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LOOKS THAT KILL: WHITE POWER, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE OCCLUSION
OF JUSTICE

by

Wesley Sutermeister, B.A., M.Div., Th.M

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT
LOOKS THAT KILL: WHITE POWER, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE OCCLUSION
OF JUSTICE

Wesley Sutermeister, B.A., M.Div., Th.M.

Marquette University, 2020

One of the most prominent, destructive, and long-lasting forms of racism in the United States and elsewhere is that which stems from the eyes of white people's personal and social bodies. Their looks have been mobilized and deployed to exclude, exploit, put down, police, manage, intimidate, mark, and kill people of color at both an interpersonal and organizational level for the purpose of securing their own substance and future. Such exercises of power are rooted in human embodiment and suggest that justice and injustice are also rooted in our flesh, in how we relate to each other both corporeally and perceptually. We can commit injustices in the very way we see other people or groups of people. Recent experiences of hate crimes, police brutality, profiling, white supremacist rallies, and deadly massacres at places of worship reveal that embodied habits of white power – especially eyepower – that developed in history still detrimentally affect the lives of many people today.

This dissertation traces the white racist eye from its beginnings, describes the social and economic processes involved in its development, and suggests a new way to understand both whiteness and power, that is, as visibility. There is power in looking as looking is a kind of praxis that does something to those who are seen whether at an individual or corporate level. In the light of the phenomena of unjust looks examined throughout the project, it is argued that Christian theology and practice must take seriously the question of how we see others and incarnate the eyes of Jesus in personal and collective practices of vision. More specifically, Christian faith and the experiences of racism demand that Christians partake in a discipleship of vision whereby they learn to see with Jesus and then go out into the world and to others in an apostolate of seeing that is rooted in love, compassion, and justice. It is only through the development of a contemplative eye and a robust sense of justice that Looks that kill can be challenged and ultimately overcome.

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Wesley Sutermeister, B.A., M.Div., Th.M.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
PART I: WHITE (EYE) POWER	17
CHAPTER 1: WHITES IN THE EYE	20
The Eyes of Hate	23
Monstrous Eyes	29
White Eyes	34
Racializing Eyes	43
CHAPTER 2: EYEBALLING THE OTHER	46
Mirroring Eyes.....	48
The Eyes of History	53
Conquering Eyes.....	57
Genres of Seeing – “Inner Eyes”	63
Sociogenic Eyes.....	66
CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZED EYEPOWER	72
The Force of Factoring Eyes	73
Integrist and Manipulating Eyes	83
The Power of the Body (Politic)	87
Anthropomorphic Thinking and Metaphor	91
PART II: EYE STEMS AND LEGACIES	101
CHAPTER 4: IN WHITE FIELDS	105
Eye Production	107
The Overseeing Eye.....	111
Speculating Eyes.....	121
The Patrolling Eye	131

Mobilizing Eyes.....	136
Offing Eyes	141
CHAPTER 5: WHITE AS A GHOST.....	147
The Cycloptic Eye	151
Performing Looks	160
Reduxing Eyes.....	163
The “All-Seeing” Eye	167
CHAPTER 6: HATE-STARES.....	175
The Jim Crowing Eye	176
Staging and Barring Eyes.....	178
Blighting Eyes	183
Leering Eyes.....	190
Eye Warriors.....	195
CHAPTER 7: EYE FOR AN EYE.....	203
The Policing Eye.....	205
The Profiling Eye.....	209
The Talionic Eye.....	214
Blinding a Spectral Eye.....	220
PART III: TOWARDS JUST LOOKS	228
CHAPTER 8: GOD’S EYE VIEW	234
The Providing Eye	236
Prosopagnosic Eyes	242
Respecting and Despecting Eyes	250
Immaculate Eyes.....	252
Redistributing the Sensible.....	257

CHAPTER 9: APOSTOLATE OF SEEING	264
Apostolic Eyes	269
Contemplative Eyes	272
Domesticating Eyes	279
All Gaze	286
CONCLUSION	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	302

Introduction

“People look at us with aggressive eyes as if they wanted to destroy us.”¹

“The ‘gaze’ has always been political in my life... There is power in looking.”²

“... situations can be more loaded than guns and gestures more eloquent than words.”³

In 2002 journalist Deborah Mathis wrote a book entitled, *Yet a Stranger: Why Black Americans Still Don't Feel at Home*, in which she describes encountering in her own nation “an absence of hospitality, a distance, a hesitation, a suspiciousness directed at black Americans that is unbecoming of a place called home.”⁴ Instead of feeling welcome and at home, Mathis and other black Americans daily confront what she called a “passive racism,” or, “the sense of being on shaky ground, the awareness of hostility and confrontation bubbling just beneath the surface.”⁵ Coupled with this state of precariousness is the “feeling that at any moment the little dance of tolerance may be abandoned and there you’d have it: a full frontal assault of prejudice, fear, anger, and deadly assumptions even though, these days, the attack may be so subtle and shifty that it is difficult for even the beholder to discern, let alone for its targets to indict.”⁶ One way an attack might occur is through what Mathis calls “the Look.” As she describes it,

We learn to recognize the Look very early in life. It radiates from white strangers’ faces. It’s not the same look of benign curiosity that is cast upon the typical newcomer, but a distinct look of unease, confusion, dislike, disapproval, alarm, dread, even hatred. And it conveys myriad questions – What are you doing here? What do you want? What are you up to? – while making one unmistakable appeal: go away.⁷

¹ Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953), 49.

² bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115.

³ Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 129.

⁴ Deborah Mathis, *Yet a Stranger: Why Black Americans Still Don't Feel at Home* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2002), 3.

⁵ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 3.

⁶ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 3.

⁷ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 15.

Mathis admits that it is difficult to describe the Look “to those outside its range,” and even “the transmitter is hardly aware he or she has dispatched it.”⁸ Yet the Look’s impact is felt: “black people can feel it as sharply as the cutting wind and have learned to anticipate it, though the Look occasionally catches us off guard.”⁹ Even more, “if you are hit by it early in life or often enough, the Look can kill. Not your body, but your spirit. Kill your faith that you will ever belong. Kill your hopes that what you have to offer the world will ever be noticed, appreciated, nurtured, or rewarded. Kill your desire to participate, to go along, to get along. Snuff out your will to even try.”¹⁰ Mathis explains how the frequency that black Americans encounter the Look depends on several factors, such as “where we live and do business, the cast of our skin and how much or little we reflect white norms and customs in the way we walk, talk, and dress.” For example, “males who are poor and black are likely to be snared by the Look so often and harshly that the Look leaves a stab wound.”¹¹ While as infants and toddlers black Americans are often passed unnoticed by strangers or even treated well, “being too young to rouse suspicion or fear,” Mathis notes that “by the time the natural rambunctiousness of youth takes hold and we begin to act and think independently, the Look begins to land on us, raising that sense of ‘otherness’ that black people have been writing and talking about ever since Africa lost its treasure to these shores.”¹² Once this transformation occurs, “the Look gradually becomes more frequent, harder and more corrosive, supplanting the presumption of innocence with the anticipation of criminality, depravity, and

⁸ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 15.

⁹ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 15-16.

¹⁰ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 16.

¹¹ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 16.

