting to assert his authority by repeating his title, and by sublimating the authority of the federal government, “I am the United States Marshal,” said Kline. Parker recalls, “I told him that I did not care for him nor the United States.” Growing indignant with Parker’s recalcitrance, Kline turns away and begins walking back down the stairs. Alexander Pinckney, becoming apprehensive, tells Parker “they will take us,” and questions “where is the use of fighting?” Overhearing this, Kline retorts, “Yes, give up, for we can and will take you anyhow.” Telling Pinckney and everyone else in the Crew, Parker encourages them to “not to be afraid, nor to give up to any slaveholder” and implores them “to fight until death.” “I have heard many a negro talk as big as you,” said Kline, “and then have taken him; and I’ll take you.”¹⁸²

“You have not taken me yet,” Parker riposted.

Querulously impatient with the ordeal, Edward Gorsuch obtests Kline to “go up stairs and take them.” “We can take them,” he continues, “follow me, I’ll go up and get my property.” Answering his own question of what is stopping them, Gorsuch says, “the law is in my favor, and the people are in my favor.” Gorsuch begins to ascend the stairs. Parker, truculently cautioning him from continuing says, “See here, old man, you can come up, but you can’t go down again. Once up here, you are mine.”¹⁸³

Flustered, and probably becoming a bit perturbed at the growing difficulty of seizing obstinate property, Kline tells Gorsuch to stop so that he can “read the warrant, and then” said Kline, “they will give up.” Kline read the warrants three times. And still hearing the sounds of “diabolical malice” being loaded into guns upstairs, Kline adjures the fugitives to “give up at once” because “we are commanded to take you, dead or alive.”¹⁸⁴

At this point, Kline and Gorsuch, both began halfhearted and languid efforts to make the full ascent up the stairs, though both were telling each other and the fugitives that they were going to

go up. Parker encouraged them to “come on” already but Kline did not want the smoke choosing instead to turn around back down the stairs and exclaim the following: “You had better give up without any more fuss, for we are bound to take you anyhow. I told you before that I was the United States Marshal, yet you will not give up. I’ll not trouble the slaves. I will take you and make you pay for all.” Seemingly still unbothered, Parker retorts, “take me and make me pay for all. I’ll pay for all.” Incredulity mounting between the two, it was now Edward Gorsuch’s turn. “Nelson!” he shouted up the stairs, “I want my men. They are here, and I am bound to have them!” Continuing his efforts to coax his malfunctioning property downstairs and back to Maryland, Gorsuch promises to “treat them kindly, and he would forgive them all.”¹⁸⁵

Realizing his efforts to be futile, Gorsuch decides to take another approach. Leaving the house and walking outside and towards one of the windows, he again calls out to Nelson, thinking if only he could make eye contact with Nelson, then maybe his benevolence would be realized and the ordeal would come to an end. But the Parker Crew was not having any of it.

Someone upstairs threw a fish gig at Edward Gorsuch.¹⁸⁶ Missing their mark, they again hurled a weapon at him, this time an axe. Though nobody was hit, United States Marshal fired his revolver through the window and said, “I am tired waiting on you; I see you are not going to give up!” Instructing one of the other members of the hunt/return posse to “go to the barn and fetch some straw,” Kline tells the combatants that he “will set the house on fire, and burn them up.” “Burn us up and welcome,” Parker responds, “you can burn us, but you can’t take us; before I give up, you will see my ashes scattered on the earth!”¹⁸⁷

With these series of escalating events, Eliza Parker tells William it is time. Concurring with her assessment, Eliza sequesters herself to the attic and began to blow the horn, a prearranged signal to alarm their comrades throughout the area that assistance was needed.¹⁸⁸ Eliza sounds the horn and upon doing so, two other members of the hunt/return party, climbed a tree and began shooting at Eliza. They “missed their aim,” says Parker, but they kept shooting. *And Eliza kept blowing the horn for their Lookouts and Backup.* Parker recalls this scene as Eliza “went down on her knees, and, drawing her head and body below the range of the window, the horn resting on the still, blew blast after blast, while the shots poured thick and fast around her.” *And Eliza kept blowing the horn for their Lookouts and Backup.* Reflecting, Parker tells us that the hunt/return party “must have fired ten or twelve times.”¹⁸⁹ *And Eliza kept blowing the horn for their Lookouts and Backup.*

[illegible]

4

[illegible]

$\text{♩} = 120$

Claps

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Solo

Piano

Right now right now

right now right now

Right now right now

Right now right now

Right now right now

Right now right now

4

Claps

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Solo

Pno.

right now right now

right now right now

right now right now

right now right now

right now right now

right now right now

♩ = 120

Claps

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Solo

Piano

4

Claps

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Solo

Pno.

Right Now, God, Church of God in Christ International Mass Choir¹⁹⁰

Before moving ahead, *right now*, I want to briefly reflect on the story to this point. The move of the Parker Crew to collectively decide to tell the hunt/return party they needed time to consider amongst themselves their surrender is a ruse intended to provide their Lookouts and Backup the requisite time to heed the horn's signal that their comrades were in need of help *right now* [*Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now!*]. But can you imagine, dear reader, demanding time to think about how to live or how to die in the waking moments of the morning under duress and under attack; to contemplate surrender to an authority authored by Christian legalese and made legitimate by an epistemological project dating back to the days before Christ was born that said all of the people you loved in that home were property, *things*,

and were free to only either die or be kidnapped back into slavery? Can you envision watching the various movements of the pursuing hunting party outside from inside preparing to either kill or be killed in that DuBosian manner as described in “Black Reconstruction”? And with this time, can you conceive pondering the possibilities at hand from a party led by a United States Marshal and your former slave owner who sees this moment as something so routine that Edward Gorsuch could proclaim that he just wants to eat his morning breakfast and have his property returned, that he is so desirous of such he is even willing to have his “breakfast in hell” if it comes to it?¹⁹¹

*One sweet morning when this life is over,
I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.*

*Just a few more weary days and then,
I'll fly away;
To a place where joy shall never end,
I'll fly away.*

*I'll fly away, Oh glory
I'll fly away, in the morning
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by
I'll fly away.¹⁹²*

After approximately fifteen minutes passing between Eliza blowing the horn and being shot at by members of the hunt/return party, Kline gives orders for someone to get the Sheriff “and bring a hundred men” to their location. Hearing this, an unidentified voice from within the Parker home shouts to the hunting party that they need some “time to consider” their surrender.¹⁹³ It is here within Parker’s *Story*, that he tells us he and his crew “parlayed for a time” and this brings us to the insurrection’s interstice whereby he and Gorsuch “went into a mutual Scripture inquiry.”¹⁹⁴

Part III. An Insurrection's Interstice: On the Citational Referents that Authored the Stories through which We Live and Could Live

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

– Colossians 3:22

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

– Colossians 4:1¹⁹⁵

But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

– Ezekiel 33:6-9

This pause to debate biblical passages – both within the narrative articulation of Parker's *Story* and within the actual series of escalating events wherein its actors appear to be careening towards the brink of un/certain death and/or re/enslavement – is as remarkable as it is instructive. On one hand, the ecclesiastical “inquiry” mentioned by Parker could be a *prima facie* commentary that wryly notes the predicament that he and his comrades find themselves. After all, if the federal authority granted to U.S. Marshal Kline could not compel the runaways to surrender, if the threats made by the hunt/return party to burn down the house could not coerce the runaways to surrender, and if the gun shots fired into the home of the Parkers could not effectuate their submission, then the hubris of Gorsuch to think these runaway slaves could be cajoled by *preaching a slave-trading gospel* into obeying his demands of returning to their condition of enslavement is rather humorous. On the other hand however, this narrative and material discontinuity creates the space to think through the articulation of difference so to consider what new meaning might be made of the incommensurable epistemes being espoused. What enabled the conditions for Gorsuch and the hunt/return party to be so cavalier about hunting black people? What made them so truly believe that black people, in general, and these runaways in particular, would recognize their legal, moral, and religious authority? How could their understanding of the world – a world in which black people were parcels of private property, mere playthings for their desires – be so incongruent with the worldview of these runaways who were so obdurate in their refusal to yield to theirs? Or, how might this in-between moment of competing epistemic conceptual paradigms and of the social reality it produces to create this aperture between death __ revolt and between the varying degrees of free __ unfree create the possibility for different truths? The in-between space of these questions serves to orient the story being narrated in this chapter's section.

In *Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man* (2000), Sylvia Wynter argues that the Western world had to be imagined, projected, and thusly protected by “scholars and writers since Greek times” through its representational apparatus.¹⁹⁶ And crucially, stories – whether

narrative, cinematic, and/or academic – constitute this apparatus. All of the “terrible evils that only a mad person could have imagined” writes Wynter, “including three remarkable monstrosities: the slave trade, colonialism and imperialism at the end of the eighteenth [century], and throughout the nineteenth fascism and Nazism in the twentieth [century],” had to be invented and legitimated through the “fantasies and constructs” of western scholarship.¹⁹⁷ The West conscripted the rest of the world to the same memory it produced and sanctioned; the “representational apparatus of our Western world system,” which is central to the historical stories authored by scholars and carried out in textual format, licenses our “forms of life” and our “culture-specific modes of being human.”¹⁹⁸ As such, our consciousness, or our ways of knowing and feeling and of being, are organized according to the “memory that has made it all possible.” The invented origin narratives that come to normatively articulate black people as occupying “the nadir, nigger rung of being,” functions to institute our behaviors always through this narratively inscribed representational schematic.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, argues Wynter, “our social reality is represented as *the way things are in themselves*, the way they *will have to be*, with this representation then serving a teleological purpose.”²⁰⁰ This telos, of course, is not unlike the Historical narratives we have seen with the stories told of Cassandra, the mother of Eliza and Hannah. How then might we come to know something outside of these logics governing this schematic? Or, as Sylvia Wynter asks, *for how can one fly in the face of a reality, even where one is condemned by, and in, it?*²⁰¹

I contend that the interstice within Parker’s *Story* provides a starting point to begin unraveling the concretization of this memory and of the epistemological codes that prescribe the governance of our lives. The interstitial articulation between Edward Gorsuch and William Parker – between the Propertied and the Property, between the Owner and the Slave – operationalizes “the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” animating Homi K. Bhabha’s conceptualization of the interstice as a “complex [and] on-going” contestation of power.²⁰² For Parker, a liminal subject demarcated by the negative identity of property/slave/black constituted by being both outside and inside the “governing code/totemic set of the onto-theoretical distinctions which articulate the mode of symbolic life,”²⁰³ to understand and attack the epistemological ground upon which Gorsuch understood the world – to attempt to “disenchant their discourses” using their grammars does indeed point to the opportunity for a different understanding to take hold. For that which submits our memory also carries with it the potential to emancipate ourselves from its dictates. The interstice from Parker’s *Story* is quoted below, in its entirety, and I will be moving to/from/through this passage for the duration of this portion of the story.

I then told him there were but five of us, which he denied, and still insisted that I had his property. One of the party then attacked the Abolitionists, affirming that, although they declared there could not be property in man, the Bible was conclusive authority in favor of property in human flesh. "Yes," said Gorsuch, "does not the Bible say, 'Servants, obey your masters'?" I said that it did, but the same Bible said, "Give unto your servants that which is just and equal." At this stage of the proceedings, we went into a mutual Scripture inquiry, and bandied views in the manner of garrulous old wives [sic]. When I spoke of duty to servants, Gorsuch said, "Do you know that?" "Where," I asked, "do you see it in Scripture, that a man should traffic in his brother's blood?" "Do you call a nigger my brother?" said Gorsuch. "Yes," said I. "William," said Samuel Thompson, "he has been a class-leader." When Gorsuch heard that, he hung his head, but said nothing. We then all joined in singing--

"Leader, what do you say

*About the judgment day?
I will die on the field of battle,
Die on the field of battle,
With glory in my soul."*

Then we all began to shout, singing meantime, and shouted for a long while. Gorsuch, who was standing head bowed, said, "What are you doing now?"

Samuel Thompson replied, "Preaching a sinner's funeral sermon."

"You had better give up, and come down."

I then said to Gorsuch,--"If a brother see a sword coming, and he warn not his brother, then the brother's blood is required at his hands; but if the other see the sword coming, and warn his brother, and his brother flee then his brother's blood is required at his own hand." I see the sword coming, and, old man, I warn you to flee; if you flee not, your blood be upon your own hand."

It was now about seven o'clock.

"You had better give up," said old Mr. Gorsuch, after another while, "and come down, for I have come a long way this morning, and want my breakfast; for my property I will have, or I'll breakfast in hell. I will go up and get it."

He then started up stairs, and came far enough to see us all plainly. We were just about to fire upon him, when Dickinson Gorsuch, who was standing on the old oven, before the door, and could see into the up-stairs room through the window, jumped down and caught his father, saying,--"O father, do come down! do come down! They have guns, swords, and all kinds of weapons! They'll kill you! Do come down!"

The old man turned and left. When down with him, young Gorsuch could scarce draw breath, and the father looked more like a dead than a living man, so frightened were they at their supposed danger. The old man stood some time without saying anything; at last he said, as if soliloquizing, "I want my property, and I will have it"²⁰⁴

Upon an initial reading of this passage, we learn that Edward Gorsuch believes "his property" or, the runaway slaves so named on his warrant – "persons held to service or labor in the State of Maryland" – are inside of the Parker family home. Parker then tells us that someone else in the hunt/return party informs him that the Abolitionists were incorrect: people could be the private property of others. And this position, underscored by the authority of federal law as dictated through the warrant attempting to be served, was further legitimated by the "conclusive authority" of the Bible. Gorsuch affirms the authority of the Bible in this matter and then proceeds to reference a passage therein contained ("obey your masters"). The passage referenced, as indicated by the first epigraph of this chapter's section, is an attempt by Gorsuch to trade on its legitimacy with the hope it would compel the Parkers and their comrades to surrender. This is made clear if we recall the heretofore attempts of the hunt/return party to induce their surrender and if we momentarily skip ahead within the interstice where we see Edward Gorsuch state they "had better give up." The question mark that punctuates the passage cited by Gorsuch ("does not ...?") further illustrates this claim to legitimacy being leveraged to exact surrender. The second epigraph of this chapter's section is the Biblical passage from which Parker draws to challenge the legitimacy being invoked by the hunt/return party. The words "just" and "equal" function to question the aporetic relationship between master/slave distinctions ("servants") mentioned in both passages cited, to wit: Parker knows neither justice nor equality exists between the propertied and the property by the very fact of being enslaved. And this modality of knowing is also functioning as a sort of epistemological counterinterpretation that calls into question the very claim of legitimacy, in the matter of the law and the discursive authority derived from the Bible, the hunt/return party so desperately exhort

Parker and his comrades to recognize and observe. Yet Parker knows debating the merits of slavery using the grammars of the Bible is pointless (“bandied views” and “garrulous”) because his lived-life experiences, as well as the lived-life experiences of Eliza, Hannah, and their comrades, all indicated that there was no duty owed to enfleshed property (“duty to servants”). And likewise, property is not bound by duty to those who would categorize he and those whom he loved as such (Recall Parker’s narration of first meeting U.S. Marshal Kline wherein he introduces himself as such and Parker responds that he neither cares for Kline nor the United States.). Nevertheless, Parker continues to refute the epistemological grounds upon which Gorsuch invokes his legal claim to hunt/return property. The question that Parker poses in the following line constitutes a relationship of propinquity between he and Gorsuch, and in effect, black people and white people (“traffic in his brother’s blood”). But this characterization fundamentally clashes with Gorsuch’s understanding of the world (“a nigger my brother?”) and we can reasonably deduce that he may have been in the initial stages of realizing that theological reasoning was an ineffective strategy for inducing surrender (“but said nothing”). The next portion of the interstice is another interstice in the form of a song.²⁰⁵

Then we all began to shout, singing meantime, and shouted for a long while.

Preaching a sinner’s funeral sermon.

Continuing, we see Edward Gorsuch once again attempting to coax recalcitrant property into surrender (“better give up”). Parker responds by foreshadowing the events that eventuate Gorsuch’s violent demise (“the sword coming”). He does so by paraphrasing the biblical passage from the third epigraph to this chapter’s section. Citing Ezekiel 33:6-9 is quite the provocation. This particular segment of Scripture is an Old Testament warning to sinners of their eminent demise if they continue in their wickedness. And this is a protectorate from God: the enemies of the dispossessed will be destroyed (!!). Parker’s allusion to an impending eschatological event refers back to the song of judgment that he and his comrades were singing just moments prior (“die on the field of battle with glory on my soul”) while also reinterpreting the original verse Gorsuch cited: situating the Parker Crew as the watchmen therewith referenced in the passage by again using the word “brother” (“if a brother see a sword coming”). Gorsuch and the hunt/return party are now dislocated from the sphere of justice (“that which is just”) and signals it is now they who must atone and submit to God (“ye also have a Master in heaven”). If we recall the Parkers and their comrades maintained a watchful eye of slavecatching operations throughout Lancaster County (“watchmen”) – through violent means – and given that Eliza already blew the horn (“trumpet”), citing this passage sublimates the Parker Crew into the protectorate of God. Because the circumference of justice no longer encompasses the hunt/return party – that is, as a result of their external position to the bounds of justice, and of the duty it requires, Gorsuch is now the enemy. In effect, the Parker Crew is transfigured as being righteous and just while the hunt/return party now occupies the sinful position of not heeding the “conclusive authority” of the Bible such that their “master in Heaven” has judged them in accordance with their wickedness on Earth and now death may be their only expiation. Soteriologically, the Parker Crew constitutes who it is the hunt/return party thinks they are. And through Parker’s reading, he and his comrades signify the typological antitype of the watchmen referenced in the passage from Ezekiel exacting divinely ordained judgement vis-à-vis the annihilation of God’s enemies. The hunt/return party are enemies of God. They will be destroyed if they persist in their evil machinations. Parker’s warning also constitutes God’s approval should Gorsuch be killed, as suggested by his paraphrasing (“if you flee not, your blood be upon your own hand”) of Ezekiel 33:9 (“if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul”).

But alas, Edward Gorsuch is too hungry (“want my breakfast”) and too tired (“come a long way this morning”) to heed the musings of a nigger. He just wants his property (“my property I will have”). He consigns himself to eating his breakfast in hell (“or I’ll breakfast in hell”) and begins

ascending the stairs to requisition his property. Here, Parker informs us that judgement drew nigh for Gorsuch (“we were just about to fire upon him”); but God is a patient god. He hears the repeated entreaties of his son to reverse his course of action (“do come down!” and “They’ll kill you!”) and he ultimately obliges (“turned and left”). Within these final moments of Parker’s interstice, we see the depths of Gorsuch’s inability to comprehend the failure to generate the outcome he previously imagined (“I want my property, and I will have it”) give way to the frightful immediacy of the situation (“they have guns, swords, and all kinds of weapons”) in which he now found himself (“looked more like a dead man than a living man”). And as the legitimacy and authority of the hunt/return party was contested, denied, and refuted at every turn, the betrayal of their previously assumed invincibility now signalled the very possibility of a much different outcome – indeed, this *is* the space created by textual interstitiality; the paroxysmic paralysis experienced by Gorsuch evidences this potentiality (“stood some time without saying anything”), however temporary. The foundation upon which Gorsuch and the hunt/return party constructed their understanding of the world was beginning to shake.

Nigger musings.

This moment of stillness, brought forth by Parker’s challenge to the governing codes of difference (e.g., outside/inside bounds of justice; enemy/friend; death/life; nigger/brother; redeemable/irredeemable) upon which the epistemic framework of the discursively legitimated system of power manifests the behaviors of Gorsuch and the hunt/return party, along with their *a priori* assumed status of superiority – just as the social order created the conditions for this authority to be challenged from the deviant liminal perspective of the nigger – was pregnant with the possibility for a different story to be written wherein a different course of action (*and being*) might have been chartered. Instead however, what we see is the durability of this epistemology. And in the final concluding instance, we likewise observe the abortion of what might have been: Gorsuch turns around and declares his desire for his runaway property, vowing to himself (“as if soliloquizing”) that he will have the niggers he came to hunt/return.

Reading Parker’s interstice reveals the relationships with which the remainder of this section’s story explores. That the Bible was used to justify the private property in persons is not my primary interest. Parker addresses this issue much earlier in his *Story* and makes clear that from a young age he understood such dogmatic doctrines to be duplicitous in their attempts to extract the slave’s obedience.²⁰⁶ And even as Gorsuch, the hunt/return party, and slave power alike weaponized the grammars therein contained to legitimate private property in black persons, Parker demonstrates a profound capacity to repurpose those grammars for different ends: a purposeful misreading of the world as if a different arrangement of the oppressor’s grammars might in and of themselves offer a new treatises of being. However, this precise situation – Gorsuch’s claim to legitimacy by unconsciously referencing the authority of the Roman Empire through citing the New Testament and Parker’s reading of the Bible back/to Gorsuch – does provide us with a lede concerning the relationships this section maps.

Do you remember previously in our story when Gorsuch first began his attempts to retrieve his property and he stated he was going to go upstairs to get his property because “the law is in [his] favor”? United States Deputy Marshal Kline followed by informing Parker that whether “dead or alive,” the hunt/return party was “bound to take [them] anyhow.”²⁰⁷ The amalgamate of such sentiments orbit around the following themes: a) the lawful claim to private property in black persons; b) the discursive legitimization of power; c) the interplay between both (a) and (b) suggests black people exist external to power’s conceptions of duty and justice; and d) the inability of Parker to appropriate the grammars of power – even when repurposed for different ends – to affect a different outcome, or a “third way” in Deleuze’s terms. How did this come to be? What’s at stake here? And how might something new emerge even as the categories that govern our lives appear to

be perdurable? To begin exploring these questions, I turn to Sylvia Wynter's work on epistemology and narrative to make sense of the various ideas and themes limned from the interstice in Parker's *Story*. What emerges is a closed citational chain of myths and fables, inherited from Cicero and textually transumed through the writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and those thinkers commonly associated with the founding of the United States including Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (the authors of *The Federalist Papers*), that cohere around the protection of private property.²⁰⁸

A note on method before moving forward: My reading of the aforementioned texts is derelict.²⁰⁹ I am not providing a cognitive map that illustrates "a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole," as Frederick Jameson posited in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.²¹⁰ I am likewise not attempting to offer any semblance of that which Michel Foucault may describe as an archaeology of knowledge: what follows does not amount to anything so grand as to be named a "history of ideas" that describes "obscure continuities and returns, the reconstitution of developments in the linear form of history [...] the whole interplay of exchanges and intermediaries."²¹¹ My derelict reading more closely adheres to the theoretical mode of storytelling Katherine McKittrick proposes in *Dear Science and Other Stories* whereby the various narratives being articulated are in service to "entangling and disentangling varying narratives and tempos and hues that, together, invent and reinvent knowledge." The stories that Cicero, Locke, Hobbes, the authors of *The Federalist Papers*, and all of their interlocutors author function to sanction horrendous acts of brutal degradation, dispossession, and exploitation so as to legitimate such vile as natural, or at least to venially characterize such machinations as necessary. The story that follows, which is a narration of an assemblage of stories – stories that can neither account for all the local historical specificities with which these authors were concerned nor of all the interlocking conversations and interventions extant from one epoch to the next – is an attempt to "tell the world differently" just as the Parkers and their comrades knew the world differently. The mode of storytelling that follows is undergirded by what inevitably must have been the "ludic laughter"²¹² of the Parkers and their comrades when Gorsuch invoked the Bible as "the conclusive authority" of their need to surrender while they knew fifty to one hundred of their comrades were on the way with swords, guns, and corn-cutters to determine whose side God was really on. The following story is thus one of intentional death and abjection being made legitimate; but it is also a story of "immense and hopeful possibilities."²¹³ Owing in large part to the very conditions that invented such a vile world to be known and lived through, the Parkers and their comrades eventually authored a new story.²¹⁴ For theirs is a story borne of the grammars contained in the story that follows, but lived beyond.²¹⁵ It is to the peripatetic exploration of these stories to which the remainder of this section now turns.

Derelict nigger musings.

Cicero's Citational Import

Even as the ideas of Cicero significantly influenced the most prominent thinkers from the fourteenth century Renaissance and the eighteenth century Enlightenment periods – most of whom were either explicitly or implicitly developing his ideas or attributing their ideas to those of Cicero through citation – our contemporary moment largely finds his ideas relegated to the footnotes.²¹⁶ This positioning might be curious to the "American Founding Fathers" given that Cicero was so elemental and foundational to the works of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, for example, classics scholar Meyer Reinhold notes that "among the numerous role models in America [...] price of place was given *above all* to Cicero."²¹⁷ Such concepts as the rule of law, mixed constitutionalism,

the primacy of liberty through the protection of private property, and the state's right to use violence in the name of protecting sovereign power are just a few of the Ciceronian ideas upon which the United States Constitution and its Declaration of Independence (DoI) are founded. Any originality contained within the written precepts of the DoI concerning the actions taken to materialize the founding of their new world order is dismissed by Thomas Jefferson, citing instead the authority of Cicero:

When forced, therefore, to resort to arms for redress, an appeal to the tribunal of the world was deemed proper for our justification. This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, &c. The historical documents which you mention as in your possession, ought all to be found, and I am persuaded you will find, to be corroborative of the facts and principles advanced in that Declaration.²¹⁸

In a letter written to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams equates the virtues of Christianity to the achievement of independence:

The general Principles, on which the Fathers Achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which, that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite, and these Principles only could be intended by them in their Address, or by me in my Answer. And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity, in which all those Sects were United: And the general Principles of English and American Liberty, in which all those young Men United, and which had United all Parties in America, in Majorities Sufficient to assert and maintain her Independence. Now I will avow, that I then believed, and now believe, that those general Principles of Christianity, are as eternal and immutable, as the Existence and Attributes of God: and that those Principles of Liberty, are as unalterable as human Nature and our terrestrial, mundane System.²¹⁹

The phrase “eternal and immutable” achieves the sublimation of Ciceronian thought as constitutive of establishing a (civil) sovereign power over man, through God's authority, as the DoI accomplished and as it was sanctioned by natural law in accordance with Cicero's conceptualization thereof:

a true law, conformable to nature, diffused among all men, unchangeable, eternal. By its commands, it calls men to their duty: by its prohibitions, it deters them from vice. To diminish, to alter, much more to abolish this law, is a vain attempt. Neither by the senate, nor by the people, can its powerful obligation be dissolved. It requires no interpreter or commentator. [...] It is the same eternal and immutable law, given at all times and to all

nations: for God, who is its divine author and promulgator, is always the sole master and sovereign of mankind.²²⁰

Thus what begins to emanate from these citational referents to Cicero is the long intellectual project of statecraft within which the founders of the new order of the United States articulated a precedent for not only its establishment/maintenance through violent means (“to resort to arms”), but also the portending of the Christian legalese invoked by the hunt/return party as “conclusive authority” for a natural order to the world, which in this instance, materialized in the form of protecting private property in black people. In each of these citations, we also see a move to go *back to*, or, a *return to*, Cicero as a form of legitimizing the protection of the American Revolution – such that there could now be no more challenges to the power they instituted in its aftermath because the constructed polis accords to the “eternal and immutable” “principles of Christianity” by which natural law governs – while simultaneously projecting this new order’s perdurability that secures against its dissolution. *The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*²²¹ As we shall see in Part IV of our story, this latter point looms large in relation to the charges of treason levied against the mutineers of Christiana.

But first, I want to think through the moves these founders make to articulate their claim to legitimacy by referencing an imagined originating textual location of their authority. That is, in order to erect a new order premised upon the protection of private property in black persons – defined in contradistinction to the new order’s conceptions of universal justice and freedom – they had to *return*, or, go *back to* the stories of Cicero to find the necessary myths and fictions required to construct a world that classified the Parkers and their comrades as justly enslaved.²²² For if it is true, as literary historian J.W. Mackail states unequivocally, that Cicero’s storytelling “created a language which remained for sixteen centuries that of the civilized world, and used that language to create a style which nineteen centuries have not replaced, and in some respects have scarcely altered,” and if it is also true that his language was the citational foundation for creating a world instrumentalized to monstrous ends, then it bares considering, even if only quixotically, how the stories of Cicero came to create the structural position from which the Parker and their comrades could question the order’s plot.²²³

Origin/Stories

Power is discursively legitimated; and at its etiological root, exists the equiprimordial and mutually reinforcing relationship between the cultural and structural aspects of power. That is, how, what, and why we know is normatively encoded in/through language – the episteme – and functions to shape, just as it is shaped by, the institutional structures of power. All social orders are epistemic orders and vice versa. The symbolic ordering principle of structural oppositions (e.g., White/slave; Life/death; Spirit/flesh) is “alone the vehicle by which human orders are enabled to define themselves into being.” We are institutionally and discursively invented, written into being by a “linguaging living system.” And perhaps this relationship between the “culturally instituted order of words” and the development of structural power is best illustrated through origin stories.²²⁴

As Sylvia Wynter notes, “we live inside of our origin stories” and it is through these stories – as constituted through language and memory – that we come to know ourselves and each other.²²⁵ The origin story itself is predicated upon myths – symbols reflective of that culture’s understanding/values/dreams, which are constructed through the grammars of an historical past arranged to author a future from the present – that portend the genesis of a given political community and their relationships to/with each other, to/with other political communities, and to/with the universe as both axiomatic and immutable.²²⁶ The myth, regardless of its veracity, comes

to legitimize the political solution to which the origin defines as the problem. In this sense, origin stories espouse valanced epistemological values that “hold us together.”²²⁷ Our behavioral matrices are delimited by the myth’s horizon of possibilities.²²⁸ The origin therefore functions to compose and configure the epistemology of the entire social order.

The role of language here is of critical importance. For if power is legitimated through discourse, as previously stated, and if we consider Martin Heidegger’s observations regarding the relationship between discourse and language, as gleaned from *Being and Time*, wherein he observes discourse is expressed through language and owing to this, language is the foundation of discourse, we come to see rather quickly that these stories – narratively articulated as such – reveal the primordially of language.²²⁹ *In the beginning was the Word.*²³⁰ Through these origin stories, we see the ways in which language obscures its projected conception of knowing. The origin, and the myths by which it is constituted, allies us to a new fiction of being: its grammars purport specific forms of knowledge (e.g., morality, values, etc...) that narratively articulate the inauguration of a given social order. These myths “have been represented in Western scholarship by *fantasies* and constructs *made up* by scholars and writers since Greek times,” upon which we all interdepend.²³¹ And just as the “founding fathers” of the United States went *back to* Cicero, Cicero went *back to* Plato.²³²

What makes Cicero unique is that he is the first person²³³ to conceive of private property and its protection, as mutually constitutive of justice and liberty and inasmuch, the primary and originating purpose of government. Civil laws were established, through nature and reason, for the purpose of justice; and the commonwealth, so conceived, ensured its security – both the commonwealth itself and private property. Cicero understood the telos of justice to be mutually constitutive of the commonwealth’s telos: the right of each to be secure in their private property. The law of nature, according to Cicero, privileges this right and civil law institutionalizes it throughout the commonwealth.²³⁴ It is from this orientation to the world and to *things* that Cicero authors his origin story which posits the necessity a commonwealth/republic/state so to ensure the protection of private property.²³⁵

In the beginning – before laws and religion – people lived nomadic lives and “wandered at random over the field, after the fashion of beasts.” Speech and reason eventually developed amongst various groups of people. Speech and reason constitute a bond from which all associations derive including the mutual agreement to form a state. And because the state, this collection of people, functions to meet their human needs – primarily the protection of private property and the security against those who use violence to settle affairs whereby the law is not a vehicle for redress – the state originates in nature. States form governments and governments operate according to the same reasons the state was founded.²³⁶ To this end, laws were created “for the safety of citizens, the preservation of states, and the tranquility and happiness of human life.”²³⁷ Elsewhere he writes, “state and municipal governments” were established to ensure “individual property rights might be secured. For although it was by Nature’s guidance that men were drawn together into communities, it was in the hope of safeguarding their possessions that they sought the protection of cities.”²³⁸ For Cicero, the state’s originating and foundational function is to uphold justice, which doubles as preserving private property.²³⁹ An encroachment against one’s private property contravenes the conventions of justice upon which the state was founded. As such, the state coheres its people through the force of its civil laws to protect and safeguard against both internal and external threats against property rights.²⁴⁰ This is accomplished by the administration of governmental duties by the state’s public officials. State officials are entrusted to apply the laws according to the government’s foundational purpose: due process of law must protect against the impingement of private property.²⁴¹

The problem Cicero is attempting to address through his origin story is the fallout that stems from a breach of trust between government officials and its people. During his lifetime, chaos and

instability fueled significant political and social unrest. He attributes the attendant rebellions and civil wars to tyrannical governments and their constitutions. Specifically, Cicero identifies the risk of tyranny to the constitutional pure form of government found in monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies.²⁴² Cicero's answer is a mixed constitution that provides the people with the perception of liberty (in the form of voting and holding political offices with the appearance of power) and the perception of in-built checks and balances against caprice and corruption. The mixed constitution, in Cicero's estimation, is a living document that will ensure the government's immortality while allowing for changes to be made without threatening the stability of the state while also ensuring the state is not captured by tyrants.²⁴³

To rationalize both the constitution and the hierarchical social order it advances, which is based upon the maintenance of wealth differentials in the form of property and the continued political domination of the propertied over the propertyless, Cicero goes *back to* Rome's founding in 753 BCE, *back to* "the origin of the Roman people"²⁴⁴ to then explain how and why a mixed constitution achieved a fair balance between the wealthy and the poor. Mostly through the provision of citational referents to a past perfect condition of Rome, Cicero commences to sinew a long historiographical story rich with tales of tyranny, betrayal, and violent rebellions. Only Rome's sixth king, Servius Tullius, was so wise as to introduce the mixed constitution, the very same concept that Cicero is advancing. Predicated upon a notion of equality that only the wealthy could conceive: a hierarchical division of social relations based upon property and wealth whereby the propertyless "have no share in the governing power, in the deliberative function, or in the courts, over which selected judges preside"²⁴⁵ because the duties of the government must be carried out by its "best citizens" for the concerns regarding those of honor and wealth weigh more than the majority of those without wealth. Any other situation would be inequitable and therefore unjust. And this is dictated by divine reason and operationalized through natural law. And just as King Servius envisioned this political formation to be the ideal, so too did Cicero.²⁴⁶ This is all that Cicero could dream; the wealthy ruling over the poor, in perpetuity, with the legal means to annihilate any revolt and any rebel who dares to rise against their power, represents the horizon of Cicero's dreams.

Symbolic Ordering Principle

More germane to the issue at hand is the institutionalization of structural difference inaugurated by Cicero's mixed constitution. The political freedom of the people is exercised when they cast their vote, which for Cicero, provides the propertyless with the mere "appearance of liberty" even though "the superintendence of the aristocracy is still retained."²⁴⁷ And it is through this appearance of decision making granted to the people of Rome that Cicero defines as liberty. At stake here, and what I hope is beginning to become apparent, is that Cicero's constitution, and the social and political order it inaugurates, is quite conservative and designed to ensure the continued social and political domination of the wealthy over the poor by preserving this constitutional arrangement. And it is these two oppositional symbolic codes – property/propertyless, rulers/ruled, honor/dishonor – that structure Cicero's commonwealth while simultaneously defining itself against. Whereby civil unrest was previously conceived to be percolated by tyrannical leaders (e.g., Julius Caesar), the people now become the internal threat against whom the state must defend itself: popular rebellions constituted the foremost threat to the Cicero's state.²⁴⁸ The symbolic codes of life (e.g., Lack/Abundance; Propertyless/Propertied; Powerless/Powerful) upon which Cicero's constitution inaugurates the commonwealth, institutionalizes a hierarchical social order predicated upon vast wealth disparities that promises the people with little recourse for significant redress. The origin story narrated by Cicero attempts to provide an epistemological basis for legitimating this constitutional arrangement while concomitantly instrumentalizing its laws towards the teleological

goal of ensuring the permanency of the commonwealth and maintenance of the authority upon which it was founded.

Yet the very structuring codes of difference through which Cicero's commonwealth coheres creates the conditions for an eternal contest to emerge between the *populares* and the *optimates*: the former constitutes a reckless and irrational cohort who utilize violent means of rebellion against the state and its magistrates, of which the latter is comprised. Fundamentally, this is a contest between the propertyless and the propertied, respectfully: a war between the wealthy and the poor. Cicero deploys the word, "*perditus*" to describe the poor, this genre of people, as a wretched and depraved gang of bandits and the word "*grex*" to liken this lot of people to savage and bestial animals.²⁴⁹ They are an enemy to the state²⁵⁰ and Cicero names them pirates:²⁵¹ violent villains existing external to the commonwealth's bonds of law.²⁵² The *perditus* have no regard for the law and often engage in political actions that "no good man would think of doing."²⁵³ Cicero describes this genre category of persons as insurrectionists and seditious agitators who threaten to overthrow the government through their political actions. But because they do not seek redress through the proper governmental avenues established for them by the propertied class, Cicero calls them criminals; that is, their use of violence makes them criminals. But they are a special case of criminal because they are not considered to be members of the state.²⁵⁴ Cicero's conceptualization of the state's right to use violence coheres around the pirate. Because Cicero's prime objective is the protection of the state and its constitutional order, and because the *perditus* threatens the authority of the constitutional order and the power invested to those wealthy magistrates who perform its duties, the state must, in the name of duty, violently annihilate its enemies.²⁵⁵

To Return To

The symbolic ordering principle inscribed into the political and social writings of Cicero were transmuted into the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras. As Harold Bloom writes in, *The Breaking of the Vessels* (1982), "transumption or metalepsis ... relies upon a diachronic concept of rhetoric, in which the irony of one age can become the noble synecdoche of another," whereby "such retropings of earlier tropes" form "transumptive chains" such that "one keeps *returning* to certain linkages as being vital to tradition, and to the crossings-over within and between traditions."²⁵⁶ Sylvia Wynter's work expands upon this concept to think through the "fictional imaginings" that structure our behavior through "intertextual discourse" to explain how the epistemological ordering principles from one epoch were necessary to the foundational discourses that inaugurated the next.²⁵⁷ The myth that underwrites the state of nature Cicero uses to develop the origins of Man prior to the formation of commonwealths implies that the world is the common property of Man, and to him it was left to be made. With the invention of the Gutenberg Printing Press (1440), this myth was widely circulated in the Bible and the stories contained therein. The symbolic ordering principle within this myth came to be understood as a dichotomy between Spirit/Flesh. But as the world had to be made safe for the protection of private property in human persons, it was the transportation of the university into the "New World" that consummated an epistemic closure transmuted from Cicero.

As the spirit of the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe in the 1500s, a new this-worldly conception of freedom was being conceived against the other-worldly concept of freedom that subtended the hegemonic orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic church. Christian humanism emerges as an outgrowth of this tension – as brought about by the episteme espoused by the Protestants that cohered around the idea of moral perfection being achieved in this world, for its own sake, on earth – and aims to instill the values of Christ as the ideal type of human behavior. In her short-titled 1969 essay, *Bernardo De Balbuena (Part I)*, Sylvia Wynter explains that this new

episteme, which sprang from humanist studies and its disciplines, was subtended by both Christian and humanist ideals designed “to fulfill the dual purpose of moral perfection on earth, and eternal salvation in Heaven.” The inauguration of this new hybrid ideal type builds from the idea of humanist studies which understood education could be used to facilitate the conformation of human behavior into an ideal type. The Counter-Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church sought to “direct this life on earth to its eternal end in Heaven.” Together, in this hybrid between the two, “the epic heroes of the past were transformed into allegorical myth and studied as prefigurations of Christ” so to now orient the guiding epistemic behavioral matrix of ideal behavior.²⁵⁸

The imperial traditions of Rome provided the blueprint for imperial expansion of Europe’s “New World” colonies. Dually armed with the mission to missionize the Natives and to remake the “New World” into the image of Europe, schools and universities were “at once set up” in the early 1500s and by the 1530s, “first rate humanists and theologians came out” to distill the values of Christian humanist education.²⁵⁹ To accomplish this, the humanists, and theologians alike, were required *to return to* the works of the Greeks and Romans. This form of education stipulated that such Latin epics as *Virgil*, which sublimated Cicero’s conceptions of morality and justice into its heroic form,²⁶⁰ was the *sine quo non* standard to be studied to imitate the ideal human type. And the theologians understood such an epic poem to reveal the desired episteme to be mirrored by humans “before the coming and revelation of Christ.”²⁶¹ The fixation upon morality, as directed by the order’s episteme, was chartered by the new analogics of neo-Aristotelian literary theory that held imitation was the mode through which the universal ideal type could be empirically mediated into reality; that anything truly worthy of being judged as good/beautiful could only be copied or imitated or cited through the replication of its form.²⁶² In other words, the European university that was transplanted into the “New World” was predicated upon a genre of literary theory that sought to institute prescriptive rules at the level of discourse to reproduce the governing symbolic ordering principle of Reason/Lack that now formed the basis of the order’s episteme. The implications of this necessarily requires one *to return to* the grammars found in a previous epoch and doing so results in an epistemologically closed citational loop chain of thought that delimits the ways in which we know the world, and this serves to ensnare our own dreams for the hope of something better. This neo-Aristotelian maxim can be observed in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* when he writes: “to imitate is to honor.”²⁶³

The grammars instituted through this new discourse of Christian humanism are likewise revealed in the case of Bartolomé de Las Casas and his deliberations regarding natives and blacks in the New World. Las Casas *returned to* the stories authored by Cicero in *On Duties (De Officiis)* to locate the necessary grammars to explain the distinction between the capacity of the natives to be redeemed through Christ and the blacks who could be categorized as “justly enslaved” within the framework of Cicero’s “just war.” Las Casas directly cites Cicero to explain that war can be just when it is an “unavoidable necessity so compelling that it cannot be avoided in any way.”²⁶⁴ Wynter notes that the significance of this move on behalf of Las Casas was not that he was “necessarily substituting white (Spaniard) slaves for black slaves,” but rather his *return to* the grammars of Cicero’s concept of just war illustrates the attempt to justify the enslavement of black people “within the system of classification legitimated by Catholic Christian doctrine.”²⁶⁵

We are still living through the material effects of this citational referent to which Las Casas *returned to* Cicero to justify the enslavement and transportation of Africans to be living tools for the new plantation order. And in a similar manner, we are still living through the symbolic ordering principle of friend/enemy that was transumed from Cicero through the citations that animate the works of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke – both of whom began their stories, *Leviathan* and *The First and Second Treatises of Government*, respectively, by a *return to* Cicero to evidence the primary purpose of government and its laws in protecting and securing private property.²⁶⁶

Symbolic Ordering Principle

The work of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) reflects a similar desire of Cicero to secure the power of the state against tyranny. Writing during the English civil war period in the middle of the 1600s, Hobbes contributes to the development of social contract theory, which would later be developed further by John Locke, to argue in favor of a monarchical sovereign wherein absolute power resided. In one of the many citational references Hobbes makes to Cicero throughout *Leviathan*, usually in opposition to his ideas, Hobbes *returns to* Cicero's notion of enmity through exile to advance his own conceptualization of an unlawful enemy.²⁶⁷

Hobbes argues that the constitution of an absolute sovereign removes people from the state of nature – a condition in which everyone wars with everyone wherein neither law nor justice exist – and provides them with “perpetual security” and peace through the formation of a commonwealth through the establishment of a constitution. Yet to deny the sovereign's authority constitutes “a relapse into the condition of war, commonly called rebellion; and they that so offend suffer, not as subjects, but as enemies. For *rebellion* is but war renewed.”²⁶⁸ And as Hobbes argues, those whom author scripts of rebellion remove themselves from the united multitude the commonwealth represents and become subject to the laws found in the state of nature, of which there is only one: the proximity to annihilation.²⁶⁹ This expulsion renders the rebel beyond the pale of where duties are due; they become the unincorporable and unlawful enemy who exists at the sovereign's will to either be destroyed or neglected – this latter condition of neglect is what Agamben refers to as a “zone of indifference” and signifies the potential for civil war.²⁷⁰

John Locke (1632-1704) also came of age during the English civil war period. He was a teenager when Charles I was beheaded and matured into his college years during the period of kingless rule and constitutional (parliamentary) advances. Locke's *Two Treatises* is a clear refutation of the monarchical sovereignty of which Hobbes writes and closely adheres to the grammars of Cicero's conceptualization of a mixed constitutional government with (the appearance of) checks and balances. And like Hobbes and Cicero, he explains the founding cause of civil government's establishment and their attendant laws is the protection of private property.²⁷¹ Locke explicitly states that the origins of the political is constituted by the protection of property. The origins of property and its accumulation are, as a matter of custom, unequal and the maintenance of this imbalance ought to be maintained. The laws of the government need not interfere or violate this condition – in the name of morality and of the justice dictated by natural law. He narrates a creation myth – *in the beginning* – to locate the “right of property” as deriving from the joys of labor.²⁷² What begins to emerge from this is the fundamental symbolic ordering principle *par excellence*: Locke's conceptualization of freedom is constructed against piratical violent slave rebellion.