¹² Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 16-17.

incompetence.”¹³ The consequences of the Look on the individual are debilitating as it “yokes the child with self-doubt, intimidation, and a definite sense of unwelcomeness, a sense of strangeness, [and] in response the black child may become more careful and self-conscious, more cunning, or more reckless and rebellious.”¹⁴

The adjectives and verbs used by Mathis to describe the Look and its effects on black Americans are poignant and attest to its power. The Look drains, sizes up, discards, scalds, eats away, chews, threatens, assumes, radiates, disapproves, hates, cuts, snuffs out, corrodes, lands on, stabs, and kills. The best way to sum up these attributes is to say that the Look is monstrous, both in the sense that it threatens and damages like a typical Hollywood monster, but also in the sense that the Look shows, or *de-monstrates* (from the Latin *monstrare* meaning “to show, point out”), the felt, sensed, and embodied impact of racism in America.¹⁵ The Look is an attempt by white people to control “their” space, whether personal, physical, or social; to mark “others” as a threat and so keep them away; and to dictate who appears and how they appear before their own eyes and the eyes of society. The Look is inhospitable and unwelcoming as it sees no shared life or common cause to make with those it wants to keep at a distance or under control. The Look exercises power.

While Mathis spoke of the Look as killing the spirits, faiths, hopes, desires, or wills of black Americans, the years since Mathis’ powerful description have demonstrated that the Look kills in a biological sense. One notorious incident occurred in 2015 when Dylann Roof shot and killed nine people – all African Americans – at an

¹³ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 17.

¹⁴ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 17.

¹⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “demonstrate.”

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Charleston, South Carolina, hoping to start a race war.¹⁶ Roof later explained that he chose his target because Charleston “is the most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country,” and in his mind “Blacks” are “the biggest problem for Americans.”¹⁷ A website he operated, named *The Last Rhodesian* after the white minority-led apartheid regime in South Africa, espoused his racist views and offered to the world his personal manifesto. Roof claimed in this document that, “segregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them... Not only did it protect us from having to interact with them, and from being physically harmed by them, but it protected us from being brought down to their level. Integration has done nothing but bring Whites down to level of brute animals.”¹⁸ When other people are equated with brute animals and contact with them is marked as dangerous, polluting, or negative, then it is easy to see that the next step in the dehumanizing process is physical violence. This is the logic of hate and a failure to see the other person in their dignity and worth; it is a logic with material repercussions. As Howard Thurman claimed, “The logic of hate is to kill, to translate the willing of the nonexistence of another into the literal deed of his extermination.”¹⁹ Roof shot a look at nine people and it killed them. He failed to regard – to see and judge – African Americans as equals and deserving of life and respect.

¹⁶ Ralph Ellis, Greg Botelho, and Ed Payne, “Charleston church shooter hears victim’s kin say, ‘I forgive you,’” CNN, June 19, 2015, accessed May 8, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting-main>.

¹⁷ “Dylann Roof’s Manifesto,” *New York Times*, December 13, 2016, accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/13/universal/document-Dylann-Roof-manifesto.html>. Spelling and grammatical errors in Roof’s Manifesto have not been corrected in quotations.

¹⁸ “Dylann Roof’s Manifesto.”

¹⁹ Howard Thurman, “The Discipline of Reconciliation,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 3, no. 1 (October 1963): 16.

Looks that kill, however, should not be viewed as merely personal, although the example just cited may give that impression. Instead, various looks, whether racist or anti-racist, can take on institutional, cultural, and organizational forms whenever like-minded people get together and work together to implement a shared goal or vision.²⁰ Thus, we speak of the public eye, the eyes of society, the eyes of the law, the eyes of government, the eyes of the police, and American eyes. Whether these social eyes see with justice or injustice depends on the views of the people who shaped them throughout their historical development and continue to do so in their present instantiations. For positive examples of collective looking, we might point to different watch groups, such as groups looking out for human rights violations around the world or groups involved in cop watching, which are forms of organized looking that attempt to counter various forms of unjust looks at an institutional level.²¹ Looks that kill can themselves be mobilized on an organizational plane. They can also be passed down generationally, whether through family and parenting dynamics, the pressure of peer groups and the draw of social acceptance, or through the creation of legislative measures and laws with their concomitant enforcement, to name just a few examples. The Look is a serial offender because it shows up and commits similar, patterned crimes against humanity through the actions of both individuals and organizations. It is possible to speak of a polygenesis of the Look; it is not the creation of one person or even one organization, but is developed

²⁰ Following Karl Rahner, throughout this work an “institution” is defined as “all those realities in the social sphere which are subject to change, and which impose certain compulsions upon human freedom, in other words not merely human laws bearing upon various departments of human life and having juridical effects, but also dominant ideas, customs, taboos... and other realities in such society, which do in fact exist but are capable of being changed.” See Karl Rahner, “Institution and Freedom,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 112.

²¹ For examples, see Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org); WeCopwatch (www.wecopwatch.org); Southern Poverty Law Center’s “Hatewatch” blog (www.splcenter.org/hatewatch).

out of a conglomeration of historical, economic, social, cultural, linguistic, political, familial, educational, technological, and numerous other materials. The Look has killed and still kills in different ways and in different contexts, but, following Mathis, the underlying messages have consistently been the same to those who aren't ostensibly white: go away (threat), or, you're mine to do whatever I want with (control).

Because Looks that kill are shaped by both personal and social forces, throughout this work we call the expressions of Looks that kill *unjust looks* and the countering and overcoming of these distorted looks *just looks*. As will be seen, however, just looks not only confront unjust looks in the same field of vision, but also re-envision the space and manner of seeing itself; that is, *what* and *who* is seen, and *how* these are seen.²² By using the language of justice, though, we call attention to how Looks that kill move between the personal and the social, the individual and the collective, each being shaped by the other. As David Michael Levin states, "The visionary life around which a society is gathered reflects and amplifies the character of the vision developed within each one of its individual members; but conversely, the conditions of society as a whole bear in many decisive ways, some of them oppressive and destructive, on the development of individual predispositions and capacities."²³ Speaking of just and unjust looks challenges us to consider how our perceptions of others are shaped by all the larger forces named

²² Just ways of seeing will not necessarily be dominated by the geo-optical metaphor of the field, whether a farm field, plantation field, or battlefield, historically so dominant in Euro-American imaginaries, but will perhaps appreciatively utilize ancient, indigenous, urban, or dystopic metaphors that shape our perceptions in far more humane and generous ways. To give one example from an urban context, perhaps instead of talking about the field of vision, we will begin to talk about the street of vision, where so many different "seeings" from different people cause traffic, where our seeing moves among people and cars and buildings, where our seeing must constantly stop, yield, and strain to truly encounter other eyes, where our seeing has the choice to move slow or put the pedal to the metal, where seeing is fragmentary and dazzled by different colors and gestures of others, where our looking is restricted by space and by the claims of others, where our seeing gets crowded and cramped or becomes anonymous and less masterful of reality.

²³ David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (London: Routledge, 1988), 10.

above, just as personal views and perceptions influence these same forces. For example, the law views, or regards, some people in certain ways and not in other ways, and these laws are themselves the enshrinement of the views of lawmakers and those constituents to whom they are accountable. To consider immigrants who enter the country as illegal aliens rather than as temporary residents or citizens obviously has real implications for the livelihoods of the people concerned. Yet the views of Supreme Court justices – their eyes – have tremendous power to shape the eyes of the law in the decisions and judgments they make throughout their careers.

In addition, justice itself concerns both the personal and social. As traditionally understood, justice is both a personal virtue – one of the seven cardinal virtues – and a goal for many societies in equally distributing land, food, wealth, political representation, health care, media coverage, and all other things related to power in society. Justice can also be construed as the goal of providing equal opportunity and access to society's many benefits, such as stable employment, education, or legal protection from various harms. Justice is much more than this, for we also speak of having a sense of justice and even a thirst for justice. Justice is felt; justice is sensed; justice fills us with substance and we experience emptiness without it. Justice, at its core, means to give to each person their due, their just desserts. Although the word “dessert” is not intended this way in the definition, where it means what each person deserves, when justice is dished out there is a certain sweetness to it, like an after-dinner dessert, a certain satisfaction that calms our nerves and eases the existing tensions in our minds, bodies, and spirits. As Bryan Massingale writes, “justice is a pathos, a desire, a longing, a yearning... indeed a *passion*... before it is a concept or a definition. In the African American experience,

justice is something visceral; it is an ache, a groan, an inner fire.”²⁴ Justice can be “served,” or perhaps not. Instead of filling up another person with justice, of satisfying their thirst, hunger, and other felt demands for what is right, true, and good, Looks that kill suck the life out of others, reversing the process. They fail to give due regard to the personality, dignity, space, life, embodiment, or uniqueness of other people. The Look calls into question the humanity of the other in the way it communicates itself to others; it frays the psychosomatic fabric of being and the social fabric of communities.

The violence perpetrated by Roof and his sighting is connected on many levels to other racist acts and organized violence both past and present. Even if we would like to see his deadly perception as isolated, it is not. “There is no such thing,” explains Brad Evans and Henry Giroux, “as a ‘random act’ of political violence. A defining characteristic of such violence is its public display – the spectacle of its occurrence that through its very performance makes a metaphysical claim such that the individual act relates to a broader historical narrative.”²⁵ Roof himself connected his violence not just to a general and vague notion of white racist violence, but to specific forms of violence: the 88 bullets he took with his .45 Glock into the basement of Mother Emanuel church for a Bible study are symbolic of “Heil Hitler,” the “H” being the eighth letter of the alphabet (“88”). Mother Emanuel itself is the same church graced by Denmark Vesey, a free black man and minister who in 1822 attempted to lead a revolt of both free and enslaved persons against white slaveholders in the Charleston area. The conspiracy was discovered by the white community and Vesey and his co-conspirators were rounded up, questioned,

²⁴ Bryan M. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 131.

²⁵ Brad Evans and Henry A. Giroux, *Disposable Futures: The Seduction of Violence in the Age of Spectacle* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2015), 42.

tortured, and ultimately put to death. Roof knew this and targeted the place and its people for what he perceived as its past (and present) intransigence. Before the massacre he also visited historic sites around South Carolina that conjured up scenes of a violent past: Sullivan's Island, where captive people were quarantined and eventually brought to market; Boone Hall; McLeod and Kensington Plantations; Fort Moultrie; and Confederate war memorials.²⁶

Rev. Clementa Pinckney, the pastor of Mother Emanuel slain by Roof's deadly attack, also knew the history of his city and congregation, holding up Vesey's so-called conspiracy as something to be proud of, not stamped out. Months before his death, Pinckney explained to a group of visitors on a Civil Rights Ride that "what our church and denomination stands for... [is] the universal vision of all people being treated fairly under the law as God sees us in his sight."²⁷ He also gave a geographical and historical lesson to the group, explaining that Emanuel church was originally built outside the city of Charleston proper. It was "outside of the city boundaries, out in the 'country' or the 'suburbs,'" where the majority of African Americans initially resided.²⁸ Fearing this group of free people, especially after Vesey's plot was discovered, the white community established the Military College of South Carolina, known today as the Citadel, on a site adjacent to the church. According to Pinckney, "the guns of the Citadel were basically facing this site [of Emanuel church] and the community of African Americans who were

²⁶ For an excellent story regarding Roof's background, see Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, "A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof," *GQ*, August 21, 2017, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.gq.com/story/dylann-roof-making-of-an-american-terrorist>. Sullivan's Island was the point of entry for an estimated 40% of the 400,000 captive Africans brought to British and later American territories, making it the largest slave port in North America.

²⁷ "Civil Rights Ride 2013 – Clementa Pinckney, SC Senate, Pastor Mother Emanuel A.M.E.," Mullikin Law Firm, February 20, 2015, accessed November 17, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP35_JVnPg.

²⁸ "Civil Rights Ride 2013."

living in this area. And that's how the Citadel got started."²⁹ His historical anecdote reveals the concrete reality that guns, and therefore eyes, were trained on the African American community in Charleston from early on, marking this population as a potential threat to white persons and property. As we will see, Looks that kill are often trained and shot out of citadel-like bodies and structures with their defensive postures and strong fronts.³⁰

Yet contemporary violence is also connected to Roof's own decision to act. Just weeks before being assassinated by a Look that kills, Pinckney, also a politician, spoke out in the South Carolina senate urging the state to legislate the use of body cameras by the police. Pinckney's recommendation followed the shooting of Walter Scott by a police officer in the Charleston area that momentarily claimed national media attention. Scott, after a scuffle with a police officer, was shot in the back while running away, and all of it was caught on tape. His own posture, his fleeing, reveals a state of fugitivity, of perpetual flight, not just from a police officer, but from a Look that kills stemming from both an individual and an institution. It is likely this Look pursued and harassed Scott throughout his life, and it finally found, in a white police officer, a host through which to manifest itself in full measure. How can we address this eye, this monstrous and killing Look, before it sights its target? This eye that people run from, seek cover from, hide from, or daringly confront at great risk of bodily harm; how can it be stopped? It seems we always

²⁹ "Civil Rights Ride 2013."

³⁰ Consider the extremist group "Stormfront," founded online in 1995 by former Alabama Klan leader Don Black in West Palm Beach, FL. According to SPLC, this group had 300,000 online members as of March 2015 and its members have been connected to nearly 100 murders. See "Stormfront," SPLC, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/stormfront>. Or, consider the "Northwest Front," a white nationalist group who wants to establish a separate and sovereign Aryan nation in the Pacific Northwest. In both cases, the rhetoric, language, and posturing of these groups follows the basic shape of a "front," a clear division of friends and enemies and a martial attitude towards the government and mainstream media as well as their usual targets of people of color, immigrants, Jews, and Muslims.

see this Look for what it is only after it has wreaked its havoc on others. Can we find another look, another set of eyes, that incarnates welcomeness, empathy, fellow feeling, compassion, and human recognition that leaves the flourishing of life behind? Are there just looks to counter and overcome unjust looks and other Looks that kill, not only on a personal level, but on the social and institutional levels?