Locke's *Treatises* redefines Hobbes's work regarding the state of nature and of war. Whereby the story narrated by Hobbes defines the state of nature as a war “of every man against every man,” Locke states that the state of nature is the absence of earthly political authority and war is the outcome of this absence.²⁷³ Locke notes “the state of war is a state of enmity and destruction” such that the law of nature dictates a fundamental right to destroy that which threatens the state, “for the same reason that one may kill a wolf or a lion.” And because Locke defines “the perfect condition” of slavery as being “nothing else, but the state of war continued,” and also because he understands the condition of enslavement to be the result of an *a priori* condition of dispossessed reason, together, the “absolute dominion” exists over the slave – as they are already relegated to the state of war to which only the heavens might provide redress – and as this condition of being in a state of war simultaneously threatens the state and its citizens with violence – the presence of the slave constitutes a declaration of war “against all mankind, and therefore may be destroyed as a lion or a

tyger [sic], one of those wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security: and this death-bound relationship is grounded upon the great law of nature.²⁷⁴

Locke's commonwealth is predicated upon the symbolic organizing principle of freedom/slave such that freedom is defined by the protection of private property. Black people therefore do not merely exist external to the concept of freedom. Rather, black people themselves were property. Black people – to whom it has been “discovered an enmity to [their] being”²⁷⁵ – are therefore, according to this logic, killable, on sight, for they are those with no security and no society. *For we are those without a country. For we are those who must appeal to heaven.*²⁷⁶

The musical score is for the hymn "Lord, Lord". It is written for a four-part ensemble: Drums, Choir, Solo, and Piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 72. The Drums part features a consistent eighth-note pattern. The Choir part consists of two vocal lines, both of which sing the word "Lord". The Solo part has a single vocal line that also sings "Lord". The Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment, with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Lord, Lord, Andrew Brown and the National Baptist Convention Choir²⁷⁷

Stories/Origin

Power is discursively legitimated; and at its etiological root, exists the equiprimordial and mutually reinforcing relationship between the cultural and structural aspects of power. That is, how, what, and why we know is normatively encoded in/through language – the episteme – and functions to shape, just as it is shaped by, the institutional structures of power.²⁷⁸ “The origin story of the nation state,” writes Sylvia Wynter, “lock us inside the nation state.”²⁷⁹ What this section of compiled stories reveals is a long intellectual project that spans several epochs of originating myths legitimizing the founding categories of symbolic Life/Death to which state-making has functioned to create; the thought experiments of these sick men, moving beyond the hypothetical realm of moral judgement to which Paul Ricoeur observes as the space of stories, have written us into

existence according to the horizon of their dreams and aspirations.²⁸⁰ *The nation state locks us inside its origin story.*

At the very moment of the people being conceived in the works of Cicero, the imagined agglomerate intended to be signaled by the people collapses on itself. The division between who is ruled and who rules, who has and who lacks, and who belongs and who does not germinates the seeds of enmity.²⁸¹ At this very moment of definition, Cicero realizes that the universalization he is seeking to establish requires “the interest of each individual and the whole of the body politic identical” for otherwise, “all human fellowship will be destroyed.”²⁸² Short of this, the commonwealth must in turn be held together by religion²⁸³ and more importantly, the fallacy of the people signals the conceptual other against whom the referential people must guard against. When Cicero points to the enemy in contradistinction to the people whereby “a struggle with the enemy is a struggle with the enemy for life,”²⁸⁴ we see here that “for life” signals the temporality of this struggle (“life”) and the terms for which this struggle requires (“life”). And yet another remove from the people is operationalized in the form of the pirate. Cicero states that the “pirate is not included in the number of lawful enemies, but is the common enemy of all the world; and with him there ought not be any pledged word nor any oath mutually binding.”²⁸⁵ And even further, by sublimating the tyrant into the figure of the pirate, Cicero tells us the following:

We have no ties of fellowship with a tyrant, but rather the bitterest feud; and it is not opposed to nature to rob, if one can, a man whom it is morally right to kill; - nay, all that pestilent and abominable race should be exterminated from human society. And this may be done by proper measures; for as certain members are amputated, if they show signs themselves of being bloodless and virtually lifeless and thus jeopardize the health of other parts of the body. So those fierce and savage monsters in human form should be cut off from what may be called the common body of humanity.²⁸⁶

Cicero’s pirate figure – one to whom nothing is owed, ought to be struggled against for life, killable through proper means of the law, and like an infection must be cut off from the rest of the political body – is the etiological prefiguration of the violent black rebel that haunted Thomas Jefferson’s revolutionary nationalism, as discussed in the previous chapter, animates the incipiently violent black rebels we find in Christiana, and why we must turn to the heavens to make our appeals known.

Cicero’s pirate stems from the symbolic ordering principle embedded within the very conceptualization of his commonwealth, which was predicated upon the attempt to legitimize *the appearance* of redress for the inevitable problems that arise when the accumulation of private property and its differentials are protected above everything else. When the epistemic ground upon which this was made possible began to shift during the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras, scholars sought the grammars necessary to legitimate the new humanist mode of being that could be made legible within the grammars of the theological ideal of being. They *returned to* the grammars of Cicero and other ancients and retropped these behavior-orienting figurations within the framework of new grammars. And with each citation and with every *return to*, new stories were written, and this pirate figure takes on new meanings, as we see in Hobbes and Locke. The Pirate figure will be further discussed Part V of this chapter and developed more fully in the next chapter. The next section of this chapter, Part IV, explores how the location of this figure, might help explain why Parker’s challenge to the epistemic textual authorities invoked by the hunt/return party to induce their surrender was insufficient, even as the symbolic ordering principle of Locke was interpolated into the *Declaration of Independence* and *The Federalist Papers*.²⁸⁷

Katherine McKittrick portends the following in *Dear Science*: “If we begin with [Cicero] as our primary methodological and theoretical frame – if [Cicero] is our referential scaffolding – *we will*,

*most certainly, draw [Ciceronian] conclusions.*²⁸⁸ This section was written with the attempt to visualize the circularity of thought embedded within McKittrick's observation as constitutive of the citational referents to/from Cicero and the delimiting of our political imaginings. The material world into which the Parkers and their comrades are preparing to violently intervene has already consigned them to death. As the opening within Parker's interstice reveals, the stories and the narration thereof, as expressed through language and its grammatical semantics (e.g., symbols, representations, text, music, *or otherwise*) suggests the stories we tell concomitantly capacitates the way in which our worlds are made, unmade, and remade.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. Deuteronomy 6:20-23.²⁸⁹

Part IV. Treasonous Thingz: “The Aftermath of When Guns Blast”²⁹⁰

Whoever ... by force goes about [and] lays the foundation for overturning the constitution and frame of any just government, is highly guilty of the greatest crime, I think, a man is capable of, being to answer for all those mischiefs of blood, rapine, and desolation, which the breaking to pieces of governments bring on a country. And he who does it, is justly to be esteemed the common enemy and pest of mankind, and is to be treated accordingly.

– John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, 1690, XIX, 230

[I]t shall be lawful for any Person or Persons whatsoever to kill and destroy such Slave or Slaves by such Ways and Means as he or she shall think fit, without Accusation or Impeachment of any Crime for the same.

– North Carolina General Assembly, *an Act Concerning Servants and Slaves*, 1741, XLV

Let it never be forgotten, that our NEGROES are truly the *Jacobins* of the country; that they are the *anarchists* and the *domestic enemy*; the *common enemy of civilized society*, and the barbarians who would, IF THEY COULD, become the DESTROYERS of our race.

– Edwin C. Holland, *A Refutation*, 1822 (p. 86)

Do you expect us, by preaching abolition, to turn loose this numerous and dangerous class in our midst, with whom we cannot either socially or politically amalgamate? In the name of God, invent a remedy and tell us how we are to get rid of this supposed evil!

– Robert J. Brent, Attorney General of Maryland, Prosecutor for the State of Maryland, *United States v. Hanway* (1851)

[N]egroes were arriving from every quarter, some on horseback, and others on foot, armed with guns, pistols, clubs, corn-cutters, &c. [...] when they set up a most hideous yell, and rushed towards the house, the negroes in the house at the same time rushing out and whooping like savages, met the advancing gang around my father. There were four men, all armed with pistols, it is true, opposed to about one hundred infuriated, blood thirsty, howling demons. [...] The negroes were whooping and yelling with savage glee over their victims.

– Reverend John. S. Gorsuch, *The Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1851

we are mumblers of words/Words? while we handle quarters of earth, while we wed delirious continents, while we force steaming gates, words, ah yes, words! but words of fresh blood, words that are tidal waves and erysipelas and malarias and lava and brush fires, and blazes of flesh, and blazes of cities ...

EIA!

– Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939)²⁹¹

Fred Moten (2013), in his *Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)* essay, observes that the political field demarcating civil society is predicated upon the constitution of blackness with enmity.²⁹² Moten’s point here is precisely cognate with what I aimed to illustrate in the previous

section of our story. Sublimated through Cicero's pirate figure, subtended by the closed citational loop upon which the intellectual projects of empire were constructed, and sacralized at the symbolic level in its stories, Parker's textual interstice reveals the epistemological ground upon which the intellectual project of state-making produces the framework(s) that make possible for black people to become codified as enemy, as property, as enemy property. This simultaneity is projected outward from the fictive stories of Cicero, transumed through the fictions of Locke's writings, as the first epigraph to this section attests, made materially manifest vis-à-vis the legal codifications of sovereign power, which functions to orient and prescribe normative behavior, as evidenced in this section's second epigraph, and maintained at the discursive level by such poets, playwrights, and jurists like Edwin Holland in the third epigraph to this section. The interstice within Parker's *Story* unveils the concomitant interplay between the conditions for livingness, to borrow a phrase from Katherine McKittrick, so authored by the Parkers and their comrades – or, the enslaved more generally – and the brutal power of sovereign authority: of being subjected to its laws to protect private property while also being objected by its rule whereby nothing is owed. *To be terrorized by the condition of being synchronously included and excluded.* However, living in and through this caustic condition provides the Parkers and their comrades with the requisite insight to mis/read the world.

Manipulating the symbols from which the social order derives its assumed legitimacy – the very symbols Gorsuch deemed to be natural and self-evident – and rearranging the elemental grammars therewith contained, attempting to arrive at different meanings is but one possibility ascribed to Parker's interstice. *As we learn from the Parkers and their comrades*, a different outcome other than the one imagined by Gorsuch remained unrealized. *As we learn from the Parkers and their comrades*, inverting the symbol's meaning is not a praxis for contesting unfreedom; the social order's symbols were neither destroyed nor transmuted. *As we learn from the Parkers and their comrades*, the mutation of the symbol's meaning is induced by their "radical calling into question" of the differentiation "between two actions, between affections, between perceptions," which stems from the collision of incommensurable difference thereby creating a "third or of something new."²⁹³ *As we learn from the Parkers and their comrades*, the interstitial potential, the manifestation of new stories [= (new thoughts) X (modalities of knowing + being)] from this confrontation between the un/thought, becomes kinetic through the semantics spoken by violent revolt, as the sixth epigraph to this section signals; the order's symbolic governing code could only be transformed by the questions posited by violent revolt.²⁹⁴ It is along these antagonisms – from the space of unassimilable difference and terror transgressed by the assailing of questions conceived in possibility and hope – in/between heaven/hell – amidst the musicandtheflames – this section and its stories move.

The story of this section begins where the previous section ends: towards the transmutation of the origin story. To conjure all of the memories and all of the care necessary to levy such a challenge to the epistemological codes that govern our lives is to live through, and to know, from the abyss. As Édouard Glissant conceptualizes it, commencing with the beginnings and endings of the slave ship, "worn down, in a debasement more eternal than apocalypse" and yoked to "the torment of those who never escaped it," hurled through the metamorphoses of "fugitive memories" passed down from one generation to the next, constituted by the experiential of being both "inside and outside," the abyss thus constitutes a place of knowing – relationally within the whole. Glissant's framing of the abyss is constituted by the "shared knowledge" through which we live: from the unknown of the abyss emerged this mode of knowing that "project[s] of and a perspective into the unknown. Beyond its chasm we gamble on the unknown."²⁹⁵ Taken together, the past is lived. For example, it is from this abyss – from its epistemological standpoint – that the mother of Eliza and Hannah moved to keep their secrets while simultaneously orchestrating her ruse for their freedom; and despite all our heretofore conversations regarding the Bible, the mother of Eliza and Hannah is the closest representation we have of Christ's love. Moreover, it is from this place of

knowing that births the praxis of the Parkers and their comrades, shaping the unknown through which they live, informing the questions they posit through their use of violence. This theory and praxis thus comports to what Glissant frames as antiviolenence violence: “it is opening and creation.”²⁹⁶

It is therefore from this abyss that the Parkers and their comrades challenge the epistemological social order; the violence of their rebellion peels back the perceived perdurability of constitutional state power to reveal an inner most secret: the entire political framework of the United States – both in terms of the discursive formations of power, of which its origin stories are constructed, and of the institutional structures that function to perform the duties of the state – is explicitly premised upon maintaining its power by governing against violent black rebellion.²⁹⁷ Though this is further examined in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, the threat against sovereign power by violent black rebellion is revealed in both the enactment of violence at Christiana and from its resulting treason trials.

But on the matter of the actual violence of the insurrection at Christina, William Parker’s *Story* is rather reticent. As Parker comments, “it is true that some of the things which did occur are spoken of but slightly” and notes that he is “compelled to let them pass just as they are recorded.” And this orientation of Parker is reserved through much of his *Story*. For example, the text itself is written in code that would later cause much confusion for historians, which is particularly true regarding his provision of the assumed aliases undertaken by his comrades (e.g., those fugitive slaves so named in Edward Gorsuch’s warrant), the workings of “The Special Secret Committee” that provided intel of the hunt/return party’s arrival, and the details of the violence enacted during the revolt.²⁹⁸ Thus in lieu of Parker’s re-telling of the violence enacted at Christiana, say for a few comments on the matter, this part of our story relies upon the “printed account of the trial of Castner Hanway and others for treason,” the same source Parker cites as the veritable accounting of “the failure of Gorsuch in his attempt; his death, and the terrible wounds of son; the discomfiture and final rout of his crestfallen associates in crime.”²⁹⁹ I also rely upon other discursive forms of texts concerning the insurrection at Christiana, including letters and speeches, to help narrate this section’s story.

My reading of the enactments of violence is read through and from the narrative discourses produced from the violent revolt, including the resultant treason trial. Narratives in this sense constitutes not merely the written word or its interpretation, but rather the ways in which narratives are active (i.e., not passive) and inscribe behaviors – the ways in which narrative informs public opinion and functions to inform laws and the implementation of such directives through policy, or policing, and/or again, that which drives the “why’s” and the “how’s” of the stories we tell.³⁰⁰ Said differently, the constellation of meanings derived from the violent insurrection (e.g., the event) is necessarily contingent upon its narration. As Michael Mark Cohen (2019) states in, *The Conspiracy of Capital*, “no explosion tells its own story.” The violence itself requires a matrix of actors to “make the bomb talk.” In this sense, my reading of the violent rebellion at Christiana relies upon the “ventriloquist act” of power and the meaning-making narrative its agents provide in order to assess the violence of the insurrection.³⁰¹ Rather than critique the extant ventriloquism of power, I ask what does the explanatory schematics of federal, state, and local power, when situated within the ambit of previous judiciary, legal, and political utterances suggest about the violence enacted by so called property. Speculatively assessing the violence of the Parkers and their comrades, as an independent variable, provides a space to think through the openings and foreclosures of possibility, even when the violence and the rebels themselves are disavowed or otherwise absented from the explanatory stories posited by power. Importantly however, as Cohen (2019) and other scholars like Kellie Carter Jackson (2019) and Lenora Warren (2019) have also articulated, my work here functions as an extension of theirs: black violent rebellion possesses its own story-telling devices

with its own semantic and narrative quality that questions the very symbolic order that created the conditions for violence, *ab initio*.³⁰² Said differently, the (new) story/stories black violent rebellion capacitates is a transmutation of the very same story/stories power narrates/fictionalizes of violent black rebellion.

For our purposes then, my reading of the actual violence committed by the Parkers and their comrades is a form of speculation, both in terms of the work violence performs and the (citational) hinge upon which the subsequent treason trial turns and extends, backwards and frontwards through time. By locating my reading with the speculative, I mean to signal an orientation derived from the same semantics stated earlier in this story – those expressed by the interrobang and the question mark – as a gesture towards the kind of wonder inspiring Sylvia Wynter's question, "What does wonder do?"³⁰³ Perhaps stated more concretely, to speculate as I do here "connotes the art of wondering ... about the connections between events, causes, origins, [and] possible outcomes."³⁰⁴ And even as my reading is tightly tethered to the rich narrative sources the event at Christiana produced, I signal the speculative because the story that unfolds in this section stretches previous scholarly inquiries regarding the violence of the insurrection and the subsequent treason charge.

A total of forty-one people were eventually charged with treason, but it would be a white man named Castner Hanway to first stand trial for this crime – a crime considered so heinous as to be a threat to the very sovereignty that binds the commonwealth. Treason for Hanway, rather than merely aiding and abetting, or even murder, is already suggestive of the devious semantics thrust outwards from the violence of the Parkers and their comrades. How to make sense of Hanway's indictment for treason given his peculiar position, of largely being absented from the scene of the violent insurrection, even within the state's own historical documents and those testimonies provided by various agents of the state, consumes my speculative efforts.³⁰⁵ If found guilty, he would have been sentenced to death. And for what? Scholarly stories have offered explanations that range from political expediency to ensure the preservation of the Union to a symbolic gesture designed to issue a warning to white Northerners about the danger of interfering with property rights (e.g., the right to private property in black people). Allow me to briefly elaborate on how Hanway's actions could be defined as treason.

According to the attorneys for the prosecution in the case of *The United States v. Castner Hanway* (1851), treason is defined as "levying War against the United States, **or** in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort,"³⁰⁶ The prosecution argued, as a matter of law, that Castner Hanway was guilty of the former definition of treason, that of levying war. What this section of our story explores however, is the latter definition of treason. Providing aid and comfort to the country's enemies serves as the symbolic and discursive argument for Hanway's treason charge. The violent black insurrectionists – the Parkers, their comrades, and their Lookouts and Backup who arrived at the scene after Eliza signaled for their help, *right now* (!) – are the enemies to whom Hanway offered aid and comfort. This was not the legal argument put forth by the prosecution. Although he was eventually found not guilty, the charge of treason is otherwise asyndetic without the ascription of enmity to those violent black rebels who *actually* did kill.

The proceeding events, and narrations thereof, subsequently come to reveal the nation's deepest fears and insecurities concerning the role of the federal government to honor its constitutional duty to protect private property in black people – again, this is the very basis and foundation for the commonwealth's establishment. And the violent rebels at Christiana struck at the very heart of the commonwealth's symbolic order. The threat posed by the black insurrectionists, even when disavowed and sublimated through Hanway, animates the charge of treason and subsequently reveals the threat posed by the black insurrectionists to the symbolic order of the United States.³⁰⁷ During the events prior to Eliza signaling the horn for their lookouts and backup to arrive, do you recall dear reader, when William Parker posed the following questions to

Edward Gorsuch: “Am I your slave?” and “Do you see any of your slaves here?” In so doing, he was also abstracting to larger questions concerning the legal authority invoked by Gorsuch and the stories he told to legitimate them. *Are we bound by your laws? Ought we concern ourselves with your laws? What have your stories to do with us? You thought we were property? What if we have our own stories and our conceptualizations of freedom with different grammars that are wholly unfathomable to you?* These are some of the openings created by the violent rebellion at Christiana.

The Response to Eliza’s Call: “Them Niggers Have all Gone Off”³⁰⁸

Right now, we are at the armistice within the interstice of our story. Both sides already agreed to a ceasefire. The Parkers and their comrades were waiting for the Lookouts and Backups to arrive. The hunt/return party, like the dead described in the book of Ecclesiastes, knew nothing. The rising sun signaled the day’s arrival; darkness giving way to light, the veil of fog burning away, its rays shining to heat the morning cool, reminders of all those things still possible: a sort of promise of those events soon to come.³⁰⁹ After Eliza blew her horn to signal for their Lookouts and Backups to arrive, the valley erupted into a cacophonous symphony of bells ringing and of more horns blowing, signaling to their fellow compatriots of no nation that help was needed *right now* [*Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now! Right Now!*].³¹⁰

[What a sound that must have been!]

*To survive in a society based on power, largely outside or on the margin of the law, one had to know how to keep a weather eye open for those friendships which could help to keep one afloat.*³¹¹

United States Deputy Marshal Kline grew tired of waiting on the property he was deputized to hunt/return to act right. As Parker frames it, “Kline broke forth,” as if to signal the armistice between he and his comrades and the hunt/return party was no longer. Kline resumes the imploring of the Parker Crew to “give up by fair means” promising the failure to do so will require their surrender “by foul” means.³¹² (As if this entire scenario, of being hunted with the authority of the country’s constitution was not already entirely foul.) Hearing Parker declare to Kline that they “would not surrender on any conditions,” Dickinson Gorsuch tells the Marshal that he need not ask his property to give up; “make them do it,” he proclaims. “We have money,” young Gorsuch says, “and can call men to take them. What is that money won’t buy?”³¹³

They would all find out soon enough.

Bemused at property’s defiance, still, Kline orders Joshua Gorsuch to “bring a hundred men from Lancaster” thus invoking the *posse comitatus* doctrine of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 to secure the surrender of the runaway property he was there to legally return to its claimant. Parker, with the same bellicosity we have already observed him to perform, exclaims “don’t bring a hundred men, – bring five hundred. It will take all the men in Lancaster to change our purpose or take us alive.”³¹⁴

The growing threat of terror beginning to take hold, Alexander Pinckney, Hannah’s husband, suggests that Parker and the Crew inside the house “better give up,” reasoning “where is the sense in fighting against so many men, and only five of us?” By now, “the whites,” Parker informs us, “were coming from all quarters, and Kline was enrolling them as fast as they came.”³¹⁵ Parker tells Pinckney that if he attempts to surrender, he would be “compelled to blow his brains out.” Parker begins to embolden his comrade and reminds him that no “living man can take you [...] Don’t give up to any slaveholder.” Hannah and Eliza decided they had enough of the pleasantries and would take manners into their own hands. Eliza “seized a corn-cutter, and declared she would cut off the head of the first one who should attempt to give up.”³¹⁶ Shortly hereafter, the

Parker Crew became even more enlivened when they saw “one of Gorsuch’s slaves coming along the highroad.” Parker signaled for him to come around to the back and states that the sight “inspired” Pinckney.³¹⁷

At the trial, this moment would be a hotly contested scene. The Parker Crew now enlivened and inspired – a reaffirmation and a recommitment to all to stay free or die trying – a moment conveyed by, as one witness would later report, “a great hallooing,” and that the prosecution would describe as “greeted by huzzas, shouting and the clashing of the weapons of the negroes.”³¹⁸ But this also coincided with the arrival of two white men, Elijah Lewis and Castner Hanway, who both refused to be deputized and conscripted into aiding Marshal Kline with the hunt/return of runaway property. This refusal, not only violated the Fugitive Slave Act and its *posse comitatus*, but the prosecution would later argue that “the blood-thirsty purpose of the blacks” rejoiced in Hanway’s act of “knowingly resisting the execution of the laws (for it must be remembered the warrants had been several times read to them) and as this logic further tarries, the “sentiment and sympathy that [Hanway] approved their conduct.” And here it is: what the prosecution referred to as the “manifestations of joy” attributed to the arrival of “Gorsuch’s slave,” were understood to be the extoling of Hanway’s arrival and his refusal to aid the hunt/return party with their property claims. This scenario amounted to Hanway being the leader of the revolt (!!!). And because Hanway arrived before the majority of the Lookouts and Backup, this was evidence of a preexisting conspiracy: Hanway counseled the negroes to revolt. As will be discussed later, this illogical reasoning is the basis of Hanway’s treason charge.³¹⁹

As Elijah Lewis and Castner Hanway approached the Parker homestead, they were greeted by Marshal Kline and were provided with the warrant that named four persons as fugitives from justice: George Hammond, Joshua Hammond, Noah Buley, and Nelson Ford.³²⁰ According to Parker’s *Story* and subsequent court testimonies, both Lewis and Hanway refused the Marshal and communicated to Marshal Kline that neither of them were going to risk their lives. Lewis and Hanway further warned the Marshal that he and the other members of the hunt/return party should all leave before they get killed. Elijah Lewis is reported to have gone back home and Hanway rode away on his horse atop of a field in the distance to wait and see what might occur.³²¹

As Lewis, Hanway, and Kline were talking, Parker tells us that he and his comrades stood in the doorway to the homestead. And after more big talk from Edward Gorsuch in the same tired manner with which we have already grown annoyed, he tells Parker to come out so that he can give him the contents of the two guns Gorsuch held in each hand. Parker walks up to Gorsuch, places his hand on his shoulder, and tells Gorsuch that guns do not frighten him and proceeds to warn him one more time: “Old man, if you don’t go away, I will break your neck.” Gorsuch, whom Parker would later comment was the “bravest of his party,” continued to shout his desire “to have [his] property, or go to hell.”³²²

And so it would be.

DERE'S NO HIDIN' PLACE DOWN DERE

Arranged by Laurence Brown

To Carl Van Vechten

Allegretto *p*

Dere's no hid - in' place down dere, Dere's

poco rit.

no hid - in' place down dere, Oh I went to de rock to hide my face, De

a tempo

rock cried out, "No hid-in' place" dere's no hid - in' place down dere. Oh de

rock cried, "I'm burn - in' too," Oh de rock cried, "I'm burn - in'

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of four systems of music. The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the dynamics 'p'. The melody is in the voice part, and the piano accompaniment is in the right and left hands. The second system continues the melody and includes the tempo marking 'poco rit.'. The third system includes the tempo marking 'a tempo'. The fourth system concludes the piece. The lyrics are written below the voice staff.

poco rit.

too;' Oh de rock cried out I'm burn-in' too, I want a go to hebb'en as well as you, dere's

a tempo

no hid - in' place down dere. Oh de sin-ner man he gamb-led an' fell, Oh de

poco rit.

sin-ner man he gambled, an' fell Oh de sin-ner man gambled, he gambled an' fell; he

a tempo

wanted to go to hebb'en, but he had to go to hell dere's no hid-in' place down dere.

DERE'S NO HIDIN' PLACE DOWN HERE, Lawrence Brown³²³

Gorsuch informs the thirty to forty white people present, all of whom were deputized by the *posse comitatus* doctrine, to commence their hunting. Parker in kind signals to his comrades, of which he estimates only ten in total at this point that *the Day of Spreading Stars when the Scales set up and the*

Scrolls undone – indeed the Day on which they are tried by Hell and the veils lifted – the Day of Opening was upon them.³²⁴ Parker's own narration of the violent revolt is quoted at length below:

While I was talking to Gorsuch, his son said, "Father, will you take all this from a nigger?" I answered him by saying that I respected old age; but that, if he would repeat that, I should knock his teeth down his throat. At this he fired upon me, and I ran up to him and knocked the pistol out of his hand, when he let the other one fall and ran in the field. My brother-in-law, who was standing near, then said, "I can stop him";--and with his double-barrel gun he fired. Young Gorsuch fell, but rose and ran on again. Pinckney fired a second time, and again Gorsuch fell, but was soon up again, and, running into the cornfield, lay down in the fence corner. I returned to my men, and found Samuel Thompson talking to old Mr. Gorsuch, his master. They were both angry.

*"Old man, you had better go home to Maryland," said Samuel.
"You had better give up, and come home with me," said the old man.*

Thompson took Pinckney's gun from struck Gorsuch, and brought him to his knees. Gorsuch rose and signalled to his men. Thompson then knocked him down again, and he again rose. At this time all the white men opened fire, and we rushed upon them; when they turned, threw down their guns, and ran away. We, being closely engaged clubbed our rifles. We were too closely pressed to fire, but we found a good deal could be done with empty guns.

Old Mr. Gorsuch was the bravest of his party; he held on to his pistols until the last, while all the others threw away their weapons. I saw as many as three at a time fighting with him. Sometimes he was on his knees, then on his back, and again his feet would be where his head should be. He was a fine soldier and a brave man. Whenever he saw the least opportunity, he would take aim. While in close quarters with the whites, we could load and fire but two or three times. Our guns got bent and out of order. So damaged did they become, that we could shoot with but two or three of them. Samuel Thompson bent his gun on old Mr. Gorsuch so badly, that it was of no use to us.

When the white men ran, they scattered. I ran after Nathan Nelson, but could not catch him. I never saw a man run faster. Returning, I saw Joshua Gorsuch coming, and Pinckney behind him. I reminded him that he would like "to take hold of a nigger," told him that now was his "chance," and struck him a blow on the side of the head, which stopped him. Pinckney came up behind, and gave him a blow which brought him to the ground; as the others passed, they gave him a kick or jumped upon him, until the blood oozed out at his ears.

As a final commentary on the violence, so there could be no more confusion, Parker seeks to correct an erroneous story that appears to have circulated after the affair:

A story was afterwards circulated that Mr. Gorsuch shot his own slave, and in retaliation his slave shot him; but it was without foundation. His slave struck him the first and second blows; then three or four sprang upon him, and, when he became helpless, left him to pursue others. The women put an end to him. His slaves, so far from meeting death at his hands, are all still living.³²⁵

The actual violence of the rebellion now fully disclosed by Parker's telling of the story, he closes this portion by informing us that the "riot, so called, was now entirely ended, [...] having driven off the slavocrats in every direction."

Even as Parker's narration is laconic when compared to other events he discusses in his *Story*, which is particularly true concerning the autobiographical elements of the text and the ensuing

escape from the area and into Canada after the insurrection, he provides us with enough detail to begin thinking about the meaning of this violence. If we take our start with Edward Gorsuch's son, Dickinson, and his incendiary charge that his father should not be tolerating such behavior from abjected property ("nigger"), the liminality of the Parkers and their comrades comes into view. As we have already observed, the originating telos of the commonwealth's law serves to protect the right of private property in black people. The conditions for this were created in part by the semantics of Locke and distinctions concerning un/developed un/occupied land and the captives who were trafficked from the continent of Africa to work this reconceived land.³²⁶ But to maintain a natural right to own private property in black persons, which is why Dickinson Gorsuch is upset at property's audacity, owes to the violence contained within the discursive schematics of power, as in the case of Locke and his interlocutors, as well as the institutionalization of that right through the violence of the law itself.

Reading Sylvia Wynter's *Black Metamorphosis*, Katherine McKittrick points to "Wynter's Nigger-Breaking Hypotheses" to illuminate the ways in which the law sanctioned violence designed to break the nigger – slave power designed practices intended to efface the soul from black people – so to procure optimal behaviors that more closely cohere to those of animals rather than of people. Nigger-Breaking then, endemic to the epistemic ground upon which constructing a social order and its laws make possible, initiates both the enslaved population and the colonizing/slave-owning population through the legally sanctioned acts of violence necessary as "asymmetrically raced black nonbeings and raced white being, through the colonization of consciousness."³²⁷ The violence of breaking black people – like they were horses or a not-yet-comfortable new pair of shoes – was the necessary precondition of the United States, and the law demands the protection of this right to violence *for* the protection of private property. The classificatory and behavior-inducing role of the law that binds black people, enslaved or otherwise, to the power of the state as property/propertyable, constitutes the liminality of the Parkers and their comrades as living outside of the law and the *raison d'être* for the law.³²⁸ This liminal condition (e.g., black/not propertyable; property/propertyed; nigger property/property owner), which is produced by the social order's episteme and made legible vis-à-vis its symbolic ordering principle, is therefore the prerequisite for the social order's reproduction.³²⁹

Dickinson's invocation of the word nigger, signifying the normative construction of the law and the violence therewith mandated by sovereign power, points to a form of economy embedded within the ascription of (violently created) property. Just as the fecundity of this liminal status was necessary to the social order's production, Nigger-Breaking established "that the strategy of the economic is a central means of establishing these fixed coefficients of exchange."³³⁰ As Gayatri Spivak writes, energy exhorts or engines economy. Opposing actions and forces played against each other represent the event's identity and the economy of "disjunction."³³¹ The economic, in this sense, gestures towards the interactivity between practices designed for exteriority and liminality on one hand, and in Allen Feldman's words "the mimetic formation of the subject" as the result of this exteriority and liminality on the other hand.³³² As Parker's *Story* suggests, and the entire history of blackness evidences, the enslaved or otherwise are constituted by this liminality and governed against and through the teleological inscription of "pain and at delineating the sphere of useful, legal, and acceptable violence." The violence of black rebellion is informed through this pain. The violence of black rebellion is the "transfer of force [and pain] ... that can be played back against the state, so that the 'copy' can affect the 'model.'"³³³

Indeed, the peripeteia of this proleptic plot reveals itself when Parker, Thompson, and Pinkney *run up on* Edward Gorsuch, beat the two guns out of his hands, and used the guns against him, his son, and other white men. In this instance, as narrated by Parker, which later became a communal event when their Lookouts and Backups arrived – to *return the devil's fire* is to use power's

own weapons against those who are attempting to further instrumentalize the law's violence to remind property of its place; to *return the devil's fire* is to enact a reversal of sorts, a pirating of the epistemological codes embedded within the weapon, those same codes of death/life, property/propertyed, object/subject that author black people as property; to *return the devil's fire* is to transform and transfer the stories and their historical contiguities by violently transposing its now valanced meaning(s), inclusive of didactic discourses with different possibilities now imbued and enacted onto the body; to *return the devil's fire* is to teach power what it has taught us; to *return the devil's fire* is to gesture towards the transcription of a different history with different stories and memories. And this compositional reversal of death/life by snatching away the very means with which death/life was imposed, such that death/life is now played against itself to signal life/death, is a potentializing force for the decentering of the episteme that animates the symbolic ordering principle and makes fragile the social order from which it emanates.

This was not the case with Parker's scripture inquiry with Gorsuch that we observed within the textual interstice from the previous section. The discourse therewith generated by Parker, as smart and as keen as it was, could only portend itself as a "truer discourse" of the same discourse possessing the same categories and prescriptions produced by "the systemically functioning order" that Gorsuch was deploying; this approach was isomorphic of the very epistemological rationalizing frame attempting to be replaced.³³⁴ Violent black rebellion however – to *return the devil's fire* – is to both manipulate and transmute the semiotic classifications of meaning that constitutes the social order's very foundation. Said differently, the violence of black rebellion threatens the epistemology that encodes the social order and the governing schematics around which the symbolic ordering principle coheres; violent black rebellion injects its own historicized and semiotized discourse by inscribing its own plurality of semantics against the representational schematics the social order depends. In this sense, the Parkers and their comrades *return the devil's fire* and in so doing, they recode, through violence, the death/life binary that Gorsuch and the rest of the hunt/return party took for granted: they too could be killed. The violence deployed by the Parkers and their comrades registers a challenge at the symbolic order because the violent death of Gorsuch – that is, when property killed the propertyed – not only "disenchants" the semiotic discourse of such categories and prescriptions, but through the semantics of the question mark that is now injected into the dead body of the propertyed, the violence herewith deployed induced a crisis of credibility for the episteme.³³⁵

As Allen Feldman, in *Formations of Violence* (1991) argues, violence enacted upon one member of a given community can come to be perceived as "commensurate in its political [...] impact to the entire community, that terror has its own circuits of amplification that do not require material destruction on a large scale."³³⁶ Evidencing this, the then Governor of Maryland, Louis E. Lowe understands the singular death of Edward Gorsuch as both the "resistance to the rights of the South" and as an ominous attack on the entire South. In an address to the General Assembly of Maryland, he issues a cautionary statement to the rest of the South that "domestic feuds" cause "American blood to flow upon American soil" and to "beware that your State does not become a mockery!" Continuing to sublimate the death of Gorsuch as an attack on the entire south, Lowe states that "the blood of a Marylander cried out from earth [and] the failure to convict the Christiana rebels" invokes "one common feeling of horror and indignation [...] to the people of Maryland, and other Southern States [...], the chartered rights of the South, which had been trampled down in blood."³³⁷ This is illustrative of violent black rebellion questioning the very core of the epistemological order wherewith Lowe's comments allude to the transgression of the ordering principle upon which the Union was formed. The distinction between property/propertyed (and the rule of law erected to secure and protect the rights of private property in black people, which forms the very basis of the U.S. Constitution and its sovereign authority) is now disarticulated; the power

from which this distinction accrues is now violently decentered, and the corresponding “slippage of meaning,” to borrow a phrase from Hortense Spillers, is now open to a rearticulation of meaning.

As we can see, Parker’s narrative articulation of the violence enacted at Christiana functions at both the material and epistemic level. By the end of this scene, the enacted violence of the Parkers, their comrades, and the Lookouts and Backup that responded to Eliza’s horn – all eighty to one hundred and fifty of them – including men, women, and children – sent the “slavocrats [running] off in every direction.”³³⁸ This collaborative and life-affirming violent insurrection of fugitive slaves against slave power and its agents set off a constellatory series of events and discourses, its epistemological meanings now in excess of the “symbolically coded terms” by and through which the social structure, constitutive of slave power’s nationalized mandate for all of its citizens to participate in the hunt/return of black people in the name of protecting the right of private property, represents the materiality of being. Said differently, property was not supposed to kill the propertied; the spectacle of such disarticulates the very governing codes of the symbolic order (e.g., nigger property/white propertied) such that the semantics produced by this violence creates the conditions for the narratives and stories that hold together the symbolic order’s governing codes to slip or to leak out whereby new stories might be narrated, which brings with it the potential to effect the symbolic ordering principle and thereby produce new meanings for the way we live. This radical potential to effectuate the very ways in which we *be* – the capacitation of the conditions for new stories to be created and lived through, and therefore new memories and new modalities of being with new citational referents – is a constitutive element of the terror violent black rebellion inflicts against power.³³⁹ And the opening for dangerous insights, of course, had to be rooted out and squashed by slave power.³⁴⁰ The next sections explore the ways in which the United States – both through its own federal powers and those powers it endows to other civil, local, and state agents of power – sought to make consonant the dissonance impelled against its epistemological foundations by the violent enactments at Christiana. This is observed through the arrests that followed, the narratives attached to these arrests, and the recursive citational referencing to the origin story of the United States throughout the treason trial.

Try as they may however, the violence of black rebellion – and the openings it creates for the possibilities of new stories to be authored – always exceeds the symbolic ordering principle. And at Christiana, Eliza and Hannah punctuated this opening with deathblows that would reverberate across the country.

Edward Gorsuch was dead, “lying in the yard in a pool of blood.”

*The flies flocked to his autolyzing corpse.*³⁴¹

*Having found no refuge from God, Edward Gorsuch earned hell.*³⁴²

The Re-Articulation and Re-Imposition of the Symbolic Order and of Sovereign Authority

Arrest/Capture

The whites rioted.

Embittered and emboldened to play slave patrollers and police, hundreds of men – the type of men eager to engage in such a hunt – were deputized according to the dictates of the *posse comitatus* doctrine of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Attorney and alderman of Lancaster City, J. Franklin Reigart alone deputized “some hundred and fifty men from the railroad” to fulfill their civil duty to aid in making arrests. In the days and weeks that followed, local historian and lawyer William Uhler Hensel described Lancaster County as a “reign of terror” as armed civil posses scoured the area for any remaining vestiges of black rebellion.³⁴³ Parker characterized it as an

“attempt at revenge by a merciless raid through Lancaster County, arresting every one unfortunate enough to have a dark skin.”³⁴⁴ A “relentless horde of whites [...] hunted black people like partridges upon the mountains.”³⁴⁵ So thirsty were these temporarily deputized officers of the law to try their hand at wantonly injuring or maiming black people, one such hunter said he would “shoot the first black thing he spotted, even if it was a cow.” Houses were ransacked; crops were destroyed; and any and all found black men, women, and children were beaten and/or arrested in the scourge’s first wave.³⁴⁶ This was but only the civil posse – those “good citizens” conscripted to “aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution” of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

If any remaining black people in Lancaster County were fortunate enough to evade the first wave of raging whites, the second wave of local, state, and federal officials intended to capture “every nigger in the county.”³⁴⁷ The Philadelphia police force sent sixty people to Lancaster County to aid the local authorities. Militias from various southern states sojourned to Lancaster with the hope of suppressing the protests of property and the abolitionists who supported such diabolical actions. The United States, at the behest of President Millard Fillmore, sent “a strong force of U.S. Marines” to the area, along with United States District Attorney, John W. Ashmead, United States Commissioner Ingraham, and a contingent of other federal deputies. The civil, state, and federal posses, were now conjoined and united in the single goal of hunting, arresting, and interrogating “every black in the county, along with many whites suspected of abolitionist sympathies.” And they did; they even captured and interrogated Eliza, Hannah, and their mother.³⁴⁸

This collectivized spectacle of civil, local, state, and federal power to suppress, capture, and otherwise arrest all remaining insurrectionary sentiments and any persons, either hospitable to the insurrectionary cause or to the people who may have been involved in such activities, is the dialogical restructuring of political power. Wherein the power relations that imputed the law’s authority was predicated upon the protection of private property in black people – indeed as Hortense Spillers frames it, the “common historical ground, the socio-political order of the New World [...] with its human sequence written in blood [...] a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile [...] willful and violent severing of the captive body, reduced to a thing”³⁴⁹ – this spectacle of capture and arrest constitutes the sovereign’s attempt to reimpose the ruling episteme of absolute power over property. This scene animates Spillers’ “protocol of ‘search and destroy’” whereby the entire “state apparatus, including judges, attorneys, ‘owners,’ ‘soul drivers,’ ‘overseers,’ and ‘men of God,’ apparently collude”³⁵⁰ to re-spatialize the sovereign’s authority over the attendant geographies of slavery (e.g., the fields, the crops, the roadways to and from plantations, etc...) ³⁵¹ while simultaneously showcasing its [*alleged*] superior strength over and against those who dared to violate its precepts. The logics at play here are cognate with the Foucault’s assessment of the constitutive relationship between the sovereign’s authority to punish and to enact revenge. “Punishment,” he writes in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), “is also a way of exacting retribution that is both personal and public; [...] the right to punish, is an aspect of the sovereign’s right to make war on his enemies: to punish belongs to that absolute power of life and death.” And even in the most quotidian of circumstances, the law’s penalty is commensurate with “the active forces of revenge.” This echoes William Parker’s understanding of the raid, as an attempt at revenge. When read in this light, the spectacle of arrest and capture, is also akin to Foucault’s conceptualization of public execution: “a policy of terror to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign” wherefore rather than an attempt to re-establish justice, the *modus operandi* of the spectacle of arrest and capture was designed to re-assert and re-activate power.³⁵²

What rings most loudly from this scene, however, is the work of violent black rebellion. The spectacular collectivization of arresting/capturing authority functions as an echo, a revalorization, or another link within the scaffolding schematics driving the semantics embedded within violent black

rebellion. Said differently, if Hannah Arendt's assessment of authority is correct, namely that force evinces the failure of authority, and if force and violence were the means by which sovereign power sought to restore its authority, then the violence of black rebellion serves to challenge the legitimizing logic upon which the spectacle of collectivized arrests and capture were constructed; the violent enactments of the Parkers and their comrades therefore functions to question authority – both before and after its deployment.³⁵³ For example, how can the collectivized spectacle of arrest/capture re-establish the legitimacy of state authority when its targets were indiscriminate and arbitrary and thus in contradistinction to the violence enacted by the Parkers? It appears the attenuating logics of the arrest/capture scene more closely adheres to the logic of terrorist violence, whereby targets are arbitrary and indiscriminatory, the same logic against which the arresting/capturing authorities were supposedly policing. The response to suppress the black insurrectionists vis-à-vis the invasion of Lancaster County by various civilian, local, state, and federal powers, and the stories subsequently narrated in response to this state-sanctioned mob, reveals another insight into the semantics of violent black rebellion. For example, the editor of the *Quarryville Sun* (Pennsylvania) observed the following: “there never went unhung a gang of more depraved wretches and desperate scoundrels than some of the men employed as ‘officers of the law’ to ravage this country and ransack private houses, in the man-hunt which followed the affray.”³⁵⁴ In sum, the original challenge violently levied by the Parkers and their comrades against state authority – the refusal to surrender to the legal dictates of U.S. Deputy Marshal Kline, Edward Gorsuch, and the remainder of the assembled hunt/return party – the resulting conclusion of such was the satiation of Gorsuch's demand – not that of the fugitive's surrender, but of having his breakfast in hell – continues to instruct and teach even in its wake.