In what follows we will explore historical roots and forces that helped produce Looks that kill and the moments throughout American history where they showed up most explicitly and left broken hearts, psyches, and bodies in their wake. We will also look at places in the Christian tradition where material and inspiration for just looks might be found, and how the presence of Looks that kill in our communities moves us to think differently about how a Christian should live and how the Church should engage with the world. Part I unpacks each term in the phrase, “white (eye) power,” which is used to denote the embodied, looking character of white power in both its personal and organized instantiations. To talk about white (eye) power and its varied manifestations is to talk about Looks that kill and associated unjust looks, except that the phrase also moves us to consider the meaning of whiteness, embodiment, and power as these relate to looking. As Shannon Sullivan astutely claims, “white people’s supremacist understandings of race are located not just in their unconscious habits, but also in their bodily constitution.”³¹ Chapter 1 explores the terms “white” and “whiteness” and attempts to come to some initial clarity as to how Looks that kill are racialized. It is suggested that it is crucial to talk about whiteness as a form of visibility. The examples

³¹ Shannon Sullivan, “The Hearts and Guts of White People: Ethics, Ignorance, and the Physiology of White Racism,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 42, no. 4 (2014): 596-97. She continues that, “White racism can also help shape white people’s biochemical make-up and activities: for example, their serotonin and other neurotransmitter levels, the activity patterns of their automatic nervous system, their predisposition for gastric tachyarrhythmia, their levels of hormone production, and so on” (597).

used in the chapter can also help us understand how white (eye) power has been deployed against various immigrant and religious communities along with African Americans. Chapter 2 works to discover how our “inner eyes” are produced and, in terms of white (eye) power, what historical forces gave the “inner eyes” of white people contours and vitality as they developed during the era of discovery, the colonial era, and beyond. The basic point is made throughout that our eyes, our interpretations and perceptions of the world and others, are produced not only biologically but also, just as importantly, socially. This is precisely what thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter call “sociogeny,” a notion that will need unpacking as we seek to understand Looks that kill. Finally, Chapter 3 explores the notion of power by engaging the writings of German theologian Karl Rahner, especially his understanding of concupiscence and what he called the danger of “integralism.” We will also look at the basic metaphors behind the way we think about our embodied experiences as they relate to social organizations. All this conceptual work leads to a definition of power as the ability to take matter/s into one’s own hands through self-anthropomorphization, that is, through mental, corporeal, organizational, and technological extensions of the self, to secure one’s substance.³² As will be seen, however, power is not only the “ability” to take matter/s into one’s own

³² While technology is much more complex, ambiguous, and varied, we take the basic image of technology as an “extension” of the embodied self from Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1964), the writings of Paul Virilio, and from a brief story related by Howard Thurman: “Years and years ago... early man learned how to use a club in self-defense and thus to *extend his control* over an area farther than his arm unaided could reach. When he learned to throw this club with precision and power, it meant that the control of his environment was *farther extended*. So the story goes; as man developed – *extending* his arm through club, bow and arrow, gun powder, gasoline engine, through various kinds of vehicles and machines up to and including the jet-propelled plane and the atomic bomb – he had required a complete adjustment of his mind and spirit to his new power. He has been forced to fit his new powers, with each development, into a scheme of life that would keep him from destroying himself.” See Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1978), 33. Emphasis mine.

hands, but the actual “taking” of matter/s into one’s own hands; power is both potential and actual *in relation to* matter/s at hand.

Having laid out a framework for thinking through white (eye) power, Part II of this dissertation delves into a damage analysis of white (eye) power and associated Looks that kill from the Southern plantation in history to the 21st century urban streets of the United States. In this analysis, inevitably incomplete and fragmentary, we trace some ways that white people, both individually and collectively, have looked at black people in the past and what material legacies these Looks have left behind for us today. The question is asked not only how have white people looked at black people, but for what reasons and for what purposes did white people look at black people in these ways. We will also explore some ways that African Americans experienced, interpreted, and challenged Looks that kill at various times and in different ways. Chapter 4 explores the overseeing and patrolling eyes trained on keeping enslaved and free persons of color “in their place.” The focus in this chapter is on how the social roles of overseers and slave patrols reveal aspects of Looks that kill in their personal and organized forms. Chapters 5 and 6 delineate the cycloptic eye (also called the kluxing eye) and the Jim Crowing eye as historical manifestations of Looks that, following emancipation and the end of the Civil War, took shape amidst a changing social and political landscape. In the latter chapter we highlight the personal experiences of Melba Pattillo Beals and others who dared to look “ferocious white racism in the eye, didn’t blink, and lived long enough to tell America the truth about this glaring hypocrisy in a bold and defiant manner.”³³ Chapter 7

³³ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 105.

addresses the legacies of the overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes in American life, especially in terms of contemporary policing practices.

One major idea that comes out of the explorations in Part II is that calling Looks that kill “racist” – and only that – covers over the diverse meanings and practical functions of the Look as it appeared and still appears in everyday life. Here it can be seen that Looks that kill are not simply racist, but versatile in how they “take” people of color; “taking” being multivalent in the sense of taking or capturing a picture or a moment, assessing a situation or a person (“what’s your *take* on the matter”), and the physical sense of taking someone somewhere, like to jail or across the Atlantic. The Look shot by an overseer at an enslaved person on a cotton plantation in Mississippi in 1850, the Look shot by a white conductor at a black passenger on a train traveling from Memphis to Cincinnati in 1922, and the Look shot by a police officer at a young black male on the streets of Milwaukee in 2016 are all clearly distinct and shaped by innumerable forces that are unique. Yet they all share important commonalities such as the attempt to control, immobilize, and put the other at one’s own disposal. By exploring the roots of Looks that kill in Part II we can come to a better understanding of both the nature of racism in America and, from a theological perspective, of sin and the related concept of concupiscence, which leads us to the next section.

Part III articulates, from a biblical and theological framework, how Christian beliefs and practices might contribute to both healing and resisting Looks that kill. Chapter 8 looks at biblical depictions of how God is portrayed as seeing people and of how Jesus saw people during his earthly ministry. While God’s seeing is typically connected with the classical attributes of God such as omniscience – God the all-seeing

or all-knowing one – we will see that God’s seeing is also connected to the theme of justice throughout the Bible. Likewise, we will search the New Testament, especially the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry, to see what Jesus and his followers did with their eyes in their encounters with different individuals and groups of people. Important is the question of not only who Jesus sees, or draws attention to, but also how he does so. Moving from the biblical witness to a focus on Christian living today, Chapter 9 explores the role of contemplation, as a spiritual form of seeing, for overcoming Looks that kill and a distorted relationship to being in general. Taking our cue from some of the latest teachings of Pope Francis, we suggest that a discipleship in vision and an apostolate of seeing is essential to Christian mission and for resisting personal and collective trainings in vision that seek to mark, target, and kill.

The basic claim made throughout this dissertation is that Looks that kill in society is not merely an interpersonal or social problem, but a theological one. The reason for this is that Looks that kill block that opening into the incomprehensible God that every human person, being made in the image of God, *is* through their very existence and unique, embodied mode of being human in the world. As the U.S. Catholic bishops recently put it, “Every racist act – every such comment, every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin – is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God.”³⁴ It is precisely this failure to see a human neighbor that also occludes a saving vision of God. Additionally, if sin and concupiscence show up in the flesh, in our corporeal, sensorial,

³⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism* (2018), accessed May 13, 2019, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>.

and perceptual relationships to the world and other people, then Christian mission must also begin with the flesh. Looks that kill are a challenge for Christians to develop a robust “sense” of mission and justice, not just in their heads, but *with* and *in* their personal and social bodies.³⁵ Seeing is thus fundamental to the orthopraxis – right way of practicing the faith – of Christians.

³⁵ Throughout this work we maintain the practice of capitalizing “Look” and “Looks that kill” in order to textually highlight the pretensions to power and domination that are involved in these modes of looking. A capital “L” sticks out to the reader and perhaps looms large on the page, much as the menacing power of Looks that kill loom large in the life experiences of those who are targeted by it. We do not capitalize “Look” in order to reify it or divinize it, but to call attention to its basic arrogance, its *libido dominandi*, that is, its “lust for power,” for “having to dominate.” Put another way, the “L” in “Look” is not capitalized but erect, with all the connotations that flow from this fact.

PART I: White (Eye) Power

*“To see or to perish is the very condition laid upon everything that makes up the universe, by reason of the mysterious gift of existence. And this, in superior measure, is man’s condition.”*³⁶

*“History—big or small, national or personal—is little more than the story of the collision of perceptions.”*³⁷

The terms “whiteness” and “power” are notoriously difficult to pin down, and when combined in “white power” the theoretical task does not get any easier. Whiteness itself began to be studied at an academic level within the field of labor history only a couple of decades ago, and ever since scholars have debated its definition and value for historical and social research.³⁸ The best example of such lively debate was when the *International Labor and Working-Class History* journal published a series of essays in 2001 from prominent labor and social historians on the meaning of whiteness and the historians’ imagination. The leading protagonist of the debate was Eric Arnesen, who forcefully argued that “while whiteness scholars... have effectively and laudably made white racial identity a subject of direct examination,” “historians have defined whiteness too loosely and... the category of whiteness has to date proven to be an inadequate tool of historical analysis.”³⁹ For Arnesen, the concept of whiteness suffers from “conceptual inflation” in that it is given “overlapping and at times competing definitions and

³⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), 31.

³⁷ Anand Giridharadas, *The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 113.

³⁸ Scholars often point to Alexander Saxton’s *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1990) and David R. Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, 1991) as the first instances of scholars using the idea of whiteness in their studies.

³⁹ Eric Arnesen, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 60 (Fall 2001), 5-6.

theoretical inflections.”⁴⁰ His summary of various scholarly takes on whiteness shows the concept’s elasticity:

Whiteness is, variously, a metaphor for power, a proxy for racially distributed material benefits, a synonym for “white supremacy,” an epistemological stance defined by power, a position of invisibility or ignorance, and a set of beliefs about racial “Others” and oneself that can be rejected through “treason” to a racial category. For those seeking to interrogate the concept critically, it is nothing less than a moving target.⁴¹

For this reason Part I offers a take on whiteness that is aware of the ambiguities and complications involved in defining whiteness, and follows Michael Eric Dyson’s broad understanding of whiteness as identity, ideology, and institution, with the additional understanding of whiteness as visibility. The examples of white (eye) power scattered throughout this project allow us to see how whiteness (or more often, its proxies) is enacted in bodily fashion, whether personal or corporate, and how whiteness is experienced by human subjects and their “objects” or “targets.” In a similar vein, power is defined with a view to its rootedness in human embodiment. Power is not just getting stuff done in the world or influencing others through force or persuasion, but dynamic relating in the flesh in terms of how “we” incarnate our personal, social, and national selves vis-à-vis “other” movements and bodies (other matter/s). In this respect “white power” can initially be seen as the power of whiteness in the flesh that happens when historically formed, habituated, and racializing white bodies work with their eyes to assign others to “an inferior category” and determine “their social, economic, civic, and human standing on that basis.”⁴² This racism in the flesh – which James Cone called “a

⁴⁰ Arnesen, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination,” 6.

⁴¹ Arnesen, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination,” 9.

⁴² See George M. Anderson, “Theologians and White Supremacy: An Interview With James H. Cone,” *America* 195, no. 16 (November 2006): 11. Barbara J. Fields, “Whiteness, Racism, and Identity,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 60 (Fall 2001): 48.

cancer in the body politic” – “is an act of peremptory, hostile, and supremely – often fatally – consequential identification that unceremoniously overrides its objects’ sense of themselves,” undermining both “identity and agency.”⁴³ Whiteness and power together make for an explosive mix; our focus in Part I is on the many ways that Looks that kill are racialized and what it might mean to say that there is power in looking.

⁴³ Fields, “Whiteness, Racism, and Identity,” 48.

Chapter 1: Whites in the Eyes

“Hate is the great insulator, making it possible for one man to deny the existence of another or to will his nonexistence.”⁴⁴

“The white eye sees its world as one of unracialized equality, of the merely human, in which the charge of discrimination is unintelligible. The others inhabit a racialized world in which they find themselves given lesser status in the name of that (white) equality.”⁴⁵

“The characteristic American mode of interpersonal relations is one of Power and Domination.”⁴⁶

On the morning of August 5, 2012, forty-year-old Wade Michael Page walked into a Sikh *gurdwara* in Oak Creek, Wisconsin and fatally shot six people and wounded four others before taking his own life.⁴⁷ At the time of the shooting, the community was preparing a meal (*langar*) that was to be served later in the day, a meal freely offered to all visitors regardless of distinctions based on religion, caste, gender, or ethnicity. The horrific shooting sparked national outrage as Wisconsin congressman Paul Ryan introduced a bill condemning “the senseless attack,” while First Lady Michelle Obama visited later that month to offer her condolences and support to the families of the victims.⁴⁸ Authorities soon discovered that Page, an army veteran from Cudahy, Wisconsin – a working-class town just south of Milwaukee – had ties to various white supremacist groups. He was also involved in the white power music scene, having played

⁴⁴ Thurman, “Discipline of Reconciliation,” 14.

⁴⁵ Steve Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity, Governance* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003), 209.

⁴⁶ Calvin Hernton, *Coming Together: Black Power, White Hatred, and Sexual Hang-Ups* (New York: Random House, 1971), 160.

⁴⁷ For the story and profile, see Rick Romell, “7 killed, including shooter, at Sikh Temple in Oak Creek,” *Journal Sentinel*, August 6, 2012, accessed April 16, 2019, <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/crime/reports-of-people-shot-at-sikh-temple-in-oak-creek-qc6cgc0-165059506.html>; Marilyn Elias, “Sikh Temple Killer Wade Michael Page Radicalized in Army,” Southern Poverty Law Center, November 11, 2012, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/sikh-temple-killer-wade-michael-page-radicalized-army>.

⁴⁸ To remember and read about the lives of the victims, see <http://sikhtempleofwisconsin.com/memorial>.

in bands such as End Apathy, Definite Hate, Celtic Warrior, Max Resist, Intimidation One, Aggressive Force, and the Blue Eyed Devils. Page had even become a member of the Hammerskin Nation (HN), a well-organized and international neo-Nazi group formed in the late 1980s.⁴⁹ Page's skin was itself covered with tattoos that revealed his allegiances: the number "838" standing for the letters HCH ("Hail the Crossed Hammers"), the Hammerskins' motto; the letters "W" and "P" on the backs of his hands standing for "White Power"; and the Celtic cross, recognized by experts as "a symbol of white pride and... one of the most popular symbols for neo-Nazis and White Supremacists."⁵⁰ Page also had the number 14 inscribed within a circle on his arm, which corresponds to the number of words in the supremacist motto written by David Lane while imprisoned in the 1980s: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." Page acted out these words and hateful ideologies and left a community in mourning.⁵¹

For Wade Michael Page, "our people" meant white people; his "we" was limited to a select group of humans, or more precisely, "9%" of all humans. Why 9%? For white supremacists this numeric is the "percentage of the world's population that is purportedly white," and as such it is used as a symbol for their beliefs.⁵² White supremacists have

⁴⁹ According to their website, "The Hammerskin Nation is a leaderless group of men and women who have adopted the White Power Skinhead lifestyle. We are blue collar workers, white collar professionals, college students, entrepreneurs, fathers and mothers." See "Who We Are," accessed May 10, 2018, www.hammerskins.net.