The space opened by their challenge functions to persist in the questioning of state authority and its juridical apparatus such that the “officers of the law” (e.g., the collectivized arresting/capture mob) who are attempting to hierarchize state violence, to restore its monopoly on violence, the legitimacy of their actions and subsequently the authority upon which they are acting produces a different narrative or a different story that would not have otherwise been articulated against the Union. The performative logic of the arresting/capturing mob that presupposed collective guilt of the entire community of Christiana, whether through direct action or in support of such (even if through inaction), became upended and inversed such that the direction of guilt shifted to the structural forces that created the conditions for the Parkers to violently revolt in the first instance. The wake of the violent enactments of the Parkers and their comrades, which is constituted by the countersubversive arrest/capture spectacle and of the authority upon which it was acting, left open the space for several hanging questions.

Is the hierarchy of state violence – the poles between unlawful and lawful (state) violence – as durable as it projects itself to be? A catechism: (a) if the law that protects the right to private property in black persons facilitates the legal authority of its agents/officers to conscript anyone to hunt/return escaping property while (b) simultaneously creating the pretext for both the violent rebellion of said escaping property and the resulting countersubversive ransacking and ravaging of entire communities, and (c) if this authority derives its source of legitimacy from the U.S. Constitution, can such a Union be deemed legitimate even on its own grammatical terms? And can the violent revolt of property transgress the perceived durability of the Union? Could violent black revolt offer such a calamitous threat against power that it creates the conditions for the abolition of currently constituted epistemological orderings while capacitating new constitutions of freedom? Could the entire government and its governing apparatuses be made to collapse by the violence of fugitive slaves? The deviousness of such questions/questioning owes to the fact that they are not prescribed by the epistemological order.³⁵⁵ And these questions, posited by the violent revolt of the Parkers and their comrades, over and against the efforts of the collectivized arrest/capture spectacle,

continued to persist, the attendant possibilities to percolate. If the arrest/capture response of state power could not squash and root out such dangerous questions, the treason trial that soon followed represents the attempt to not only punish (Death is the sentence for treason.) the virulence of behaviors cognate with such questioning, but it also constitutes the attempt to crystallize the state's authority against its belligerents by re-narrating and re-telling the Union's founding origin stories so to bring to the fore and re-memorialize the symbolic ordering principles of nigger property/white property.

Treason Indictments

By October 13, 1851, thirty-eight people were charged with treason and three more people were later charged on November 14, 1851.³⁵⁶ This represents the most amount of people ever simultaneously charged for treason in the history of the United States. Among the forty-one persons to be tried, five were white: Castner Hanway, Joseph Scarlet, Elijah Lewis, James Jackson, and Jacob R. Townsend. The remaining thirty-six people were black. William Parker and those fugitives named on Gorsuch's Warrant, Josh Hammond, Nelson Ford, George Hammond, and Noah Buley, already escaped but were nonetheless tried in absentia. Thus, the named black people charged with treason, those who responded to Eliza's call are as follows:

George Williams, Jacob Moore, George Reed, Benjamin Johnson, Daniel Caulsberry, Alson Pemsley, William Brown, 2nd, Henry Green, Elijah Clark, John Holiday, William Williams, Benjamin Pindergrast, John Morgan, Ezekiel Thompson, Thomas Butler, Collister Wilson, John Jackson, William Brown, Isaiah Clarkson, Henry Sims, Charles Hunter, Lewis Gates, Peter Woods, Lewis Clarkson, Nelson Carter, William Parker, John Berry, William Berry, Samuel Williams, Josh Hammond, Henry Curtis, Washington Williams, William Thomas, William Thomas, Nelson Ford, George Hammond.³⁵⁷

A total of 117 separate indictments for treason were eventually levied and through a series of conversations with President Millard Fillmore, his cabinet members, and various politicians including Maryland Governor Louis Lowe, it was decided that Castner Hanway would be the first to stand trial for the charge of treason that he and the other defendants were accused.³⁵⁸

Lasting for less than three weeks, the case of *United States v. Hanway* (1851) commenced on November 24, 1851 and ended on December 12, 1851. The trial was tried before U.S. District Court Judge John K. Kane and Supreme Court Justice Robert C. Grier. The prosecution consisted of seven lawyers and Hanway's defense of five.³⁵⁹ The treason indictment charged that Hanway, and each of the other defendants, comprised a "great multitude of persons" with treasonous intent

to the number of one hundred persons and upwards, armed and arrayed in a warlike manner, that is to say, with guns, swords, and other warlike weapons, as well offensive as defensive, being then and there unlawfully and traitorously assembled, did traitorously assemble and combine against the said United States, and then and there, with force and arms, wickedly and traitorously, and with the wicked and traitorous intention to oppose and prevent, by means of intimidation and violence, the execution of the said laws of the United States, within the same, did array and dispose themselves in a warlike and hostile manner against the said United States, and then and there, with force and arms, in pursuance of such their traitorous intention, you, the said Castner Hanaway, with the said persons so as aforesaid, wickedly and traitorously did levy war against the United States.

The charge continues in this manner with the goal of demonstrating the intent to oppose the execution of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 by knowingly and intentionally preventing the hunt/return of legally codified parcels of property who owed “service or labor” in the State of Maryland by refusing to be conscripted into the Act’s *posse comitatus* doctrine. And though no evidence of this was presented at any point during the trial, the indictment further charged that Hanway conspired with the other black defendants, both before and after the insurrection, “in execution of the said wicked and traitorous combination to oppose, resist and prevent” the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, through the means of intimidation and force. Further, Hanway

maliciously and traitorously did meet, conspire, consult, and agree among themselves [...] further to fulfill, perfect, and bring to effect, the said traitorous intention of you, the said Castner Hanway [...] together with the other persons [i.e., the black insurrectionists], with force and arms, maliciously and traitorously did prepare and compose, and did then and there maliciously and traitorously cause and procure to be prepared and composed, divers books, pamphlets, letters, declarations, resolutions, addresses, papers and writings, and did then and there maliciously and traitorously publish and disperse, and cause to be published and dispersed divers other books, pamphlets, letters, declarations, resolutions, addresses, papers and writings, the said books, pamphlets, letters, declarations, resolutions; addresses, papers, and writings, so respectively prepared, composed, published and dispersed, as last aforesaid, containing therein, amongst other things, incitement, encouragement, and exhortations, to move, induce, and persuade persons held to service in any of the United States by the laws thereof, who had escaped into the said district, as well as other persons [i.e., other white people], citizens of said district, to resist, oppose, and prevent, by violence and intimidation, the execution of the said laws, and also containing therein instructions and directions how and upon what occasion, the traitorous purposes last aforesaid, should and might be carried into effect contrary to the form of the act of Congress in such cases made and provided, and against the peace, dignity of the United States.³⁶⁰

In Judge Grier’s charge to the jury, those instructions by which the jury ought to decide the case, he averred to the indisputable facts of the case that were not open to interpretation. Among such facts, included the legality of the hunt of the persons named, and later identified at the Parker home, in Gorsuch’s warrant; that “a number of negroes were collected upstairs, armed” and intent on preventing the return of fugitive slaves; that members of the hunt/return party fired upon the negroes after such members were fired upon first from the windows upstairs; that the members of the hunt/return party fired their weapons, though “not aimed at the negroes, but rather to frighten them and let them know their assailants were armed.” (*Why does this particular genre of persons always claim victimhood?*) Judge Grier’s explication of the other relevant incontrovertible events of the case read as follows:

That a parley was then held between the parties, and the negroes informed that the officer had legal process in his hands for their arrest. That the negroes demanded time for the purpose, as was supposed, of offering terms of surrender, but in reality, perhaps, to gain time for the arrival of assistance from the neighborhood. That after some lapse of time, the defendant arrived on the ground, and at the same time, or soon after, large numbers of negroes began to collect around with various weapons of offence, such as guns, clubs, scythes, and corn-cutters.

That on the arrival of these reinforcements, the persons in the house set up a yell of defiance. That the officer made known his character, and exhibited his writs to the defendant, and another white man who had arrived on the ground, and demanded their assistance in executing the warrants, which was refused. That the officer deeming the attempt to execute his writs in the face of a numerous armed and angry mob of negroes hopeless, made no further attempt to do so, being content to escape with his life.

That the mob of armed negroes, now amounting to near or over one hundred persons, immediately made an attack upon the party who attended the officer. Edward Gorsuch was then shot down, beaten with clubs, and murdered on the spot. His son, who came to his assistance, was shot and wounded, and with difficulty escaped with his life.

Dr. Pierce, the nephew, was surrounded and beaten, but escaped with his life.

It is in evidence, also, and not disputed, that on the preceding evening, notice had been given in the neighborhood, by a negro who had followed the officer from Philadelphia, that an arrest of the fugitives was intended, and that the concourse and riot of the morning, was evidently by preconcert and in consequence of such information.

Without at present further noticing the history of the transaction, or expressing any opinion of the conduct of the white people in the neighborhood, on the occasion, or of the miserable farce of the jury of inquest, got up as an afterpiece to this disgraceful tragedy, we may say that the evidence has clearly shown that the participants in this transaction are guilty of riot and murder at least—whether the crime amounts to treason or not will be presently considered.³⁶¹

And to render a guilty verdict for the charge of treason – that Hanway did “wickedly and traitorously intend to levy war against the United States” by intentionally preventing the implementation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and as such, disturbed “the peace and tranquility of the United States” – the prosecution needed to prove the existence of a treasonous conspiracy³⁶² whereby the violent insurrection of the negroes was orchestrated – planned and/or executed – by Hanway (and other whites) and was carried out in opposition to the Act of 1850 with the intention of overthrowing the government. The jury deliberated for less than twenty minutes and found the defendant, Castner Hanway, not guilty. United States District Attorney subsequently entered a *nolle prosequi* for all other untried bills for treason.³⁶³

The symbolic significance of treason, “the king of crimes,” as articulated by Thomas P. Slaughter, carries with it the weight to judicially define the crimes in question as being so extraordinary and so sinister, the criminal must not only die by capital punishment, but they must also die branded a traitor to the nation.³⁶⁴ An article in the *Planter's Advocate* (Maryland) dated October 1, 1851 illustrates this significance. The southern newspaper article exclaims that “the free negroes” and their abolitionist allies “must die” and “there must be no delay – no quibbling – no escape. Death must follow promptly and inevitably upon this crime.” The unnamed authors, further state that the decision to convict “is pregnant with the fate of this Union” and the outcome of such a decision “involves *the lives, the property, and the honor*, not of Marylanders alone, but of every citizen of the South.” And in a final invective against Northern authorities, the authors presage a veiled threat of secession and war: “We hope, at least, there will be no more yielding on the part of the South – at least we *do hope*, that if still willing to sacrifice political privileges and territorial possessions and our very slaves at last, *we will not* remain indifferent to the murder of our fellow

citizens.”³⁶⁵ Importantly, what the authors of this newspaper article signal is the primacy of the Union’s fate being adjudicated, that this fragility was precipitated through the violent enactments of “*the property*” revolting. And while a cursory reading might evince the same myth of white superiority and black gullibility and ignorance that some scholars have been contented to offer as reasons for Hanway’s treason charge,³⁶⁶ the release of Eliza and Hannah, and that the “free negroes” were mere pawns within the abolitionist agenda of opposing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, when read in tandem with the jury charge proffered by Judge Grier, it becomes very clear that such actions constituting levying war is almost singularly ascribed to the negroes. *Return* back and read the charge to the jury concerning the undisputable facts upon which they were to convict Hanway; it all points to the violent revolt of property against the propertied. This is further compounded when we consider another portion of Grier’s charge to the jury: Hanway “must stand or fall by the *evidence* in the cause, and not be made the scape-goat or sacrifice for the offences of others, unless he be proved to have participated in them.”³⁶⁷

If Hanway was guilty of anything, it appears it would be for the crime(s) of refusing the dictates of the *posse comitatus* doctrine and/or of aiding and abetting the escape of persons held in service to Maryland, but certainly not for levying war. In this regard, Gorsuch’s death was thus no ordinary murder: property’s violent insurrection called into question the very way(s) in which property understood themselves and their worlds (“*the lives, the property, and the honor...*”) such that the epistemological categories governing such knowledge formations needed to be re-aligned and re-narrated, a genre of countersubversion. The court proceedings cohere around, are constructed upon, and revolve around the reprogramming of perceived acceptable behaviors through the constant and consistent invocation of origin stories. These utterances function to illustrate both the perceived fragility of the Union wrought forth by the black insurrectionists at Christiana and the *pari passu* attempts to re-impose power through the violence of the arrest/capture spectacle *and* through the discursive. These stories also provide us with a tell, a similar tell that the authors of the above newspaper article disclose for us: the treason charge against Hanway sublimates the enmity of the Parkers and their comrades through the disavowal of their organized and plot against power.

The Counterinsurgency of the Discursive: More Origin Stories

A reiteration of Sylvia Wynter’s observation of origin stories: we live inside of the nation’s origin stories; they hold us, and each re/narration serves to mediate and anneal the historical and social into crystallized enclosures.³⁶⁸ And the operationalization of the discursive formation of power towards the re/defining of behavioral schematics is immediately observed in the case of the *United States v. Hanway* (1851). The U.S. District Attorney Ashmead begins his opening remarks by referencing the origin of the Union and the importance of the Fugitive Slave Acts:

It is almost needless to say, that without this provision, the Constitution of the United States never could have been adopted; the existing National Union never could have been formed, and the powerful, prosperous, and glorious Republic of the United States, never could have existed among the nations of the earth. Of the value of this Union, not only to us as a separate people, but to the common family of mankind, I admit my utter inadequacy to form an estimate, regarding it as one of those great blessings of Divine Providence which human intellect cannot fathom; and which increases in appreciation with the progressive development of its benefits.³⁶⁹

Ashmead’s invocation of the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and of 1850 as being mutually constitutive to the origin of the United States and its Constitution highlights the equiprimordial importance of

the preservation of private property in black people as consubstantially and constitutively foundational to this origin story. Appealing to the Constitution (as a pro-slavery document) is an attempt to legitimize the legal order it prescribes while simultaneously advancing the authority upon which the country was founded. And the incomprehensibility of “Divine Providence” functions to imbue this origin story with mythic authority.³⁷⁰ The plinth of Ashmead’s origin story is predicated upon a system of narrative representations (e.g., nigger property/white property)³⁷¹ impelled by citational referents that span across and through time³⁷² encoding the subjugation of black people. Taken together, Ashmead’s origin story highlights a certain orientation, or, in Paul Ricoeur’s terms, a distinct “directedness” towards the configuration of a plot,³⁷³ which universalizes the past to explain the present and reciprocally narrate the horizon of future events already etiologically prescribed and proscribed.³⁷⁴

At stake here is the way in which the country’s origin story is foundational to the prosecution’s argument that Gorsuch’s death was so extraordinarily devious that the high crime of treason was the only judicial definition for such a crime. While the prosecution may have made other legal arguments on this matter, however ineffectively, the repeated and re-articulation of the Union’s origin – over and over and over again – functions as a genre of emplotment such that the directedness of behavior it orients is weaponized against the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, and a signposting for everyone else that despite the events that unfolded at Christiana, black people (or, nigger “captive flesh” as Hortense Spillers would have it) are still parcels of property, to be used in service of their owners. The origin therefore signals the hopes and dreams of slave power: the symbolic order and its representational ordering schematics constitute the natural order of *things* such that whatever openings were created by the violent revolt of property, the ordering principle remains the same as it always has been. In other words, the symbolic ordering principle was disturbed by the violent insurrection against the property by Parker and their comrades and the repeated invocations of the origin story serves to re-establish its authority by re-gaining the legitimacy of the order’s representational matrix (e.g., who can die and who can live) from which sovereign power is derived. And this is important because it makes clear not only how long the chain of citational referents extend to create the conditions possible to simultaneously aver a universality of freedom and equality endowed to all of God’s children; it also constructs an entire governing apparatus designed to protect the right of private property in black people. The strategy of the prosecution to repeatedly cite the mythologized origin of the Union also reveals how fragile it perceived itself to be because of the violence enacted against the property and its legal protections at Christiana.

The United States of America was in its infancy in 1851, its constitution ratified merely 63 years prior in 1788. Signs that pointed to the Union’s perceived fragility – the veneration of its Constitution and its Compromise a year prior in 1850, and the reverence of the Constitution and those “Revolutionary Fathers” who helped conceived its precepts – all coalesced onto the *posse comitatus* doctrine and the Fugitive Slave Act throughout Hanway’s trial. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 “authorized and required” federal marshals “to employ so many persons as they might deem necessary” to aid in the hunt/return of fugitive slaves.³⁷⁵ Not only did the 1850 Act erect an entirely new governing apparatus dedicated to the administration of hunting/returning private property in black people, but it also conscripted an entire country into de facto slavecatchers vis-à-vis the *posse comitatus* doctrine. Imported from England’s thirteenth century practice of *jurata ad arma*, Edward I (1285) conscripted private persons to aid in the repression of riotous mobs. Carried through Great Britain’s Riot Act of 1714, however now referred to as the *posse comitatus*, stipulated the same conscription for the same ends. The colonists imported this doctrine into their nascent colonial rule as a form of legal coercion, which functioned at the local level.³⁷⁶

Indeed, the *posse comitatus* doctrine was a matter of great constitutional importance and deemed necessary to ensure against domestic insurrections. While it was primarily framed around the benign issue of state's rights, its significance as a vehicle to quell rebellions functioned to ensure its mainstay. Alexander Hamilton (1787) in, *Federalist No. 27*, for example, argues that "securing due obedience [to] the authority of the Union, and the affections of the citizens towards it, will be strengthened, rather than weakened" when "turbulent factions" are met with "the combined efforts of the Union." Against insurrections and rebellions, he further states that the *posse comitatus* doctrine compels adherence to the epistemology of the Union:

the more the operations of the national authority are intermingled in the ordinary exercise of government, the more the citizens are accustomed to meet with it in the common occurrences of their political life, the more it is familiarized to their sight and to their feelings, the further it enters into those objects which touch the most sensible chords and put in motion the most active springs of the human heart, the greater will be the probability that it will conciliate the respect and attachment of the community.

Perhaps less sanguine about the materiality of internal insurrections, he further comments that such rebellions, and their rebels, will more assuredly be squashed, and subsequently, their punishment assured when state and federal powers are marshalled together in such a defense.

The hope of impunity is a strong incitement to sedition; the dread of punishment, a proportionably strong discouragement to it. Will not the government of the Union, which, if possessed of a due degree of power, can call to its aid the collective resources of the whole Confederacy, be more likely to repress the former sentiment and to inspire the latter, than that of a single State, which can only command the resources within itself?³⁷⁷

During the Constitutional Ratifying Convention in June 14, 1788, James Madison, the country's fourth president and a co-author of *The Federalist Papers* with Hamilton, would later emphasize this point in no uncertain terms: "public force must be used when resistance to the laws required it, otherwise society itself must be destroyed."³⁷⁸ The United States Constitution was ratified the next week, and within a little more than a year's time, the *posse comitatus* doctrine was constitutionally authorized in Article III through the Judiciary Act of 1789. And prior to the Christiana Rebellion, legal scholar David B. Kopel argues that there is "no evidence indicating [...] the federal posse power [had] ever been used [...] within the United States to summon private citizens into federal service."³⁷⁹

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 fundamentally altered the doctrine's practice however, when it commanded "all good citizens" to "aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required."³⁸⁰ Whereby the deployment of the *posse comitatus* doctrine was once for emergency purposes, it was now ubiquitous and quotidian; the protection of private property in black people was now the national edict, if not in name then in function. Thus, when Castner Hanway refused to aid in the hunt/return of those persons named on Edward Gorsuch as being "fugitives from service," when compelled by United States Deputy Marshal Henry H. Kline to do so in the name of the law, Hanway violated "his duty as an American citizen."³⁸¹ When United States President Millard Fillmore and members of his cabinet, including United States District Attorney John Ashmead and Secretary of State David Webster, decided to charge Hanway with treason, his dereliction of duty was but one thread of the prosecution's case.³⁸² As U.S. District Attorney Ashmead would later argue in his opening statements in the case of the *United States v. Castner Hanway* (1851), "the treason charged against the defendant is, that he wickedly devised and

intended to disturb the peace and tranquility of the United States, by preventing the execution of the laws” as it pertains to the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and its amended version of 1850.³⁸³

Maryland Attorney General, Robert J. Brent, utters this precise scenario in an address to the jury by stating the following:

much as the Union is venerated and beloved, North and South, East and West, there are some things that may precipitate ruin and disaster upon that Union. I tell you, that whenever that day shall arrive, that any considerable portion of the people, (and particularly the people of the South) shall be satisfied, that the constitution of your country is but idle parchment; that the bond of the Union is but a bond of fraud and injustice; I tell you, in ‘that dreadful day of wrath,’ there can be no longer Union [...] if they did not maintain the rights which had been handed down to them by their Revolutionary forefathers. We all cherish and love the Union. We all agree at the South, that if the Union is to be dissolved, and such a question is to be agitated, the sin is not at our door, but it is upon the conscience of a miserable and wicked faction in the North, who are seeking to rend asunder the bonds of this Union.³⁸⁴

Brent is commenting on the sanctity of the Fugitive Slave Acts and of its Constitutional mandate to return the fugitive parcels of property to their respective owners, and the failure to do so threatens civil war (“the dreadful day of wrath”). He continues in this vein to “enrich upon the blessings and glory of the Union and the disasters which would result from its destruction” noting that the totality of the Fugitive Slave Act is “but mere instruments, and the anathemas of heaven and of man” to which “the Union, and the charter of the Constitution” facilitates the reclamation of private property. But when such legal avenues are obstructed in the “execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities,” as Brent continues with this citational referent to George Washington’s Farewell Address, “are destructive to this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency.”³⁸⁵ Here as before, Brent continues to warn of the Union’s destruction through an impending war (“fatal tendency”) if the precepts of the constitutional directives of the fugitive slave act is resisted. Moving from the ominous to the melancholy, he implores the paneled jury to imagine the “utter impossibility” of the sword’s capacity to “reunite the broken fragments of a dismembered Republic.” To do this, Brent cites the Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, naming him “the greatest mind which now lives upon American soil,” and warns that “the well-proportioned columns of Constitutional liberty [...] which unites National sovereignty with State rights, individual security, and public property [...] if these columns fall, they will not be raised again.”³⁸⁶

The move to cite Webster is not surprising given they both benefited from the labor of the enslaved,³⁸⁷ and Webster, having just a couple of months prior, in Buffalo, New York, delivered a popular speech making a similar case as Brent: resisting the fugitive slave act, and therefore the Constitution, amounted to treason. More is that Webster’s reliance on the country’s origin story in this address, is the same strategy Brent and the rest of the prosecution would undertake throughout the treason trial: everything reverts back to the origin of the Union, and of its fundamental need to be preserved.

This particular speech of Webster’s, on May 22, 1851, was in response to the “opposition [that] has sprung up in modern times” against the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, indeed just a mere nine months after its passage. He sinews a rather lengthy paean for the Constitution that formed the union between the colonies and whose government “produced a [George] Washington [...] and so

many other distinguished patriots, who had so truly served [in the Revolutionary War] and so greatly honored the whole country.” Lauding further,

“were they to be excluded from the new government because they tolerated the institution of slavery? Your fathers and my fathers did not think so and of course, when the Constitution was framed and established, and adopted by you, here in New York, and by New England, it contained an express provision of security to the persons who lived in the Southern states, in regard to fugitives who owed them service.”

And to punctuate this panegyric, Webster reminds the good (white) people of Buffalo, NY that the “bonds of political brotherhood, which holds us together from Maine to Georgia” are the most “sacred domestic ties, our most endearing social relations” to which “the history of the country from its first settlement” has always been; as “hardly any one opposed [the original Fugitive Slave Act of 1793] in order to carry the Constitution into effect” the question now at hand with regards to the agitation around the Act of 1850, according to Webster, “do we, or do we not, mean to conform to it, and to execute that part of the Constitution as well as the rest of it?”³⁸⁸

Two insights can be gleaned here. First, Webster’s narrative articulation of the country’s origin and of its sanctimonious slave-owing founders as a method to compel adherence to the Union’s laws, and specifically to the nationalized hunt/return doctrine of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, reveals a profound and predominate anxiety anent the perceived perdurability of the Union. The near incessant need to invoke an origin story, as observed here and throughout the prosecution’s case against Castner Hanway, signals the presence of a devious discordance that needs to be discursively realigned, reordered, and reformed. The repeating return to the origin is, in Paul Ricoeur’s words, placing “consonance where there was only dissonance.”³⁸⁹ The internal enemy prefigured by Cicero and legally inveighed against by such judiciary articulations posited by Madison and Hamilton, now being adjudicated against, in absentia, by Brent and the United States – the chaos induced by revolting property required a form of narrative conversion whereby those sacred political bonds of which Webster spoke, must be strengthened and assured: the “opposition of modern times” could be reversed and cohered again for the harmony of the Union. And if it is at the point of the origin story that power was seeking to re-assert its regulatory and behavior-inducing episteme, constitutive of its memories and its myths, then it is also here at the symbolic level of narrative where the violent rebellion of the Parkers and their comrades would contest power. Violent black rebellion is an antithetical narrative to power’s origin and its origin stories: the semantics of violent black rebellion makes dissonant what power desires to be consonant.

The second insight here is revealed through the disavowal of the enslaved within Webster’s plea for obedience and within the paralipsis of Madison and Hamilton’s discussion of insurrection without mentioning or naming such as slave revolts. And this is particularly glaring given the *posse comitatus* doctrine was regularly deployed throughout the colonies to kill, maim, and otherwise suppress the revolts of the enslaved.³⁹⁰ The language deployed, such as “your fathers” and “hardly any one opposed,” further highlights the omission of the enslaved despite the omnipresent fear of revolts constantly threatening slave power and demonstrates the discursive process by which judicial, legislative, and political utterances formalizes institutional behavior while tying the behavioral matrix of people into practices.³⁹¹ This is the work of those essays of Sylvia Wynter from which this chapter is primarily informed, laid bare, wherefore the equiprimordiality of storytelling constitutes the discursive and institutional formations of power that amalgamates to form the social order’s epistemological grounds from which the realm of possibilities are delineated and delimited.³⁹² Moreover, such paralipsistic disavowals also reveals the scotomatous veneers through which such utterances are constructed and how such misinterpretations come to appear veridical.³⁹³ Such

elisions concerning the enslaved – the construction of enfleshed property as being enacted upon and never acting – as a matter of judicial, legislative, and political utterances ultimately facilitated the federal government’s charge against Castner Hanway with the high crime of treason.

Before moving forward to the final portion of this section, it is worth highlighting two judicial utterances that may prove helpful in demonstrating the precise valence of deviousness embedded within the questions posited by the violent revolt of the Parkers and their comrades. The violent insurrection at Christiana evinces what both rulings inveigh against: property killing the propertied strikes at the nation’s very core of its governing *modus operandi*. Insofar as the judiciary can be thought of as a genre of “institutional behavior” that directs the actions of others, the semantics of the violence levied against the epistemological foundation of the Union, of which the judiciary is mutually constitutive, a clearer picture may begin to emerge as to how these semantics create the necessary opening for slave power to bleed out – if only inasmuch slave power perceived its authority to be a mimetic function of Gorsuch’s bleeding/dead body.

On the legal matter as to whether a slave owner could be criminally charged with assaulting a slave, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled in the case of *The State v. Mann* (1829) that slaves, property as they were, have no redress to the courts. Judge Ruffin’s decision on the matter was characterized by Eugene Genovese in *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1976) as the example *par excellence* anent the “logic of slavery [having] been followed so faithfully.”³⁹⁴ At stake here is Judge Ruffin’s dictum concerning the relationship between the slave, owner, and the Court. Ruffin’s written words are so striking that it is worth quoting at length:

With slavery [...] the end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person and his posterity, to live without knowledge and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits. What moral considerations shall be addressed to such a being to convince him what it is impossible but that the most stupid must feel and know can never be true — that he is thus to labor upon a principle of natural duty, or for the sake of his own personal happiness, such services can only be expected from one who has no will of his own; who surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect. [...] There is no remedy. This discipline belongs to the state of slavery. They cannot be disunited without abrogating at once the rights of the master and absolving the slave from his subjection. It constitutes the curse of slavery to both the bond and free portion of our population. But it is inherent in the relation of master and slave.

That there may be particular instances of cruelty and deliberate barbarity where, in conscience, the law might properly interfere, is most probable. The difficulty is to determine where a Court may properly begin. Merely in the abstract it may well be asked, which power of the master accords with right? The answer will probably sweep away all of them. But we cannot look at the matter in that light. The truth is that we are forbidden to enter upon a train of general reasoning on the subject. We cannot allow the right of the master to be brought into discussion in the courts of justice. The slave, to remain a slave, must be made sensible that there is no appeal from his master; that his power is in no instance usurped; but is conferred by the laws of man at least, if not by the law of God. The danger would be great, indeed, if the tribunals of justice should be called on to graduate the punishment appropriate to every temper and every dereliction of menial duty.

Ruffin's decision, which was widely circulated and cited in subsequent case precedent, makes clear that the POWER OF THE MASTER MUST BE ABSOLUTE as conditionally requisite for the relationship between property and owner. And this relationship of complete dominion is necessary for not only the security of the owner (!), but that the public's tranquility rests upon the total subordination of the slave. And crucially here, Ruffin explains that THERE CAN BE NO REDRESS FOR THE SLAVE beyond the state of slavery itself because THE RIGHT OF THE MASTER MUST NOT EVEN BE ALLOWED TO BE BROUGHT INTO DISCUSSION IN THE COURTS OF JUSTICE FOR IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO JEOPARDIZE A CHANGE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP. Ruffin concludes with the following: IT WILL BE THE IMPERATIVE DUTY OF THE JUDGES TO RECOGNIZE THE FULL DOMINION OF THE OWNER OVER THE SLAVE.³⁹⁵

Twenty years later in 1849, two years prior to the Christiana Rebellion, he provides a dissenting opinion in the case of *The State v. Caesar* (1849) that extends his argument of absolute dominion of the slave to its owner regarding the plausibility of a slave killing its owner. Here, in a remarkable yet instructive schizophrenic-like break from reality, he says throughout his near forty-five year long career, he has "not known or heard of half a dozen instances of killing or attempting to kill a white man by a nigger in a scuffle." However (!!!), "when a slave [does] kill a white man," it is not because the slave possesses "unusual" cruelty, but rather the resultant death is the consequence of "a bad heart – one intent upon the assertion of an equality, social and personal, with the white, and bent on mortal mischief in support of the assertion." But because this assumes the negro capable of judging for themselves they need not recognize the authority of "the white," Ruffin concludes this "to be a dangerous doctrine [...] as to the right or propriety of resistance, by one of his own race, to the authority taken over them by whites, and, upon the notion of a generous sympathy with their oppressed fellow servants, may step forward to secure them from the hands of a white man, and much less to avenge their wrongs." This chain of actions, which begins first by property "denying their general subordination to the whites," eventuates with "denouncing the injustice of slavery itself, and upon that pretext, band together to throw off their common bondage entirely."³⁹⁶ (!!!) (!!!)

Ruffin's judiciary utterances are illustrative of several key points. The first of which is how utterly inconceivable it is to imagine the violent revolt of the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, to actually kill a white person ("half a dozen instances") while in the same breath, he is able to imagine the collective and collaborative theory and praxis of violent black rebellion whereby it may propitiate other instances of revolt, and the questions opened by such allow for the deepening of such communal bonds, and too, for different constitutions of being. Remarkable! While the telos ascribed here, namely to be as free as the white man, is a bit of a misnomer given that he is not very free at all,³⁹⁷ it does serve to point towards the concomitant nightmarish reality within which slave power existed: on one hand, property has almost never revolted and determined itself to be a better judge than those who claim ownership over it – disavowing the actual reality of *thingz* thus becomes the only way to believe this, to create a different reality; and on the other hand is the gesture towards a biblical-like day of judgement, whereby the world as slave power knows it ceases to exist and having passed judgement, a new order would therefore be constituted by violent black rebellion. In some ways, this foreshadows Christiana.

What I hope is clear, dear reader, is why the violence enacted by property against the propertied, particularly within the ambit of the Union's fragility concerning the Compromise of 1850 and within the judicial, legislative, and political utterances herewith discussed, which serve as but mere examples of the discursive formations of power against violent slave rebellion: new stories might be written and subsequently lived through. And this is precisely why the death of Gorsuch transcended the normal run-of-the-mill murder; Gorsuch's dead body, along with his son's now

deformed body, came to mirror the perceived consequences of property killing its claimants: slave power and the world it portended for them could cease to exist (or live on in a different form). But is this commensurate with the treason charge against Hanway? The concluding portion of this section's story speculates that the enmity ascribed to the enslaved, free or otherwise, animates the treason charge. While everything heretofore discussed, and as would later be legislated in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) ruling, of which our Judge Grier concurs with the Taney's majority opinion – the United States Constitution could not and does not include the negro – makes clear that the enslaved are owed no rights and as such, cannot commit treason given there are no relations of allegiance. Therefore, it is the other treason clause that operationalizes the charge: Hanway did adhere to the enemies of the United States by “giving to them aid and comfort.”

A Brief and Speculative Reading: “To Witness the Massacre of White Men”³⁹⁸

speculate v. 1 *to meditate on or ponder a subject: reflect; ●. tr. 1 to take to be true on the basis of insufficient evidence: theorize. 2 to be curious or doubtful about: wonder*

It is not required to perform a great series of mental hurdles to conceive of the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, as enemies. To the extent of the readings already herewith discussed anent Cicero, Locke, and even Judge Ruffin's judiciary utterances, the enslaved in a general sense, fugitive or otherwise, and the Parkers and their comrades more specifically, evidence the betrayal and evasion of the social order's truth. And their configuration as an internal class of people to whom no rights are owed, evoke an easily observable contradiction of those values declared in its founding documents and its governing apparatus that must preserve the right to private property in black people. Taking this as a starting point, even before concluding this enemy status by pointing to such appellations inscribed to the Parkers and their comrades in the works of historians like Hensel (1911) wherein he comments, “the Gorsuches, father and son, stood their ground and took the enemy's fire.”³⁹⁹ For this would remove the wonder of speculating or theorizing. Rather, I want to mediate on the agents of the Court and their narration of the events at Christiana. Let's begin first with the charge of treason against Hanway and the evidence provided to therewith substantiate it.

As we have already discussed, the treason clause being charged against Hanway is that of levying war. And in order for the prosecution to prove its case, they had to evidence the existence of a conspiracy and the intent to overthrow the government. If Hanway's refusal to be conscripted into the *posse comitatus* to aid in the hunt/return of fugitive slaves, as per the dictates of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, satisfies this definition, then what constitutes the traitorous aspect of the charge? That this refusal is so sinister that it cuts to the core of the country and therefore operationalizes the attempt to overthrow it? Silly as this seems, if we momentarily assume its veracity, the return to the origin stories for the protection and preservation of private property being fundamental to the laws of the country through which all concepts of justice and morality are operationalized evidence this threat. And as Hanway's refusal was a “concerted and combined resistance by force” to the Act of 1850, Hanway's “declared intent” was to render the Act inoperative; and to do so *would therefore constitute the threat to the nation*.

In this scenario, treason could not be the actual levying of war. According to testimony and to the prosecution's own opening statement, “Hanway rode a short distance down the lane leading from Parker's house and sat on his horse watching the blacks.” This means he was not actually levying war. And even as the prosecution went to great lengths, with citational references going back to the 1200s, to demonstrate the validity of a treason charge “without regard to the quantum of force or numbers employed,”⁴⁰⁰ both judges in this case make clear that the evidence presented by the prosecution did not establish the existence of a conspiracy to levy war. But what of Hanway's

affirmation of the Parkers and their comrades to rightfully defend themselves? Could this be the treason?

James Cooper of the prosecution spends a significant amount of time on this matter. In particular, as he recalls, when Hanway told U.S. Deputy Marshal Kline that the negroes have a right to defend themselves – and that this was said in the presence of the negroes – Cooper argues that this constitutes a conspiracy of “devoted destruction” such that Hanway’s language “was calculated to inflame them, and hurry them on the execution of the bloody deed which they afterwards committed. Cooper asks the jury that if this was not Hanway’s true intention, then “why was it that he sat on his horse, whilst the negroes were about him lading their guns, without uttering a single word in rebuke of their bloody purpose?” Further imploring the jury of Hanway’s treason for not doing more to be a better white man – a relationship projected through Jefferson’s Anglo nationalism – Cooper says, “but no word counselling obedience to the laws was spoken; no appeal to their humanity was made; no caution given; no attempt of any kind to turn them from their purpose. On the contrary, they were told in substance, that they had a right to defend themselves [...] could have no other tendency than to ensure its violation. Excited, ignorant, scarcely aware of the consequences to themselves or others, of resisting the laws of the United States, such a remark, made by a white man [...] was well calculated to produce the violence which ensued, and ensued almost immediately.” But again, no evidence was presented to satisfy the requirement that this conspiracy existed. Moreover, if it was in fact Hanway’s responsibility to “hold the excited and infuriated blacks in check” as a “worthy and respectable citizen” ought do, it seems Hanway is guilty of being a bad white man for expressing some vague notion of solidarity through indifference.⁴⁰¹

Robert Brent for the prosecution references the peculiarity Eliza’s horn being signaled. Rather than being convinced that the horn was to signal breakfast, as the defense argued (HAHA!), Brent argues that the horn was to signal to “their friends [...] a banner cry of hell” that the Parkers and their comrades were overwhelmed by the hunt/return party, and on the verge of surrender, “armed bands of negroes ready to kill” appeared and those negroes located in the house “became encouraged AND WERE SHOUTING, AND BEATING THEIR CLUBS AND GUNS UPON THE FLOOR WHEN THEY SAW OTHER NEGROES COMING TO THEIR RESCUE.” Brent’s observation here is telling because he locates guilt as belonging to Hanway for not imploring the “armed band of negro conspirators” to surrender. Instead, he “incited and encouraged them by words, even though he struck no blow.” Brent further argues that the “horn was a signal to bring to the rescue of those in the house THE ENEMIES OF THE LAW, WHO WERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.” From this we can observe that the plinth of the prosecution’s narrative argument here, though they explicitly stated their legal argument was in favor Hanway levying war, the treason charge accords more closely with giving aid and comfort to the enemy – and the resulting death of Gorsuch is only legible through the dissimulation of enemy status of the Parkers and their comrades.

At each narrative articulation offered by the prosecution, and even the judges of the case, “the resistance of the South” is constituted by the violence of the Parkers and their comrades. And this resistance from an internal enemy – inimical nigger property – is conterminously narrated through an eschatological telos that if left unpunished, which is otherwise to say if they were allowed to remain alive, the soul of the South would share the same destiny with that of Edward Gorsuch. James Cooper, in his closing arguments, implores the impaneled jury to withhold nothing from punishing Hanway; the resultant death of Edward Gorsuch was “on the skirts of the white men” who allowed the negroes “to load their guns, without uttering a single word in rebuke.” Hanway had therefore, through his silence, consented to provide aid and comfort to the “negroes [...] who were devoted to destruction [and] were standing around armed, ready for the attack.” Continuing, Cooper argues that “their [the negroes] bloody purpose” that resulted in “the murder of an

unoffending citizen [Edward Gorsuch],” to which Hanway adhered, must be punished in the name of “the obligations which the constitution imposes.” Failure to do so “will produce discord, and alienation, and finally enmity” in all the associations “between the North and the South” such that “kindred blood will be shed by kindred hands.” The “concerted and collateral act” between Hanway and “the huzzas and other demonstrations” of the negroes allows for the transference of the enmity endowed to the negroes onto the entire North.⁴⁰² This transference and telos (e.g., if unpunished, then “will produce” “and finally”) is echoed in the trial’s closing bench comments. Judge Grier, attesting to the “bloody resistance to the laws of the land [...], the guilt of this foul murder rests on the deluded individuals who were its immediate perpetrators [...] that are not only dangerous to the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the citizens of these United States, and leading to the dissolution of the Union, but subversive to all human government.”⁴⁰³

Operationalized here is the logics of Cicero’s piratical figure, that was transmuted through the citational referents of Hobbes, Locke, and Jefferson’s always incipient violently revolting slave figure that had to be legislated against and narrated into the oppositional pole of the Union’s origin story as the property to which there exists a primordial and fundamental right to own and use however deemed appropriate. More germane to the issue at hand however, is that when, nearly a year later, Maryland Governor Lowe spoke before General Assembly of Maryland and calls for the “annihilation of the criminal mobs that shed the blood of your [the South’s] constituents”⁴⁰⁴ and that “no people can plead innocence, who stand by as passive spectators,” referencing Hanway’s inaction to stop the riotous blacks from killing Gorsuch, the enemy status of the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, was cognately understood as a genre categorizing all black people as the symbol that needed to be conquered and annihilated. And this understanding animates the charge of treason against Hanway, through the disavowal of the violent revolt, which was (schizophrenically) incomprehensible, while abundantly clear that the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, had to be annihilated.

The Romanticism movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, transfigured the treatment of the enemy figure. In the epics of epochs past, the enemy was conceived as a mirror figure such that it represents the “baseness on both sides,” a signaling of the need to be cautious and as a reminder of the ideals strived for. The enemy was projected with the same fear for depravity that haunted the imaginations of the storyteller and of the social order. The Romantic themes of an idealized past and the primacy of nature and individualism reconfigured the enemy figure such that it was now sublimated into the landscape, seascape, deserts, and the tropics. The enemy therefore became the symbol of everything that man in the new world must conquer, defeat, and annihilate; the enemy became the symbol against which empire in the new world was constructed. Storytelling makes this possible. Of this period, Sylvia Wynter writes, “what men dreamt and wrote, and what they lived coexisted side by side. Literature realized itself in life, and life surprised itself as literature.”⁴⁰⁵

Part V. Dangerous Insightz and New Storiez (?)

remembrance of things past can give rise to dangerous insights

– Sylvia Wynter, *Novel and History, Plot and Plantation*, 1971 (p. 101)

Atqui si tempus est ullum iure hominis necandi, quae multa sunt, certe illud est non modo iustum, verum etiam necessarium, cum vi vis inlata defenditur

– Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro Milone*, 52 BCE, [9]⁴⁰⁶

in an instant there will be blood shed where the glowworms pull their little electric lamp-chains to celebrate the Compitalia // and the childish tricks of the alphabet of spasm which constitutes the great boughs of heresy or complicity // there will be the indifference of the ocean liners of silence that furrow // day and night the cataracts of the catastrophe in the proximity of wise human temples in transhumance [...] // scolopendra scolopendra // until the cavalcades sow their wild oats in the salt meadows of abysses their ears filled with the human humming rich in prehistory // scolopendra scolopendra

– Aimé Césaire, *The Miraculous Weapons*, 1983

TO MAKE IT NEW
We'll throw these boundaries
Through the window.
We shall search for non-archy
No hierarchy
No law and order
Only Harmony
No Binding Categories
Only states of being
Of becoming
Of searching ...

– Ramabai Espinet, *Orthodoxies*, 1991

The marginal and the deviant sense in advance the shock of cultures; they live its future excess. The rebel paves the way for such a shock, or at least its legibility, by refusing to be cramped by any tradition at all, even when the force of his rebellion comes from the defense of a tradition that is ridiculed or oppressed by another tradition that simply has more powerful means of action. The rebel defends his right to do his own surpassing; the lives of marginal and deviant persons take this right to extremes. [...] Its results are unpredictable.

– Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 1997 (pp. 156; 95)⁴⁰⁷

On the night of September 10, 1851, roughly fifty miles west of Philadelphia and twenty miles north of the Maryland border in a small farming community in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, nestled on a hill that overlooks the Chester Valley and the Delaware River, a secluded two-story stone house was the site of much merriment: an apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves. The runaways danced around the fire and sang songs of freedom and ate apple butter until their heart's delight. This house was home to Eliza Ann Elizabeth Howard and her husband William Parker and

their children, Maria, John, and Catherine. Eliza's sister, Hannah, and her husband, Alex Pinckney, also made this house their home. Having all escaped from slavery, and indeed still escaping, they opened their home to other fugitive runaways who were in search of shelter as they were making their way north, to those who lived nearby and needed to wash clothes in the river, and/or to those weary runaways, "intoxicated with dreams and freedom" who sought to channel all of their heartbreak through "the powerful rhythm of the drum" seeking to experience "something akin to freedom." And though it was reported that these trysts between fugitive families, friends, and comrades were a common occurrence at the homestead, this night would be the last; an overgrown field is now all that remains.⁴⁰⁸

An apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves. What if we were to begin this chapter's final story here? What stories might be told – anew and/or differently – if the inquiry commenced not with a concern regarding the stories narrated by power, as the Prologue and Part I may suggest, but rather located its starting point at this party? What might we begin to learn by the seeming paradoxical poetics of this scene? The togetherness of refusing to accept their shared conditions of unfree – what new conceptions of freedom, and likewise methods of contesting our unfreedoms, might be gleaned if we were to escape into the realm of imagining the profundity of the spirituality required to even dream the world anew? In what ways might doing so evince the various modalities of knowing and being necessary to dance and sing collectively and collaboratively – with the hope of better things – as if these modalities of knowing and being were not also informed by the lurking peril of annihilation? What emancipatory openings might be sought if we imagined the [ludic] laughter of those boiling apple butter? What stories did *they* share with each other? What new forms of living might be conceptualized, in both theory and praxis, by listening to the secondary rhythms produced by the drum? What might the polyphonic, asymmetrical, and ultimately antiphonic expressions incite?

An apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves. The scene itself evokes an interconnected dialectical process of terror and hope. Terror: state power and its drive to annihilate. Hope: the assertions made by the (fugitive) slaves for an otherwise life – a life enmeshed in, and lived through, the struggle to re/build and to re/write their worlds with new memories (hope). Terror: the right to private property serves the ends to which the Union governs and the right to private property in black people functioned as the means by which the Union became a guarantor of rights. Rights were therefore secured through the [attempted] annihilation of every black person's soul, body, and when deemed necessary, their very existence.⁴⁰⁹ The logics that made this form of terror possible – the same logics that precipitated the arrival of the hunt/return posse at the Parker's home threatening various forms of death – *continue* to haunt us and those I love dearly. Hope: the epistemology that produced such logics also created the conditions for the Parkers and their comrades to collectively and collaboratively challenge the proleptic plot authored for them. Terror: the Parkers were expecting the arrival of Gorsuch and his hunt/return party. Hope: and still (!!), they sang, danced, laughed, showed up for each other, and they plotted for the possibility of a new beginning.

An apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves. The appellation and conceptual framing of this event as such helps us imagine the ways in which the Parkers and their comrades mis/read the world made for them while simultaneously disclosing the stakes of their already-ongoing heretic rebelliousness. At once, the adjective "runaway" and the noun "slaves" signals the preexistence of an epistemic code that makes possible for the social order's laws to categorize the Parkers and their comrades (and black people more generally) as property/propertyable. These terms also conjure the "disciplining discourses"⁴¹⁰ and origin stories required to maintain this categorization and the "forms of life"⁴¹¹ it authors. However, when we consider "runaway" to be a verb and conjoin it with other verbs like "party" and "hosted," a different semantic expression

begins to emerge. The audacity necessary to even conceive of hosting an apple butter party for other runaway slaves while knowing that death would be arriving at their door the following morning suggests an imaginative assertion of living that not only signals the extant excess of the social order's epistemology – that power and its stories are both unstable and hijackable, but so too provide us with the insight needed to write new stories with new demands for an otherwise. *An apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves* elucidates a shared, collaborative, and relational practice of re/writing our worlds anew – voraciously living through the unfinished stories.

During his final instructions for the jury, Judge Grier went to great lengths to explain that the insurrection of the Parkers and their comrades were "connected with no public purpose."⁴¹² Imploring the jury how they ought to treat the insurrectionary actions of the Parker Crew when Castner Hanway was on trial, is of course illustrative of the previous section's story: despite being tried for the levying war component of treason, the already floating ascription of enmity to the Parker Crew specifically, and to the enslaved (fugitive or otherwise) more generally, sustains and animates the charge of treason against Hanway – for adhering to the Union's enemies and giving them aid and comfort. Looking beyond this obvious tell for a moment, Grier provides the jury with a long sinuous story of case law and precedent reaching back to the same monarchical jurists the prosecution cited (e.g., "Foster, Hale, and other writers") and stretching forward to the English Revolution during the time of Hobbes and Locke and to those incendiary instances of treasonously levying war against the U.S., namely *United States v. Mitchell* (1795) and *United States v. Fries* (1799).

On the surface, the purpose of Grier's story – which owes to the citational referents of case law that typically function on a closed citational loop of legal precedence – is to explain to the jury how treason has been defined "within the true meaning of the Constitution." For our purposes, it is unnecessary to rehearse the dross of his story in its entirety. What is germane to our purpose here however, is the following: (1) the charge of treason for levying war must be evidenced by the combination of "a body of people [who] conspire and meditate" to oppose any United States statute through violent means; (2) levying war requires the evidencing of intention to execute the conspiracy through violent means; and (3) the degree of force used is irrelevant, the amount of people that participated is immaterial, and the implementation of the conspiracy's outcome is inconsequential; "any insurrection to resist or prevent by force or violence the execution of any statute of the United States" is an act of "levying war against the United States."

Crucial to Grier's story is that the levying of war against the United States, constitutive of the "conspiracy and the insurrection connected with it," must be of a public and general nature." He goes on to say, "a number of fugitive slaves may infest a neighborhood ... [and] ... may resist the capture of any of their number; they may resist with force and arms, their master or the public officer, who may come to arrest them; they may murder and rob them," and though they are "liable to punishment," they are "guilty not as traitors." Grier goes on to repeat, at least five times, the insurrection of the "fugitives in the neighborhood" is "of a private, not of a public nature; their object is to hinder or remedy a private not a public grievance." And despite "however great their numbers may be," says Grier, "their insurrection, their violence" are to be classified according to the schematics conceived by Alexander the Great (356 BCE-323BCE): war and robbery constitute defining distinction of ends such that war is a national and public interest (political) while robbery is personal and private (non-political). And to drive this point home, Grier states that "the persons engaged in [...] the assault and murder," speaking of the Parkers and their comrades, "is deeply to be deplored," but such offenses are not matters of the United States, because the charge of treason does not "rise to the dignity of levying war."⁴¹³

If we take it at face value, Grier's story may appear to be aboveboard. As the court records suggest, and as he makes clear to the jury, the prosecution did not provide (any) evidence to support the existence of a conspiratorial effort intending to overthrow the United States. Moreover, William Parker's *Story* attests to the fact that they were not attempting to overthrow the government. Rather, the plot – and the plotting – of their collective efforts was in service to ensuring “no slaveholder [could] take back a fugitive.”⁴¹⁴ But when Grier suggests there was also no evidence to suggest that the negroes even knew about the Act of 1850,⁴¹⁵ the implication being that (1) they were ignorant of such legislation *and* (2) the resistance to the law constituted a private (non-political) purpose of protecting their friends rather than a public (political) desire towards its nullification, his story begins to turn on itself.⁴¹⁶

A more sinister (sub)text to Grier's story is, of course, the distinction being made along public/private interests here implies that black people, enslaved or otherwise, possess no claim to the government. This harkens back to the legal reasoning we observed in the previous section with Judge Ruffin and extends forward to *Scott v. Sandford* (1857), which ruled black people are not citizens and possess no claim to the duties owed by the government. Grier was among those U.S. Supreme Court Justices who ruled on the case and wrote a concurring decision that fully agreed with Chief Justice Roger Taney's opinion: neither the Declaration of Independence nor the United States Constitution applied to black people – enslaved, fugitive, or otherwise:

The unhappy black race were separated from the white by indelible marks, and laws long before established, and were never thought of or spoken of except as property, and when the claims of the owner or the profit of the trader were supposed to need protection. [...] More especially, it cannot be believed that the large slaveholding States regarded them as included in the word citizens, or would have consented to a Constitution which might compel them to receive them in that character from another State. For if they were so received, and entitled to the privileges and immunities of citizens, it would exempt them from the operation of the special laws and from the police regulations which they considered to be necessary for their own safety. It would give to persons of the negro race, who were recognized as citizens in any one State of the Union, the right to enter every other State whenever they pleased, singly or in companies, without pass or passport, and without obstruction, to sojourn there as long as they pleased, to go where they pleased at every hour of the day or night without molestation, unless they committed some violation of law for which a white man would be punished; and it would give them the full liberty of speech in public and in private upon all subjects upon which its own citizens might speak; to hold public meetings upon political affairs, and to keep and carry arms wherever they went. And all of this would be done in the face of the subject race of the same color, both free and slaves, and inevitably producing discontent and insubordination among them, and endangering the peace and safety of the State. [...] It is impossible, it would seem, to believe that the great men of the slaveholding States, who took so large a share in framing the Constitution of the United States, and exercised so much influence in procuring its adoption, could have been so forgetful or regardless of their own safety and the safety of those who trusted and confided in them.⁴¹⁷

Concluding his remarks to the jury, he compares the Parkers and their comrades to smugglers. “[T]he fugitive slaves,” Grier states, “may be said to resist the execution of the fugitive slave law, but in no other sense than the smugglers resist revenue laws [...] and yet they will not be guilty of treason, because it is not an insurrection of a public nature, but merely for private lucre or

advantage.”⁴¹⁸ And with this, the skeins of this chapter’s story, its narrative tapestry is now agglomerated.

An apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves. Limned between the lines of subject/object, inside/outside, public/private – subtended by the stories that narratively elaborated the meanings of the world created for slave power and the citations to which it repeatedly invokes its legitimacy – interdigitated by the meanings of slave and enemy, terminological slippages that portend the nothingness of that which is owed beyond a promise of (impending) annihilation – *an apple butter party hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves* precisely illustrates the terms through which the Parker Crew could/would incite their violent rebellion. The both/and of black life is animated by/through these grammars, elucidating the theory and praxis of the Parker Crew.

*these things point towards the possibility of an otherwise.*⁴¹⁹

In *Novel and History, Plot and Plantation* (1971), Sylvia Wynter puissantly argues that the New World is the history of “a dual relation between plantation and plot, the two poles which originate in a single historical process.” The plantation and the plot both are constituted by each other. But power – the fictionalized stories it creates and mythologizes; the history it writes and teaches; its various techniques of terror; and its laws designed to protect property – is never absolute and its rules are always unstable. The same symbolic ordering principle(s) (e.g., property/propertyed) that encode(s) the order of discourse, and the behavior-inducing episteme, also produces excess meaning, as Glissant notes in the above epigraph. An example of this is observed through the stories told in the literary forms of the epic and the novel. Wynter analogizes between the epic and novel form literature, whereby the epic knows nothing of questions”⁴²⁰ and represents the stories told and re-told through the logics of the plantation; and the novel, a product of the plantation’s logics, is also “the critique of [this] very [same] historical process.”⁴²¹ The epic and the novel are part and parcel of the same (market) forces of the plantation system, but the novel “is in essence a question mark.”⁴²² And this question mark – the semantical outburst of an ongoing, in-built clash between the plantation and the plot wherein violent rebellion becomes the “logical and rational basis”⁴²³ for expressing criticism – constitutes the transgressive epistemological grounds from which the rebellious actions of the Parker Crew *plot* the authoring of new stories.

Violent insurrection, in and of itself, is not enough to challenge the epistemological order. As Wynter writes in *On Disenchanted Discourse* (1987), the episteme is “not reducible to that of their individual subjects.”⁴²⁴ Rather, it is the order of discourses themselves, which are constituted by the epistemic organization of knowledge it projects through its symbolic ordering principle, and the behaviors they induce, that must be the grounds upon which new questions must be posited. The specificity of such questions prove to be unanswerable by the current/dominant/hegemonic order of knowledge. Elsewhere, in *Beyond the Word of Man* (1989), Wynter states that these questions, which are a productive “mode of revolt against the very roots of our present mode of ‘conventional reason’ and therefore of the order of discourse,” offer the opportunity for new modalities of being “into realms beyond conventional reason.”⁴²⁵ Thus what emerges from Wynter’s work, is the importance of stories – the discursive grammars through which its purported knowledge induces our behaviors – and that new stories with new meanings, new origins, and new conceptions of freedom are not authored by the installation of “a truer discourse.”⁴²⁶ Rather, this form of revolt must be levied against the founding stories of the epistemological order that institute its life/death and property/propertyable teleological function; the revolt must be played against the epistemological order itself, its origin stories, and the semantic charter therewith ordained and proscribed.

The transgressive thesis put forward by the Parkers and their comrades therefore functions as the revolt Wynter calls for: a rebellion constituted by “performative acts of countermeaning directed against the semantic charter”⁴²⁷ upon which the closed-citational loop of our current episteme operates and coheres. Whereby the violence the Parkers and their comrades enacted are

illustrative of the “performative acts of countermeaning” and the challenge “against the semantic charter” observed in the role of origin stories designed to keep the Parkers and their comrades consigned to the episteme’s symbolic ordering principle of nigger property – together and concomitantly – the necessity of writing new stories is revealed through the theory and praxis of violent revolt in the case of the Parker Crew, and so too, through the narrative form this chapter’s story.

*what needs to be brought to an end is the entire history of these past five hundred years.*⁴²⁸

One must begin somewhere.

Begin what?

The only thing in the world worth beginning:

*The End of the world of course.*⁴²⁹

The analytical frames and poetic expressions offered by Sylvia Wynter, Katherine McKittrick, Édouard Glissant, and Aimé Césaire, evince the need for, and the possibility of, re/writing new stories. But how can I tell this story without reinscribing the same logics and the same epistemological modes of knowing that the Parkers and their comrades were challenging? As Sylvia Wynter reminds us, “not even we ourselves [...] in the normal course of things” are free from the modes of knowing purported through the epistemic order; that despite knowing the world through the liminal standpoint of black, we too are constituted by the same memories born from our origin stories that structure our consciousness.⁴³⁰ And though “we have been educated as academic” and function as “the grammarians of our order,” we run the risk of either attempting to offer a “truer discourse” by inverting the logics of the same epistemological framework – or, risk being “well-versed in the ‘techniques of ordering a select body of facts within a framework that is completely consistent with the system of values [and] the cognitive model’ of society to which they belong [...] thereby ensuring the existence of each order’s conceptual framework.”⁴³¹ In both instances, the symbolic ordering principle of life/death around which the order of discourse coheres and inscribes our behavior, is validated and replicated rather than displaced. At stake for me, in narrating this chapter’s story, is thus not only the problematics of my own cloudy veneers through which I am enculturated, but the difficulty of telling this story in such a manner that it mirrors a similar operating schematic of the violent rebellion of the Parkers and their comrades. How might the semantics of such be illustrated through a narrative form that is both questioning itself and the conceptual frame that makes the Parkers and their comrades legible *ab initio*.

My *attempt to contend with* such a serious duty and obligation is grounded in what Wynter refers to as accepting “the full responsibility of its position [e.g., the existence of a capaciousness cognitive autonomous knowledge beyond the closed citational referents of the hegemonic epistemic order] as a ‘free outcast’ who confronts” the epistemic order “as a trial, task, issue and enigma, as an alien abode and therefore as the casual source of our own Good, our own Evil.”⁴³² The narration, and the textual form of this chapter’s story, is therefore *the attempt* to write this story through the expressions of the histories (and “secretive histories”) lived through from the plot – with and against the distorted histories of the plantation – and with the knowing these plot histories⁴³³ informed the “fierce collective effort to escape the mean destiny that had been imposed on this world.” These expressions of being and knowing – imbued through “syntax, sound, and poetics of rhythm” narratively composed and authored in seemingly nonorderly pieces – gesture towards the “logically seditious”⁴³⁴ grammars through which the Parkers and their comrades contested the origin narratives kept secure by the United States Constitution. And as the violence enacted by the Parker Crew is congruent with the semantics of the question mark – imbued with the audacity of *an apple butter party*

hosted by runaway slaves for runaway slaves and tonality that challenges, laughs, suspects, indicts, and creates the space for more questions – the enjambments of this chapter’s story – the meanings carried on/from one section to the next without terminal punctuation – the pauses and its stop-and-go narrative form – is my attempt to *contend with* the paradox of academic writing, which purports to grasp claims to knowable subjects/outcomes, while simultaneously attempting to demonstrate the open-ended and unfinished story the Parkers and their comrades provide for us.

If the stories herewith narrated seems long, dear reader, it is because the story into which the Parkers and their comrades intervene is long. If the references to the many citations herein discussed and signaled appear to be redundant, it is because these stories are in fact recursive and circular. If the composition of this story does not respect the commands of academic writing, it is because I took seriously what Sylvia Wynter said: “disrespect all of the order’s commands [laughter].”⁴³⁵ If these stories feel as though they are distracting, burdensome, onerous, and/or tedious, it is because they are. If the violence enacted upon the enslaved, whether physically and/or as a function of the law and the stories therein contained, takes too long to read while the actual violence of the Parker’s violent revolt is rather brief in comparison, it is because the violence of slave power – and its many mutations into the current time of slavery, as Saidiya Hartman names it – is epistemologically ossified at/within/through the structures of power, discursively and institutionally – while the praxis of violent revolt amongst the oppressed is always fleeting and ephemeral, even if its theory is always being un/done, re/written, re/made, and re/created in the stories *we* hold and share.

And this can be observed with the piratical figure transumed from Cicero, which was governed through and against to construct the New World, which later served as the enemy figure and the signaling of the allegorical truth for the annihilation of heretics. When Judge Grier erroneously qualified the insurrection of the Parker Crew as owning a similar private interest as smugglers, he unintentionally provided us with a framework to think about the violence used by the Parkers and their comrades to write their world anew. And though Grier was attempting to argue, as a matter of law and of legal precedent, that black people, fugitive slaves, or otherwise, have no recourse to the government and therefore its founding origin stories contained within the United States Constitution – and too, that black people, fugitive slaves or otherwise, are incapable of, as a function of these founding origin stories, having and expressing political (public) demands. Parker’s understanding of having no recourse to the government and its laws is brought to the fore: *we have no country*. Grier’s misqualification shares in this understanding: the Parkers and their comrades were not interested in the grammars of freedom subtended through “juridical humanity,” the state’s horizon of being free.⁴³⁶ And cognate Saidiya Hartman’s *Scenes* (1997), there is no need to tether the violent revolt of the Parkers and their comrades to the political. What emerges here then, is the *piratical praxis* of the Parker Crew.⁴³⁷

As the work of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker demonstrate, the smuggler is at times indistinctive from the actions of a pirate. Amalgamated as the two may have been from the standpoint of power (the many-headed hydra), this conceptual slippage allows us to think through the theory and praxis, *the deadly seriousness* and agonizing attempts to negate the symbolic ordering principle by being and living rebelliously, through the lens of criminality and enmity originally inscribed by Cicero. The piratical praxis⁴³⁸ of the Parkers, is therefore suggestive not only of Cicero’s piratical figure that animates Locke’s state of war – those to whom no rights are due, are killable on sight, and the figure against the legitimization of the Union is constructed – but more importantly, it illustrates the collaborative and laborious efforts to sustain each other through informal networks and alliances. The Parker Crew, along with the other unnamed black persons, free or otherwise, who responded to Eliza’s call evidence the robust and generous community to which they all worked to create and sustain, external to state-sanctioned modes of collectivities.

The etymological root of the word pirate coheres to the verbs “tests,” “to attempt,” and “to act” and “contends with.” I offer that the rebellious actions of the Parker Crew comports to the very tenets of *attempting* to live in a world that could be ended at any moment; and communities of which they were apart – the secret networks that informed them of impending slave catchers and of escaping cargo that needed help escaping further north; the solemn promises made to each other that they would never be captured nor allow for others to be captured – are illustrative of the various ways in which they were *contending with* their shared status of *being* inside/outside the bounds of law. This piratical praxis, discloses the material conditions and the theoretical tenets from which the Parkers and their comrades were to *test* the possibilities for a *something else* – how might we *act* if we were already living in the worlds we desired, constituted by new treatises of community governed by different epistemological values?

The world of the Parkers and their comrades was projected through the violence of making the slave/nigger-breaking. From the modes of knowledge that made such viciousness possible, the Parkers and their comrades pirated the epistemological codes and *returned the devil's fire* to write a different story – a polyphonic plurality of possible futures from their past and present. And they protected their world, the world being made and re-made by/for/with their comrades, through violence and its semantic function. The pedagogical valence associated with the questions violence posits against the epistemological order⁴³⁹ suggests not only a possible starting point to commence the ending of the world and the beginning of a new one, but it may be a way to teach power what its history has taught us: anyone can be killed.

In 1996, a fictional children's book entitled, *William Parker: Rebel without Rights* was published. The story begins with the dreaming of freedom and ends with the continuation of dreaming the world anew, lived through the laboriousness of creation and recreation. The story ends with a beginning: “still seek: freedom of the mind, the spirit, and the body.”⁴⁴⁰ The violence enacted by the Parkers and their comrades, cognate with the semantics of the question mark, thus offers us a different kind of freedom – a freedom not operative within the closed citational loop of the stories told by Cicero, Hobbes, and Locke – but rather an orientation to freedom that is found in the space opened by violent revolt to continually seek and to live through the unfinished and unanswered questions spurned on by more questions. And this unfinished story, gestures towards the possibility of living a new now that has never before been lived.

The Parkers and their comrades provide an example of a shared and collective effort to *be* with and for each other. Their shared project of writing the world anew, building for the world they desired as if it was already at hand, *from* their place of knowing. The impossible longing for a “nostalgia for nowhere,”⁴⁴¹ and the desire to dream of empire crumbling away while simultaneously living at its heart – creates the conditions necessary to produce the attendant possibilities for new stories to be authored and for the epistemological valences therewith inscribed, trafficking “dangerous knowledge”⁴⁴² that may induce a “root expansion of thought.”⁴⁴³

To live through these possibilities is to carry all of the paradoxes and contradictions; to carry the weight of our questions and “with all our hearts, believe in opacity and giving on and with rather than finding, grasping, and having [...] the answers;” it is to live through the “difficult and often unbearable encounters [which] are riddled with impatience and are endless repetitive burdens that are ongoing and never resolved.” It is a “monumental demand” constituted and engendered to collaboratively sharing relationally “for and with each other.” Positing the form of questions that carry with it the potential to yield dangerous insights, as the stories here show the Parkers and their

comrades persistently insisted upon doing so, evinces a theory and praxis of black life “that does not assume or desire resolved outcomes.”

*An unfinished mess.*⁴⁴⁴

??????

¹ Following the work of Sylvia Wynter, these epigraphs at the beginning of sections and those throughout the body of the text serve as a guide to highlight the terrain of the argument being presented, even as I struggle to think through the very grammars of our present epistemological ordering and towards the articulation of something else. See Footnote #1 in Wynter's 2003 essay short-titled "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom" for the ways in which our discourse and our grammars encode our thinking and behaviors specifically as it relates to academic scholarship and the articulation thereof. However, this is a central tenant to her project more generally and can be found throughout any number of her essays, plays, and interviews.

² William Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1866, 288.

³ See, Parker, 288. As a matter of textual representation, it might be interesting to note here that the events that precipitated Eliza and Hannah both killing this man – the events framed as either the Christiana Tragedy or the Christiana Riot – heretofore had largely been forgotten; and it would not be for another thirty-two years after Parker's publication of "The Freedman's Story" that the subject was discussed again in any substantive matter. But when David Forbes published his book in 1898 entitled, "A True Story of the Christiana Riot," he reproduced Parker's narrative as a sort of appendix to the otherwise "true story" told in this book. And (!) Forbes removes all mention of violent black rebellion – and significantly – this includes the paragraph that informs us Eliza and Hannah killed a slave owner. See, D. R. Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot* (Quarryville, PA: The Sun Printing House, 1898), 138–54.

⁴ The histories of imperialism, colonization, and slavery – otherwise those histories associated with liberal modernity, as Lisa Lowe frames it – function to obscure the very questions we can ask of these histories and its archives because "these histories are influenced by the unevenly inhabited and inconsistently understood aftermath of these obscured conditions." The division of knowledge through disciplined thought, as a function of humanism and *modus operandi* to "give an education that would enable the student to conform to an ideal human type" further obscures what constitutes the answers derived from historical modes of inquiry. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 1–2; Sylvia Wynter, "Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I]," *Jamaica Journal* 3, no. 3 (1969): 6. For more on this predicament as it relates to westernized academics working within disciplined fields of knowledge, see: Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for Our Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Dêsetre: Black Studies toward the Human Project," ed. Lewis R. Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 107–69; Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtake, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, ed. Jason Ambrose and Sabine Broeck (Liverpool, United Kingdom: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 184–252; Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁵ Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; R. C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, PA: The Journal, 1883); W. U. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch* (Lancaster, PA: Press of the New Era Printing Company, 1911); James J. Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason* (Wesport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1852); J. Franklin Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna., Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th* (Lancaster, PA: John H. Pearsol, 1851).

⁶ Ula Yvette Taylor, "Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Professional," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 187–96.

⁷ Footnote 18. Jonathan Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1974), 334.

⁸ Katz, 127–28.

⁹ Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ella Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance* (Cherry Hill, NJ: African Homestead Legacy, 1998).

¹⁰ "More Victims of the Man-Hunt," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, September 25, 1851; "Outrage on Gov. Johnston - Another Fugitive Slave Case - The Christiana Tragedy," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1851, sec. Correspondence of the New York Daily Times; "More Surrenders," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 10, 1851; "Perplexing Case of Slave Capture," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, October 16, 1851; "Aged Woman Sent Into Slavery," *Liberator*, October 17, 1851.

¹¹ Sylvia Wynter is quoting Sir Philip Sidney to explain how history, or the stories not told by historians, implies an ever unknowability. Contextually, Wynter draws from this Sidney to demonstrate the capaciousness of poetry to create new epistemes with new modes of being vis-à-vis the differences between the factual dogma of (positivistic) historians and the poets who need not make claims of veracity, but rather to an "underlying essence" that might be or could be true. For this, see, Sylvia Wynter, "Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part II]," *Jamaica Journal* 3, no. 4 (1969): 21. To see the entirety of Sir Philip Sidney's passage from which this quote is derived, see his 1595

publication of “An Apology for Poetry” in Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney - the Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2002), 235.

¹² This is a reference to “Better in Tune (With the Infinite)” by J A Y E L E C T R O N I C A. He raps the following: My feet might fail me, my heart might ail me/The synagogues of Satan might accuse or jail me/Strip, crown, nail me, brimstone hail me/They might defeat the flesh but they could never ever kill me/They might can feel the music but could never ever feel me/To the lawyers, to the sheriffs, to the judges/To the debt holders and the law makers/Fuck you, sue me, bill me/That name on that birth certificate, that ain’t the real me/The lies can’t conceal me/The sun rise and the moon tides and the sky’s gon’ reveal me/My brain pours water out my tear ducts to heal me/My Lord’s too beneficent. Jay Electronica, *Better in Tune (With the Infinite)* (Hollywood, CA: Roc Nation, 2017).

¹³ Much has been written on this. But I am specifically thinking about these particular texts: Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14; Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2019); Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 2015; Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Avery F. Gordon, *The Hawthorn Archive: Letters from the Utopian Margins* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018); Ranajit Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45–88; Marisa J Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Samera Esmeir, “1948: Law, History, Memory,” *Social Text* 21, no. 2 (2003): 25–48; Alix Wick, *The Red Sea: In Search of Lost Space* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995); Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).

¹⁴ The concluding lines from the prologue of Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” reads as follows: “If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult.” Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (New York, NY: Random House, 1969).

¹⁵ Sylvia Wynter, “But What Does ‘Wonder’ Do? Meanings, Canons, Too? On Literary Texts, Cultural Contexts, and What It’s like to Be One/Not One of Us,” *Stanford Humanities Review* 4, no. 1 (1994): 124–29. I punctuated this sentence with an interrobang, the overlapping of “?” and “!”, so to more accurately express the sentiment of wonder I am attempting to communicate here. Together, I am seeking the meanings evoked by and through wonder, plunging, exploring, tumbling, and wading.

¹⁶ This exploratory process of fascination and frustration, and of contemplating and reorientating – a process that necessarily requires being stretched and pulled to think differently – is a similar practice, though not twinned, as that which Historian Ula Yvette Taylor explicates regarding the ways in which she had to think with the archive and Amy Jacques Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey. See, Taylor, “Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Professional.”

¹⁷ Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 2015.

¹⁸ See “Errantry, Exile” for Relation and Errantry Thought. On the Roar: “I thought about these modes that are just so many commonplaces: the fear, the wasting away, the tortured extinction, the obstinate means of resistance, the naïve belief, the famines that go unmentioned, the trepidation, the stubborn determination to learn, the imprisonments, the hopeless struggles, the withdrawal and isolation, the arrogant powers, the blind wealth, the maintenance of the status quo, the numbness, the hidden ideologies, the flaunted ideologies, the crime, the whole mess, the ways of being racist, the slums, the sophisticated techniques, the simple games, the subtle games, the deserts and betrayals, the unshrinking lives, the schools that work, the schools in ruin, the power plots, the prizes for excellence, the children they shoot, the computers, the classrooms with neither paper nor pencils, the exacerbated starvation, the tracking of quarry, the strokes of luck, the ghettos, the assimilations, the immigrations, the Earth’s illnesses, the religions, the mind’s illnesses, the musics of passion, the rages of what we so simply call libido, the pleasures of our urges and athletic pleasures, and so many other infinite various of life and death. That these commonplaces, whose quantities are both countless and precise, in fact produced this Roar, in which we could still hear intoned every language in the world. Chaos has no language but gives rise to quantifiable myriads of them. We puzzle out the cycle of their confluences, the tempo of their momentums, the similarities of their diversions.” See, Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11–22; 124–25.

¹⁹ The “somewhat secret, somewhat unknown” is a quote from Édouard Glissant as he describes the ways in which the minute offers a generative site of analysis to study power; see, *Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation* (Third World Newsreel, 2010). For the opposition between secrecy and forced exposure, this is quoted from, Fred Moten, “Black

Op,” *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (2008): 1746. On differential repetition, I am thinking about what Glissant said: “Repetition, moreover, is an acknowledged form of consciousness both here and elsewhere. Relentlessly resuming something you have already said. Consenting to an infinitesimal momentum, an addition perhaps unnoticed that stubbornly persists in your knowledge.” See, Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 45.

²⁰ “Nearer and nearer comes the unseen singer,” remarked Sarah H. Bradford, the biographer of Harriet Tubman, as Harriet recalled singing this song, in and around the plantations, so as to alert the those who knew the song’s embedded code that the time was nigh to begin readying for the voyage north from Maryland to Canada. The quoted verse comes from the song, “Go Down Moses.” See, Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (WJ Moses, printer, 1869), 25–27.

²¹ Millard Fillmore, “Special Message” (February 19, 1851), The American Presidency Project ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.

²² Frank H. Severance, ed., “President Fillmore to Webster, October 23, 1850,” in *Millard Fillmore Papers, Volume I*, vol. Volume X (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1907), 334–35.

²³ Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021); Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*; Avery F. Gordon, “Feminism, Writing, and Ghosts,” *Social Problems* 37, no. 4 (1990): 485–500.

²⁴ Millard Fillmore, *Inaugural Address of the Hon. Millard Fillmore: Delivered at American Hall, July 1, 1862*, vol. 1, Buffalo Historical Society Publications (Buffalo, NY: Bigelow Brothers, 1879).

²⁵ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989); Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles,” *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (1989): 637–48.

²⁶ Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I].”

²⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*.

²⁸ “The world had to be kept safe for the market economy. History, to help in this task had to be distorted. The myth of history was used by the plantation to keep its power secure. [But] ‘remembrance of things past can give rise to dangerous insights.’” From, Sylvia Wynter, “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation,” *Savacou* 5 (1971): 101.

²⁹ Wynter, 100.

³⁰ Michael Mark Cohen, *The Conspiracy of Capital: Law, Violence, and American Popular Radicalism in the Age of Monopoly* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), 199.

³¹ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1952), 13.

³² Della Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Ninth Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 1995), 1050.

³³ Millard Fillmore was the first President of the United States to install a library within the White House. Fred I. Greenstein, *Presidents and the Dissolution of the Union: Leadership Style from Polk to Lincoln* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

³⁴ William Richard Cutter, *Genealogical And Family History of Western New York: A Record of the Achievements of Her People In the Making of a Commonwealth And the Building of a Nation*, vol. II, III vols. (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912); Paul Finkelman, “Millard Fillmore 1850-1853,” in *The American Presidents*, ed. Melvin I. Urofsky (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000), 166–74; Robert J. Raybuck, *Millard Fillmore: Biography of a President* (Buffalo, NY: Henry Stewart, Inc., for the Buffalo Historical Society, 1959).

³⁵ As Buffalo, New York came into this state of flourishing, whether through metrics of commercial trade, economics, and/or industrialization, the effects of such undoubtedly produced large-scale degradation and abjection: a Janus-faced reality through which residents in Buffalo, and other rustbelt cities, continue to live. The material effects of Fillmore’s aspirations for the city to flourish, and the attendant Janus-faced effects, would manifest in his lifetime. By the 1870s, Buffalo became among the nation’s top manufacturers of railroading, iron and steel while also among the nation’s leaders in “child labor, periodic epidemics of cholera, and human misery.” From, Milton Rogovin, *Triptychs: Buffalo’s Lower West Side Revisited* (New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1994), 19. For Fillmore’s role in the Third Treaty of Buffalo Creek (1842) and its implications, see: Laurence Hauptman, “The State’s Men, the Salvation Seekers, and the Seneca: The Supplemental Treaty of Buffalo Creek, 1842,” *New York History* 78, no. 1 (1997): 51–82; Laurence Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Kristin Szczepaniec, “Indigenous People of Western New York,” *FACT SHEET*, 2018, 23. I am borrowing the term “Janus-faced” from Sylvia Wynter and her essay, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 233–57.

³⁶ Julian Park, *A History of the University of Buffalo*, vol. Volume XXII (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1917), 13; John T. Horton, *Millard Fillmore*, vol. Volume II, *Adventures in Western New York History* (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, 1960).

³⁷ “Millard Fillmore to Orasmus H. Marshall Regarding Fillmore’s Official Resignation as Chancellor of the University of Buffalo,” February 24, 1874, Millard Fillmore Papers, 4/1/0000. Series IV, Letter: Box-folder: 1.21, University at Buffalo Archives.

³⁸ The indentation of these three paragraphs is my attempt to visually display a form of talking back, as it were, back in textual arrangement to the preceding idea of the university comprising the intellectual arm of State power (Consider too, the epistemological project of the university, which was alluded to earlier, and how, this episteme produces other epistemes that are able to clap back/talk back/shoot back.). This idea forms the basis of the paternalism Millard Fillmore expresses in his first address as Chancellor of the University of Buffalo. And it is also the idea to which June Jordan is writing back to in these three paragraphs; articulating not only a sort of manifesto for black studies and its role [see her distinction between Host and Parasite], but also a foreshadowing – tethered to the past and pandiculating outwards – that violence possesses a pedagogical valence that teaches *us*: violence is the primary language that property and the propertied can hear. See, June Jordan, “Black Studies: Bringing Back the Person (1969),” in *Civil Wars* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1981), 47–48 [italics and bold are my own].

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary Gregor (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), 1979).

⁴⁰ Holman Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier in the White House* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951).

⁴¹ Holman Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1964), ix.

⁴² And this is to say nothing of the congressmen – those from the North and the South – who owned private property in black persons – and again, still, this is to say nothing of the laws they made as being invested in maintaining a right to retain this enfleshed property. For more on this, see: Julie Zauzmer Weil, Adrián Blanco, and Leo Dominguez, “Who Owned Slaves in Congress? A List of 1,800 Enslavers in Senate, House History,” *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/interactive/2022/congress-slaveowners-names-list/>.

⁴³ Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850*, 5; Robert E. May, “Invisible Men: Blacks and the U.S. Army in the Mexican War,” *The Historian* 49, no. 4 (1987): 463–77.

⁴⁴ Taylor’s purchase coincides with the United States Supreme Court ruling of the same year that held state legislation must not interfere with the extradition of escaping property in the form of black people as per Article IV, Section 2 of the United States Constitution and the *Fugitive Slave Act of 1793*. See, *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. (16 Pet.) 539 (1842).

⁴⁵ K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

⁴⁶ “Art. VII.--THE FREE SOIL PARTY AND THE LATE ELECTION.: DEED OF SALE,” *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review* V, no. XI (December 1848): 105–26.

⁴⁷ “...these piecemeal measures, which always implies an acceptance of the status quo. The piecemeal measures which by their very inadequacy, merely patch up and help us maintain an improbable and unreal status quo. And slowly, for [the] intelligent and imaginative, [...] the rust of inertia begins to eat away at one’s soul. Before one knows it, one has become woof and warp of the very fabric which one had set out to recreate. But the process, by its very slowness is imperceptible.” Sylvia Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part III],” *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 1 (1970): 15.

⁴⁸ Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1980); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016); Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire: The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Walter Johnson, *The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2020); K-Sue Park, “The History Wars and Property Law: Conquest and Slavery as Foundational to the Field,” *Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works*. 2361, 2021, 1–69; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Tiffany Jeannette King, “In the Clearing: Black Female Bodies, Space and Settler Colonial Landscapes” (Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2013).

⁴⁹ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest*; Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier in the White House*; Stephen Currie, “Zachary Taylor, Plantation Owner,” *Civil War History* 30, no. 2 (1984): 144–56; Finkelman, “Millard Fillmore 1850-1853”; Paul Finkelman, *Millard Fillmore*, The American Presidents Series: The 13th President, 1850-1853 (New York, NY: Times Books, 2011); Horton, *Millard Fillmore*; Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996); Paul Finkelman, “The Centrality of Slavery in American Legal Development,” in *Slavery and the Law*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997), 3–26; Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidencies of Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

⁵⁰ “When you make men [sic] slaves [...] you compel them to live with you in a state of war.” Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself. Vol. I.* (London, UK, 1789), 224.

⁵¹ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*.

- ⁵² Davis, 41.
- ⁵³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11–22; 124–25.
- ⁵⁴ “Fugitive Slave Act of 1793,” Pub. L. No. 2–7, § 5, 1 Stat. 302 (1793).
- ⁵⁵ Julius Sherrard Scott III, “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution” (Dissertation, Durham, NC, Duke University, 1986).
- ⁵⁶ Douglas R. Egerton and Robert L. Paquette, eds., *The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2017), 136.
- ⁵⁷ Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 1963); Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844*; Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ Pr, 2009); Daniel Rasmussen, *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America’s Largest Slave Revolt* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011); Egerton and Paquette, *The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History*; Maggie Montesinos Sale, *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity* (Duke University Press, 1997); Vanessa Michele Holden, “Reexamining a Community: African American Women and the Southampton Rebellion of 1831” (Dissertation, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University, 2012); Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part III]”; Lenora Warren, *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019); Sylvia Wynter, “Sambos and Minstrels,” *Social Text* 1, no. Winter (1979): 149–56.
- ⁵⁸ Kathryn Benjamin Golden, “‘Armed in the Great Swamp’: Fear, Maroon Insurrection, and the Insurgent Ecology of the Great Dismal Swamp,” *The Journal of African American History* 106, no. 1 (2021): 1–26; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred; A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, vol. 1 & 2, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1856).
- ⁵⁹ John Hope Franklin, “Slavery and the Martial South,” *The Journal of Negro History* 37, no. 1 (1952): 44.
- ⁶⁰ Sylvia Wynter, “Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World” (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 5–6, Institute of the Black World Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Boxes 3-9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.
- ⁶¹ Michael Alan Schoepner, “Navigating the Dangerous Atlantic: Racial Quarantines, Black Sailors and United States Constitutionalism” (Dissertation, Gainesville, FL, University of Florida, 2010); Lenora Warren, “Denmark Vesey, John Howison, and Revolutionary Possibility,” in *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 42–70; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966).
- ⁶² *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. (16 Pet.); Park, “The History Wars and Property Law: Conquest and Slavery as Foundational to the Field.”
- ⁶³ Zachary Taylor, “Zachary Taylor to Jefferson Davis” (August 14, 1847), Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, Taylor Papers, 1814-1850.
- ⁶⁴ James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, 10 Vols.*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1899), 5: 92-93.
- ⁶⁵ Some scholars argue that the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 actually hastened the Civil War due to the galvanizing effect that violent black rebellion had on both black leaders and abolitionists. See, for example, Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).
- ⁶⁶ Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970).
- ⁶⁷ Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
- ⁶⁸ “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,” Pub. L. No. 31–60, § 9, 9 Stat. 462 (1850), Section 5.
- ⁶⁹ Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Section 5.
- ⁷⁰ This phrase, “secrets are magic bullets,” comes from Somni-451, a character in David Mitchell’s novel, *Cloud Atlas*. And previously, on the matter of bullets functioning as ripples, I am thinking about Rivers Solomon’s character Aster in *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, and how Aster’s mispronunciation of the word “rifles” was restated with the word “ripples” to signify both the unfamiliarity and the simultaneous deep knowing of what these rifles/ripples produce/rupture/create/destroy. See, David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (London, UK: Sceptre, 2014), 242; Rivers Solomon, *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (Brooklyn, NY: Akashic Books, 2017).
- ⁷¹ Sylvia Wynter, *Oral History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Historical Society Oral History Program Interviews (SC0932). Department of Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford Libraries, 2020), 58.

⁷² Sylvia Wynter, "Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man," in *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*, ed. June Givanni (London, UK: British Film Institute, 2000), 25–76.

⁷³ Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860*, 100.

⁷⁴ John W. Ashmead, "Ashmead to Derrick, Acting Secretary of State" (September 26, 1851), Microfilm publications, M. 179, roll 128, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, November 1-December 31, 1851.

⁷⁵ One such person that espoused these views, was Holman Hamilton, biographer of Zachary Taylor and Historian. Though he is wrong about who killed Edward Gorsuch, an assumption that I think provocative, comments on his death in this way, "a kindly if credulous Marylander [that was] to be killed and mutilated by black men when he tried to regain his property." And just a couple of pages later, he unequivocally diagnoses the symptoms that led to the Civil War as being endemic to abolition propaganda that created a "fantastic caricature of the slave labor system" and "propagandists of abolition underscored both pity and mercy, castigating vile 'slave catchers,' making the most of Negro virtues, and minimizing owner's rights." Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850*, 169–70; 190; 172.

⁷⁶ William Parker provides the details of his escape into Canada following the Riot and briefly alludes to the difficulties encountered by Eliza and their children. Elsewhere though, Eliza and Hannah were betrayed by a friend they paid to covertly transport them north in his wagon. Instead, he actually drove south and planned to catch whatever reward being offered for their return. Upon realizing this betrayal, Eliza kills him: "All night until dawn they drove. Thinking that by now they would have crossed over into the free state of Pennsylvania, they started to look around and suddenly began to recognize landmarks very close to the very plantation from which they had started hours before. It was then that the frightened slaves realized that the 'friend,' to whom they had entrusted their lives, had betrayed them to the slave catchers for he had driven in circles the entire night and now was waiting only for their arrival to deliver his unsuspecting victims into their hands. What is said to have happened then is that Eliza, a tall slender woman but made strong by years of hard work, whipped off her kerchief and using it as a garrote soon sent their would-be betrayer where he could cause no further mischief. The now desperate slaves whipped up the horses and fleeing for their very lives made good their escape to freedom." Arlie C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, Ontario: Ideal Printing, 1983), 67.

⁷⁷ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 68–69.

⁷⁸ I am reading across the multiple sources available to reconstellate her story and as such, will provide all of the citations together in one place. But to the point of the "singular anomaly" presented by the mother of Eliza and Hannah, there was another case of similar intent on behalf of the fugitive slave wishing to be returned back into slavery just a little more than a month prior to this. It was later determined to be a rouse conceived and implemented by slave power intending to cajole and convince the incipient runaway slave or otherwise enslaved that the condition of enslavement was superior to that of not being someone's property. The person of interest in this case was named Daniel Davis and the events transpired in Buffalo, NY. It is believed that he eventually escaped from custody and fled to Canada. See, "Arrest of a Fugitive," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, August 15, 1851; "Daniel in the Den and Out," *New York Daily Tribune*, September 2, 1851; "Case of Mr. Rust," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, August 19, 1851; "To the Colored Population of Buffalo," *Buffalo Morning Express*, August 30, 1851; "Home Matters. The First Fugitive Slave Case in Buffalo," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, August 16, 1851.