⁵⁰ See Russell Goldman, "Cracking Wisconsin Gunman's Secret Racist Tattoo Code," ABC News, August 7, 2012, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/wisconsin-gunman-wade-michael-pages-tattoos-racist-beliefs/story?id=16949676>.

⁵¹ In general, we understand "ideology" to mean, with Karen and Barbara Fields, "the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day. It is the language of consciousness that suits the particular way in which people deal with their fellows. It is the interpretation in thought of the social relations through which they constantly create and recreate their collective being, in all the varied forms their collective being may assume: family, clan, tribe, nation, class, party, business enterprise, church, army, club, and so on." See Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso, 2014), 134-135.

⁵² See the Anti-Defamation League's "Hate on Display Hate Symbols Database," <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/hate-symbols?page=0>. Accessed April 18, 2018.

loved percentages ever since the reinvented Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s preached the sacred values of “pure Americanism” and of being “100% American.”⁵³ The belief that only 9% of humanity are worthy of both an existence and a future allowed Page to violate others who, in his eyes, were not worthy of being his people, of being included in his sense of life and sense of self. Page’s violence was a failure of his senses, of his perception and recognition of the other as “another self.”⁵⁴ His take on the world and other people contrasted sharply with the values of the community he targeted, just like Dylann Roof and the holy ones of Emanuel church. A central component of Sikh belief and practice that comes from the teachings Guru Gobind Singh is to “Recognize the whole human race as one.”⁵⁵ Their further emphasis on the unity of humanity and the equality of humans defies all ideologies that declare white people supreme and all others inferior. One can gainfully speculate that the Sikh community was for Page a symbol of both a religious and racial “other” who was a threat to the white Christian establishment. Page, as a “blue-eyed devil,” regarded – or *saw* – the Sikh community in a violent fashion.⁵⁶ Much like Roof, his unjust look first violated their dignity as humans through his judgment of them as outside the domain of common humanity, and then later his

⁵³ These percentages are still a part of the language and threats of white supremacists. The national office for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) recently received an e-mail which stated: “I am 100% American let me tell how this is going to go, #1 if you all ever disrespect are president ever. We will unleash hell on you for ever and a day.you have 30 days to leave, be an american, or be deleted, choose wisely. [*sic*]” Zainab Arain, “Targeted: 2018 Civil Rights Report,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, 52.

⁵⁴ The phrase comes from Vatican Council II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965): “everyone must consider his neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity” (§27). See Holy See Website, accessed April 16, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁵⁵ To see how this principle leads to inspired social action, see especially the work of United Sikhs, <https://unitedsikhs.org/> and Khalsa Aid, <https://www.khalsaaid.org/>.

⁵⁶ According to the Anti-Defamation League’s Hate Symbols Database, the term “blue-eyed devil” is “a racial epithet originating in Asia directed against people of European ancestry. Some white supremacists have adopted the term in recent decades and may refer to themselves as blue-eyed devils.” See “Blue Eyed Devils,” ADL, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/blue-eyed-devils>.

Look violated their bodily integrity through hate-infused shots. His perception of them first reduced their status to that of the expendable, and this Look was then concretized in bullets emanating from his line of sight. The popular logo of the Blue Eyed Devils band in white power circles was incarnated in Page: a white man pointing a pistol out of a Celtic cross, refitted as a target.

The Eyes of Hate

The tragedy sparked by the miseducation and *mis*-sensing of Wade Michael Page was not the first of its kind. Only a few days after 11 September 2001 – an event which precipitated what some have called a “national hate crime epidemic” in the United States – Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American, was murdered in Mesa, Arizona just outside the gas station he owned. In the words of Sikh studies scholar Jaideep Singh, Sodhi was “the first person to die from domestic terrorism after 9/11.”⁵⁷ Targeted by a white man distraught over the 9/11 attacks, Sodhi was a “convenient scapegoat” for the crimes of Muslim extremists “because of the way he looked.”⁵⁸ Frank Silva Roque, the perpetrator, had reportedly told his friends on 9/11 he was “going to go out and shoot some towel-heads.”⁵⁹ Roque shot Sodhi five times from his truck, killing him, and then drove to another gas station where he fired on a Lebanese American clerk. After missing his target, Roque drove to his former residence purchased by a local family of Afghan descent and fired shots outside the house. When the police arrested him the next day,

⁵⁷ Jaideep Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority in the US,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, ed. Pashaura Singh and Louis E. Fenech (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 532.

⁵⁸ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 532.

⁵⁹ Simran Jeet Singh, “A Unique Perspective on Hate-Crimes: The Story of a Convicted Killer,” *Huffington Post*, September 19, 2012, accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/a-unique-perspective-on-hate-crimes-the-story-of-a-convicted-killer_b_1685020.

Roque reportedly shouted, “I am a patriot!” and “I stand for America all the way!”⁶⁰

Apparently, America did not include Sikh Americans, Lebanese Americans, or Afghani Americans.

Like many other Sikh men, Sodhi’s physical appearance was “largely defined by religious symbols, such as facial hair, non-Western attire, and religious headwear.”⁶¹ According to Singh, after 9/11 “the appearance of a recognizable Sikh had been clearly designated as the ‘other’ in public life.”⁶² Even moments after the Twin Towers fell, Sikh Americans experienced the targeting, unjust looks of a nation in chaos. Singh tells the story of “one Sikh American” who, while walking to work in New York City, “was yelled at, cursed, and chased by several men – who somehow identified him as responsible for the attack that had just occurred.”⁶³ The man fled in terror, ducked into a subway to hide, and removed his turban fearing his life. “For months after 9/11,” says Singh, “Sikh Americans continued to receive verbal and gestured threats, were spat upon, had garbage thrown at them, were run off the road and menacingly tailgated, were shot at with guns, and suffered numerous cases of arson, firebombings, beatings, and murders.”⁶⁴ It would take time and the efforts of Sikh activists promoting educational information about their community and faith that other Americans would realize “that the vast majority of people wearing turbans in the US were Sikh,” and not Arab Muslims.⁶⁵ Singh

⁶⁰ Tamar Lewin, “Sikh Owner Of Gas Station Is Fatally Shot In Rampage,” *New York Times*, September 17, 2001, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/us/sikh-owner-of-gas-station-is-fatally-shot-in-rampage.html?>.

⁶¹ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 531.

⁶² Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 531.

⁶³ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 531.

⁶⁴ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 532.

⁶⁵ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 532.

concludes that “to this day, the historic nature of the hate crime epidemic after 9/11 is very rarely broached in remembrances of that traumatic period in US national history.”⁶⁶

Less than a month after 9/11, Waqar Hasan, a Pakistani Muslim, was found fatally shot in his grocery store in Dallas, Texas. The police reported there was a “considerable amount” of money left in the cash register, evidence of a hate crime and not a simple robbery.⁶⁷ The same killer, Mark Anthony Stroman, would also shoot Vasudev Patel, an immigrant from India, behind the counter of a Shell gas station on October 4, 2001, killing him. Stroman claimed that he wanted to “retaliate on local Arab Americans, or whatever you want to call them,” and court documents show he told authorities he was a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, a notorious white supremacist group.⁶⁸ According to a statement made by Mukesh Patel, a brother-in-law of the victim, Stroman “said he has skin allergies against people like us.”⁶⁹ Stroman, who soon dubbed himself the “Arab Slayer,” also severely wounded Rais Bhuiyan – a recent immigrant from Bangladesh – with another hate-infused look incarnated in shotgun pellets.⁷⁰ Stroman’s white (eye) power partially blinded Bhuiyan, who described the shot hitting him “like a million bees stinging my face.”⁷¹ The meaning of Stroman’s embodied and sensorial comportment toward other people – his *skin* – was violently enacted against another as if this “other”

⁶⁶ Singh, “Sikhs as a Racial and Religious Minority,” 532.

⁶⁷ Lewin, “Sikh Owner.”

⁶⁸ Robert E. Pierre, “Victims of Hate, Now Feeling Forgotten,” *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2002, accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/09/14/victims-of-hate-now-feeling-forgotten/ab6232f8-0225-4d0d-b9b7-b840f3680e9f/?utm_term=.97befbd32739.

⁶⁹ “11 September revenge killer guilty,” BBC News, April 3, 2002, accessed May 8, 2018, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1909683.stm>.

⁷⁰ Stroman penned a poem after his deed that included the lines: “Here sits the Arab Slayer, for what he did we / Should make him our mayor. / He has no regret for what he has done, / Killin Arabs is just half the fun. / Patriotic yes indeed, a true American, a special breed. / Did what other’s wanted to do, did the chore for me and you. / They said he was blue, but all he could see was Red, so he shot one / of them Arabs in the head. / So all you American’s let’s stand tall and let’s not forget the man / who’s dream was to kill em all.” See Giridharadas, *True American*, 33.

⁷¹ See the video, “This Muslim American was shot after 9/11. Then he fought to save his attacker’s life,” Vox, November 28, 2016, accessed November 14, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMlvidnkEwY>.

was an allergen that had gotten under his white skin, onto his nerves, and was infecting his life system. While Wade Michael Page's skin presenced, or bodily performed, his whiteness as a dominating and forceful hammer against all others ("Hammerskin"), Stroman's skin acted as an antibody against anybody and any bodies deemed foreign and aggressive toward his life and values, both personal and national. The force of his own skin skinned the other of the ability to manifest their presence as a distinctly human other, thus killing them.

Like others, Stroman's white skin and white power tattoos covered his life and self-understanding with meaning and value, and they also protected him from those deemed "outside." According to Anand Giridharadas, Stroman's ideas and observations "were grounded in a profound sense of besiegement," and that "he felt himself and people like him to be standing on a shrinking platform at which minorities and immigrants and public dependents were nibbling away."⁷² His citadel-like response to this "besiegement" was a narrowing of his perceptual and judging capacities that pinned and fixed the other in stinging fashion; there was no opening up of his understanding, no broadening of his vision, but a radical closure of his visual and ethical fields. His eye-presencing in the world, the embodied, visual manifestation of his core values as a white man in America, would destroy all others he saw as "Arab"—even if they were actually from South Asia. As social theorist Ghassan Hage explains, "from the perspective of the racializing subject, it is unclear where the Arab and the Muslim begin and end, where they are separate and where they fuse and where they even go beyond to delineate anyone who in the eyes of the Western racists looks like a 'third-world-looking-person.'"⁷³ As

⁷² Giridharadas, *True American*, 75.

⁷³ Ghassan Hage, *Is racism an environmental threat?* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017), 8.

meaningful distinctions blurred in the face of rage, hatred, bitterness, and insecurity, any “Middle Eastern-looking” or “third-world-looking-person” would do as an object for retributive violence. Stroman himself “had gone after an Indian, a Pakistani, and a Bangladeshi – the latter two Muslim, but none of them Arab – in the name of avenging attacks he and many others blamed on people who looked like them.”⁷⁴

Miraculously, Bhuiyan survived Stroman’s attack and after multiple facial surgeries, a pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), and a decade of healing, he started a campaign to stop the execution of Stroman, his attacker. Despite initially dealing with recurring nightmares which featured “that man with those searing eyes walking in, pointing the twin-barreled gun, asking where he was from, and then the stings,” Bhuiyan now fought for the preservation of that man’s life.⁷⁵ Along with some family members of the other victims, Bhuiyan preached a message of forgiveness through his *World Without Hate* organization and looked for legal ways to spare Stroman from death by lethal injection.⁷⁶ Bhuiyan repeatedly told others that he wasn’t interested in an eye for an eye justice, and that his Muslim faith taught him that “saving a life is like saving the entire mankind,” a beautiful principle found in the Qur’an.⁷⁷ Bhuiyan’s charity had a remarkable effect on Stroman, who towards the end of his life changed his tone and opened up to others.

Before he was executed on July 20, 2011, he stated in an interview, “Please don’t

⁷⁴ Giridharadas, *True American*, 78.

⁷⁵ Giridharadas, *True American*, 60. Hage argues that, “it is good enough to call ‘racist’ any bundle of practices which aim at problematizing, excluding, marginalizing, discriminating against, rendering insecure, exploiting, criminalizing, and terrorizing and harbouring exterminatory fantasies against an identity group of people imagined as sharing a common and inheritable determining feature” (Hage, *Is racism*, 11-12).

⁷⁶ See “World Without Hate” website: <https://worldwithouthate.org>.

⁷⁷ Qur’an 5:32. The same Surah in which this principle appears also includes text which reads: “And We ordained for [the Children of Israel in the Torah] a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution. But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him” (5:45).

stereotype these Muslims.”⁷⁸ Stroman also acknowledged his own hatred: “In the free world, I was free but I was locked in a prison inside myself because of the hate I carried in my heart.”⁷⁹ Most hate crime stories, however, do not end with such an acknowledgment of wrong.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Hate Crime Statistics, in 2017 there were 7,175 hate crime incidents reported by 2,040 law enforcement agencies across the United States.⁸⁰ Of the roughly 7,100 single-bias incidents, 58.1% were motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry bias, 22% prompted by religious bias, and 15.9% resulted from sexual-orientation bias. Of those offenses motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry (58.1% of total single-bias incidents), 48.8% were motivated by anti-Black or African American bias, 17.5% stemmed from anti-White bias, and 10.9% were classified as anti-Hispanic or Latino bias. Hate crimes motivated by religious bias accounted for 1,679 offenses in 2017, of which 58.1% were anti-Jewish, 18.7% were anti-Islamic (Muslim), 4.5% were anti-Catholic, and 1.4% were anti-Sikh. According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in their 2018 Civil Rights Report, aptly titled “Targeted,” there was a 17% increase in anti-Muslim bias incidents nationwide in 2017 over 2016, and a 15% increase in hate crimes directed against American Muslims over the same time period.⁸¹ The incidents included hate crimes, intimidation, denial of service or access, employment discrimination, bullying, immigration and citizenship delays, and anti-mosque incidents

⁷⁸ Alex Hannaford, “The 9/11 Revenge Killer, the man he shot, and an extraordinary lesson in forgiveness,” *The Telegraph*, August 19, 2011, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/8708732/The-911-revenge-killer-the-man-he-shot-and-an-extraordinary-lesson-in-forgiveness.html>.