⁷⁹ This piece of her story was gleaned from the following: "Perplexing Case of Slave Capture"; "Outrage on Gov. Johnston - Another Fugitive Slave Case - The Christiana Tragedy"; "More Victims of the Man-Hunt"; "More Surrenders"; "Aged Woman Sent Into Slavery"; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

⁸⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), 220.

⁸¹ Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 286.

⁸² "Community feminists are women who may or may not live in a coverture relationship; either way, their activism is focused on assisting both the men and the women in their lives – whether husbands or sisters, fathers or mothers, sons or daughters – along with initiating and participating in activities to 'uplift' their communities." See, Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 2, 64, 67, 69–70, 74–79.

⁸³ McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 33.

⁸⁴ This phrase is borrowed from part 3 of Sylvia Wynter's 4 part essay, "Bernardo De Balbuena."

⁸⁵ Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton*; Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

⁸⁶ Article III, Section 3, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution: "Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort."

⁸⁷ Sylvia Wynter, "Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part IV]," *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 3 (1970): 9.

⁸⁸ This is the name of the essay from which this Chapter borrows its namesake. Though Sylvia Wynter used this phrase to assume the perceptual standpoint of those in Britain beginning to, for the first time, experience West Indian cultural productions (e.g., plays, poetry, novels, etc...), I think this is an apt characterization and guiding conceptual framing of this chapter. Surely the presence(s) of violent and piratical black people intervening into the epistemological ordering of society must be strange. Just as surely as the longstanding citational referents to Cicero's project remains present is strange. See: Sylvia Wynter, "The Strange Presences," *Vogue*, June 1958.

⁸⁹ Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166–76.

⁹⁰ "We must become undisciplined. The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archives of slavery [...] that live in the present." Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

⁹¹ For a discussion on deixis as an analytic, see J. L. Gaynor, "Piracy in the Offing: The Law of Lands and the Limits of Sovereignty at Sea," *Anthropological Quarterly* 3 (2012): 817–57.

⁹² I am indebted to Katherine McKittrick for the discovery of this word/concept specifically, and more generally, I am grateful to have learned from her method-making/world-making methodologies in, McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*.

⁹³ McKittrick, 60.

⁹⁴ Wynter, *Oral History*, 55.

⁹⁵ Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, 60.

⁹⁶ Wynter, "Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man," 60.

⁹⁷ Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, 48.

⁹⁸ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 241.

⁹⁹ Katherine McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 950.

¹⁰⁰ McKittrick, 954.

¹⁰¹ Warren, *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886*, 44.

¹⁰² Here, I am thinking about the Black Arts Movement and the desires and beliefs of some of its members to write "poems that shoot guns." On this, see Chapter 3 in Zachary Manditch-Prottas, "Zealous Watchmen: Racial Authenticity, Masculine Anxiety and the Black Arts Movement" (Dissertation, Berkeley, CA, University of California, Berkeley, 2018).

¹⁰³ "Murder is a tough thing to digest, it's a slow process." JAY-Z, *Dead Presidents II*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ This classic record from the Purple Tape is 4 verses and comprised of Inspectah Deck, Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, and GZA. Inspectah Deck begins, "poisonous paragraphs." See Raekwon et al., *Guillotine (Swordz)*, Only Built 4 Cuban Linx... (New York, NY: Loud Records, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies [1992]," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 274.

¹⁰⁶ Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 24–45.

¹⁰⁷ I am thinking here with Katherine McKittrick when she says the following: "I am, we are, aware of the familiar story where black people are continually worked on and worked over yet seemingly never wear out. But I do want to honor that living blackness, living as black, is work, and that black people help us think through the ties between consciousness, labor, cultural production, and freedom seeking. The work of liberation does not seek a stable or knowable answer to a better future; rather, it recognizes the ongoing labor of aesthetically refusing unfreedom." A clarifying point to make here then, is that I am not claiming violent black rebellion, in and of itself, is *the* work of liberation, but rather it is one aspect of *the* work towards negating unfreedom and seeking other ways of knowing. McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ C. L. Baker, "Notes on the Description of English Questions: The Role of an Abstract Question Morpheme," *Foundations of Language* 6, no. 2 (1970): 205; Lauri Karttunen, "Syntax and Semantics of Questions," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1977): 10.

¹⁰⁹ Solomon, *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, 303.

¹¹⁰ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 82.

¹¹¹ Anna Julia Cooper, *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists: L'attitude de La France a l'égard de l'esclavage Pendant La Revolution [1925]*, ed. and trans. Frances R. Keller (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 67.

¹¹² Here, I am thinking about how her provocation contributes to the work that would come after her question.

Cooper's dissertation serving as a citational antecedent to different projects with different questions might include: James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*; Scott III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution"; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*; Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

¹¹³ James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 70.

¹¹⁴ Dickinson Gorsuch to Joseph P. Scarlett: Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 119; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 82–84.

¹¹⁵ BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM. See Westside Gunn and Conway the Machine, *Undertaker vs. Goldberg*, Hitler Wears Hermès 7 (Buffalo, NY: Griselda Records, 2019).

¹¹⁶ Sylvia Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," *Cultural Critique* 7, no. Fall (1987): 207–44.

¹¹⁷ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 111.

¹¹⁸ Saidiya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2002): 757–77; Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 2015.

¹¹⁹ Katherine McKittrick's work is foundational here. In fact, just as Fred Moten tells us in *Black and Blur*, and consistently shows us, his work is an attempt to engage with the ideas of Saidiya Hartman, such that *In the Break* was his first attempt to do, so too am I attempting to think with Katherine McKittrick – with the same sense of reverence and respect. McKittrick's work is *so* important. She opened the entire field of black studies with her book, *Dear Science and Other Stories*. As Sylvia Wynter teaches me, Katherine McKittrick shows me. And this is not to be misconstrued as some academic fandom/cult of celebrity phenomena that younger scholars seemingly attach to more senior scholars. What I mean is that McKittrick's work makes it possible for me to be free enough to experiment in the manner outlined. I mean that her work *is* an opening. What I mean is that the openings her work seeks and shows and manifests are such that she has shifted the terrain of thought so significantly that these openings enable new starting points. I mean that in a very literal sense, her work is life-affirming for me; and I am sincerely grateful. "Alternative Outcomes" she writes, the "unhinging, unknowing ourselves, opens up learning processes that are uninterested in a self that is economized by citations. And still, displacing the self, unknowing who we are, is awful; it is indeterminate and unpredictable and lonely. togetherness can be difficult and lonely, too." But it is precisely because of this awfulness that openings can be created. "The awfulness" she continues, "opens up a conversation about why we do what we do and offers methods for living, here, in this place, that despises us. the unknowing brings together unexpected intellectual conversations that, together, resist dehumanization. The unknowing risks reading what we cannot bear and what we love too much. Unknowing ourselves. Unknowing does not seek or provide answers: the steady focus is, instead, on working out how to share ideas relationally. Perhaps the function of communication, referencing, citation, is not to master knowing and centralize our knowingness, but to share *how we know*, and share how we came to know imperfect and sometimes unintelligible but always hopeful and practical ways to live this world as black. *The text passes from a dreamed-of transparency to the opacity produced in words*. The parentheses enfold and convey, the notes buttress, and they leave shadows" [italics original]. "Alternative outcomes" she writes again. For this and the capacity of citations/footnotes, and for our purposes, endnotes, to reveal something else, see: Katherine McKittrick, "Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered About the Floor)," in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 14–34. For the Moten texts mentioned, see: Fred Moten, *Black and Blur (Consent Not to Be a Single Being)* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), x; Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

¹²⁰ And so too is the texture of this text: the long-winded sentences, the stuttering of words and the (required) re-reading of those words, the pauses, and sometimes even the breathing with which we are reading these words that form sentences and ideas – an otherwise anastrophic interruption of thought typically expected of traditional academic inquiry whereby the knowability of its object(s) are clearly communicated; that this story is not. The work of the text, or the text's work, is mutually constitutive of this story's narration.

¹²¹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 94–95.

¹²² Katherine McKittrick, "Rebellion/Invention/Groove," *Small Axe* 49 (March 2016): 79.

¹²³ Aimé Césaire, in his essay "Poetry and Knowledge" cites André Breton on the role of the poet as "abstracting us for a second from our dissolving adventure, reminding us of an indefinitely perfectible place of resolution and echo for every pain and joy exterior to ourselves" such that "everything leads us to believe that there exists a certain mental point from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived contradictorily" (p. 22). Césaire goes further to note that the epistemology of poetic knowledge is "an astonishing mobilization of all human and cosmic forces" written "not merely with [one's] whole soul," but rather "with [one's] entire being." And what guides the poem is not "the most lucid

intelligence, or the most acute sensibility” but rather an “*entire experience*: all the women loved, all the desires experienced, all the dreams dreamed, all the images received or grasped, the whole weight of the boy, the whole with of the mind. *All lived experience. All the possibility. [...] All the flux, all the rays. [...] Everything is summoned.*” For “all true poetry, without ever abandoning its humanity, at the moment of greatest mystery ceases to be strictly human so as to begin to be truly cosmic.” And, on a new word, Césaire says the following: “More and more the word promises to be an algebraic equation that makes the world intelligible. Just as the new Cartesian algebra permitted the construction of theoretical physics, so too an original handling of the word can make possible *at any moment* a new (theoretical and heedless) science” (pp. 22-25) [italics my own]. See: Aimé Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge,” trans. A. James Arnold, *Sulfur* 5 (1982): 17–32. And for Wynter, see Sylvia Wynter, “Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters,” in *Poetics of the Americas*, ed. Bainard Cowan and Jefferson Humphries (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 163.

¹²⁴ Manifest Destiny, see: John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 1845.

¹²⁵ Manuel Mier y Terán, “Terán and Texas: A Chapter in Texas-Mexican Relations,” in *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 1001–1104.

¹²⁶ David G. Gutiérrez, “Significant to Whom?: Mexican Americans and the History of the American West,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1993): 519–39.

¹²⁷ For more on Slave Power and some of the responses of the enslaved to the *Fugitive Slave Act* of 1850, see the second chapter in Kelly Carter Jackson’s book entitled, “Fight, Flight, and Fugitives”: see, Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*.

¹²⁸ Consider these lines from a Walt Whitman poem written in 1850 reflecting on Europe in 1848 (and of the U.S. as well): *That brief, tight, glorious grip / Upon the throats of kings / [...] Not a grave of those slaughtered ones / But is growing its seed of freedom / In its turn to bear seed / Which the winds shall carry afar and resow / And the rain nourish.* Source: Walt Whitman, *Walt Whitman: The Early Poems and the Fiction*, ed. Thomas L. Brasher (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1963), 38–39.

¹²⁹ This is a reference to Walter D. Mignolo’s text, “The Darker Side of Western Modernity.” For more, see: Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011).

¹³⁰ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹³¹ Wynter, “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation.”

¹³² For the relationship between the enslaved black women’s womb and the settler colonial apparatus of the United States, see, King, “In the Clearing.” The colonial present is a reference to Derek Gregory’s book of the same title: see, Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). With this last sentence, I am attempting to link the events mentioned in this paragraph to not only the schizophrenic-like dissonance associated with the ideals the United States declares to be ‘self evident’ in 1776 and its continued genocidal occupation of the land it wrested from Mexico and Native Americans, but I am also attempting to make it clear that such maneuvers of the U.S. before and during the middle 1800s represent a certain epiphenomenal modus operandi towards its treatment of countries inhabited by non-white persons. Here I am thinking about the texts written by Alfred T. Mahan (1890) and Frederick J. Turner (1893) and their relationship to the colonization, exploitation, and imperialization of Native Americans and countries throughout the Pacific Ocean, namely Hawai’i, and how this sort of epistemology – this American way of knowing – facilitates all kinds of horrors and hegemonic blocs desirous of exploiting and conquering non-white people and non-white countries throughout the world including Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. For an historical overview, see the following texts: Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1883* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890); Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1893*, 1893, 199–227; Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 2015; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C.L. Markmann (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1967); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York, NY: Editions Presence Africaine, 1955); W.E.B. Dubois, “Colonialism, Democracy and Peace after the War,” in *Against Racism: The Unpublished Essays 1887-1961*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, 1944; Enrique D. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Sylvia Wynter, “1492: A New World View,” in *Race, Discourse and the Origin of the Americas*, ed. Vera Lawrence and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1994), 5–57; Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument”; Sylvia Wynter, “Columbus and the Poetics of the Proper Nos,” *Annals of Scholarship* 8, no. 2 (1991): 251–86; Katherine McKittrick, “The Authenticity of This Story Has Not Been Documented: Auction Blocks,” in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 65–90. For the Hawai’i context and the many facets of the settler colonial apparatus (e.g., the instrumentality of United States law, the imposition of United States education system, tourism,

etc...) see the following: C Fujikane and Jonathan Y Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Jonathan Y Okamura and Mary Yu Danico, "Challenging Inequalities: Nations, Races, and Communities," *Journal Of Asian American Studies* 13, no. 3 (2010): 261–81; D. K Sai, "American Occupation of the Hawaiian State: A Century Unchecked," *Hawaiian Journal of Law and Politics* 1 (2004): 46–81; David Keanu Sai, "The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom: Beginning the Transition from Occupied to Restored State" (Dissertation, Honolulu, HI, The University of Hawai'i, 2008); N. K Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Kahunawaika'ala Wright, eds., *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Haunani Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Rev. Ed.) (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993); Haunani Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i," 2000 26, no. 2 (2000): 1–24; Haunani Kay Trask, "The Color of Violence," *Social Justice*, Native Women and State Violence, 31, no. 4 (2004): 8–16; Julie Kaomea, "Education for Elimination in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii: Settler Colonialism and the Native Hawaiian Chiefs' Children's Boarding School," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2014): 123–44; D. E Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu, HI: Social Science Research Institute, 1989); D. E Stannard, *American Holocaust* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992); D. E Stannard, "The Hawaiians: Health, Justice, and Sovereignty," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 34, no. Spring (2000): 15–20; D. E Stannard, "Disease and Infertility: A New Look at the Demographic Collapse of Native Populations in the Wake of Western Contact," *Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 325–50; Michael Dougherty, *To Steal a Kingdom: Probing Hawaiian History* (Waimanalo, Hawai'i: Island Style Press, 1992); Momiala Kamahale, "'Īlio'ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 39–65; M.W Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976); Q Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1898); Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Teri Mahealani Wright, "Demolition of Native Rights and Self Determination: Act 55's Devastating Impact through the Development of Hawaii's Public Lands," *University of Hawai'i Law Review* 35 (2013): 297–344; R. Keahiolalo-Karasuda, "A Genealogy of Punishment in Hawaii: The Public Hanging of Chief Kamanawa II," *Hulili: Multidisciplinary Research on Well-Being* 6 (2010): 147–67; Sylvia Wynter, "'A Diferent Kind of Creature': Caribbean Literature, the Cyclops Factor, and the Second Poetics of the Proper Nos," in *Sisyphus and Eldorado: Magical and Other Realisms in Caribbean Literature*, ed. T. J Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 143–68. I have found Leila Khaled's autobiography to be generative in thinking through some of the relationships between black people and Palestinians: see, Leila Khaled, *My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, ed. George Hajjar (Toronto, Canada: Hodder and Soughton, 1973). And for a meditation upon the instrumentality of the law's violence concerning the repression of radicalism in the United States after the Civil War in the name of capital and economic exploitation, see: Michael Mark Cohen, *The Conspiracy of Capital: Law, Violence, and American Popular Radicalism in the Age of Monopoly*.

¹³³ Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 4.

¹³⁴ W. Arthur Jackson, *A History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others, for Treason, at Philadelphia in November, 1851. With an Introduction upon the History of the Slave Question*. (Philadelphia, PA: Uriah Hunt & Sons, 1852); Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Ella Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance* (Cherry Hill, NJ: African Homestead Legacy, 1998).

¹³⁵ Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*, xii; Anthony Rice, "A Legacy Transformed: The Christiana Riot in Historical Memory" (Dissertation, Lehigh, PA, Lehigh University, 2012), 10–12.

¹³⁶ A. K. McClure, *Colonel Alexander K. McClure's Recollections of Half a Century* (Salem, MA: The Salem Press Company, 1902), 23–24.

¹³⁷ Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 4–5.

¹³⁸ Roderick W Nash, "William Parker and the Christiana Riot," *The Journal of Negro History* 46, no. 1 (1961): 30–31; Frances Williams Browin, "But We Have No Country," *Quaker History* 57, no. 2 (1968): 91.

¹³⁹ Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Nash, "William Parker and the Christiana Riot"; Browin, "But We Have No Country"; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*.

¹⁴¹ Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866.

¹⁴² David Francis Magee, “The Christiana Riot: Its Causes and Effects, from a Southern Standpoint,” *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 15, no. 6 (1911): 193–208; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁴³ Thomas Whitson, “William Parker, The Hero of the Christiana Riot,” *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 1, no. 1 (1896); Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*; A.K. Hostetter, “The Newspapers and the Christiana Riot,” *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 15, no. 10 (1911): 296–308; Nash, “William Parker and the Christiana Riot”; Hugh Douglass, “The Christiana Riot - September, 1851,” *Octorara Area Historical Society Papers* 3, no. 11 (1911); Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Rice, “A Legacy Transformed: The Christiana Riot in Historical Memory”; Richard Grau, “The Christiana Riot of 1851: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 68 (1964); Magee, “The Christiana Riot: Its Causes and Effects, from a Southern Standpoint.”

¹⁴⁴ Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 11.

¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that William Parker refers to the events as a riot as well. Though this could be a function of the text’s narrator? See Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 283.

¹⁴⁶ Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, xiii.

¹⁴⁷ Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231–49; Richard Bell, “Slave Suicide, Abolition and the Problem of Resistance,” *Slavery & Abolition* 33, no. 4 (2012): 525–49; Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, 272, xi.

¹⁴⁹ Forbes, xiii, 133.

¹⁵⁰ For example, see Thavolia Glymph, “Rose’s War and the Gendered Politics of a Slave Insurgency in the Civil War,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 4 (December 2013): 501–32; Thavolia Glymph, *The Women’s Fight: The Civil War’s Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Kellie Carter Jackson, “‘Dare You Meet a Woman’: Black Women, Abolitionism, and Protective Violence, 1850-1859,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 2 (2020): 269–92; Benjamin Golden, “‘Armed in the Great Swamp’: Fear, Maroon Insurrection, and the Insurgent Ecology of the Great Dismal Swamp”; Holden, “Reexamining a Community: African American Women and the Southampton Rebellion of 1831.”

¹⁵¹ Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 2, 56–57, 116.

¹⁵² Carter Jackson, 49.

¹⁵³ Carter Jackson, 4, 157, 106.

¹⁵⁴ Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis,” in *C.L.R. James’s Caribbean*, ed. P Henry and P Buhle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 72.

¹⁵⁵ Like Rico said to Ace: “niggas get shot ‘uryday, b.” See *Paid in Full* (Roc-A-Fella Films, 2002).

¹⁵⁶ Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 4, 161.

¹⁵⁷ For example, see Warren, *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886*.

¹⁵⁸ It should be noted that both Forbes and Carter Jackson are classically trained Historians. The teleological narratives they write might be a function of their academic training. I am writing from the perceptual and liminal vantage point of black studies and as such, I have more freedom to tell a different kind of story, a story that still remains tethered to the History/Histories both scholars articulate.

¹⁵⁹ Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, 272.

¹⁶¹ This quote derives from a conversation William Parker had with Sarah Pownall on the evening before the riot occurred. The point I am trying to make here is that despite the extant historiographies that place the violent rebellion within statist paradigms teleologically tethered to a different form of legal inclusion, William Parker understands this violence to exist outside of such goals. This understanding comports to the axiology of the enslaved, in the terms Ella Forbes deploys, or to the epistemic positionality of *being* owing to the liminal status of the enslaved, in Sylvia Wynter’s terms. The violence deployed by the fugitive slaves and their comrades cannot be conscripted into liberal valences of justice. Further elaborating, Parker says “if the laws protected colored men as they did white men, he too would be non-resistant and not fight, but would appeal to the laws. But, the laws for personal protection *are not made for us, and we are not bound to obey them*. [The whites] have a country and may obey the laws. But we have no country.” See R. C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, PA: The Journal, 1883), 115 [italics my own for emphasis]. Lastly, as a matter of reconstructing the events that transpired, I rely firstly on Parker’s account and then draw from the extant court documents and secondary sources. I do this because it is important to illustrate both the epistemology of those violent black rebels, when possible, here in this chapter and

throughout this project, as well as being able to illustrate the epistemes into which they intervene – and the court documents and secondary sources on the matter help make the latter point.

¹⁶² Saidiya Hartman says the following: “[E]veryday forms of practice must be contextualized within the virtually unbounded powers of the slave-owning class, and whites in general, to use all means necessary to ensure submission. Thus it is no surprise that these everyday forms of practices are usually subterranean. I am reluctant to simply describe these practices as a ‘kind of politics,’ not because I question whether the practices considered here are small-scale forms of struggle or dismiss them as cathartic and contained. Rather, it is the concern about the possibilities of practice as they are related to the particular object constitution and subject formation of the enslaved outside the ‘political proper’ that leads me both to question the appropriateness of the political to this realm of practice and to reimagine the political in this context. As well, I take seriously Jean Comaroff’s observations that ‘the real politik of oppression dictates that resistance be expressed in domains seemingly apolitical.’” Continuing, she writes, “The contradictory status of the enslaved, their ambiguous relation to the state, and the nonautonomy of both their social status and their practice determine this limited and tentative use of the political and informs this effort to wrench the political from its proper referent. Given the exclusion of the slave from the sphere of the political, what forms do the assertion of needs and desire acquire? What assumptions of the political are at all relevant or adequate to their social location? Slaves are not consensual and willful actors, the state is not a vehicle for advancing their claims, they are not citizens, and their status as persons is contested. Assimilating these practices into the normative frame of the political is less important than examining the relations of subjectification and practice and the form the political acquires for the enslaved? In what ways are the (im)possibilities of practice related to, if not determined by, the closures of politics? How are the claims of the dominated articulated or advanced or their needs addressed or accommodated?” And lastly she writes, “The everyday practices of the enslaved generally fall outside direct forms of confrontation; they are not systemic in their ideology, analysis, or intent, and, most important, the slave is neither civic man nor free worker but excluded from the narrative of ‘we the people’ that effects the linkage of the modern individual and the state. The enslaved were neither envisioned nor afforded the privilege of envisioning themselves as part of the ‘imaginary sovereignty of the state’ or as ‘infused with unreal universality.’ Even the Gramscian model, with its reformulation of the relation of state and civil society in the concept of the historical bloc and its expanded definition of the political, maintains a notion of the political inseparable from the effort and the ability of a class to effect hegemony. By questioning the use of the term ‘political,’ I hope to illuminate the possibilities of practice and the stakes of these dispersed resistances. All of this is not a preamble to an argument about the ‘prepolitical’ consciousness of the enslaved but an attempt to point to the limits of the political and the difficulty of translating or interpreting the practices of the enslaved within that framework. The everyday practices of the enslaved occur in the default of the political, in the absence of the rights man or the assurances of the self-possessed individual, and perhaps even without a ‘person,’ in the usual meaning of the term.” See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 64–65.

¹⁶³ Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Brown, “But We Have No Country”; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*.

¹⁶⁴ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

¹⁶⁵ This is a reference to the quixotic and to the anarchic women and girls of whom Saidiya Hartman writes. See: Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, 88.

¹⁶⁶ Wynter, “The Strange Presences,” 145.

¹⁶⁷ Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, 83.

¹⁶⁸ Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Brown, “But We Have No Country”; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Rice, “A Legacy Transformed: The Christiana Riot in Historical Memory.”

¹⁶⁹ Here, I am drawing from the following to reconstruct the arrival of the hunt/return party: Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

¹⁷⁰ This is the language of the Fugitive Slave Clause of the United States Constitution, Article IV, Section II, Clause III. And this was the language used at the arraignment for Castner Hanway’s treason trial: see Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 18; United States v. Hanway, No. 139, 26 Fed. Cas. No. 15,229 (C.C.E.D.Pa 1851). Also,

compare the language of this Clause to the language found in Article IV, Section II, Clauses I, II, and III in the Constitution of the Confederate States, March 11, 1861.

¹⁷¹ Edward Gorsuch's great-granddaughter, interviewed in 1911, aged eighty-three, states that he genuinely believed his "slaves wanted to come home." And this is despite the fact that "his slaves" had been escaping for two years already. Can you imagine the kind of schizophrenic break from reality required to earnestly believe such a thing? See Myles Jackson and Florence Jackson, *Two Men War at Christiana, 1851*, Audiotape, Viewpoints on American Abolition (New York, NY: Random House, 1971); William Uhler Hensel, "Aftermath Supplementary to Christiana Riot, 1851," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 16, no. 5 (1912): 133–41.

¹⁷² Carter Jackson, "'Dare You Meet a Woman': Black Women, Abolitionism, and Protective Violence, 1850-1859"; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998; Julie Winch, "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," *He Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 111, no. 1 (1987): 3–25.

¹⁷³ On the harmonious relationship between country, law, lawyers, police, and slavecatchers, William Parker says the following: "Under the pretext of enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law, the slaveholders did not hesitate to violate all other laws made for the good government and protection of society, and converted the old State of Pennsylvania, so long the hope of the fleeing bondman, wearied and heartbroken, into a common hunting-ground for their human prey. [...] This nefarious business was conducted mainly through one channel; for spite of man's inclination to vice and crime, there are but few men, thank God, so low in the scale of humanity as to be willing to degrade themselves by doing the dirty work of four-legged bloodhounds. Yet such men, actuated by the love of gold and their own base and brutal natures, were found ready for the work. These fellows consorted with constables, police-officers, aldermen, and even with learned members of the legal profession, who disgraced their respectable calling by low, contemptible arts, and were willing to clasp hands with the lowest ruffian in order to pocket the reward that was the price of blood. Every facility was offered these bad men; and wither it was night or day, it was only necessary to whisper in a certain circle that negro was to be caught, and horses and wagons, men and officers, spies and betrayers, were ready, at the shortest notice, armed and equipped and eager for the chase." Parker also characterizes the U.S. Deputy Marshal, Henry H. Kline, as a "notorious" and "professional kidnapper of the basest stamp." See Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 281–82. The two sheriffs who accompanied the hunt/return party to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, though implored by Edward Gorsuch to remain the night at the Gap Tavern before they stormed the home of the Parkers the next morning, ultimately returned back to Philadelphia. For this, see: Kline's Testimony, Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 56–57.

¹⁷⁴ There was some confusion as to the names of those present given the aliases used by runaway slaves. Noah Buley and George Hammond, two of the four names provided on the warrant, are understood to be Samuel Thompson and Joshua Kite. Joshua Kite was also known as John Beard. I find it particularly interesting that Parker himself is writing in code throughout his Narrative and this opacity with which he writes, given he identifies his comrades by their assumed aliases, causes much confusion for the Hunt/Return Party. See Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 293; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, Footnote 3, 327; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*, 58.

¹⁷⁵ United States Marshal Kline Testimony: "we took out some cheese and crackers which we eat [sic], and we fixed our ammunitions and started." See Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 58; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 80; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁷⁶ United States Marshal Kline repeatedly testifies that Edward Gorsuch thought they "would come home without any trouble." See Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 58, 69. Here, I am also thinking about the Biblical story of Joshua and the sound of trumpets causing Jericho's walls to crumble. See Joshua 5:13-6:27.

¹⁷⁷ Joshua Gorsuch testified that he "heard someone singing." See Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 84.

¹⁷⁸ Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 278, 283; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁷⁹ What happens hereafter for approximately the next two hours remains much a matter of historiography. The court documents and the testimonies therein are often contradictory anent the precise sequence of events, the exact conversations, and the specific actions attributable to variously identified present actors during the riot/insurrection/revolt. As Thomas Slaughter observes, insurrections or riotous revolts "are by their very nature wild, confusing, and frightening experiences. Seldom does anyone have a clear perspective of all that goes on or the calm

state of mind that contributes to rational perception and objective reporting. This riot is no exception.” Rather, the task here is to provide a cogent narrative articulation of the events. And as I have stated previously, I draw first from Parker’s narrative, then from the court documents available, and then from secondary sources. For Slaughter’s point on writing these events as a matter of historical record, see Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*, ix–xiv, 59–75, 182–86.

¹⁸⁰ For Aimé Césaire’s concept of “thing-ification,” see Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*.

¹⁸¹ Kline Testimony: Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 47; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁸² Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 283.

¹⁸³ Parker, 283.

¹⁸⁴ Maryland Attorney General Robert J. Brent testimony “diabolical malice on the part of these colored people” Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 208; Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 283.

¹⁸⁵ William Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1866, 283–84; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁸⁶ A fish gig is described by Hansel as a “pitchfork with blunt prongs” in Hansel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*.

¹⁸⁷ The narrator of Parker’s narrative intervenes to make it a point to characterize the use of the fish gig “as being the first weapon used in the contest” and the axe being the second weapon used in the affair. I think this is important because it belies the ascription of the violence deployed here as necessarily defensive: see Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 278, 284.

¹⁸⁸ Blowing the horn instructed their comrades to come help as Lookouts and Backup. In fact, this pre-arranged signal is illustrative of the efforts the Parkers and their comrades undertook to guard against slavecatchers in the area. Parker notes that a number “of us had formed an organization for mutual protection against slaveholders and kidnappers, and had resolved to prevent any of our brethren being taken back into slavery, at the risk of our own lives.” And there are several instances throughout Parker’s narrative that highlights the collective actions taken to ensure a fellow fugitive would not be recaptured and returned into slavery. There was one brazen attempt outside of a courthouse to free William Dorsey; another that resulted in rescuing a black woman named Elizabeth from a posse of white men that stole into a white abolitionist’s house where said black woman lived. This resulted in the death of these two would-be kidnappers. Another resulted in Parker being shot in the ankle but successfully taking back an unnamed black man who was tied and bound by kidnappers holed up at Mount Vernon Tavern, a place friendly to slavecatchers and hunters of black people in Lancaster County, after a shootout occurred that lasted for “ten or fifteen minutes” between Parker’s comrades and the would-be kidnappers. Parker and a band of five others would eventually set fire to the barn belonging to the Tavern’s owner, McKenzie. Parker describes the event “with evident satisfaction” as flames curled to and fro’ ascending “from the girder to roof, and lap and lash their angry tongues in wild license, until every vestige of the budling was consumed.” Parker informs us that McKenzie never again boasted of entertaining kidnapping slavecatchers ever again, for “the poor fugitive had no better friend than the publican McKenzie” as his realization of precarity taught McKenzie “to adopt other views, and became a practical abolitionist.” Parker also recounts that they beat a white man to nearly within an inch of his life for snitching to kidnappers about the fugitive that was living with him. And near Christiana, they burned down the home of a black man pretending to offer a place of refuge for runaway slaves only to sell them back to their owners. On this, see Parker, 161–66; Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 96; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 38–39; Carter Jackson, “‘Dare You Meet a Woman’: Black Women, Abolitionism, and Protective Violence, 1850–1859,” 275–79; Ella Forbes, “‘By My Own Right Arm’: Redemptive Violence and the 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance,” *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 3 (1998): 164. Furthermore, Parker makes the effort to illuminate, with great care, the existence and the workings of a “little band of true patriots in Philadelphia” who work to thwart the efforts of slave hunters and kidnappers. Parker calls them “The Special Secret Committee” and they worked in a tightknit network from Philadelphia east through to Harrisburg, PA, west to Wilmington, DE, and south through Washington, Baltimore, and other “principal despots of villainy” in between, to relay information pertaining to the whisperings of the hunt/return of escaping fugitive slaves. Parker states that members of this Committee, and on a Mr. Samuel Williams in particular, who would later be among those to stand trial for the high crime of treason, stood ready at a moment’s notice and without personal consideration to “sound the alarm to save their fellows from a fate far more to be dreaded than death,” to return to slavery. Parker notes that when the hunting party that showed up at the Parker home, the posse stopped in Philadelphia and Mr. Samuel Williams

traveled with them – “sat by their side carrying with him their inglorious defeat, and the death-warrant of at least one of their party.” Parker stops short of delving too deep into the Committee’s innerworkings and exactly how Mr. Williams heard of such whispers of the hunting party that eventuated his side-by-side sojourn with the United States Deputy Marshal and Gorsuch, et al, but he does say this of the Committee: “they were friends when and where it cost something to be friends, and true brothers where brothers were needed.” See Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 280–83. Commenting on this “Special Secret Committee,” historian Jonathan Katz notes it was a black operated, yet interracial organization named the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, which William Still was the Chairman: Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 60, 75; William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-Breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers, of the Road*. (Philadelphia, PA: W. Still, 1872). And more, Levi Pownall Jr., the son of William Parker’s employer, informs us that despite having burned them for the purposes of protecting William and Eliza and their comrades, “a great number of letters” from escaped and runaway slaves were found hidden away in the Parker home, attesting to the efforts of both Eliza and William to aid in the continued escaping of runaway property: see Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 120–21.

¹⁸⁹ Eliza’s life was preserved owing to the stone house and deep windows. Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 284; Carter Jackson, “‘Dare You Meet a Woman’: Black Women, Abolitionism, and Protective Violence, 1850-1859,” 276; Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*.

¹⁹⁰ See 3:55-4:27 of Dorinda Clark-Cole and Twinkie Clark, *Right Now, God*, 1995, <https://youtu.be/IEQBVKGjjs>.

¹⁹¹ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 285.

¹⁹² Sometimes, thinking about the sick dreams of men is enough to make me want to fly away. This hymn was originally written by Albert E. Brumley in 1929, but here I am thinking about the renditions that are sung and danced on the second line in New Orleans and composed and performed by such New Orleans brass bands including the Hot 8 Brass Band, The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, and the Rebirth Brass Band.

¹⁹³ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 278.

¹⁹⁴ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 285.

¹⁹⁵ Newer translations use the word “slave” instead of “master” but because these translations were not printed until the middle-to-late 1900s, I am using the King James Version. It is also worth noting that the Apostle Paul, author of this Epistle to the Colossians, wrote an almost word-for-word reiteration of this in his Epistle to the Ephesians. Where Gorsuch uses Colossians 3:22 as an injunctive for Parker’s submission, Ephesians 6:5-7 is likewise echoing the same sentiment; and where Parker retorts using Colossians 4:1, Ephesians 6:9 serves a similar purpose. These passages from Ephesians read as following: “5) Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: 7) With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men [...] 9) And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.” It should also be noted here that Thomas Hobbes cites Colossians 3:22 in *Leviathan* to legitimate his argument regarding the absolute authority of sovereign power over its subjects just as Gorsuch is claiming of slave power over slaves (*Leviathan*, XX, 16).

¹⁹⁶ Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man,” 29.

¹⁹⁷ Wynter, 29.

¹⁹⁸ Wynter, 26.

¹⁹⁹ Wynter, 26–32; Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument,” 261–62.

²⁰⁰ Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man,” 30; italics original.

²⁰¹ Wynter, 30.

²⁰² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 2.

²⁰³ Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond,” 233.

²⁰⁴ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 285.

²⁰⁵ As Gilles Deleuze points out, textual interstices can take many different forms. These might include acts of silence, acts of speech, and/or acts of music; “interstices thus proliferate everywhere.” What I find to be particularly interesting is that Parker’s interstice contains both the longform interstice that begins with the “mutual Scripture inquiry” and another interstice in the form of a hymn. While both interstices appear to me to challenge the epistemological ground upon which the hunt/return party invokes their mere presence at the Parker family home, I think the pause to sing and to shout this particular hymn is doing something different. Whereas the former textual interstice, from Parker’s

perspective, seems to be tethered to both the past and present, the latter hymnal interstice, while surely functioning to invoke a warning to Gorsuch in that present moment that extends to the future, it is also conjuring a future temporality for Parker and his comrades that, for me, suggests the possibility of peace knowing that these sick men who could reason people were parcels of property will have to atone. Of course this framing is conceived by and through the same Christian theology that Parker and Gorsuch are debating, but this ROAR, as it is characterized by Glissant – to be willing to die for the hope and with the belief that justice might be carried out in another world or on another plane – because this seems to be more plausible than justice/redress for the enslaved and their progeny in this world, reflects, or gestures towards, an axiological disposition or orientation of those who violently struggle against their oppressors. For Deleuze's interstice, see: Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 249, 181. The hymn being sang and shouted by Parker and his comrades is cited in Chapter 5 of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was published roughly a year or two after the revolt at Christiana, and is an adaptation of Samuel Wakefield's "Die in the Field." Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life among the Lowly* (Boston, MA: John P. Jewett and Company, 1853).

²⁰⁶ "The preachers of a slave-trading gospel frequently told us, in their sermons, that we should be 'good boys,' and not break into master's hen-roost, nor steal his bacon; but they never told this to these poor white people, although they knew very well that they encouraged the slaves to steal, trafficked in stolen goods, and stole themselves. Why this difference? I felt I was the equal of these poor whites, and naturally I concluded that we were greatly wronged, and that all this talk about obedience, duty, humility, and honesty was, in the phrase of my companions, 'all gammon.'" Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 158.

²⁰⁷ Parker, 283.

²⁰⁸ My readings of these authors is not in service to necessarily say something new about their ideas. In fact, I do very little reading of these works; the citations provided in the endnotes will provide the basis for my argument. For nearly the past three and a half centuries, many academic departments (e.g., History, Political Science, Sociology) in many universities have managed to produce a bevy of scholars who write profusely on these men. And of course, these written stories then come to comprise a canonized system of thought. The ideas espoused by these men are those readings assigned to students in course syllabi. As Sylvia Wynter comments in a 1997 essay, "university students are still assigned the dialogues of Plato as if they could throw any light on human behavior." And this cannon, constituted by these ideas, subsequently informs the basis for accepting a new cadre of younger scholars into doctoral programs, as a matter of intellectual fit, to which more stories about these men and their ideas will be published. And so on. *Dross*. Even as this characterization may be overstated, the citational loop to which I am alluding is in some ways gesturing towards the point being made throughout this chapter's section. As such, as it bears repeating for the reader steeped in the works heretofore mentioned, rather than focusing on providing a reading that offers new insights about their ideas or of the stories written concerning their ideas, my goal is to narratively illustrate the ways in which these ideas – despite the historical specificities of their origins and regardless of the intellectual debates framing their work(s) – have come to agglutinate the horizon of our political imaginations, even sometimes in the realm of fiction. My readings here are therefore more in service to thinking with Sylvia Wynter's work regarding the ways in which the epistemological codes embedded within these ideas have been transumed over time to then demonstrate not only how these organizing codes shaped the worlds of the enslaved in general, and specifically, those of the Parkers, their comrades, and the hunt/return party and why it was that it was the use of violence was the *only* way to produce the possibility of a different story/outcome than the proleptic plot believed by the hunt/return party. For Wynter's comments regarding Plato, see: Wynter, "Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters," 145. For a conversation about how even in the realm of fiction, our political imagination is ensnared to the outworn grammars of liberalism and its citational antecedents, see: Lenora Warren, "Joseph Cinqué, the Amistad Mutiny, and Revolutionary Whitewashing," in *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019), 71–97.

²⁰⁹ This sentiment is borrowed from Frantz Fanon: "It is good form to introduce a work in psychology with a statement of its methodological point of view. I shall be derelict. I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2008), 5.

²¹⁰ Frederick Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 51.

²¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1972), 137.

²¹² Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," *Boundary 2: On Humanism and the University: The Institutions of Humanism* 12/13, no. 3/1 (Spring-Autumn 1984): 31.

²¹³ McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 5, 7, 9.

²¹⁴ “To survive in a society based on power, largely outside or on the margin of the law, one had to know how to keep a weather eye open for those friendships which could help to keep one afloat.” Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I],” 9.

²¹⁵ The grammars posited by these thinkers do not and cannot offer liberation. It is as Sylvia Wynter said in her 1962 novel entitled, *The Hills of Hebron*, “They spoke glibly of freedom and democracy, but were incapable of understanding their meaning. They came from the generations of slaves on whose toiling backs the noble slogans of democracy had been conceived. And they were ready to die defending concepts which could have no meaning for them. [...] In exploring the symbols of power that their rulers had trapped in books, they had become enmeshed in their complexities, had fallen victims to a servitude more absolute than the one imposed by guns, whips, chains, and hunger. [...] They had surrendered even the right to dream their own dreams. Their dreams were second-hand, cut-price, bargain ones.” Thus, as Samera Esmeir notes, our liberation “is left for us.” See: Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 256–57; Samera Esmeir, “The Palestinians and the Struggle of the Dispossessed,” *openDemocracy*, May 14, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/palestinians-and-struggle-dispossessed/>.

²¹⁶ Upon the invention of the Gutenberg Press, Cicero’s *De Officiis* [On Duties] was the second most widely populated text only after the Gutenberg Bible. B. A. Uhlendorf, “The Invention of Printing and Its Spread till 1470: With Special Reference to Social and Economic Factors,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 2, no. 3 (1932): 179–231. One scholar refers to the Renaissance as being “above all things a revival of Cicero, and only after him and through him of the rest of Classical antiquity.” George A. Kennedy, “Cicero’s Oratorical and Rhetorical Legacy,” in *Brill’s Companion to Cicero* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 481–501 cf., Zieliński, Tadeusz. Cicero Im Wandel Der Jahrhunderte. Nabu Press. Historian Neal Wood comments that Cicero “is, after all, the only Roman republican social and political thinker of supreme importance” and attributes the apex of Cicero’s import to the Enlightenment, stating “it was a Ciceronian century.” Neal Wood, *Cicero’s Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 1, 3. There exists a cornucopia of references regarding Cicero’s influence on thinkers that range from Machiavelli, and Hugo Grotius to Montesquieu, David Hume, and Adam Smith. A very small sample of such sources include, Leslie J. Walker, ed., *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. Leslie J. Walker, vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950); Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism (New York, NY: Knopf, 1966); Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); D. H. van Zyl, “Cicero and Kant,” *Journal for Juridical Science* 16, no. 1 (1991): 49–57; Robert Denoon Cumming, *Human Nature and History: A Study of the Development of Liberal Political Thought* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1969); John B. Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1963); Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1976). From a different perspective, Karl Marx had this to say about Cicero: “he knew as little about philosophy as about the president of the United States of North America.” Karl Marx, “Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy (1839),” in *Collected Works*, by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engles, trans. Richard Dixon, vol. 1: 1835-1843 (New York, NY: Lawrence & Wishart, 2017), 472.

²¹⁷ Meyer Reinhold, “Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought,” in *Classical Influences on Western Thought, A.D. 1650-1870* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 232; italics my own.

²¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, Jr., May 8, 1825” (Letter, Washington, DC, May 8, 1825), Series 1: General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Library of Congress.

²¹⁹ John Adams, “John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1813,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney, vol. Volume 6: 11 March to 27 November 1813, Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 236–39.

²²⁰ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero: On the Republic. On the Laws*, trans. Clinton W. Keyes, Loeb Classical Library 213 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), Book III, 33. Of note, James Wilson, signee of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution and a justice on the first Supreme Court, invokes this very passage from Cicero’s *De re publica* and in so doing, is legitimating Cicero’s contention that the commonwealth, or the state, ought to permanently rule through obedience to its laws. Contextually, Wilson is also making the argument that the legality of the Constitution is etiologically connected to the legal and juridical traditions of Rome, not to those of England. See: James Wilson, *Collected Works of James Wilson*, ed. Kermit L. Hall and Mark David Hall (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2007), 523. The First Continental Congress references this passage from Cicero in their *Declaration of Rights* on October 14, 1774. Likewise, *A Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms* put forth by the Second Congress in July 6, 1775 also references this passage from Cicero. See: Charles C. Tansill, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927), 1–5; 10–17.

²²¹ Romans 13:1-2.

²²² Sylvia Wynter, “Rethinking Origins/Knowledges/The Achievement Gap: Black Education After ‘Man’ in Working Colloquium Jun 30-July 2, Commission on Research in Black Education,” 2000,

<http://www.coribe.org/pages/IManifesto.html>; Sylvia Wynter, "New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas," *Jamaica Journal* 17, no. 3 (1984): 46–55.

²²³ Even as I gesture towards perhaps an unscientific response to Sylvia Wynter's call "for a science of our origin stories," I am using the word "quixotic" here to intentionally signal the heartbreaking sentiment expressed by Saidiya Hartman regarding "the hope for social transformation in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the *quixotic* search for a subject capable of world-historical action, and the despair induced by the lack of one" even as "the instances of insurgency and contestation narrated herein and the relentless proliferation of small acts of resistance offer some small measure of encouragement." It is with these concomitant sentiments of heartbreak and hope that I am also referencing Walter Benjamin: "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious." See: Wynter, "Rethinking Origins/Knowledges/The Achievement Gap: Black Education After 'Man' in Working Colloquium Jun 30-July 2, Commission on Research in Black Education.," 130; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 14; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (1969), ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2007), 255.

²²⁴ Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis"; Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," 27; Wynter, "Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters," 144. For an apt and generative reading of Wynter's conceptualization of epistemic orders in contrast to other scholars like Kant and Habermas, see: Paget Henry, "Wynter and the Transcendental Spaces of Caribbean Thought," in *After Man, Towards the Human: Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter*, ed. Anthony Bogues, Caribbean Reasonings (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2006), 258–89.

²²⁵ Wynter, *Oral History*, 34.

²²⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York, NY: The Noonday Press, 1972); Lon L. Fuller, *The Law in Quest of Itself* (Chicago, IL: Foundation Press, Inc., 1940); Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The "New World" through Indian Eyes Since 1492* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1992); Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 175–92; Wendy Brown, "Finding the Man in the State," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992): 7–34; John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

²²⁷ Wynter, *Oral History*, 35.

²²⁸ Michel Foucault in "The Order of Things" describes this phenomenon as "the laws of a certain code of knowledge." In Sylvia Wynter's "Oral History" interview, she says, "the story of democracy, for example, when you had Hitler come in, you had this tremendous temptation of the story being changed for the negative." Aimé Césaire, in "Discourses on Colonialism," ascribes a similar function to the origin stories of nations that coincides with the rise of Hitler; the practices of Nazism were accepted and legitimated so long as they were practiced on non-European people, and thus the story was normalized and encouraged according to the episteme of the West until Nazism transcended its modus operandi and turned inward against Europeans. Crucially however, what both Wynter and Césaire demonstrate is the possibility for the plot to be challenged. See: Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1970); Wynter, *Oral History*, 37; Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*.

²²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward S. Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 199–203.

²³⁰ John 1:1; Wynter, "On Disenchanted Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," 225.

²³¹ Wynter, "Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man," 29; italics my own.

²³² Cicero's *On the Orator* (*De oratore*) *On the Commonwealth* (*De re publica*), and *On the Laws* (*De legibus*) are all modeled after Plato's works. J.E.G. Zetzel, ed., *Cicero: On the Commonwealth and On the Laws* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x. See *On the Laws*, Book I, 15. To most efficiently reference the works of Cicero, I will cite his works directly by name where I am reading from the original source. Though someone like Quentin Skinner and those affiliated with the Cambridge School who adhere to a depoliticized reading of political theory that suggests meaning from different epochs cannot be extrapolated for meaning in the current moment would likely characterize my readings here to be something beyond a dereliction, for my purpose – and indeed more importantly, for our purpose, dear reader – I am not overly concerned with the translations of Cicero's works. I have read enough of them to know meaning is not lost in any of the extant translations into English. To this end, his works can be found online with little trouble for the most part. I am mostly working from this version: Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Complete Works of Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC)*, ed. Delphi Classics, trans. Charles Duke Yonge, Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, and Cyrus R. Edmonds, Ancient Classics Series (East Sussex, U.K.: Delphi Classics, 2014). For the Cambridge School of political theory and the "myth of prolepsis," as posited by Skinner, see: Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53.

²³³ R.E. Smith, *Cicero: The Statesman* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1966); F.E. Adcock, *Roman Political Ideas and Practice* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1964); Matthias Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, trans. Robin Seager (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1969); Robin Seager, "Cicero and the Word Popularis," *The Classical Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1972): 328–38; Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*; Susan Treggiari, "Sentiment and Property: Some Roman

Attitudes,” in *Theories of Property: Aristotle to the Present*, ed. Anthony Parel and Thomas Flanagan (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 53–85; Elizabeth Rawson, “The Ciceronian Aristocracy and Its Properties,” in *Studies in Roman Property*, ed. M. I. Finley (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 85–102; Bruce W. Frier, *Landlords and Tenants in Imperial Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Thomas N. Mitchell, *Cicero: The Ascending Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).

²³⁴ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book I: 15, 20, 23 42–45; Book III: 21–24.

²³⁵ Clinton W. Keyes makes the case that while English translators have used words such as “republic,” “state,” “government,” and “civil order” interchangeably, Cicero’s conception of the state, as defined by “*populus Romanus*,” the name the Romans designated to refer to themselves as “Roman people” or “property of the Roman people” connotes a collective of citizens. Keyes’s reading draws from an interpretation of Cicero’s usage of two words: *res publica* and *civitas*. The former signals the constitutional and structural aspects of the state and the attendant conceptions of rights and of common interest. The latter on the other hand, refers to a more generalized conception of complex institutions of which the *res publica*, or state, is comprised. See: Clinton W. Keyes, “Original Elements in Cicero’s Ideal Constitution,” *The American Journal of Philology* 42, no. 4 (1921): 309–23.

²³⁶ Cicero, *About the Composition of Arguments (De Inventione)*, Book I, 2; Book II, 168–169; *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 40; Book II, 30.

²³⁷ Cicero, *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, Book II, 11.

²³⁸ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book II, 73.

²³⁹ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book I, 15, 20, 23, 42–45.

²⁴⁰ Cicero, *On Behalf of Aulus Caecina (Pro Caecina)*, 70, 73–75; Of note here is Cicero’s railing against property redistribution in the form of an Agrarian Bill that sought to make property ownership more equal. But Cicero says this would be ruinous to the commonwealth, antithetical to its founding, and unfair “that a man who never had any property should take the possessions of lands that had been occupied for many years or even generations, and that he who had them before should lose possession of them.” *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book II, 73, 78–79; *Topics of Argumentation (Topica)*, Book II, 9.

²⁴¹ Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 2, 47; Book III, 37; *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book II, 85; *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, Book II, 2, 5; *On Behalf of Aulus Cluentius (Pro Cluentio)*, 146–147; *On his House (De Doma Sua)*, 33.

²⁴² Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 44, 47; Book II, 47; Book III, 43–45.

²⁴³ Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 69; Book II, 30, 41–42.

²⁴⁴ Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book II, 3.

²⁴⁵ Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 47.

²⁴⁶ Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, Book I, 45, 47, 51, 53, 68; Book II, 3, 30, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 56–59, 65, 69; Book IV, 1; Book V, 2; Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book II, 79; Cicero, *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, Book II, 5; Book III, 10, 19–25; 28, 33–39, 44.

²⁴⁷ Cicero, *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, Book III, 39.

²⁴⁸ Cicero was vehemently opposed to such popular forms of rebellions that centered around agrarian proposals, land reform initiatives, and the calls for the redistribution of wealth. For his articulations concerning the injustice of such demands made by the people, see: *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book II, 73, 78–79; Book III, 69; *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, Book III, 8. For a deeper analysis from secondary sources, see: J.P.V.D. Balsdon, “Auctoritas, Dignitas, Otium,” *Classical Quarterly* 10, no. 54 (1960): 43–50; Mitchell, *Cicero: The Ascending Years*; Ch. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome During the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1950); Rawson, “The Ciceronian Aristocracy and Its Properties”; B.W. Frier, *The Rise of the Roman Jurists: Studies in Cicero’s Pro Caecina* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Smith, *Cicero: The Statesman*.

²⁴⁹ Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 2, 15–16, 38–39, 43, 60, 78, 85, 106, 110–112.

²⁵⁰ Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 73.

²⁵¹ Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 1, 2, 26, 34, 39, 76, 81, 130, 144.

²⁵² Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 2, 34, 39, 40, 76–78, 80–82, 85–86, 88–90, 92, 95, 101, 127, 133, 135.

²⁵³ Ch. Wirszubski, “Avdaces: A Study in Political Phraseology,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 51, no. 1–2 (1961): 15. See also Robert Kaster’s commentary throughout in, *Cicero: Speech on Behalf of Publius Sestius*, ed. and trans. Robert A. Kaster, Clarendon Ancient History Series (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁵⁴ Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 15, 46, 99, 104, 110, 139.

²⁵⁵ Cicero, *In Defense of Publius Sestius (Pro Sestio)*, 90–92, 98.

²⁵⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Breaking of the Vessels* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 74–75.

²⁵⁷ This is an important concept in much of Wynter’s work. However, I am citing from this particular piece of hers: Wynter, “Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters,” 151–52.

²⁵⁸ Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562–1627 [Part I],” 6–7.

²⁵⁹ Wynter, 6.

²⁶⁰ Zetzel, *Cicero: On the Commonwealth and On the Laws*; John B. Van Sickle, “Virgil vs. Cicero, Lucretius, Theocritus, Plato, and Homer: Two Programmatic Plots in the First Bucolic,” *Vergilius* 46 (2000): 21–58.

²⁶¹ Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I],” 6–7.

²⁶² Wynter, “On Disenchanted Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part II]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part III]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part IV].”

²⁶³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1688], ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), X, 31. For the quote from Cicero, see: *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book I, 35.

²⁶⁴ Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Poole Stafford (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 202.

²⁶⁵ Wynter, “New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas,” 47, 51. Here, it is worth noting that when Thomas Jefferson said he believes “the Indian, then, to be, in body and mind, equal to the white man” and “the black man, in his present state, might not be so,” in 1785, doing so was made possible by his *return to* this citational chain of Las Casas and Cicero. Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson to Francois Jean, Chevalier de Chastellux, June 7, 1785” (Letter, Washington, DC, June 7, 1785), Series 1: General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Library of Congress. See also, Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

²⁶⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1688], XXIV; John Locke, *The First and Second Treatises of Government* (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1690), TT, II.v.36-38; 50-51, II.ix.136.

²⁶⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVIII, 21-28; Cicero, *On Behalf of Aulus Caecina (Pro Caecina)*.

²⁶⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVIII, 23, italics original.

²⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII, 8-13; XIV, 8; XV, 5, 34; XVII, 1-4; XVIII, 8, 13; XIX, 4, 14-15; XXII, 5; XXIV, 8; XXVII, 3; XXVII, 20; XXIX, 3; XXX, 25.

²⁷⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

²⁷¹ The grammars espoused by Locke are intentionally crafted to appear as though the commonwealth possesses the vehicle for the government’s dissolution while explicitly telling us piecemeal reform is the limit of possibility. I find it to be quite devious. And this is before, within the broader narrative arch of his *Treatises*, that we learn revolution is purely a juridical concept such that rebellion from below is cause for strict punishment. See: Locke, *The First and Second Treatises of Government*, TT, III, 21; XIX, 223-226; II, XVIII, 207; XVIII, 208-209, 226.

²⁷² Locke, TT, II, 14; V, 42, 44-45.

²⁷³ Locke, TT, II, 9; III, 21.

²⁷⁴ Locke, TT, II, 8; IV, 24; XV, 174.

²⁷⁵ Locke, TT, II, 8.

²⁷⁶ Locke states that when redress is not to be found on earth – when the laws of government, its judgements, and the administration thereof are absent or absented of legitimacy – the only recourse remaining is to appeal to heaven. “Where an appeal to the law and constituted judges, lies open but the remedy is denied by a manifest perverting of justice, and a barefaced wresting of the laws to protect or indemnify the violence or injuries of some men, or party of men, there it is hard to imagine anything but a state of war.” *For we are those who exist properly in a state of war.* And though divine judgment is suspended until our meeting no more in the flesh, when Locke asks, “who shall be judge” in a state of war, we learn it is *us*, “the people shall be judge.” Left with no earthly recourse for redress, “the right of war” can be exacted “even against an aggressor, tho’ he be in society and a fellow subject.” Whereby the “fellow subject” implies one who possesses the protectorate of earthly recourse – those whom the laws protect – and where the adverb “even” expresses a similar sense of surprise that I felt while reading this passage, the peculiar historical irony notwithstanding, one possible reading hereof foreshadows all *our* violent rebellions, from Buffalo to Haiti, Oakland to Palestine. *For we are those who must appeal to Heaven.* Locke, TT, III, 19-21; XIX, 242-243. *Allahu Akbar.*

²⁷⁷ Andrew Brown (1929-1977) was from Buffalo, New York and organized incredibly large, one hundred piece choirs. This song is the namesake of the album that was recorded live in Buffalo, New York in September of 1974. See: Andrew Brown and National Baptist Convention Choir, *Lord, Lord*, Vinyl (Buffalo, NY: Mark Custom Recording Service, 1974). Listen: <https://youtu.be/hb4kO2ALfxI>.

²⁷⁸ This repeats the from the previous section so titled Origin/Stories. I am attempting to signal the closed citational loop – the closure of other possible epistemological possibilities for knowing/being/thinking – that portends our behaviors and our thoughts to the symbolic ordering principles we currently live.

²⁷⁹ Wynter, *Oral History*, 35.

²⁸⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1992), 170.

²⁸¹ “For what is a state? every collection even of uncivilized savages? every multitude even of runaways and robbers gathered into one place? Not so, you will certainly say. Therefore our community was not a state at a time when laws

had no force in it, when the courts of justice were abased, when ancestral custom had been overthrown, when the officers of government had been exiled and the name of the Senate was unknown in the state; that horde of bandits and the brigandage that under your leadership was a public institution and the remnants of conspiracy that had turned from the frenzies of Cataline to your criminal insanity, was not a state” [Cicero here is speaking of Rome and Clodius during his own exile in 58BCE]. From: Cicero, *Stoic Paradoxes (Paradoxa Stoicorum)*, 27.

²⁸² Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book III, 26.

²⁸³ Cicero, *On the Laws (De Legibus)*, II, 15-16, 26, 36, 69; Cicero, *On the Republic (De re Publica)*, II, 26-27; V, 3.

²⁸⁴ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book I, 38.

²⁸⁵ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book III, 107-108, 111.

²⁸⁶ Cicero, *On Duties (De Officiis)*, Book III, 32.

²⁸⁷ Compare Locke, TT, XIII, 225 with Federalist Papers, 10, 19-20, 23, 41.

²⁸⁸ McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 23 italics original.

²⁸⁹ Just as the plot shifts here, perhaps owing to the redress found by appealing to the heavens, the Parkers and their comrades rewrite their plot through violence.

²⁹⁰ The “z” signifies the way in which blackness capacitates the transmutation of language and subsequently the stories that are told through languaging. I am thinking about the deformation and reformation of form that constitutes what Vèvè Clark described as “diasporic literacies” and the work of rhythm, displacement, and movement(s) embedded within our (black) studies, our writing, our storytelling, and of our be-ing. I am also thinking about the way in which JAY-Z conceives of flow as being not time, but rather “like life. It’s like a heartbeat or the way you breathe, it can jump, speed up, slow down, stop or pound right through like a machine. If the beat is time, flow is what we do with that time, how we live through it. The beat is everywhere, but every life has to find its own flow.” And this understanding is cognate with Katherine McKittrick’s discussion about how we inhabit the world differently, but this parallax is conditioned by a praxis of “black livingness.” James Baldwin also comes to mind here when he said, “we were funky, baby, like funk was going out of style” and how black English is playful, cutting, inventive, and creates opportunities for the work of the prefix “re-” to take hold and attach to “-definition” and “-identification.” Lastly, the right side of the colon is from the Inspectah Deck’s verse on the record, “Guillotine (Swordz).” All of this is an attempt, however quixotic, to signal the equiprimordiality of storytelling and of the grammars/semantics embedded within violent black revolt. See: Vèvè Amasasa Clark, “Developing Diaspora Literacy and Marasa Consciousness,” in *Kaiso!: Writings by and about Katherine Dunham*, ed. Veve A. Clark and Sara E. Johnson (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); JAY-Z, *Decoded* (New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2010), 12; McKittrick, “Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered About the Floor)”; James Baldwin, “If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1979; Rackwon et al., *Guillotine (Swordz)*.

²⁹¹ Locke, TT, XIX, 230; Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, XI–XXVI (Winston and Goldsboro, NC: State of North Carolina, 1895), XIII, 202; capitalization original; Edwin Clifford Holland, *A Refutation of the Calumnies Circulated Against the Southern & Western States: Respecting the Institution and Existence of Slavery Among Them. To Which Is Added, a Minute and Particular Account of the Actual State and Condition of Their Negro Population. Together with Historical Notices of All the Insurrections That Have Taken Place Since the Settlement of the Country* (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1822), 86; italics and capitalization original; Rev. J. S. Gorsuch, “History of the Christiana Tragedy, by One of Mr. Gorsuch’s Sons,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1851; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 192, 195; Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land [1939]*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 23.

²⁹² Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 737–80.

²⁹³ Here, I am drawing from Gilles Deleuze’s conceptualization of the interstice. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989), Deleuze defines an interstice as a space “between two actions, between affections, between perceptions” wherein differentiation occurs to produce the possibility for something new. Describing the interstice as a “method of BETWEEN” and as a “method of AND,” Deleuze argues that this space of textual incommensurability – unassimilable pure difference – furnishes the opportunity for new thought. When an incommensurate textual relation collides, as they do within Parker’s *Story*, given one textual representation, Deleuze writes, another representation “has to be chosen which will induce an interstice *between* the two.” Continuing, he adds, “given one potential, another one has to be chosen, not any whatever, but in such a way that a difference of potential is established between the two, which will be productive of a third or of something new.” For Deleuze, the interstice comprises a “radical calling into question” of the textual representation whereby the “while undergoes a mutation, because it has ceased to be the One-Being, in order to become the constitutive ‘and’ of things, the constitutive between-two.” See: Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 175, 179–80; capitalization original.

²⁹⁴ While this draws from the language of Deleuze, it is conceptually cognate with Sylvia Wynter’s understanding of the “cognitive advantage” we possess owing to our “liminal status” as both being inside and outside of the social order’s governing epistemological project. It is from this position/standpoint that the possibility to provide a

“counterinterpretation” or a “root expansion of thought” towards the autonomy from the order of knowledge that governs our behaviors. See, Deleuze, 175; Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man,” 59; Wynter, “Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters,” 154–62.

²⁹⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6–8.

²⁹⁶ Glissant, 56.

²⁹⁷ “The political framework is quite explicitly predicated on the notion that whites everywhere have a common interest in maintaining global white supremacy against insurrections conceived of in racial terms.” See, Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 114.

²⁹⁸ Confusion on the matter still manifests in the work of the most substantive texts written on the Christiana Insurrection. For example, Jonathan Katz and Ella Forbes disagree about which of fugitives named on Gorsuch’s warrant actually correspond to the names provided in Parker’s *Story*. On this, see: Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 82, 94, 327n.3; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, 52–53; 58–59; 72. Parker does provide some details concerning the “Special Secret Committee” in his *Story*, but the opacity with which he recalls precisely how information traveled across their networks to inform and provide the Parkers and their comrades of the hunt/return party’s comings and goings, even fifteen years after the rebellion in 1866 when his *Story* was published, I find to be telling of how organized folks *had* to be and of the deadly seriousness with which secrets *had* to be kept. This is organization is the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, of which William Still was the chairman. It was formally established in 1837 with the purpose to “fund [and] aid colored persons in distress and was, as best as I can see, constituted an inter-racial and inter-class effort of those persons already involved with the underground railroad. See: Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-Breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers, of the Road*; Joseph A. Boromé et al., “The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 92, no. 3 (1968): 320–51; Winch, “Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad.”

²⁹⁹ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 293.

³⁰⁰ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1991); Jacques Derrida, “But, beyond... (Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon),” trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry* 13, no. 1 (1986): 155–70; Wynter, “Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters”; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998; Janelle T. Scott, “A Rosa Parks Moment? School Choice and the Marketization of Civil Rights,” *Critical Studies in Education* 54, no. 1 (2013): 5–18.

³⁰¹ Cohen, *The Conspiracy of Capital: Law, Violence, and American Popular Radicalism in the Age of Monopoly*, 37.

³⁰² Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*; Warren, *Fire on the Water: Sailors, Slaves, and Insurrection in Early American Literature, 1789-1886*. See also: Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*; Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1993).

³⁰³ Wynter, “But What Does ‘Wonder’ Do? Meanings, Canons, Too? On Literary Texts, Cultural Contexts, and What It’s like to Be One/Not One of Us.”

³⁰⁴ Teresa Brennan, *History After Lacan* (London, UK: Routledge, 1993), 33. Also see Christopher Tomlins’s rich project on the speculative history of Nat Turner in, *In the Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

³⁰⁵ It may be worth noting here that I am intentionally using the speculative rather than Hartman’s method of critical fabulation. While the speculative, as I am signaling here, is in many ways cognate with the insurgent politics of imagining and dreaming between the silences of the archives and still shares a similar “narrative restraint” that understands “the shrieks, the moans, the nonsense, and the opacity” are *derelict* and “always in excess of legibility and of the law” with critical fabulation, the ends appear to me to be different. Whereby critical fabulation, as Hartman explains, constitutes an attempt “to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done [...] by exploiting the ‘transparency of sources’ as fictions of history” with the goal of accounting for black life and black livingness that exists between “two zones of death – social and corporeal death.” While the Christiana insurrection is unique for a myriad of reasons, it is particularly unique in that those responsible for killing the propertied escaped death and the law that functions to maintain its monopoly on violence by ensuring at least someone is held accountable at the symbolic level for its breach. What I mean here is that I am not locating the Parkers and their comrades between these two zones of death, and I am also not reading the narratives produced by the Christiana events with the same stated goal as Hartman. While on the one hand, yes, the stories told in the archives also weave meaning from the past, present, and future so to

narratively enact “the time of slavery as our present.” This remains with the speculative too, as it is with critical fabulation. Said most simply: Hartman’s method seeks to imagine the livingness of black within those archives that would have some people – though not us, dear reader – believe that death was all that constituted black. The speculative, on the other hand, is an attempt to imagine black as it was conceptualized – as always incipiently in some process of violently revolting – so to begin grasping towards conceiving of the horror wrought on the genre category of white people – the yet still unimaginable and unthinkable of black people killing whites, of *returning the devil’s fire* – wrought on slave power when it *actually* did happen. The abundance of archival material produced by the Christiana Insurrection helps offer meanings towards such wonder. Where Hartman’s method works to displace the authorized source/story through imaginative reclamation, I am taking the authorized source/story and using it against power in an attempt to reveal openings created by violent black rebellion itself. If its use – the taking of that which is given and turning it back at the source – resembles what Michael Taussig refers to as “mimetic excess,” and again elsewhere as “subversive mimesis,” then the use of violence, along with the speculative form of reading here, both and together, imply “understanding the unbearable truths of make-believe as foundation of an all-too-seriously serious reality, manipulated but also manipulatable.” In this sense, the speculative is a subjunctive reading/method/approach that understands power’s official accounting can *also* be used against power for devious and diabolical ends. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 11–12; Michael T. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 254–55; Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

³⁰⁶ The charge of treason is quoted from the U.S. Constitution, Article III, Section III, Clause I. This was the charge read to the jury in the trial of *United States v. Hanway* (1851). See, Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; James Willard Hurst, *The Law of Treason in the United States: Collected Essays* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971).

³⁰⁷ This move to categorize black people – enslaved, fugitive, or otherwise – as enemies is found within the Hobbesian doctrine of generational enmity, which its citational antecedents stem from Cicero, conceives the power of sovereign authority the legitimate and necessary capacity to ascribe entire communities with generational enmity. This also foreshadows the capacity of international law to ensnare entire communities as piratical, or terrorists, or those belonging to a failed state, which triggers its own form of legal repressions.

³⁰⁸ An ascription of the revolting parcels of property offered through testimony during the interrogation of those arrested and at the hearing over which United States Commissioner Edward D. Ingraham presided. “[T]hey had clubs in their hands; said they had a fight over there and that a man was killed; they allowed the man’s son got shot or wounded [sic]; allowed Pinckney struck his master over the head with the fence rail [sic]; they have all gone off.” I read this as, *them niggas have gone of the chain*. This is as much an expression of black slang as it is an ontological condition of no longer being confined and held by the social, political, juridical, epistemological, and/or any other dictates of enslavement. To *be off the chain* signifies a condition of freedom, if only by comparison for the logics it represents, which as Saidiya Hartman and others remind us, the time of slavery is still now. See: Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*, 27.

³⁰⁹ I am invoking the authority from which Gorsuch laid claim to authority in the previous section as a genre of recursive emplotment, the same mode of ensnarement with which he was trying to envelop the Parkers is going to be his undoing – in the very grammars of the authority he sought to legitimate his hunt/return. These two sentences are a composite of Ecclesiastes 9:5: “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.” and of Malachi 4:1: “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Thus, this move is to not reinscribe the authority Gorsuch claims, but rather a move towards the ludic – a move that is as playful as it is a form of weaponizing authority’s own semantic and authoritative charters.

³¹⁰ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 147.

³¹¹ Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part II],” 9. I am also thinking about Katherine McKittrick’s reflection on her deep friendship with Sylvia. She says, “I feel possibility. I think this is what possibility feels like. It is not narrated textually. It is not an idea.” Later in the piece, thinking about Wynter’s generosity and their collaboration through the sharing of ideas, she states, “I believed them with all my heart. And lucky for me, she believed me too. (We must believe each other; we must believe the stories we tell one another.) And on friendship, McKittrick offers us this: “The friendship itself, a form of life that cannot be totally capitalized on and is therefore slightly in excess of work as we know it ... Working in friendship could be a way to work outside of productivist demands. Friendship is hard freedom. Maybe friendships effectuate consciousness and liberation and possibility.” Against those framings of black life that assert an ontological condition of impossibility, she closes with a suggestion that offers a praxis of hope and of the very possibility with which she opened: “Maybe we are not an impossibility. Maybe we are, in the words of Aimé Césaire, ‘poetically beautiful’ and therefore possible outside the terms of what they think we are.” I have cited this at length because this understanding of who *we* are helps frame my understanding of what I

have come to learn about the Parkers and their comrades. Katherine McKittrick, “Something That Exceeds All Efforts To Definitely Pin It Down,” in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 71, 73–74.

³¹² Read: NIGGA, PLEEEASE!

³¹³ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 285.

³¹⁴ Parker, 285.

³¹⁵ Parker, 286.

³¹⁶ Threatening death to their comrades, as both William and Eliza Parker did, is cognate with the story Harriet Tubman told to her biographer. When the path of escape became too troublesome, too difficult, and too fearful; when the brutal efforts to continue enacting their escape out of the South and out of the fetters of the laws that averred they were property became so heavy whereby their bodies trembled under the burden of escape such “that they could not take another step. They would lie there and die, or if strength came back, they would return on their steps, and seek their old homes again. Then the revolver carried by [Harriet] would come out, while pointing it at their heads she would say, ‘DEAD NIGGERS TELL NO TALES; YOU GO ON OR DIE!’” See: Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 32–33.

³¹⁷ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 286.

³¹⁸ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 103, 227.

³¹⁹ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Jackson, *A History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others, for Treason, at Philadelphia in November, 1851. With an Introduction upon the History of the Slave Question.*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

³²⁰ As I have alluded to throughout this chapter’s story, Parker’s *Story* is written in code. The names of those so mentioned in the warrant are not the names of those persons Parker identifies by name; he uses their assumed aliases. Though others have undertaken to decipher the code and match the names on the warrant to those persons Parker names, even as I think some have done so erroneously, I will not do that here. As McKittrick states, “There are some things we can just keep for ourselves. Somethings they cannot have and know.” Like Parker, and like the mother of Eliza and Hannah, I prefer to keep this tiny little secret. McKittrick, “Something That Exceeds All Efforts To Definitely Pin It Down,” 74. See also: Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 97–114.

³²¹ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

³²² Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 286–87.

³²³ James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1925), 74–75.

³²⁴ Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, trans. T.J. Winter, 2nd ed., Book XL of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Cambridge: UK: Islamic Texts Society, 2015), 186–87. I want to thank my dear friend Yasmina Raiani for sharing this text with me.

³²⁵ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 286–88.

³²⁶ Daniel J. Hulsebosch, “The Ancient Constitution and the Expanding Empire: Sir Edward Coke’s British Jurisprudence,” *Law and History Review* 21, no. 3 (2003): 439–82.

³²⁷ McKittrick, “Rebellion/Invention/Groove,” 82–83.

³²⁸ Samera Esmeir, *Judicial Humanity: A Colonial History* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

³²⁹ The *partus sequitur ventrem* doctrine, which translates to “offspring follows the womb,” is one such example of the law’s inducement to violence for the purpose of protecting private property. Consider the comments made by James Gholson, a judge from Virginia, nearly twenty years prior to the violent insurrection at Christiana. Addressing the Virginia legislature on January 18, 1831, Gholson argued that “*partus sequitur ventrem* is coeval with the existence to the right of property itself and is founded in wisdom and justice.” And this doctrine was a foundational governing practice throughout the colonies, especially after 1808 when the importation of black people from the continent of Africa was prohibited. Virginia first defined slavery, in accordance to this doctrine, on the condition of the mother in 1662. So harrowing and sick are these men, for it guaranteed the legal right to rape black women throughout the colonies in the name of protecting private property; rape was the vehicle for selling black people; rape – not in any criminal sense of the word – was the vehicle by which the governing apparatus of the Union, constructed to secure the right to private property in black people, was advanced, memorialized, and secured. “I do not hesitate to say,” said Gholson as he closed his address to the Virginia legislature and to those otherwise present, “in its [rape] increase consists much of our

wealth.” A.B. and Correspondence of the Republican, “Mr. Clay on Slave-Breeding,” *Emancipator and Republican*, August 15, 1850, sec. News.

³³⁰ McKittrick, “Rebellion/Invention/Groove,” 82–83.

³³¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Translator’s Preface,” in *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), xlii.

³³² Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, 177.

³³³ Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History*, 4–5; Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, 178.

³³⁴ Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond.”

³³⁵ Wynter.

³³⁶ Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, 78–79.

³³⁷ E. Louis Lowe, “Annual Message of the Executive to the General Assembly of Maryland. January Session, 1852” (Annual Message to the Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD, January 7, 1852), 37, Public Documents - January 7, 1852 - May 31, 1852 Session, Maryland State Archives. An article in the Richmond Dispatch (VA) dated October 23, 1851 similarly avers Gorsuch’s death as an assault on all of the South: “The body of the Southern people are loyal to the Union [...] But they will not consent to live under it, if its laws may be set at defiance with impunity.” *Richmond Dispatch*, October 23, 1851.

³³⁸ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 287; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 221–28.

³³⁹ As Kellie Carter Jackson observes, violent black rebellion “inflict[s] its own form of terror.” Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, 157.

³⁴⁰ My understanding here is informed by Sylvia Wynter: “Seeing that it is only by means of such a new rupture that we can, as a species, be empowered to govern the governing codes of symbolic life and death which have hitherto governed and still govern us, thereby necessitating our behaviors in pre-determined and code-specific ways. [...] as humans we were to experience ourselves in symbolically coded terms – even where, as in our own case, we verbally define ourselves [...] and are thereby induced to experience ourselves [through the symbolic ordering principle] that we inscript, define ourselves to be.” Continuing this line of thought, Wynter cites Aimé Césaire to say, “it remains unable to make our human worlds, as worlds instituted by the Word, by Origin narratives and representations, intelligible, and therefore to provide knowledge of our phenomenological universes as a third level or reality, *outside the symbolically coded terms of their order-enacting cognitive closure and circular self-referentiality*.” Wynter’s provocation here serves as the basis of this chapter: the violent black revolt of the enslaved, fugitive or otherwise, is in service to producing this knowledge vis-à-vis the new narratives it produces, with, against, and *hopefully*, beyond our current epistemological frame of being. Thus, when Wynter says: “*Meaning [...] is being*. [And] any fundamental change in our affairs calls for a profound change in meaning and thereby in the order of consciousness, which it structures; [...] a profound change in representations,” I offer here that it is through the use of violence – perhaps one of the few grammars power understands – that such a “profound change in representations” can be induced. See: Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man,” 58–59.

³⁴¹ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 287; Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 119–20.

³⁴² Al-Muddaththir 74:38 “Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained.”

³⁴³ Lancaster County “was in a state worse than subjection to martial law. The tendency of a ‘little brief authority’ is toward abuse of it; and the class of persons easily secured for the service then required of temporary officers of the law was not such as to insure delicacy of treatment or tender consideration for the objects against whom their summary processes were directed. Whites and blacks, bond and free, were rather roughly handled; few households in the region searched were safe from rude intrusion; many suffered terrifying scenes and sounds.” Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*, 41.

³⁴⁴ Parker, “The Freedman’s Story: In Two Parts,” March 1866, 293.

³⁴⁵ Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 123; Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-Breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers, of the Road.*, 360–82.

³⁴⁶ Reigart, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy: In the County of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim Et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25th*; Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 70; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*, 25–35; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*, 39–45; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 120–36; Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*, 76–93; LaVerne D. Rettew,

A Charge of Treason or a Fight for Freedom (Christiana, PA: Moores Memorial Library, 2000), 18; “N. Y. Tribune. Sentiments of the Press upon the Christiana Slave Hunt,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, n.d.; “The Christiana Outrage,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 14, 1851; “The Pennsylvania Outrage,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 14, 1851; Lucy Maddox, *The Parker Sisters: A Border Kidnapping* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2016).

³⁴⁷ Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*, 137.

³⁴⁸ Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, 42; 125–26; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*, 27; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*, 44; Paul Finkelman, “The Treason Trial of Caster Hanway,” in *American Political Trials*, ed. Michal R. Belknap (Greenwood Press, 1994), 84; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998, 65; Rice, “A Legacy Transformed: The Christiana Riot in Historical Memory,” 79–80.

³⁴⁹ Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 67.

³⁵⁰ Spillers, 67.

³⁵¹ While this might appear to be endemic to only the South, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 erased whatever perceived differences between the North and South that may have been thought to exist given that the Act of 1850 federalized not only the hunt/return of black people into slavery, but it also conscripted all citizens in all geographic sectors to the confinement of black people – distinctions between free and enslaved and fugitive not always a concern – to dispossessed modalities of being, chained to the land. See: McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place.”

³⁵² Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1979), 48–49.

³⁵³ Hannah Arendt, “What Is Authority?,” in *Between Past and Future; Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1961), 91–142.

³⁵⁴ Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*, 36.

³⁵⁵ Noam Chomsky articulates a similar sentiment in a different context as the allowance for the very lively debate within a limited spectrum of acceptable possibilities. See: Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good* (Monroe, ME: Odonian Press, 1998).

³⁵⁶ Of note is that some sources count only a total of thirty-eight while others count forty-one. Some of the confusion owes to the fact that the trial for the last three persons to be charged was intended to be held in the next court session of April 1852. Nonetheless, they were to be charged for treason in accordance with the other thirty-eight persons. “The Christiana Rioters,” *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, November 19, 1851; Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*; Jackson, *A History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others, for Treason, at Philadelphia in November, 1851. With an Introduction upon the History of the Slave Question*; Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot*; Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*; Forbes, *But We Have No Country: The 1851 Christiana, Pennsylvania Resistance*, 1998.

³⁵⁷ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*.

³⁵⁸ United States District Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, John W. Ashmead, a member of the prosecution, states the reason for this in a letter he wrote to various federal officials at the Department of State dated September 26, 1851: “A jury would be terrified at the idea of returning a verdict of guilty which would involve so great a sacrifice of human life and also because the evidence would be uncertain and indistinct as to some, and in this way might so involve the whole transaction in doubt as to lead to the acquittal of all. Separate indictments would enable us to select the strongest cases for the trial first, and present the causes to the jury in our own way.” Ashmead, “Ashmead to Derrick, Acting Secretary of State.”

³⁵⁹ The Prosecution consisted of U.S. Attorney John W. Ashmead, his cousin George L. Ashmead, and James R. Ludlow. All three of whom were Philadelphia attorneys. The state of Maryland also provided a prosecutorial team to aid, or to rather ensure their interests were protected in Pennsylvania. From Maryland: Robert J. Brent, the Attorney General of Maryland, James Cooper, a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania but hired by Maryland, another federal government attorney hired by the state of Maryland, Z. Collins Lee, U.S. District Attorney in Baltimore, Collins Lee, and the Gorsuch family lawyer, R.M. Lee. For the defense, Thaddeus Stevens, John M. Read, Theodore Culyer, Joseph J. Lewis, and W. Arthur Jackson. Jackson, *A History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others, for Treason, at Philadelphia in November, 1851. With an Introduction upon the History of the Slave Question*.

³⁶⁰ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 18–20; “Indictment of Castner Hanaway, et. al., November 12, 1851; Criminal Case Files, 1791-1870; United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania” (Indictment, Mid Atlantic Region (Philadelphia), November 12, 1851), Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21, National Archives and Records Administration.

³⁶¹ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 244–45.

³⁶² The predicates upon which the charge of treason against Hanway needed to be proved operationalize Michael Mark Cohen’s three-part definition of conspiracy: this conspiratorial triptych “is first an act, albeit a collective and criminal one,

subject to legal interpretation; conspiracy is second a political plot in the contested social field; and third, conspiracy is a vision of totality, as the agent of history itself.” Cohen’s “three interrelated horizons” map onto the prosecution’s burden to demonstrating guilt: the black insurrectionists were collectively organized and led by Hanway in the attempt to contest the legality of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and its constitutional mandate and the violent enactments against such authority constituted the attempt to overthrow the government. See: Cohen, *The Conspiracy of Capital: Law, Violence, and American Popular Radicalism in the Age of Monopoly*, 18–20.

³⁶³ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*. For other sources that include a deeper engagement with the politics surrounding the trial, see: Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North*; Finkelman, “The Treason Trial of Caster Hanway.”

³⁶⁴ Slaughter traces the legal interpretations of both clauses constituting treason: the levying of war and also the provisioning of aid to the enemy. Revealed here is the slippage between such terms and though treason is significant in its punishment of death and in the way in which its charge signals a threat to the symbolic order of power, the behaviors constituting levying war could be defined, not as protracted regular warfare, but irregular and even simple rebellions wherein damage to property is the only outcome. The same is revealed with providing aid to the enemy, which hinges upon the theatre of political spectacle. And of course, this is constitutive of the sovereign’s ability to name someone or some group as enemies in the first instance; the named enemy and the procuring of aid and comfort could be internal and external, and coheres to no fixed definition. See: Thomas P. Slaughter, “‘The King of Crimes’: Early American Treason Law, 1787-1860,” in *Launching the “Extended Republic”: The Federalist Era*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1996), 54–135. For a comparison of interpretations, see also: Charles Warren, “What Is Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy?,” *The Yale Law Journal* 127, no. 3 (1918): 331–47.

³⁶⁵ *The Planter’s Advocate and Southern Maryland Advertiser*, October 1, 1851 [italics original].

³⁶⁶ In many ways, the work of Ella Forbes, Thomas P. Slaughter, and Christopher Rice signal a shift away from this trope. See their citations throughout.

³⁶⁷ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 242 [italics original].

³⁶⁸ Wynter, *Oral History*; Sylvia Wynter, Joshua Bennett, and Jarvis R. Givens, “‘A Greater Truth than Any Other Truth You Know’: A Conversation with Professor Sylvia Wynter on Origin Stories,” *Souls* 22, no. 1 (2020): 123–37.

³⁶⁹ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 49.

³⁷⁰ “No set of legal institutions or prescriptions exist apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic, for each decalogue a scripture. Once understood in the context of the narratives that give it meaning, law becomes not merely a system of rules to be observed, but a world in which we live.” Robert M. Cover, “Foreword: Nomos and Narrative,” *Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 1 (November 1983): 4–5.

³⁷¹ Wynter, “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism.” Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man.”

³⁷² Recall Cicero’s originating purpose of the republic’s formation: the protection of private property.

³⁷³ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. Volume 1 (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1984), 150.

³⁷⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1992); Sylvia Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man,” in *Symbolic Narratives/ African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*, ed. June Givanni (London, UK: British Film Institute, 2000), 25–76.

³⁷⁵ “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,” Pub. L. No. 31–60, § 9, 9 Stat. 462 (1850).

³⁷⁶ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (London, UK: A. Strahan, Law-Printer to the King, 1825); Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis: Ontaining a Detail of the Various Crimes and Misdemeanors by Which Public and Private Property and Security Are at Present Injured and Endangered and Suggesting Remedies for Their Prevention* (London: J. Mawman, 1800); Daniel J. Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire: New York and the Transformation of Constitutionalism in the Atlantic World, 1664-1830* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David E. Engdahl, “Soldiers, Riots, and Revolution: The Law and History of Military Troops in Civil Disorders,” *Iowa Law Review* 57, no. 1 (1971): 1–74; Marcus Rediker, “The Seaman as the ‘Spirit of Rebellion’: Authority, Violence, and Labor Discipline,” in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seaman, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 205–53; Rao Gautham, “The Federal Posse Comitatus Doctrine: Slavery, Compulsion, and Statecraft in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” *Law and History Review* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 1–56; *Coyles v. Hurin*, 10 Johns. 85, 88 (New York State Supreme Court 1813); *Comfort v. Commonwealth*, 5 Whart. 437 at 439–40 (Pennsylvania 1840); *Avery v. Seely*, 3 Watts & Serg. 494, 498 (Pennsylvania 1841).

³⁷⁷ Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist No. 27: The Same Subject Continued (The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered): (Hamilton) From the New York Packet. Tuesday, December 25, 1787,” in *The Federalist Papers (1787-1788)*, by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (New York, NY: J. and A. McLean, 1901), 87–89.

- ³⁷⁸ James Madison, “James Madison, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 12; Debate in Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 14, 1788,” in *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, ed. Jonathan Elliot, 2nd ed., vol. Vol. 3, 5 vols. (New York, NY: Burt Franklin, 1888), Document 27; 380-395, 400-402.
- ³⁷⁹ David B. Kopel, “The Posse Comitatus and the Office of Sheriff: Armed Citizens Summoned to the Aid Of Law Enforcement,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Symposium on Guns in America, 104, no. 4 (2015): 798.
- ³⁸⁰ “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,” Pub. L. No. 31–60, § 5, 9 Stat. 462 (1850).
- ³⁸¹ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 196.
- ³⁸² Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*, 62; Katz, *Resistance at Christiana: The Fugitive Slave Rebellion, Christiana, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851, A Documentary Account*, 162–64.
- ³⁸³ “Opening Speech of John W. Ashmead, United States District Attorney, in the Case of the United States vs. Castner Hanway, Indicted for Treason, in the Circuit Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania: Delivered; Speech of John W. Ashmead, in the Case of The People vs. James Stephens, Indicted for Murder, in the Court of Oyer and Terminer, for the City and County of New York: Delivered March 25, 1859.” (New York: Grossman & Son, Printers, March 25, 1859).
- ³⁸⁴ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 198.
- ³⁸⁵ Robbins, 198–99.
- ³⁸⁶ Robbins, 198.
- ³⁸⁷ Brent’s father, William L. Brent, owned a sugar plantation that was bequeathed to him from his grandfather. William Brent was also an attorney and a U.S. Representative from the State of Louisiana. It is also suggested that Robert Brent was related to Colonel Lloyd, the same Colonel Lloyd who was reputed to “own” thousands of enslaved persons on the “Great House Farm” where Frederick Douglass grew up. David M. French, *The Brent Family: The Carroll Families of Colonial Maryland* (Alexandria, D.C.: D.M. French, 1981). Daniel Webster contracted enslaved persons to labor at his house. Elizabeth Dowling Taylor, *A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).
- ³⁸⁸ Daniel Webster, “Reception at Buffalo. A Speech Delivered Before a Large Assembly of the Citizens of Buffalo and the County of Erie, at a Public Reception on the 22nd of May, 1851,” in *The Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster: With an Essay on Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style*, by Daniel Webster, ed. Edwin Percy Whipple (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902). To note here is the retroping of (shared) semantical semblance between what Webster is espousing here and the epigraph attributed to Cicero that opened this chapter’s story.
- ³⁸⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1984), 48–49; 67–68.
- ³⁹⁰ Harvey Wish, “American Slave Insurrections Before 1861,” *The Journal of Negro History* 22, no. 3 (1937): 299–320; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*.
- ³⁹¹ Robert M. Cover, *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992).
- ³⁹² Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part II]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part III]”; Wynter, “Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part IV]”; Wynter, “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation”; Wynter, “On Disenchanted Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond”; Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis”; Wynter, “Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters”; Wynter, “Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man.”
- ³⁹³ What I am referring to as scotomatous veneers is what Sylvia Wynter, through reference to Ralph Ellison’s “inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality,” conceives of as the way in which the epistemology of a social order is integrated to reveal the process of racialization, invisibilization, or in our case, even the making of the enemy, so to signal the *how* of “representations, meanings, and remembered events are perceived by the same neuronal processes by which actual events are perceived.” Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3; Wynter, “But What Does ‘Wonder’ Do? Meanings, Canons, Too? On Literary Texts, Cultural Contexts, and What It’s like to Be One/Not One of Us,” 126. Wynter deploys this concept elsewhere, too; consider for example, Wynter, “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism”; Wynter, “On Disenchanted Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond”; Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument”; Wynter, “On How We Mistook the Map for Our Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Dêsetre: Black Studies toward the Human Project”; Wynter, “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtown, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition.”
- ³⁹⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1976), 36.
- ³⁹⁵ Thomas Ruffin, *The State v. John Mann*, No. 13 N.C. 263 (North Carolina Supreme Court 1829).

³⁹⁶ Thomas Ruffin, *State v. Caesar*, No. 31 N.C. 391 (North Carolina Supreme Court 1849).

³⁹⁷ Here, I am thinking about Frederick Douglass's observation that white people in general, and those white persons who held private property in black people more specifically, were also enslaved to an even more bitter form of oppression than those who were enslaved. See: Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, NY: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855).

³⁹⁸ Brent for the Prosecution Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 214.

³⁹⁹ Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851; An Historical Sketch*, 32.

⁴⁰⁰ For example, James Cooper of the prosecution makes a series of whirlwind-like movements, whiplashing between the origin story of the Union and the English Constitution, both of which he tethers together by the citational referents he provides to Biblical stories ("pillars [of sovereign authority] are Samson-like") and to England's preeminent jurists and scholars (e.g., Hale, Foster, Coke, Vaughan, and Mansfield) to validate the Union's existence and its laws – both of which he makes clear to argue are being threatened and therefore warrant the charge of treason and the resulting penalty of death. And as we have already observed in Part III of our story, this recourse fictionalized and mythologized stories through recursive citational referents provides Cooper the framework necessary to both legitimate the United States Constitution and the prosecution's charge for treason. "Both in this country and in England," Cooper repeatedly recites throughout his arguments. Interestingly, the jurists he cites, in addition to the influence of Locke's ideas in the Americas, were instrumental to American law regarding the transformation of how property was treated in English colonies like Jamaica and Virginia. While black people were not being bought and sold in England as they were in the colonies, a new rationale had to be invented to allow for this difference. And this invention was the shift from jurisdiction of English laws to jurisprudence of liberty. The law had to be flexible enough for the protection of liberty in one place and in another place, liberty had to be re/defined so to allow/enable colonization and enslavement. Land in the 'new world', even though inhabited, had to be legally considered empty wastelands in order to be settled by English colonizers. The various Chief Jurists for the Crown of England that Cooper cites re/fashioned the concept of *res nullius* to thereby claim imperial "discovery" of empty and unsettled lands which could then be settled by its colonizers and subsequently ruled at the discretion of the crown. Indeed, *res nullius* was the legal condition for conquest; it remedied the dichotomy of taking over already inhabited land. This legal fiction is the same logic Locke deployed to label black people throughout the continent of Africa as conquered people who, according to the sovereign authority and discretion of the King, were now deemed to be slaves. See: Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 170–226.

⁴⁰¹ At stake here is the (treasonous) threat Hanway's refusal to aid Gorsuch, as a "fellow-creature" sharing the same stake of humanity as other white people, and still doing nothing to help his genre, Hanway provided aid/comfort to the "hundred or a hundred and fifty [...] wretches" assembled who were "armed and ready for resistance and bloodshed." And this perceived threat of aiding the enemy is even more clear in the case of Jacob R. Townsend, the last person to be indicted for treason: he provided a gun to a comrade of the Parkers.

⁴⁰² Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 221–28.

⁴⁰³ Robbins, 242.

⁴⁰⁴ Lowe, "Annual Message of the Executive to the General Assembly of Maryland. January Session, 1852."

⁴⁰⁵ Wynter, "Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I]," 4.

⁴⁰⁶ The approximate translation: "And yet, if there is any occasion the right of man to slay a man, and there are many, this at least is not only just, it is true, too, it is necessary, when violence is repelled by violence." See: Jacqueline J. Stimson, "Killing Romans: Legitimizing Violence in Cicero and Caesar" (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI, The University of Michigan, 2017), 77.

⁴⁰⁷ Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 101; Aimé Césaire, "The Miraculous Weapons," in *Aimé Césaire, The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 119; Ramabai Espinet, "Orthodoxies," in *Nuclear Seasons* (Toronto, Canada: Sister Vision Press, 1991), 34; Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 156; 95.

⁴⁰⁸ See the beginning of Part II.

⁴⁰⁹ My heart breaks every day. This knowing breaks my heart every day. Every day, this knowing breaks my heart.

⁴¹⁰ Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," 639.

⁴¹¹ Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 7.

⁴¹² Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 247.

⁴¹³ Robbins, 246–48.

⁴¹⁴ Parker, "The Freedman's Story: In Two Parts," March 1866, 161.

⁴¹⁵ They knew.

⁴¹⁶ It is worth noting here that Grier is still talking about the insurrection of the Parkers and their comrades; no mention is made of Hanway. This is further suggestive of the hypothesis stated in Part IV.

⁴¹⁷ *Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (United States Supreme Court 1857).

⁴¹⁸ Robbins, *Report of the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason*, 247.

- ⁴¹⁹ Wynter, *Oral History*, 58.
- ⁴²⁰ Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 96.
- ⁴²¹ Wynter, 97.
- ⁴²² Wynter, 96.
- ⁴²³ Wynter, 100.
- ⁴²⁴ Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," 243.
- ⁴²⁵ Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," 639; 646.
- ⁴²⁶ Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," 237.
- ⁴²⁷ Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," 639.
- ⁴²⁸ Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 6.
- ⁴²⁹ Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* [1939], 22.
- ⁴³⁰ Wynter, "Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man," 44.
- ⁴³¹ Wynter, 44; Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Voices of the African Diaspora* VIII, no. 2/Fall (1992): 55; Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," 237; Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," 55. And this is the plinth of Katherine McKittrick's work as well: *Dear Science* constitutes both the cautioning of this paradox and most importantly, for me and from my point of view, a generative and generous illustration of how to tell our stories in dazzling new ways. *Dear Science* is a license of sorts. Thank you Dr. McKittrick. McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*.
- ⁴³² Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," 646.
- ⁴³³ Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 101.
- ⁴³⁴ Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," 641; 639; 646.
- ⁴³⁵ Wynter, *Oral History*, 23.
- ⁴³⁶ Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History*, 284, 282, 134–35.
- ⁴³⁷ My interest with this appellation is not to merely suggest a metaphorical relationship between the *ness* of black and the oft magical figure of the pirate. Black people are not magic. There is nothing magical about the material conditions through which we live and die, laugh and cry, sing, dance, rob, steal, and rebel. In each of these efforts is the attempt to contend with, what Alexander Weheliye names "the brutal facticity of blackness" such that the metaphors we deploy risk erasing the very risk(s) through which we live every day. This is Katherine McKittrick's precise point: "metaphors are delinked from their material underpinnings or histories, which means racial violence risks being cast and/or read as figurative." Thus, my point here is to situate the being and living of black within the material conditions of inside/outside demarcated by the intellectual project of state-making, as manifested by the closed-citational referential loop to/from Cicero and the legal fictions created to construct the pirate figure, imbued with enmity, threatening to unmake the state. See: McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 11.
- ⁴³⁸ James J. Lenoir shows that piracy lacks a formal and juridical geographic boundary. That is, piracy can be committed on land, sea, and air. As Heller-Roazen elaborates from classic jurists like William Hall, is that piratical acts are defined as such when the people or persons committing such acts do not belong to a political society, or has rejected the authority of the society to which they belong, or – and most crucial for our purposes here – the society to which they belong has rejected those committing such acts whereby they are neither a criminal nor a lawful enemy, but rather serve as the figure upon which various technologies of terror and war are practiced upon (thereby transforming concepts of war). See: J.J Lenoir, "Piracy Cases in the Supreme Court," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 25, no. 4 (1934): 532–53; William Edward Hall, *A Treatise on International Law* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1895); Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2009).
- ⁴³⁹ On August 11, 1852, eleven months after the Christiana Insurrection, at the Free Soil Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Frederick Douglass proclaims the following of violence's pedagogy: "The only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen or *more* dead kidnappers [...] a dozen or more dead kidnappers carried down South would cool the ardor of Southern gentleman, and keep their rapacity in check." See: Frederick Douglass, "Frederick Douglass, Let All Soil Be Free Soil (August 11, 1852)," in *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One, Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, vol. II, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 390.
- ⁴⁴⁰ John Rosenberg, *William Parker: Rebel without Rights* (Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1996), 140.
- ⁴⁴¹ Wynter, "Bernardo de Balbuena, Epic Poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627 [Part I]," 12.
- ⁴⁴² Cohen, *The Conspiracy of Capital: Law, Violence, and American Popular Radicalism in the Age of Monopoly*, 82–86.
- ⁴⁴³ Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 18.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Katherine McKittrick, "Failure (My Head Was Full of Misty Fumes of Doubt)," in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 117; 120–121.

3

“On the Other Side of the Sky”*Towards the Exilic Futures Chartered by Sky Pirates*

The gods had been transshipped and brought their space with [the blacks from Africa]. But the sky now had to be underground. They themselves were displaced gods, in exile ... [and] knowing hell and exile were here and now ... they lost their complacency, the complacency of the norm, and became contingent gods.

– Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis: Natives in a New World*
(unpublished manuscript, n.d.: pp. 532; 70)

For me, exile is one step before jail.

– Charles Hill (2016)

I had been chased during half my life, and it seemed as if the chase was never to end.

– Harriet Jacobs (1861)

Or, get a gun, a mask, an escape route

– JAY-Z, “Show You How,” 2002

[...] violence seems to wake up those in power.

– Charlotte O’Neal (2020)¹

Introduction

The stories within and throughout the preceding chapters attend to the grammars of heresy and piracy to elucidate the epistemological valences that produced black people as the symbolically encoded enemy against which the social Order was established and is elaborated. I have argued it is precisely upon the semantic charters of heresy and piracy that the violence of violent black rebellion – as a creative enunciation of counter signification and meaning-making – is enacted to “call into question the closure instituting the order” and evokes the emancipatory possibility of

¹ Alexander Zaitchik and Charlie Hill, “How I Hijacked a Plane & Spent the Next 44 Years Living in Cuba,” *Thrillist*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.thrillist.com/lifestyle/nation/how-i-hijacked-a-plane-and-spent-the-next-44-years-living-in-cuba>; Linda Brent [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston, MA: Author, 1861); Nas, *N.Y. State of Mind*, Illmatic (New York, NY: Columbia, 1994); JAY-Z, *Show You How*, The Blueprint 2: The Gift & The Curse (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 2002); Yoav Litvin, Charlotte O’Neal, and Pete O’Neal, “Panthers Forever: Revolution at Home and in Exile,” *Roar Magazine*, July 9, 2020, <https://roarmag.org/essays/panthers-forever-revolution-at-home-and-in-exile/>.

transcendence.² Extrapolating from the eschatological exigencies exhibited by the Church of Nat Turner and extending the piratical praxis evinced by the Parker Crew, the stories within this chapter turns away from fleeing the physical contours of the plantation and towards the flights chartered by black Sky Pirates.

Between the years of 1968-1972, an airplane was hijacked approximately once every six days across the world and once every two weeks in the United States.³ Within this same period, a total of 124 planes were hijacked in the U.S. and black people pirating airplanes accounts for roughly twenty percent of all such incidences.⁴ While the other eighty percent of hijackings were intended to reach a multitude of destinations, depending upon the hijacker's nation of origin and race, black people only wanted to fly to three places: North Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba.⁵ So frequent were such occurrences, and so menacingly treacherous were these deprivations levied against the entire "world community," one legal scholar in 1972 had this to say in *The International Lawyer*: "The last decade has dramatically witnessed the emergence of the "air pirate" – as dangerous and destructive as his prototype, the sea pirate. [And all] pirates [are] the enemies of the human race who place themselves outside the law of peaceful people ... and attacking all nations indiscriminately."⁶

Imbued with the enmity of Cicero's pirate figure, legal scholars and jurists moved to invent a new legal category of criminality to describe these hijackings, "air piracy." While the threat of hanging in the gallows did not attach to the new pirates like the piracy of the old, resonance between the pirate of the sea and air was to be found with sentences of life imprisonment and the ascription of enemy status to all nations. For example, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, a former Black Panther, hijacked a plane from Atlanta, Georgia to Cuba on February 25, 1969. Following an international manhunt, the long arm of the United States followed Ervin's peripatetic movements from Cuba and across the globe to East Germany before eventually reaching him in Czechoslovakia in September of the same year. Ervin's capture was made possible with the assistance of several other countries, including Cuba. Upon extradition back to the U.S., Ervin was convicted for the crime of air piracy on July 6, 1970, and sentenced to serve two life sentences in prison.⁷ Though ultimately released from federal prison in 1983, the appellation of enemy status, derived from this piratical praxis, remained, if only transformed and renamed to "terrorist." For this was the reason provided upon entering Australia fourteen years later in 1997 wherein he was detained with his travel visa having been revoked.⁸

This chapter turns to the newly invented legal category of sky piracy used to categorize and ground the flight of black Sky Pirates between 1968-1972. Situated between the decolonization movements abroad and the civil rights movement domestically, the form of violent black rebellion takes on a different hue in the time elapsed from the United States Civil War, namely a violence of exile. Locating exile and its portended futures as a subjunctive site of analysis, this chapter explores

² The quoted text is from, Sylvia Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" in *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, ed. Agibou Y Yansane (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 305.

³ Robert T. Holden, "The Contagiousness of Aircraft Hijacking," *American Journal of Sociology* 91, no. 4 (1986): 874.

⁴ William M. Landes, "An Economic Study of U. S. Aircraft Hijacking, 1961-1976," *The Journal of Law & Economics* 21, no. 1 (1978): 1.

⁵ Robert T. Turi et al., "Descriptive Study of Aircraft Hijacking," *Criminal Justice Monograph* 3, no. 5 (1972): 1-178.

⁶ Celine Y. November, "Aircraft Piracy: The Hague Hijacking Convention," *The International Lawyer* 6, no. 3 (1972): 642.

⁷ "Hijacker of Plane to Cuba Gets First Life Sentence for Offense," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1970; "Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin Interview," *Black Flag*, 1995; Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution: The Definitive Edition* (1979; repr., London, UK: Pluto Press, 2021).

⁸ Michael S. Simons, "A Review of Issues Concerned with Aerial Hijacking and Terrorism: Implications for Australia's Security and the Sydney 2000 Olympics," *Journal of Air Law and Commerce* 63, no. 4 (1998): 731-56; "A Win for the Panther," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 11, 1997.

the ways in which Sky Pirates ebulliently hijacked the skies to “call into question the closure instituting the order”⁹ manifested at ground level, and queries towards what new epistemological modes might emanate from this understudied émeute of exilic being. Indeed, this staccato of flight, piracy, and exile orchestrates the heading and itinerary of this chapter. Part One briefly provides the historical context in which the Sky Pirate emerges while Part Two explicates how the law created this new category of enemy and its implications. Part Three thinks with Charles Hill and other Sky Pirates to meditate upon violence, exile, and the futures portended *on the other side of the sky*.

Part I. Arrivals

Whereas flight from the plantation could only be imagined and understood within its own historical context, the newly-juridically-endowed-with-civil-rights-yet-newly-expelled-from-the-production-system black found themselves expurgated as refuse and often contained to the urban ghetto. Escape from here, though resonant with the continuities of escaping the plantation, necessitated/necessitates a differently valenced epistemic exertion to countries beyond Canada. For the first time in the history of the new world, the social Order, in concert with the colonizing matrix of industrialization and capital’s technological advances of this era, could inscribe black people as useless, a use value of null.¹⁰ Expelled to the ghetto’s entangled web of squalor housing, under-employment/joblessness, kill-you-slow schooling,¹¹ and to the always lurking/waiting confines of prison,¹² many black people lived a reality exiled even from the terrain of Martin’s idyllic dreamscapes.¹³ For what could terms like inclusion, equality, and community provide for the already exiled? Such grammars, as portended by Martin Luther King Jr., when juxtaposed with the grammars posited by black nationalism, reveals the differently valences of flight.

Martin Luther King Jr., in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1968), the last book he published prior to being assassinated the same year, writes that the destiny of black people “is tied up with the destiny of America.” But the horizon of King’s dream is also tied up with a project subtended by citational referents to Cicero. Of which, King writes:

In the first century B.C., Cicero said: ‘Freedom is participation in power.’ [...] Negroes can never be content without participation in power. America must be a nation in which its multiracial people are partners in power. This is the essence of democracy toward which all Negro struggles have been directed since the distant past when he was transplanted here in

⁹ Wynter, “Is ‘Development’ a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from ‘We the Underdeveloped,’” 305.

¹⁰ Sylvia Wynter, “Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World” (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 492–555, Institute of the Black World Records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Boxes 3-9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.

¹¹ Jean Anyon, *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1997).

¹² Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

¹³ Here, I am thinking about the following terraneous domains he references, and from which black people were meant to be exiled: “from every mountainside;” “from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire;” “from the mighty mountains of New York;” “from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania;” “from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado;” “from the curvaceous slopes of California;” “from Stone Mountain of Georgia;” “from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee;” “from every hill and molehill of Mississippi;” and again, “from every mountainside.” In, King Jr., Martin Luther. “I Have a Dream.” Delivered August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.

chains.¹⁴

If we momentarily set aside the veracity of such a claim – and if we briefly assume that King was familiar neither with the provocations put forth by the Parker Crew in *The Freedman's Story* (1866) (see Chapter Two of this dissertation) nor with the Church of Nat Turner (see Chapter One of this dissertation) – to focus on the fact that King's provided answer to the black freedom struggle is the will to political power, to push and pull the levers of so-called American democracy – then the question must be ridiculous. For even white people saw what those partners in power are capable of when John F. Kennedy (1963) was cut down (by how many shooters?) and pieces of his brains splattered onto Jacqueline Onassis's dress. These are the same partners that either played a role in, or possessed prior knowledge about, and did nothing to stop, the assassinations of Medgar Evers (1963), El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (1965) – the assassination of King (1968) himself – and later young Bobby Hutton (1968) and Fred Hampton (1969).¹⁵ This is not to say there is no parlance between "the essence of democracy" King puts forth and the first point of the Ten Point Program of the Black Panther Party (BPP), "We want power to determine the destiny of our black community." However, the latter implies a desire to do so without the need for outside machinations (or partners).¹⁶ This is why, as Kathleen Neal Cleaver puts it, "the escalating momentum of a dynamic Black nationalisms challenged the nonviolent integrationist approach to civil rights, and nearly eclipsed it by 1969."¹⁷ And the role of violence helped shape this shifting terrain.

The decolonization movements throughout Africa during the 1950s and the 1960s loomed large for black people in the United States. The grammars that shaped their violent struggles, like anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-colonization, which Frantz Fanon helped popularize in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), necessarily challenged the integrationist approach that sought to leverage black people as consumers in the fight for inclusion and equality in the United States.¹⁸ King viewed such provocations as mere intimations of white civilization. Below, is a passage from Fanon's *Wretched* that King provides and reads against:

We must invent and we must make discoveries. If we wish to live up to our peoples' expectations, we must seek the response elsewhere than in Europe.

Moreover, if we wish to reply to the expectations of the people of Europe, it is no good sending them back a reflection, even and ideal reflection, of their society and their thought with which from time to time they feel immeasurably sickened.

For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we

¹⁴ Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968), 54.

¹⁵ "Hearings before the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities of the United States Senate, Ninety-Fourth Congress, First Session," Hearings on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Washington, D.C.: United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976); "Hearings before the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities of the United States Senate, Ninety-Fourth Congress, First Session"; Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1990).

¹⁶ "I believe in uniting with white revolutionaries to fight against a common enemy, but i was convinced that it had to be on the basis of power nd unity rather than from weakness and unity at any cost." In, Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (United Kingdom: Zed Books Ltd., 1987), 192.

¹⁷ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of The Black Panther Party (1969-1972)," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (1998; repr., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2005), 212.

¹⁸ Cleaver, 214–16; King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, 143–46.

must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.

to which King responds:

These are brave and challenging words; I am happy that the young black men and women are quoting them. But the problem is that Fanon and those who quote his words are seeking “to work out new concepts” and “set afoot a new man” with a willingness to imitate old concepts of violence. Is there not a basic contradiction here? Violence has been the inseparable twin of materialism, the hallmark of its grandeur and misery. This is the one thing about modern civilization that I do not care to imitate.¹⁹

A simple analysis of King’s conflation between white violence – the violence that is used to maintain its power – versus the violence used by black people – to contest power – renders moot the point of imitation, for they are vastly different. King’s rhetorical strategy to appose “chaos” with “community” by the conjunctive “or” in the title of his book bears out another misleading conflation when he states “violence only adds to the chaos. [...] Violence is the antithesis of creativity and wholeness. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible.”²⁰ King’s castigation of violent black rebellion structures his attempts to “appeal to [the white] conscience and his “faith in America and in white society”²¹ Such an argument, propagated through tenuous logics, which even elides the biblical possibility that the first could become last, would come to hold little weight for the young ghetto kids that would eventually seek *the other side of the sky*.

One such exile, Assata Shakur, cuts through the ahistorical appeals upon which King grounds his faith – a system of belief that only a king could believe – in this way:

Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them. Once you study and really get a good understanding of the way the system in the United States works, then you see, without a doubt, that the civil rights movement never had a chance of succeeding. [...]

A war between the races would help nobody and free nobody and should be avoided at all costs. But a one-sided race war with Black people as the targets and white people shooting the guns is worse.²²

Here, Shakur puissantly illuminates the fundamental distinction between flights from the plantation and flights from the U.S. altogether: while the logics of slavery remain ascribed to black people – that capital can still assess the value of a black person’s life, whether exchange value was high or use value null – enough time had elapsed to learn that no such distinctions between the U.S. north and the existed; that redemption for King’s America was nowhere to be had in its past or future; and that the horizon for black being was fundamentally opposed to King’s vision of sharing “in the American economy, the housing market, the educational system, and [its] social opportunities.” Rather, the already exiled turned to the unknown underground and sought to build communities in exile.

Though the names are few, the will to take flight away from Jim Crow, un-civil rights, hunger, rats and roaches, and that third grade textbook in a sixth grade classroom – this will –

¹⁹ King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, 65–66.

²⁰ King Jr., 61.

²¹ King Jr., 59, 45.

²² Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*, 139–40.

coupled with the unwillingness to accept that this world has anything else to offer besides a *nigger-rung* level of existence,²³ evinces the hopes for an exilic future. Because – yet and still – the names we do have offer a transcendent glimpse of flight – whether it is Charles Hill’s grandfather escaping from the plantation²⁴ or Assata Shakur fleeing the underbelly of Babylon,²⁵ the continuities of flight – indeed, the desire to *die enormous than live dormant* – charts an alter-destiny beyond the encystations of our currently lived realities.²⁶ Doing so however, carries the risk of being exiled, even unto the sky.

Part II. Flight Monitors

By the 1930’s, sufficient technological advancements in seafaring transportation and airplane navigation propelled a renewed interest in piracy among the world’s leading scholars and jurists alike. Given “the realization of the great changes that have occurred through the centuries in the conditions of commerce and travel, the Harvard Law School convened such a cohort to systemically codify piracy within international law with the expressed aim of ensuring that “legitimate” and “sovereign nations” could be equipped to capture, punish and/or extradite pirates accordingly. At stake here was the matter of jurisdictional authority and the determination of piracy as a matter of municipal law (i.e., a piratical act exclusively occurring within one state’s territory) or international law (i.e., a piratical act committed external to territorial jurisdiction). The modus operandi of the Harvard Law School Draft Convention on Piracy moved with the understanding that “it is the basis of an extraordinary jurisdiction in every state to seize and to prosecute and punish persons” and sought not “to provide uniform measures for punishing pirates, but to define this extraordinary basis of state jurisdiction over offences committed by foreigners against foreign interests outside the territorial and other ordinary jurisdiction of the prosecuting state.” This Convention would prove to have a long-lasting impact on how piracy was conceptualized, as legal scholar Peter Jacobson later commented in 1972, providing the basis for key legal frameworks including the Tokyo Convention (1963) and the Hague Convention (1970).

With no interest in rehearsing the details of the Harvard Draft Convention (1932), it is important to note that for our purposes here, the sky was constituted as a space of extraterritorial jurisdiction and the ship and airplane are conceived interchangeably. For example, Article 1 defines territorial jurisdiction “as the authority of a state under international law over its land, its territorial waters, and the air above its land and territorial waters” and defines ship to mean “any water craft or air craft of whatever size.” This conflation between the ship on the seas and the airplane in the sky constitutes the definition of piracy in Article 3. Articles 1 and 3 of the Harvard Draft Convention (1932) include aircraft hijackings within their definitions of piracy.

Piracy is any of the following acts, committed in a place not within the territorial jurisdiction of any state:

²³ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentations - an Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 261–62.

²⁴ *An African-American Revolutionary and Fugitive Reflects on Decades of Exile in Cuba* (Stanford, CA: The Documentary Film and Video M.F.A. Program Department of Art & Art History, 2016).

²⁵ Assata Shakur, “An Open Letter from Assata Shakur,” 1998, <https://www.workers.org/2014/12/17645/>.

²⁶ JAY-Z, *Can I Live*, Reasonable Doubt (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1996).

1. Any act of violence or of depredation committed with intent to rob, rape, wound, enslave, imprison or kill a person or with intent to steal or destroy property, for private ends without bona fide purpose of asserting a claim of right, provided that the act is connected with an attack on or from the sea or in or from the air. If the act is connected with an attack which starts from on board ship, either that ship or another ship which is involved must be a pirate ship or a ship without national character.
2. Any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship with knowledge of facts which make it a pirate ship.²⁷

As a matter of codifying piracy within the law of nations (i.e., common jurisdictional authority of all nations), firstly observed here is that the commandeering or destruction of private property within an extraterritorial region, is considered piratical. Secondly, the “private ends” component of the definition implies that legitimate states do not engage in piratical behavior; rather, only de-nationalized persons/collectives do so, and as such, said individuals/groups are relegated to the category of illegitimate enemy. Crucially, it is this conceptualization from which John Yoo, UC Berkeley Professor of Law and author of the 2004 “torture memos,” draws to justify the legal category of illegal enemy combatant.²⁸ It is also important to note the “without national character” aspect of this definition because when operationalized with the aforementioned denationalized pirate figure, people from “the community of nations” that commit a piratical act are excised therefrom. Taken together, the foundational definition of a pirate, including the new pirate of the sky, retains the Ciceronian valence which locates the pirate beyond and external to the bond of “civil society” and as one jurists writes in the Harvard Draft Convention (1932), the pirate

“is, in fact, regarded as an enemy of the human race (*hostis humani generis*) [without] National character, and to whatever country they may have originally belonged, they are *justiciable* everywhere, being reputed out of the protection of all laws and privileges whatever.”²⁹

Questions remaining to be answered through subsequent Conventions worked towards the following ends: a) ensuring municipal law could and would in fact effectively legislate jurisdictional authority within the above formulation of piracy; b) determining how might “sovereign states” demarcate between the political and private; and c) how might such distinctions be treated when dealing with piratical actions that take place within the territorial jurisdiction of countries like Cuba, whose sovereign authority is unrecognized by the Law of Nations and deemed to be a belligerent country?

The Tokyo Convention of 1963 sought to provide answers to these questions by strengthening the legal framework at the national level (i.e., municipal) governing matters pertaining to capture, punishment, and extradition to be agreed upon at the international level. Significantly the Convention produced a treaty, the 178 signatory nations agreeing to its stipulations as a matter

²⁷ Harvard Law School Research in International Law, “Part IV-Piracy,” *The American Journal of International Law (Supplement)* 26, no. 1 (1932): 743.

²⁸ “Why is it so hard for people to understand that there is a category of behavior not covered by the legal system?” he said. “What were pirates? They weren’t fighting on behalf of any nation ... Historically, there were people so bad that they were not given protection of the laws. There were no specific provisions for their trial, or imprisonment. If you were an illegal combatant, you didn’t deserve the protection of the laws of war.” In, Jane Mayer, “Outsourcing Torture,” *The New Yorker*, February 6, 2005.

²⁹ Harvard Law School Research in International Law, “Part IV-Piracy,” 828.

of law, something for which the Harvard Convention did not mandate. For our purposes, there are three principles of importance. Firstly, the Tokyo Convention (1963) dictates that the nation from which the aircraft is registered flies under the laws of that nation. In turn, this provides that the contracting nations recognize and grant other nations territorial jurisdictional reciprocity even as piratical acts occurred extraterritorially. In other words, for example, if a plane registered within the United States and landed in the territory of another signatory country, this country would be required to grant the United States the jurisdictional right to exercise its laws inside the other country's borders, and vice versa. Another vital aspect of the Convention (1963) is that it absolves the captain of the airplane of any criminal or civil liability if, when in the act of attempting to thwart the pirating of the vessel, harm/death befalls on any of its passengers or attackers. These two stipulations mirror a similar, though not identical, logic of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Whereby the United States is granted the right to chase those whom it has identified as criminal without concern for the legal and customary practices of the places into which someone has fled. And furthermore, the plane's captain was vested with all "necessary authority" to exercise "reasonable force" to prevent the assailants/hijackers/pirates/enemies from successfully hijacking the plane, with no regard as to whether they and/or those aboard were harmed or otherwise killed in the process.³⁰ The head pilot was legally obligated to exercise such force. And lastly, this conjoined and coeval relationship with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is further observed by the Convention's (1963) ascription of legal responsibility to the nation in which the plane for returning the pirated plane back to the country in which the airplane is registered.³¹

While the Tokyo Convention (1963) sought to address the problem of air piracy by strengthening national laws to be observed internationally, the Hague Convention (1971) sought to expand international jurisdiction gaps, particularly around the question of deterring future piratical acts in the sky. The question of deterring air piracy began to percolate and thus served as the organizing purpose of the Hague Convention (1971). Ushered in here was the "without exception whatsoever" requirement that wherever the pirated plane landed, that state would either prosecute the pirate in its own territory and according to its laws or facilitate an extradition process to the registered state from which the plane originated.³² This Convention (1971) was the first to address the political/private nature of hijacking since the issue was first raised by the Harvard Convention (1932). The determination of which piratical acts of hijacking airplanes could count as political, if any at all, given that piracy is a private (criminal) offense. One legal scholar of the time reflects on this difficulty by pointing to members "of a dissident group such as the Black Panthers or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" and comments the following:

Hijacking is inextricably intertwined with the notion of political offenses and the concept of asylum. [...]. Since the problem has been limited for the most part to the aircraft of certain nations ... the states which because of their physical location and political climate have been the destination of most hijackers ... if an international agreement requiring extradition or prosecution is to function in deterring the forcible diversion of **aircraft in flight**, it must be a compromise between the preservation of the state's right to grant refuge to individuals

³⁰ "Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, Tokyo," United Nations Treaty Series (Tokyo, Japan: International Civil Aviation Organization, 1969).

³¹ "Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, Tokyo."

³² "The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft," United Nations Treaty Series (The Hague, Netherlands: International Civil Aviation Organization, 1971); November, "Aircraft Piracy: The Hague Hijacking Convention," 647.

who flee from persecution and the need to discourage hijackers.³³

The compromise achieved in the Hague Convention (1971) however, was to make no mention of asylum and instead, provide the destination state with the authority to exercise discretion concerning the legitimacy of the hijacker's political motives. Illustrative here is the approach the United States had historically taken in contradistinction to its treatment of members of the Black Panther Party. For example, Czechoslovakian hijackers point of transit ended in the U.S. territory in 1951 and despite governmental requests to extradite those whom Czechoslovakia considered to be fugitives of the law, the U.S. argued that such hijackings are political because they "fled for political reasons by whatever means they could find to escape." And even further, "world opinion has not been accustomed to hold that persons who have sought to leave their country in order to obtain political asylum abroad are terrorists and criminals."³⁴ Unsurprisingly and unironically, twenty years later in the case of black Sky Pirates, "terrorists" and "criminals" were the precise grammars deployed by the United States.

As alluded to at the beginning of this section, the world – its oceans, skies, and inhabitants – had to be made safe for global commerce.³⁵ The above Conventions are reflective of the process by which the pirate of old had already been thought disappeared. The once vast and awe-inspiring ocean shrank into the modern technological advances made by "the pervasive legalities [of] positive codified law."³⁶ Where the outlaw pirate once sailed the edges of the world external to the grasp of legal authority, the coloniality of modern law co-opted, sanctioned, and transformed them into privateers relegated to committing acts of piracy on the behalf of other nations during times of war. And when the pirate *returned* to pirate the skies, just as the scope of international moved before, it once again functioned to shrink the earth vis-à-vis its "production of totality and gaplessness."³⁷ Therefore, the structurally organizing categorization constituting the seafaring pirate (and piratical actions) owed to the location in which they appeared – on the high seas and within an extraordinary space of sovereignty, that is, as beyond the bounds of municipal law, no longer holds true for the Sky Pirate. The black Sky Pirate inverts this relationship, as the Conventions illustrates: the "enemy of all" is constituted no longer by their location, but rather by their mere presence – either on land, on the high seas, and/or in the sky. Their presence, as once captives on sugar, rice, and tobacco plantations, shifts to the open-air captives of the urban ghetto, their blackness marked their enemy status as killable. Therefore, the law – be it international, municipal, and/or local – treats this negro as such, without exceptions and without the guise of the extralegal or extraterritorial. Yet, this proves to be a generative and world-making site for possibility, as the case of Charles Hill evinces.

exploded sky flayed curve

³³ John P. McMahon, "Air Hijacking: Extradition as a Deterrent," *Georgetown Law Journal* 58, no. 6 (1970): 1141, 1152; emphasis my own.

³⁴ McMahon, 1141.

³⁵ On the world needing to be made safe for capitalism, see, Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95–102. By "world" I am signaling Samer Esmeir's conceptualization of the world as *external* to that which international law flattened. "The ocean was indeed a material surface to be traversed (by colonists and merchants). But it was not only that. It shared its moisture with the skies, the clouds, and the stars. It was unmeasurable and infinite. It exceeded human cognition, human calculation. The earth, including its oceans, was not only a surface; it was also the seat of humankind, one planet among others." She argues that it was the positivistic drive of Jeremy Bentham's conception of international law that reduced the earth into divisible parts and the world subtended to mirror all countries "through the grid of international as a system of states or countries." In, Samera Esmeir, "On Becoming Less of the World," *History of the Present* 8, no. 1 (2018): 95, 90.

³⁶ Samera Esmeir, "On the Coloniality of Modern Law," *Critical Analysis of Law* 2, no. 1 (2015): 41.

³⁷ Esmeir, 41.

*of flogged slaves' backs
and wide-open eyes of exiles
grief treasurer of the trade winds
criminal pre-born
grimoire closed words forgotten
I question my mute past*³⁸

Part III. Departures

Emerging from the whirlwinds of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and created by the outflow of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz's "ideological vortex in the dynamic movement for black liberation,"³⁹ the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) was founded in 1968. The RNA's stated objective was to achieve "political independence, territorial sovereignty, and reparations" by claiming Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina as an independent nation-state. Its borders would be protected by a "black army."⁴⁰ The RNA was accordingly labeled a "black extremist" organization by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).⁴¹ Predictably, the FBI and local police raided the RNA headquarters on August 18, 1971, in Jackson, Mississippi. The RNA *returned* fire and a shootout followed, leaving one cop dead.⁴² With the RNA compound in disarray and in need of being fortified against another police attack, leadership reached out to members in the Bay Area of California to transport ammunitions and bomb-making materials.

Three citizens of the RNA answered the call: Ralph Goodwin, a recent UC Berkeley graduate from the physics department; Michael Finney, born and raised in San Francisco; and Charles Hill, a Vietnam War deserter. They made it as far as to somewhere on the outskirts of Albuquerque, New Mexico when, on November 8, 1971, suspecting the Ford Galaxie was stolen, New Mexico State Police Officer, Robert Rosenbloom, turned on his sirens and proceeded to pull the vehicle over. With the studied gait of a John Wayne character,⁴³ Rosenbloom swaggers to the car with his hand hovering over his holstered gun. Neither Goodwin, Finney, nor Hill detail what exactly happens next, but Rosenbloom should have been quicker on the draw; he was shot in the neck and left on the road to bleed out from his jugular veins.⁴⁴

The largest manhunt in New Mexico State history ensued and more than 250 law

³⁸ Aimé Césaire, "Lay of Errantry," in *Aimé Césaire, The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith, Bilingual Edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 517, 519.

³⁹ Ula Yvette Taylor, "Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam: Separatism, Regendering, and a Secular Approach to Black Power after Malcolm X (1965-1975)," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 177.

⁴⁰ Edward Onaci, *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 29.

⁴¹ Teishan A. Latner, "Revolution in the Air: Hijacking, Political Protest, and U.S.-Cuba Relations," in *Cuban Revolution in America: Havana and the Making of a United States Left, 1968-1992*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 231.

⁴² "The New Afrikans present shot back, killing one police officer and injuring an FBI agent." Onaci, *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State*, 38. Listen: "been shot at, shoot back," JAY-Z, *Change Clothes*, The Black Album (Roc-A-Fella Records, 2003).

⁴³ Serge Kovalski, "Havana Is Haven for Fugitive '70s Hijacker," *The Washington Post*, August 31, 1999.

⁴⁴ Tracey Eaton, "The Politics of American Fugitives in Cuba," *Al Jazeera*, January 3, 2015, sec. Features.

enforcement officers followed them for nineteen days.⁴⁵ And like Harriet Tubman instructed runaway slaves to hide away in potato holes to evade capture, Charles Hill put his military training to use and showed the others how to bury themselves neck-deep under the desert sand during the day to wait for night's cover.⁴⁶ The trio spent several such days like this, watching and plotting; plotting and watching; and plotting an escape route. Advancing the plot, the group came to the realization that exile was the only way out. As Hill comments, "We had to go into exile so we hijacked a plane." They stole a tow truck at gunpoint and drove through tarmac fencing of Albuquerque International Airport and on November 28, 1971, Goodwin, Finney, and Hill pirated TWA Flight 106.⁴⁷

Africa was the intended destination. But upon being informed that the plane was not designed to fly that far, they directed the pilot to take them to Havana, Cuba.⁴⁸ In an interview from 1999, Charles Hill explains why the choice of Cuba: "We definitely had a connection with the Cuban revolution, and we heavily related to Fidel and Che [Guevara]. The revolution was real, man, and we felt like we were part of the struggle."⁴⁹ Though Cuba was meant to be but a "pit stop," according to Hill, never again would any of them touch the shores of the United States. But for Charles Hill, the longest remaining American fugitive in Cuba, at the time of this writing, has been exiled for fifty-two years – that is roughly *eighteen thousand five hundred twenty-six days of untuning and unstringing old associations*;⁵⁰ *eighteen thousand five hundred twenty-six days of inventing with found objects, engendering new contexts from old histories, and learning to speak in new forms*;⁵¹ that is *eighteen thousand five hundred twenty-six days of study, praxis, and reinvention of black life*;⁵² that is *eighteen thousand five hundred twenty-six ways of returning the devil's fire: taking an idea and folding it in on itself, flipping the script*,⁵³ pirating the institutionally imposed and epistemically structured notion of *time, that is, linearly, rigidly channeled towards*⁵⁴ the absolute annihilation of the black cop-killer that by **still** escaping, **still** living beyond the normed psychic structure of settled homeland, and **still** *interrupting and reimagining and creating* a new story,⁵⁵ Charles Hill is presently living an exilic future, negating the supposed dead end for the violent black rebel – and **still** *returning the devil's fire* from the other side of the sky.

The reality of exile, since the 1970's and the horizon of liberal imaginings for black people coming to pass with the Civil Rights Act of 1968, through which Charles Hill lives is shaped by the epistemological understanding shared by runaway slaves and the pirate of old. Mary Prince understood such strivings when, in 1831, she characterized herself as an "exiled negro woman" in England, acutely aware of the dichotomous relationship between the condition of enslavement from which she was fleeing in the United States and the unchained, yet still unfree condition of living an

⁴⁵ Patrick Oppman, "Admitted Hijacker Dreams of Home after 43 Years Hiding out in Cuba," CNN, April 9, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/04/09/americas/us-cuba-fugitive-charlie-hill/index.html>.

⁴⁶ Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (WJ Moses, printer, 1869); Teishan A. Latner, "Assata Is Welcome Here: Black Radicalism, Political Asylum, and the Diplomacy of Exile and Freedom," in *Cuban Revolution in America: Havana and the Making of a United States Left, 1968–1992*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 199–263; Anne Marie O'Connor, "Michael Finney's Last Flight," *Miami New Times*, May 8, 1991.

⁴⁷ Oppman, "Admitted Hijacker Dreams of Home after 43 Years Hiding out in Cuba."

⁴⁸ Eaton, "The Politics of American Fugitives in Cuba."

⁴⁹ Kovalesski, "Havana Is Haven for Fugitive '70s Hijacker."

⁵⁰ Sylvia Wynter, "'We Know Where We Are From': The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley" (Paper Presentation, The Joint Meeting of the African Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association, Houston, TX, November 1977), 47.

⁵¹ Katherine McKittrick, "(I Entered the Lists)," in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 170.

⁵² McKittrick, 170.

⁵³ McKittrick, 170.

⁵⁴ Wynter, "'We Know Where We Are From': The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley," 48.

⁵⁵ McKittrick, "(I Entered the Lists)," 170.

exilic future in England. From the place of deep knowing that can only be the result of a previous displacement and the subsequent unmooring that bequeaths an errant epistemological existence, Mary Prince found herself where there were “no slaves here – no whips – no stocks – no punishment” yet surrounded by the “wicked [English] people [that] can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner [...], when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame.”⁵⁶ Prince astutely characterizes the in/between and betwixt nature of living *still* not free but over *there* was better than the *here* from *where exiles were from*.⁵⁷ John Swanson Jacobs, the brother of Harriet Jacobs – both sixth-generation American slaves – both of whom chose a certain mode of an exilic future by running away – in the nascent stage of a declared Civil War between Union and the Confederates, in a similar vein as William Parker’s understanding that black people, enslaved, runaways, or other otherwise have no nation, writes the following on June 1861 from exile in England:

If the American flag is to be planted on the altar of freedom, then I am ready to be offered on that altar, if I am wanted [but] if it must wave over the slave, with his chains and fetters clanking, let me breathe the free air of another land, and die a man and not a chattel.⁵⁸

This radical relinquishment of the expediency of security provisioned by the notion/idea of the nation being a protectorate, however vague and questionable the veracity of its tenants may be for black people – enslaved, runaway, exiled, or an otherwise descendant of the categorizable propertied flesh – is an eternal striving for the possibility of a different reality than the/*this* current reality. It is to abandon the mere accoutrements of a fictional and always yet-to-come concept of freedom that Martin Luther King Jr. imagined (to be achieved by paying white people to eat at their restaurants while being spit, beat, and often worse⁵⁹) and to apprehend the *here and now is exile* – and the meaning of Exodus is to *bring crashing down, at the level of the psyche, individual and collective, all such walks* through the *symbolic subversion of, and the concrete rebellion against, the dominant social order*.⁶⁰ Exile, as a contiguous condition of slavery and escaping to the sea or and as the lived reality for the violent black rebel that pirated the sky, is the condition of remix and reinvention – even as international law compounds the inscribed status of enmity, portending the peril and destruction that lurks at every turn.

The violence of violent black rebellion – indeed the *return of the devil’s fire* – in the case of Charles Hill and other exiled Sky Pirates is a different alchemic theoretical and praxis of being than in previously discussed *returns*. The exiled Sky Pirate complicates the very notion of dis/place(ment) and homeland. And as such, the *return* never ceases, the flight continues without end. If we take for example, the definitions Katherine McKittrick provisions of displacement and homeland, the parallax ground from which the Sky Pirate emerges comes into view. Accordingly, the condition of displacement moves one way:

the geographic process of being removed, exiled, or marginalized ... displacement can occur due to racism, sexism, homophobia, or other acts of discrimination and violence that

⁵⁶ Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave. Related by Herself. With a Supplement by the Editor. To Which Is Added, the Narrative of Asa-Asa, a Captured African* (London, UK: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831), 23.

⁵⁷ Wynter, “‘We Know Where We Are From’: The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley,” 43.

⁵⁸ John Swanson Jacobs, “A Colored American in England,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 29, 1861.

⁵⁹ “Once the New World black had tried to prove that he was as good as his master, when he should have proven not his equality but his difference. It was this distance that could command attention without pleading for respect.” In, Derek Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” in *What the Twilight Says: Essays*, by Derek Walcott (1970; repr., New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 9.

⁶⁰ Wynter, “‘We Know Where We Are From’: The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley,” 44.

subordinate particular communities, even though these communities may not have the means to escape ... discrimination ...

And if homeland is to be understood as “a territory to which one belongs, was born in, or is tied to ancestrally ... also understood as a “country of origin,” ... in the past or the present ...,”⁶¹ then how is the exiled Sky Pirate to make sense of having lived longer in exile than in one’s “homeland?” And given that this particular mode of exilic living was precipitated by the double operative function of violence – the initial violence in McKittrick’s definition of displacement and the second mode of violence that stems from the first being *returned* in the form of killing a cop, and to *still* be escaping – a particular genre of displacement sprouts forth here. A raucous chaos of agglomerated violence and the multiplicative echoes of dis/place(ment) chorus this condition of exile for the violent black rebel turned Sky Pirate. As Charles Hill would come to learn, the history of exile’s now is unbearably ambivalent.

The Ford Galaxy that Charles Hill and his comrades fled from New Mexico after killing a police officer hastened the unraveling of new worlds and cosmogonies. Speeding towards Louisiana, and eventually to *the other side of the sky*, necessarily dictated that their rearview mirror would always reflect the remaining remnants of a world no longer. Hill, twenty-two at the time, left behind a pregnant wife and a daughter. In a 2016 interview, Hill mourns the fact that he never met the son that his then-wife birthed, and his grief seeps through the text in absence when he further reveals that said son was shot and killed and he does not know why. He is exiled from his daughter Caroline, mentioning that she longs to know why her life was lived without her father, the once-fond memories of whom she once possessed have faded into the same abyss of absence and grief for not being able to understand why her dad killed a police officer. Hill reflects with a sense of peace, though if actual, could have no way been arrived at such a place without a languishing torment, when he says “I don’t think she understood” that he thought he was trying “to free our race.” This reluctant acceptance limns a throughline to all of Hill’s interviews from exile. From having to accept that Cuba was not the panacea neither he nor his comrades imagined it to be; from accepting that the condition of exile was not actually external to imprisonment, as the second epigraph to this chapter indicates, but rather a point of location around which the constellation of exiled living frequently orbits; from accepting that no other country would forgive their American roots when they sought to join decolonizing guerrilla units under the flag of other countries;⁶² from accepting that no other country would grant entry to an enemy of the United States;⁶³ from accepting that at any moment, the Cuban government upon which his exile is dependent could extradite him to a certain death in the United States;⁶⁴ from accepting the fact that he will never be able to “eat some black berry pie” or “go to McDonald’s” even though he nostalgically “craves the kind of French fries that only capitalism can make;”⁶⁵ to accepting that he has outlived his exiled comrades and few others can possibly even imagine how long *eighteen thousand five hundred twenty-six*

⁶¹ McKittrick, “(I Entered the Lists),” 174; [ellipses original].

⁶² Latner, “Revolution in the Air: Hijacking, Political Protest, and U.S.-Cuba Relations.”

⁶³ Zaitchik and Hill, “How I Hijacked a Plane & Spent the Next 44 Years Living in Cuba”; Latner, “Assata Is Welcome Here: Black Radicalism, Political Asylum, and the Diplomacy of Exile and Freedom.”

⁶⁴ Oppman, “Admitted Hijacker Dreams of Home after 43 Years Hiding out in Cuba”; Oppman, *An African-American Revolutionary and Fugitive Reflects on Decades of Exile in Cuba*; Chris McKee, “Cuban Fugitive, Murder Suspect Wants Charges Dropped,” *KRQE News*, March 10, 2015, sec. News; Kovalski, “Havana Is Haven for Fugitive ’70s Hijacker”; Zaitchik and Hill, “How I Hijacked a Plane & Spent the Next 44 Years Living in Cuba”; Carlos Álvarez Rodríguez, “The Long Read: The Story of Charlie Hill, an FBI Fugitive in Havana,” *Huck*, March 2016; Eaton, “The Politics of American Fugitives in Cuba.”

⁶⁵ Oppman, “Admitted Hijacker Dreams of Home after 43 Years Hiding out in Cuba.”

days of an exilic future actually is;⁶⁶ and to accepting the bittersweet reality of Michael Finney's observation that "exile is probably one of the most difficult human conditions that exists"⁶⁷ – the future lived and endured by Hill is, as his fellow Sky Pirate William Lee Brent characterized it, a never-ending flight.⁶⁸

If this side of exile is an exigency of deprivation, its homologue is, to quote Derek Walcott, a "deprivation made lyrical, and twilight, with the patience of alchemy, almost transmutes despair into virtue."⁶⁹ That is, the exiled future through which Hill is *still* living – a reality parallel to that of the better known and more adequately funded, as Hill frames it, Assata Shakur is *still* living⁷⁰ – evokes the necessary conditions for regeneration and reinvention. As Sylvia Wynter demonstrates in both of the unpublished pieces entitled, *Black Metamorphosis* and *We Know Where We are From*, exile – the valence of such congruent with the aforementioned definition of displacement – was constituted by a "near total alienation" wrought forth by the "conditioning power of the plantation."⁷¹ But as a new culture emerged on the plot, complete with its own secretive histories and myths and values and epistemologies,⁷² a similar culture emerged from the dually exiled condition of the Sky Pirate in Cuba.

For example, while not all of those whom hijacked planes to Cuba shared the same world views as Hill, Goodwin, and Finney and certainly most had not fled to the island after killing a cop, Hill affectionately notes that after being detained and incarcerated by Cuban officials upon their arrival, the Cuban government sent these black Americans to a place called, "the hijacker house." And it was here, as Hill recounts, that he met people from diverse backgrounds that shared similarly attuned politics and hopes for the Cuban Revolution. Though disagreements about which brand of Marxism would eventuate the end of the capitalist world and fracture what preliminary collaborative dreaming may have materialized amongst the hijackers, it was here, in exile, that Hill began to read and to seriously study not only the decolonial texts that Martin Luther King Jr. railed against, but also to seriously study the world in which he now lived. As the arrow of normative time moved forward, Hill learned Spanish, began to think in Spanish, and began translating said decolonial and anticolonial texts into the Cuban dialect of Spanish. Charles Hill learned how to farm and developed a spiritual relationship to the land with a never previously held understanding and appreciation of the harmonious balance of the universe. Indeed, the sea-change of the old exile brought forth by the transatlantic slave trade inspired new vocabularies evocative of new modes of

⁶⁶ Hill's comrades, Ralph Goodwin and Michael Finney, both died in Cuba. Goodwin drowned in 1973 and Finney passed away in 2005.

⁶⁷ O'Connor, "Michael Finney's Last Flight."

⁶⁸ William Lee Brent, *Long Time Gone* (New York, NY: Times Books, 1996), 276.

⁶⁹ Walcott, "What the Twilight Says," 4.

⁷⁰ Both Shakur and Hill are examples of the otherwise unnamed exiled fugitive *still* fleeing alongside other expats who *still* elude capture – and of the progeny of such fugitives and exiles that *still* live and testify to the world-destroying/making implications posed by and through exilic futures. And the veracity of such living – *still* – becomes more puissant considering both Shakur and Hill were named in a January 11, 2021 declaration from the United States Department of State that Cuba was re-designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. The United States Department of State Secretary, Michael R. Pompeo, writes that Cuba "must end its support for international terrorism and subversion of U.S. Justice" as it "harbors several U.S. fugitives from justice wanted on or convicted of charges of political violence, many of whom have resided in Cuba for decades. For example, the Cuban regime has refused to return [Assata Shakur], on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey State Trooper Werner Ferster in 1973; Ishmael Labeet, convicted of killing eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972; Charles Lee Hill, charged with killing New Mexico State Policeman Robert Rosenblom in 1971; and others." See: Michael R. Pompeo, "U.S. Announces Designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism," Press Statement (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of State, January 11, 2021).

⁷¹ Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World," 17–18.

⁷² Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation."

existence carried by the jet streams that carried the Sky Pirates to Cuba.

Wynter describes this very condition of exile as a cultural conversion that was not only exile, “and not only exile from a place, but exile from the human condition.”⁷³ And upon realizing that one had to either adapt or die; upon accepting Cuba was constitutionally predicated upon flawed values and beliefs like every other nation; upon accepting that “today could be the day” that everything changes for the better – once exile became known, as Wynter writes, “they [the exile] lost their complacency, the complacency of the norm” and the once exiled “heretical popular gods, laughing ironic, contingent, anti-norm, unofficial gods – gods in exile” were counterposed and a new poesis of being emerged, as on the plantation and in the case of the Sky Pirates in Cuba, by and through the participatory action of the exiles themselves. For Wynter, this is the emergence of black music, an out of normative time experience whereby the “the song is the Exodus – an exodus from the ‘reality constituted by the dominant cultural signification systems.’” This is the slave song (“the doleful song”), this is the blues, jazz, reggae, reggaeton, soul, funk, hip hop; this is the pain and possibility of exile made manifest through “the transshipment of the gods” across the Atlantic. And this inventive and affective culture emergent from exile, as constituted by the central role the gods played in moving through song and dance – a deviant theology evidencing the infallibility of the exiled gods. “The gods were, because they were danced. Song dance and the drum created and sustained the space of the gods.”⁷⁴ With the firstly imposed being of exile, the exiled gods materialized into the exiled enslaved themselves. And a similar phenomenon transpired in the exiled violent black rebel Sky Pirate in Cuba.

Whereas the Devils of the new emerged – Nat Turner’s devil was integral to the transatlantic slave trade and Hill’s devil possesses an abundance of names, though the most commonly used remains anchored in the transatlantic flow of commodity and exchange – it was the exiled gods of provenance that provided the fire to *return*. In the case of Hill and his collective and collaborative participatory action with his new collective of people – an arrangement against the individualizing totalitarian mode of power – he himself is an exiled god, in the form of a Santería priest, a tradition that extends back to the Yorubas. For these are the stakes of the Sky Pirate – the expansion and extension of Harriet Jacobs’s loophole of retreat, from ten feet above ground to thirty thousand above sea level, Jacobs and Hill both illustrations of the gossamer wings of the exiled gods upon which the Sky Pirate takes flight (and sings and dances and violently revolts) into an unknown exilic future on *the other side of the sky*.

⁷³ Wynter, “Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World,” 56.

⁷⁴ Wynter, 496, 933.

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EXILIC FUTURE

S

F

Score for the first system (measures 1-4) in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major (two flats).

Instrument parts:

- Voice:** Four measures of whole rests.
- Violins:** Measures 1 and 2 are whole rests. Measures 3 and 4 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- Piano:** Measures 1 and 2 are whole rests. Measures 3 and 4 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- Acoustic Bass:** Measures 1 and 2 are whole rests. Measures 3 and 4 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- Drumset:** Four measures of whole rests.

Score for the second system (measures 5-8) in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major (two flats).

Instrument parts:

- Vo. (Vocal):** Measure 5 starts with a five-measure rest (labeled '5'). Measures 6-8 contain a triplet of eighth notes: B-flat, A, and G. The lyrics "Sweet le-mon pepper mint and or - ange colored dreams" are written below the staff.
- Vlins. (Violins):** Measures 5 and 6 are whole rests. Measures 7 and 8 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- Pno. (Piano):** Measures 5 and 6 are whole rests. Measures 7 and 8 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- Bass:** Measures 5 and 6 are whole rests. Measures 7 and 8 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.
- D. Set (Drum Set):** Measures 5 and 6 are whole rests. Measures 7 and 8 play a half note chord of B-flat and F.

9

Vo. *3* ha-a-a a-a v-e I *3*

Vlns.

Pno.

Bass

D. Set

Measures 9-12. The vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (ha-a-a) and continues with a triplet of eighth notes (a-a v-e I). The violin line has sustained chords. The piano line is silent. The bass line has a steady eighth-note pattern. The double bass line has a steady eighth-note pattern.

13

Vo. *3* wa-tching the clouds go by sa-il-ing the se-a-sons *3*

Vlns.

Pno.

Bass

D. Set

Measures 13-16. The vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (wa-tching the clouds) and continues with a triplet of eighth notes (sa-il-ing the se-a-sons). The violin line has sustained chords. The piano line is silent. The bass line has a steady eighth-note pattern. The double bass line has a steady eighth-note pattern.

17

Vo. *on the other side of the sky*

Vlrs.

Pno.

Bass

D. Set

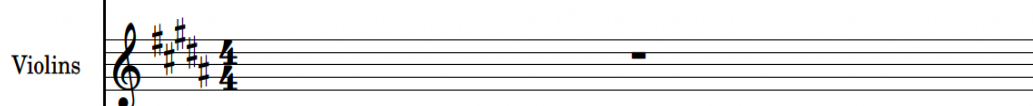
*Hey Now Hey (The Other Side of the Sky)*⁷⁵

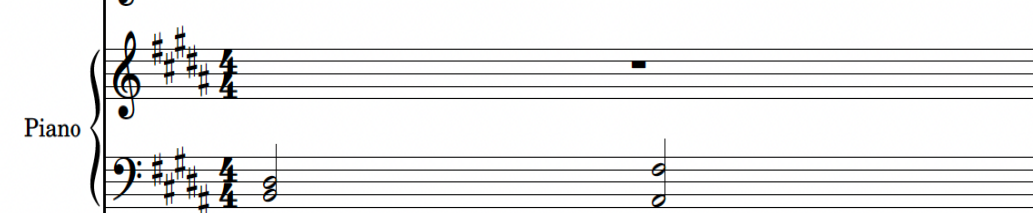
⁷⁵ Aretha Franklin, *Hey Now Hey (The Other Side of the Sky)*, Hey Now Hey (The Other Side of the Sky) (Los Angeles, CA: Atlantic, 1973).

Finale

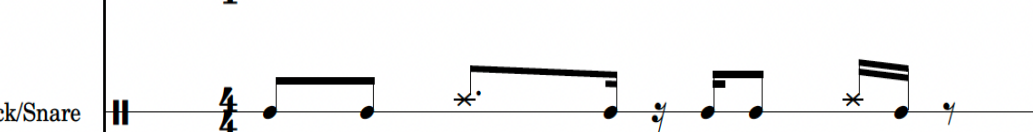
A Postlude to Nigger Chaos

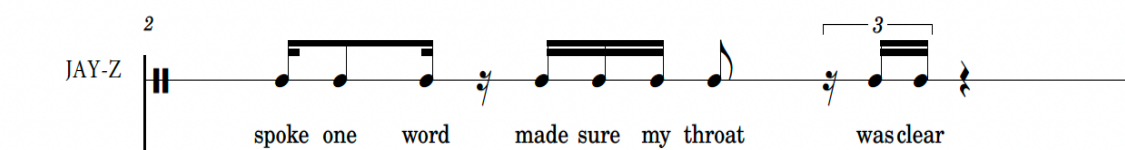
Vocalist (JAY-Z): 

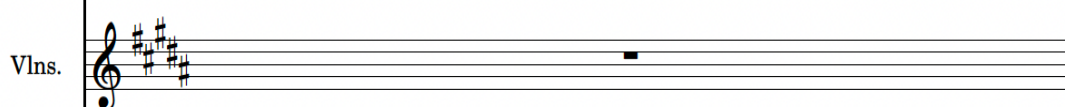
Violins 

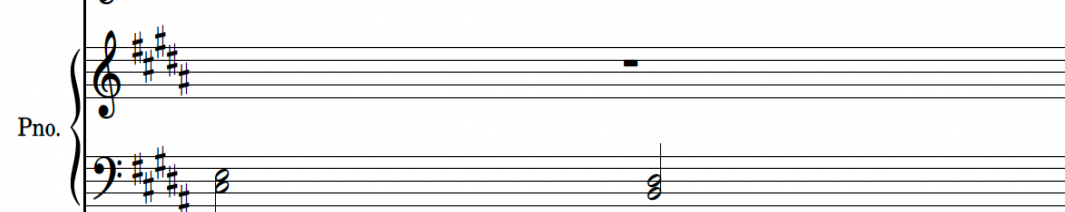
Piano 

Hi-Hat 

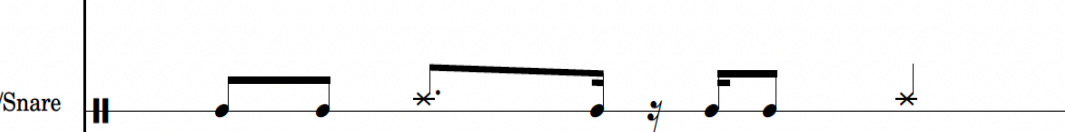
Kick/Snare 

2
JAY-Z 

Vlins. 

Pno. 

Hi-Hat 

Kick/Snare 

3

JAY-Z

I'm a pri - son - er of cir - cum-stance,

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 3 and 4 of a song. The score is written for five parts: JAY-Z (vocals), Vlns. (violin), Pno. (piano), Hi-Hat, and Kick/Snare. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#). In measure 3, JAY-Z sings 'I'm a pri - son - er of cir - cum-stance,'. The Vlns. part has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Pno. part has a simple harmonic accompaniment. The Hi-Hat and Kick/Snare provide a rhythmic foundation. In measure 4, JAY-Z sings 'frail nig - ga, I could-n't much work with my hands, but my'. The instrumental parts continue with similar patterns.

4

JAY-Z

frail nig - ga, I could-n't much work with my hands, but my

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

Detailed description: This block contains the continuation of the musical notation for measures 3 and 4. The score is written for five parts: JAY-Z (vocals), Vlns. (violin), Pno. (piano), Hi-Hat, and Kick/Snare. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#). In measure 3, JAY-Z sings 'frail nig - ga, I could-n't much work with my hands, but my'. The Vlns. part has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Pno. part has a simple harmonic accompaniment. The Hi-Hat and Kick/Snare provide a rhythmic foundation. In measure 4, JAY-Z sings 'frail nig - ga, I could-n't much work with my hands, but my'. The instrumental parts continue with similar patterns.

5

JAY-Z

mind was strong, I grew where you hold your blacks up, trap

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

6

JAY-Z

us, ex - pect us to pick the gats up.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

7

JAY-Z

where you drop your cracks off by the Mack trucks,

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

3

8

JAY-Z

de-destroy our dreams of law-yers and act-ors.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

3

9

JAY-Z

Keep us spi-ra-ling, go-ing back-wards. At age nine, saw my first hate crime,

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

11

JAY-Z

blind fol - ded, ex - pec - ted to walk a straight line.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

12

JAY-Z

Mind mol - ded, taught to love you and hate mine.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

13

JAY-Z

Climbed o - ver at an ear - ly age Jay shined.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

14

JAY-Z

Fuck the sys - tem, at La - dy Jus - tice I blaze nine. Your

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

15

JAY-Z

ho - nor, I no lon - ger kill my peo - ple, I raise mine.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

16

JAY-Z

The soul of Mu-mi - a in this mo-dern day time.

Vlns.

Pno.

Hi-Hat

Kick/Snare

Dope Man, JAY-Z

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 16 and 17 of the song 'Dope Man' by JAY-Z. It is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The vocal line (JAY-Z) in measure 16 consists of a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4), a quarter note (C5), a quarter note (B4), a quarter note (A4), a quarter note (G4), a quarter note (F#4), and a quarter note (E4). In measure 17, it starts with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4), followed by a quarter note (C5), a quarter note (B4), a quarter note (A4), a quarter note (G4), a quarter note (F#4), and a quarter note (E4). The violin line (Vlns.) in measure 16 plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. In measure 17, it plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The piano line (Pno.) in measure 16 plays a half note G4. In measure 17, it plays a half note G4. The hi-hat line in measure 16 plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. In measure 17, it plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The kick/snare line in measure 16 plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. In measure 17, it plays eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The score ends with a double bar line.

In sum, the governing cultural categories of the social orders in both center and periphery became the governing categories of their systems of knowledge and of aesthetics. Further, both knowledge and aesthetics systems constituted the sociocultural environment as an environment which encoded its conceptions in the very structure of social relations. These structural encodings of cultural conceptions are made possible by the fact the structure serves as the abduction system for the thought-systems and vice-versa. Consequently, for fundamental change to take place, it must take place both in the conception and in the pattern of relations. Such changes must therefore call into question both the structure of social reality and the structure of its analogical epistemology; they must involve “shifting our whole system of abductions. [To do this] we must pass through the threat of that chaos where thought becomes impossible.”

– Sylvia Wynter, *Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis*, 1992 (p. 67)¹

Outro

I flow here from JAY-Z’s verse in sheet music format because the lyrics, cadence, and groove that moves in and out of the ethereal melody – its combined sound made visible – awkwardly overflowing onto page after page with the audacity to blatantly disregard supposed form and accepted (grammatical and contextual) norm(s) whereby the historical, political, mythological, and ultimately, the epistemological conditions that make possible for such a response, is unforgivingly braided together by an emphatic, “Fuck You!” For this is precisely the semantical, discourse-constitutive, and knowledge-making totem of *Nigger Chaos*. The tortured narrative articulation of each of the stories and its substories; the plot, plots, and plotting; the codes, encodings, and decoding; and the interplay between the method-making, method-destroying, and the attendant mutually reinforcing aesthetic that paints, scribbles, and animates this project illustrates what the “violence” of violent black rebellion is – and most significantly – what the “violence” of black rebellion *does*. The scenes of *Nigger Chaos* traverse back and forth into and out of time; and just as the violent black rebels heretofore discussed are creatively, collaboratively, and capaciously authoring new stories with new grammars, and new (future) memories – subverting the proleptic plot that has already consigned them to a hellish lived reality on earth that structurally portends their emotional, mental, and somatic annihilation and obliteration whereby an afterlife in Hell awaits for the eternal damnation of their soul – so too are the opening lines from JAY-Z’s verse, unfurled from the middle of an already ongoing plot, emanating back and forth through time.²

At the onset, the solemnity of mythical stories that aver the apex of moral and ethical behavior is introduced as the supreme symbol by which one is ultimately judged for their actions.

¹ JAY-Z, *Dope Man*, Vol. 3 ... Life and Times of S. Carter (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 1999). Sylvia Wynter’s use of quotations here is a citational referent to Gregory Bateson’s 1979 book entitled, “Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity” in, Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis,” in *C.L.R. James’s Caribbean*, ed. Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 67.

² “It would be foolish to say that the mutiny led to the massacre of hundreds, their limp bodies lying across *Matilda’s* corridors, began with Aster, who after all was only a woman, a small and largely unlikely woman, whose heart was no more prone to thoughts of violence than any other who’d endured the decades of trauma that characterize all who lived in the lowdecks. She was stubborn and recalcitrant, but so were many. Like any tidal matter, a mutiny only had a middle.” From River Solomon’s *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (Brooklyn, NY: Akashic Books, 2017), 283.

And because we are already all too familiar with this narrative, very little is needed to convey that we are in a courtroom and the presumed defendant is swearing on the Bible to tell the truth (“Right hand on the Bible, left hand in the air”). Dropped into the middle of this scene (“Before”) already eludes to the extant historical conditions and epistemological projects that not only constructed the legal and judicial apparatus that was etiologically created in the American colonies to define the religious orthodoxy of Christianity, which already designated black people as the infidel enemy to guard against, but also evinced here are the machinations of hubris and conceited arrogance to police and punish heterodoxy. As Chapter One indicates, this fundamental organizing principal of orthodoxy/heresy structured the colonies and the slave power to which it gave rise. The right to own private property in black people, and to ensure they stayed in their place was the law of the land and its citizenry – the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 ensured that it mattered not if one owned en fleshed property or not – and this right is the very basis of freedom and liberty upon which Thomas Jefferson, and the perceived legitimacy garnered by citational referents to Cicero, articulated the basis for government and governing – became Divinely ordained in the hands of slave power. The contorting of Biblical stories to evidence the natural order of nigger-infidel-property, to which JAY-Z finds himself swearing an oath on, would be the same source that Nat Turner used to *return the devil’s fire* in Chapter One. And in Chapter Two, we see that these stories that provided Edward Gorsuch the perceived authority to hunt/return escaping runaway recalcitrant property would be the ground upon which he earned Hell. Moreover, the Parker Crew in Chapter Two also demonstrate that a struggle waged solely on the terrain of hegemonic thought (i.e., the insurrection’s interstice to debate Bible verses) to produce a “more truth” statement from the same epistemological ground, does not/cannot alone produce the possibility for a different and transcendent story to be authored. Wynter makes this point in the above epigraph and the violent black rebels throughout the multi-scalar terrain of *Nigger Chaos* disclose the liberatory potentialities propagated by both the theoretical provocations and praxis of their treasonous discontent: the production of new stories with new citational referents.³ For without such, we are, as JAY-Z states here, stuck, ensnared, and

³ This is neither a simple nor easy feat to work towards; and this is equally true of the violent black rebel as it is of the supposed scholar to write and think. For example, the word choice of “ground” appears twice in the preceding sentence and even as I am/have been attempting to disentangle my academic inquiries here and throughout this dissertation, my conscious refusal of certain citational referents is unconsciously refused. For as I am attempting to gesture towards the possibility of different emancipatory horizons my thoughts are ensnared to the citations required to make this thrust: the mention of “ground” conjures Heidegger’s “On the Essence of Ground” and the ways in which philosophical debates, like those between Heidegger and Hegel for instance, come to shape the very terrain of slavery. For example, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 557–64. for the way in which such a citation invokes the a/historical and a/political debates as to the nature of slavery and the ways in which such prattle becomes the gammon of fodder for future academic inquiries – thus the question at hand: How to move beyond the current languishing language landscape that ensnares even the possibility to imagine black liberation? See, Katherine McKittrick, “Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered About the Floor),” in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 14–34. See also Katherine McKittrick’s Keynote presentation at the “Black Geographies: Insurgent Knowledge, Spatial Poetics, and the Politics of Blackness” Symposium at UC Berkeley, October 12, 2017 [link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9u7fsUPFbM>]. I want to echo and extend McKittrick’s point here: “Foucauldian questions generate Foucauldian answers;” and so if the liberal projects of Thomas Jefferson and John Locke are indebted to and embedded within the work of Cicero, where is black liberation to be found in using the grammars produced by these projects? *Nigger Chaos* contend that these grammars are not vehicles for/to black liberation (e.g., the failures of the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement). For example, if abolition is the goal, can demands to arrest the killers of Breonna Taylor be anything other than an abolitionist aporia? For more on the inability of liberalism’s grammars, see Angela Y. Davis, “Political Prisoners, Prisons and Black Liberation,” in *If They Come in the Morning... Voices of Resistance*, ed. Angela Y. Davis (1967; repr., New York, NY: Signet Books, 1971), 27–43.

imprisoned within the middling and repeating stories that dropped us into its ongoing middle (“prisoner of circumstance”).

The next couple of lines from JAY-Z point to the material world into which the violent black rebel enters while simultaneously alluding to a mode of being from which black study emerges, and the scope through which the theory and praxis of the violent black rebellion takes aim. JAY-Z’s narrator made weak and undexterous (“Frail nigga, I couldn’t much work with my hands”) may reference a host of environmental conditions in which the heretical-nigger-enemy is placed and forced to subsist through what Sylvia Wynter describes as the “terror of Lack” (e.g., inadequate housing, nutrition, healthcare, and exposure to certain toxins, etc...). Reading from Deleuze and Guattari, Wynter explains that this lack is “created, planned and organized in and through social production” and it is the “deliberate creation ... as a function of the market economy, the art of the dominant class.”⁴ From this imposed position of slow death, an axiomatic culture may emerge to threaten the system of knowledge that made possible for such conditions to exist. And like the exile discussed in the previous chapter, these alternative modalities of being, emergent from the place and condition of Lack, is a historical continuity – from the hold of slave ships where multi-cultural/lingual/tribal blacks developed new modes of communication and collaborative efforts to contest their unfreedom to the development of new songs and gods from the old within the plot of the plantation system. This is also the place where life and living demands the capacity to be a quick read of the world and everyone in it – to see beyond our seeming⁵ and through the bullshit, lies, and empty promises. This is the place where the necessary theoretical formulations are crafted.

*But my mind was strong, I grew where you hold your blacks up
Trap us, expect us not to pick gats up
Where you drop your cracks off by the Mack trucks
Destroy our dreams of lawyers and actors*

The point here is that violent black rebellion, its violence, is necessarily predicated upon a different epistemological framework, and constructed with different citations and/or different interpretations of such, because the vantage point from the liminal category, as Wynter frames it, of nigger/propertyable/infidel is the condition of possibility that makes possible for the theory and praxis of violent black rebellion to manifest *ab initio*; it is from the place of knowing the world differently, the place of the enemy/heresy, that conditions for different stories to be authored through violently rebelling. And this becomes clearer when Historians and scholars alike do not flatten such imaginative modes of (attempting to) re-writing their worlds to the metrics of “failed,” “successful.” Similarly, reducing the violence of violent black rebellion to the dependent variable denudes and further ensnares the semantical outburst posed by the violence of violent black rebellion that challenges the epistemological apparatus of thought and behavior that seeks to annihilate the violent black rebel. Together, this is the analytical and methodological basis of *Nigger Chaos*: memories, grammars – our languages – ensnare our behaviors and therefore, we writers, scholars, critics, etc..., must take seriously the task to not reinscribe the very concepts/ideas/epistemes we work/seek to undo. This instructive is informed by: Sylvia Wynter, “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” *Voices of the African Diaspora* VIII, no. 2/Fall (1992): 42–73; Sylvia Wynter, “But What Does ‘Wonder’ Do? Meanings, Canons, Too? On Literary Texts, Cultural Contexts, and What It’s like to Be One/Not One of Us,” *Stanford Humanities Review* 4, no. 1 (1994): 124–29; Sylvia Wynter, “A Black Studies Manifesto,” *Forum N.H.I. Knowledge for the 21st Century* 1, no. 1 (1994): 3–11; Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 947–63; Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021); Dylan Rodríguez, “Goldwater’s Tribal Tattoo: On Origins and Deletions of Post-Raciality,” in *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 107–34; Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

⁴ Sylvia Wynter, “Sambos and Minstrels,” *Social Text* 1, no. Winter (1979): 153.

⁵ This is a reference to Toni Morrison’s poem, Toni Morrison, “We Saw Beyond Our Seeing,” in *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water fore I Diie* (New York, NY: Random House, 1971), 36.

Such keen discernment and perceptive insight informs the rigorous intellectual heft of black study. Recall the deep knowing and dexterity with which Nat Turner articulates the Church's eschatological interpretation of the Bible in his confessions from Chapter One. And this continues into Chapter Two with William Parker's biblical exegesis. Together, both the Church and the Parker Crew weaponize the organizing episteme to *return the devil's fire*. And in Chapter Three, we observe a similarly sharp and perspicuous discernment levied against the would-be totalizing integrationist dreams of Martin Luther King Jr. and the liberalism incubating such dreams. Charles Hill, his comrades, and the other Sky Pirates of the era, remain fugitive; the *still* escaping exiles continue to live and remake their worlds through black study.

The unrelenting Lack however, can also facilitate the aspirations for inclusion into the market economy. This is also a cultural process that Sylvia Wynter ascribes to the black middle class worldview. And this danger of denuding the radical possibilities from this place of knowing is also present in JAY-Z's narration.⁶ Of course the threat of succumbing to the temptation posed by the things that may numb you to the terrorization of Lack always looms large ("cracks off by the Mack trucks"). Yet, even more pernicious, is the way in which studying the symbols and concepts of the ruling order may leave one prone to falling victims "to a servitude more absolute than the one imposed by guns, whips, chains and hunger. [...] The "dreams of lawyers and actors" to which JAY-Z mentions, may be the product of a particular mode of thought that restricts the perception of other possibilities to exist to not be poor, like playing a sport, selling the drugs ("cracks"), and/or rapping becomes the only vehicle imaginable to transcend. In this sense, as Sylvia Wynter poetically describes such a situation in her 1962 novel entitled, *The Hills of Hebron*, there is a danger in believing the "half-truths and compromises and subtle distortions" encountered in this place. Whereby those so desirous to move from the position of Lack may run the risk of "surrender[ing] even the right to dream their own dreams. Their dreams [may become] second-hand, cut-price, bargain ones." The operationalized risk is to become so deft in understanding their game, one may "play the game brilliantly without ever questioning the rules."⁷ And this becomes the enclosure to which even the imagined horizon of political possibility becomes ensnared ("trap us"). For the Sky Pirates in Chapter Three, Martin Luther King Jr. explicitly demonstrates this middle class ethos, a sentiment that is shared by each of the violent black rebels heretofore discussed more generally, as gleaned from the theoretical provocations with which they articulated their violent praxis.

To return to King's last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, King writes the following in 1967:

Two things are clear to me, and I hope they are clear to white liberals. One is that the Negro cannot achieve emancipation through violent rebellion. The other is that the Negro cannot achieve emancipation by passively waiting for the white race voluntarily to grant it to him. The Negro has not gained a single right in America without persistent pressure and agitation. However lamentable it may be, the Negro is now convinced that white America will never admit him to equal rights unless it is coerced into doing it.

⁶ I know how some of you are. I don't want any of you to come up to me at conferences, organizing events, or anywhere otherwise for any reason to debate me on the merit of your proclamation of possessing a superior set of politics, morals, ethics, or anything else in relationship to what you think you know about Shawn Carter or of those he espouses as JAY-Z.

⁷ Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 256–57; 260–61.

Nonviolent coercion always brings tension to the surface. This tension, however, must not be seen as destructive. There is a kind of tension that is both healthy and necessary for growth. Society needs nonviolent gadflies to bring its tensions into the open and force its citizens to confront the ugliness of their prejudices and the tragedy of their racism. [...]

So every ethical appeal to the conscience of the white man must be accomplished by nonviolent pressure. If first-class citizenship is to become a reality for the Negro, he must through a powerful action program assume the primary responsibility for making it so. [...] With nonviolent resistance, we need not submit to any wrong, nor need we resort to violence in order to right a wrong.

The American racial revolution has been a revolution to “get in” rather than to overthrow. We want a share in the American economy, the housing market, the educational system and the social opportunities. This goal indicates that a social change in America must be nonviolent. If one is in search of a better job, it does not help to burn down the factory. If one needs more adequate education, shooting the principal will not help. If housing is the goal, only building and construction will produce that end. To destroy anything, person or property, cannot bring us closer to the goal that we seek.⁸

The tone of King’s writing here suggests that he is preaching to the heretic-nigger-enemy while talking and empathizing with the white liberals to whom he has addressed this passage and with whom he identifies most closely (“we seek”). Even as an aside to the condescension, purporting the extant possibility of “appealing to the conscience of the white man” cannot hold any weight for the people seemingly placed lightyears beyond King’s in their desperation. Likewise, King’s middle class desires to be included (“to ‘get in’”) within the fabric of America’s democracy, wherein hollowed-out and empty words like freedom and equality are also bereft of meaning for those who occupy the nigger place of Lack. To continue advocating this line of reasoning is to ignore the historical record of violent black rebellion and the lived experiences of those that chose to use violence; such an episteme constitutes the morphing of King and his fellow middle class bourgeoisie compatriots to the “you” with which JAY-Z identifies as the proverbial actor responsible for relegating the nigger to the place of Lack, which is materially produced by violence (“I grew where you hold your blacks up”).

In King’s haste to appeal to white liberals through “nonviolent coercion,” he blanches the historical record of the role of violent black rebellion and erases every possible theoretical intervention to be therewith learned. At a glance, when he says violent revolt offers no emancipatory possibility (“cannot achieve emancipation”) and instead elects to advocate for nonviolence, because such a tactic evidences the deservedness for full citizenship and rights (“assume the primary responsibility”), one might be led to ask, is King really fixin’ his face to say that if not for the violent insurrections in the offing along the shores of west Africa in the attempt to not be trafficked across the Atlantic Ocean, and if not for the violent insurrections aboard the slave ships that brought them to the “new world” as en fleshed property, and if not for the violent insurrections that occurred on the plantations, then maybe the slave trade and slavery could have been stopped? This sounds ridiculous. But to keep pushing the point, King’s diagnosed telos of the so-called “racial revolution” as being one to “get in” instead of overthrow completely ignores the

⁸ King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, 90-91;129-130.

Haitian Revolution, which, for better or worse, served as *a* guiding light to the insurrections in the Americas by the enslaved and further disavows the epistemological basis for the violent black rebels discussed throughout this dissertation. For example, the exiled Sky Pirates in Chapter Three wanted, in no part, to be included in the market economy of America; they chose the Communist country of Cuba instead. The logic piloting the exiled futures they *still* live, harken back to the Parker Crew in Chapter Two: they just wanted to be left alone because they understood that they had no country to call their own. And the Church of Nat Turner completely turns King's assertion ("To destroy anything ... cannot bring us closer to the goal...") on its head; for they understood that it was only through the destruction of this world could another be created. As JAY-Z raps, for King to tell the Lack-nigger-enemy to "not pick gats up," and to "appeal to the conscience of the white man" is, in effect, to teach us heretical niggers, to love whites and to hate black ("Mind molded, taught to love you and hate mine"); a proposition that can only "Keep us spiralin, goin' backwards,"⁹ blind to the possibility of an otherwise, meekly accepting whatever annihilation may come ("blindfolded, expected to walk a straight line").

To this, the violent black rebel says, "Fuck you!" And this response is bolstered by all the niggerness one may possibly muster, like the pride of Buffalo, New York, Rick James, when he proceeded to stomp and rub all of the mud from his boots onto Eddie Murphy's new couch while simultaneously hollering, "Fuck your couch!"¹⁰ In Chapter Three, through the Sky Pirates, we see glimpses of the Black Panthers, their politics, and the axiomatic countercultural struggles that gave rise to not only new political collectives like the Republic of New Afrika, of which Charles Hill and his comrades were members, but the Black Panthers, like the Nation of Islam and the Garveyites prior, invented a new aesthetic for blackness, advancing new grammars and new concepts for which to understand their shared struggles – relationally and collaboratively. Whereas King submitted to the middling anachronistic grammars of equality and inclusion, the violence of violent black rebellion – *nigger chaos* – sought to re/create new poesies of being through a piratical praxis of collective difference, positing a radical refutation of death. ***Nigger Chaos***: the awe-inspiring clarity of knowing how to aim at different targets¹¹ ("I no longer kill my people, I raise mine"); the imaginative audacity of being bold enough to live, *still*, the credulousness to peer up into the sky and conceive of freedom, that maybe niggas can fly; the effrontery to breathe the same air as the devil and the acquired impudence from understanding the power of not being suffocated; the temerity to even imagine that another mode of existence beyond that which this world has created, *transcending through the threat of chaos where thought becomes impossible*;¹² the insolence to *call into question the closure*

⁹ This is also reminiscent of Ralph Ellison's Dr. Bledsoe: "To Whom It May Concern [...] Keep this Nigger-Boy Running." Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1952), 33.

¹⁰ "Charlie Murphy's True Hollywood Stories: Rick James," *Chappelle's Show* (Comedy Central, February 11, 2004).

¹¹ Listen: "Nothing wrong with my aim, just gotta change the target." JAY-Z, *American Dreamin'*, American Gangster (New York, NY: Roc-A-Fella Records, 2007). This is also a Fanonian reference to his discussion in *Wretched of the Earth* that suggests a praxis of the colonized turning the violence they enact upon each other towards the colonizers. And yet, after all of the time that has elapsed since the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962), we are still waiting for the target to be completely relocated and replaced. For example, see Nikki Jones, "Targets," in *The Chosen Ones: Black Men and the Politics of Redemption* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 87–115.

¹² Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" 305.

instituting the order,¹³ and the daring and courageous effort to simply *act*, even if the *attempt* hastens death.¹⁴ *Die enormous*.¹⁵

The theory and praxis of violent black rebellion – *nigger chaos* – stems from the “radical bias of hope” that James C. Scott ascribes to those who dare to misread the world. In, *The Art of not being Governed*, he writes the following:

In a world with the odds stacked so massively against them, surely the astounding fact about marginal hill peoples and many of the world’s dispossessed is that they should so often believe and act as though their deliverance were at hand. Though it so often ends tragically, this radical bias for hope, the conviction that the world is headed their way, is worthy of our careful attention and perhaps even our admiration. It is hard to imagine what the world would be like if the dispossessed, knowing the long odds, were all hard-headed realists.¹⁶

In this sense, while a gossamer of parlance and overlap may exist, both *nigger chaos* and *Nigger Chaos* are anything but (afro)/pessimistic. I do not desire to luxuriate on this point, many others have already provided sound and insightful remarks on this matter.¹⁷ However it bears mentioning that the *nigger chaos* enacted by the enslaved, escaping and/or otherwise, hasten an exilic future. This possibility for a different story to be authored is informed by the profound knowingness – of power, of people, yours or otherwise – that *Nigger Chaos* understands to be a capacious and generative critique to weaponize and *return*. In a 2015 radio interview on KPFA Berkeley, Frank B. Wilderson III argues that the slave knows nothing of the condition of slavery because slavery is defined by the status of social death, natal alienation, and dishonor. Again, I have no interest in rehearsing the terms provisioned by Orlando Patterson, someone who once referred to the confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas as being “one of the finest moments in modern history of America’s democratic culture.”¹⁸ But it is these terms, and only these fixed terms – social death, natal alienation, and dishonor – slavery can be understood, for only in imagination can it be stated that “I have a father, I have a mother” because “as a point of fact,” Wilderson III continues, “the world does not recognize or incorporate your filial relations into its understanding of family.”¹⁹ But *nigger chaos* is a function of disregarding and ignoring what the world recognizes to be true by *contending with* and *attempting* to struggle against condition(s) of unfreedom. *Nigger Chaos* is a gracefully patinaed, yet emphatically crass,²⁰ “Fuck you!” to any such totalizing articulations of black-being, as if the enslaved and their progeny *ever* lived through such static conceptions of knowing and being.

Imagine telling Harriet Tubman, the pirate’s pirate,²¹ that she was socially dead vis-à-vis an ontological *a priori* condition of enslavement. Imagine telling Harriet Tubman that she was forever

¹³ Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis,” 67.

¹⁴ Recall from Chapter Two, the etymological root of the word pirate coheres to the verbs “tests,” “to attempt,” “to act,” and “contends with.”

¹⁵ Listen: JAY-Z, *Can I Live*.

¹⁶ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 293.

¹⁷ Three such pieces include, Nick Mitchell, “The View from Nowhere: On Frank Wilderson’s Afropessimism,” *Spectre* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 112–20; Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231–49; McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*.

¹⁸ Orlando Patterson, “Race, Gender and Liberal Fallacies,” *The Black Scholar* 22, no. 1 & 2 (1991): 77.

¹⁹ “Blacks and the Master/Slave Relation,” Radio, *Against the Grain* (Berkeley, CA: KPFA 89.3, March 4, 2015).

²⁰ This is a reference to Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” 27.

²¹ I want to thank Mahasan V. Offut-Chaney for this framing of Harriet Tubman.

natally alienated from her family as she returned to pirate them all to Canada. Imagine fixing one's face to tell Harriet Tubman that she knew nothing of power because the social order's governing epistemology dictated that she was propertyable. Imagine a man, from an upper-middle class environ and a second generation professor, telling Harriet Tubman that he was more capable to understand the machinations of slave power and its violence than she. Imagine Nat Turner with his sickle, pitchfork, and machete on the precipice of no return readying to usher in the return of Christ and the end of the world, and someone fixes they face to say, "Excuse me, Nat Turner. Should you be doing this when you 'exist in a regime of violence which is gratuitous, open, and you are openly vulnerable to everyone else' and therefore, maybe Mr. Nat Turner, may you please just remain dead? Socially?" The *nigger chaos* of *Nigger Chaos* ludically laughs at such utterances ("Climbed over it").

HA HA HA HA HA HA

This ludic laughter, as observed in Chapter One, is an epistemic expression that is mutually inclusive of the hope for better things that animates violent black rebellion. *Nigger Chaos*, like the discourse-constitutive, knowledge-making, and method-making/destroying valence of the violence of violent black rebellion itself, is a Black Studies storytelling experiment that seeks to enact a grammatical, aesthetical, methodological, pedagogical, and epistemological insurrection upon the very terms by which the violent black rebel can be known to the academic and scholarly sphere. *Nigger Chaos* is the *attempt to mirror* what violent black rebellion *does* in narrative form. *Nigger Chaos* harnesses all of the imaginative audacity, credulousness, effrontery, and temerity, to daringly and courageously implore you, the black-heretic-enemy-and-already-incipiently-potential shooter, to

SHOUT: *Fuck the system! And at Lady Justice, blaze nine.*

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