⁷⁹ John Rudolf, “Post-9/11 ‘Arab Slayer’ Mark Stoman’s Last Words Offer Message Of Peace,” *Huffington Post*, December 1, 2011, accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mark-stroman-execution-texas_n_905579.

⁸⁰ Criminal Justice Information Services Division, “2017 Hate Crime Statistics,” FBI, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2017/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>. All the hate crime data and the language used to classify it in this paragraph comes from this source, unless otherwise noted.

⁸¹ Zainab Arain, “Targeted: 2018 Civil Rights Report,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2018, 6.

including vandalism and bombings. Of all anti-Muslim bias incidents recorded by CAIR in 2017, federal government agencies such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection, TSA, and the FBI caused 35% of them, occurring most frequently at air, bus, or train terminals.⁸² The report considers the increases to be largely due to Donald Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric and election victory in 2016, and his executive orders banning travel from several Muslim-majority countries.⁸³ According to an article published online by the Southern Poverty Law Center – an organization committed to tracking various hate groups and ideologies and taking legal action against them – “in the first 34 days after [Trump's] election, the SPLC documented 1,094 bias-related incidents and found that 37% of them directly referenced Trump, his campaign slogans or his notorious comments about sexual assault.”⁸⁴ The article says that, more generally, “each year, across America, an average of 250,000 people are victimized by hate crimes,” which are defined as “criminal expressions of bigotry that terrorize entire communities and fray the social fabric of our country.”⁸⁵ Eyes that hate to see “others,” that can't bear the sight of “others” or their symbolic proxies (e.g. turbans, hijabs, long beards, dark skin color, menorahs), seem to be as American as apple pie.⁸⁶

⁸² “Targeted,” 13. Again, this evidence shows that discriminatory looks are not just shot by individuals but also by social institutions.

⁸³ “Targeted,” 14.

⁸⁴ “Hate Crimes, Explained,” SPLC, April 15, 2018, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/20180415/hate-crimes-explained>. On recent and historical troubles involving the SPLC, see Bob Moser's fascinating read, “The Reckoning of Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center,” *The New Yorker*, March 21, 2019, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-reckoning-of-morris-dees-and-the-southern-poverty-law-center>.

⁸⁵ “Hate Crimes, Explained.”

⁸⁶ According to an SPLC story, Wade Michael Page went to a meeting at a pizza parlor with criminologist Pete Simi years before the Oak Creek shooting and something bizarre occurred: “When he and Simi were entering a pizza parlor that had a decal of a menorah... on the door, Page refused to touch the door. ‘It was like it was poison. He just froze. He wouldn't even touch anything that had a menorah on it.’” See “Sikh Temple Killer.” Sociologists Jack McDevitt and Jack Levin have classified hate offenders as having four main motivations: thrill-seeking (66%), defensive (25%), retaliatory (8%) and mission (1%). See Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt, “Hate Crimes,” accessed May 8, 2019, <http://jacklevinsonviolence.com/articles/HateCrimesencyc92206FINAL.pdf>.

Monstrous Eyes

The Looks shot by Roof, Stroman, Page, Roque, and others like them are not anomalous, but reveal and make explicit the racism in America that Deborah Mathis spoke of as “bubbling just beneath the surface.” The Look that Mathis might receive while shopping at a local mall is felt by many to be related to the Look that can propel itself into a Sikh *gurdwara*, a Texas gas station, a Charleston church, a rugged American frontier, an Iraqi town, or an urban street and kill black, brown, and red people. These Looks are white power in the flesh. Yet what is whiteness, and how does whiteness relate to vision and perception? In an interview titled, “Giving Whiteness a Black Eye,” which tellingly suggests the nature of whiteness as “eyepower,” Michael Eric Dyson offers a way to approach these questions by way of another example. Reflecting on Timothy McVeigh, the man who bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, Dyson claims that McVeigh “viewed himself as part of a tiny outpost of pure patriotic rebels whose patriotism was expressed in the logic of radical *antipatriotism*: one must blow up the state as it is to get to the state as it should be.”⁸⁷ Further, “McVeigh believed he was reviving a heroic vision of whiteness that he thought was being suppressed within the institutional matrices of American democracy and ‘legitimate’ government.” McVeigh, like Stroman, Page, and Roof later, believed that only a war could save white civilization or culture from the corrupting influence of racial and religious minorities; but in McVeigh’s case, the war was not necessarily against African Americans, immigrants, or “third-world-looking-people,” but against an American body politic that had increasingly disallowed its hands and arms to serve as overt expressions

⁸⁷ Michael Eric Dyson, *The Michael Eric Dyson Reader* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 121.

of white supremacy with its fundamentalist views of race, religion, and Americanism. Indeed, in McVeigh's view, the government was complicit in its own debasement and corruption through its affirmative action policies; support of multiculturalism; perceived abridgement of individual liberties such as religious freedom, free speech, and the right to bear arms; the expansion of federal government oversight; and implementing a welfare state. According to this view, in pandering to nonwhite racial groups and their bogus needs and in allowing them representation and leverage over the state apparatus, the government itself had become culpable and morally weak. If American political bodies with their wealth in ideas, organization, and technological sophistication would no longer serve the interests of white people and forcefully secure these interests, then the hands of individuals and loosely formed "militia" groups would have to do. McVeigh, and others later, felt like he had to take matter/s into his own hands to secure his (white) substance: white power. As Ghassan Hage explains the dynamic,

Nation-states are built around nationals disinvesting themselves of the capacity to deploy personal violence and investing this capacity in the state. Nationals with a high degree of governmental belonging don't need to deploy personal violence for national purposes. They are secure in the knowledge that the state is acting out their violence for them. In this sense, those [like McVeigh or white supremacists] who engage in such personal violent acts feel that they have lost this special relation to state power. They feel that their governmental national belonging is threatened or in decline. Nevertheless, they think they have a legitimate claim to represent the national will embodied in the state. This is why they feel that they should take matters back into their 'own hands', as it were.⁸⁸

McVeigh's own actions, however, drew on public political discourse, actions, and pathos for its inspiration. His actions, according to Dyson, "articulate in the extreme the logic of repressive, hegemonic whiteness that hibernates within the structures of

⁸⁸ Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 69.

legitimate government: vicious attacks on welfare and its recipients; brutal attacks on black progress and its advocates; heartless attacks on the crime-ridden black ghetto; and exploitative attacks on the alleged pathologies of black culture.”⁸⁹ The result of “such attacks is the implementation of policies that punish the black poor and stigmatize the black middle class as well as the legitimization of crude cultural biases toward black citizens.”⁹⁰ McVeigh not only brought out the white power aspirations that hibernated within the structures of legitimate government, but also, with other figures like him, became “hugely discomfiting manifestations of the hidden animus toward blackness and civility that such discourses of attack encourage.”⁹¹ McVeigh, and one could argue Roof, Stroman, Page, Roque, and the perpetrators of hate crimes who latch onto political rhetoric as justification for their crimes, are “a living embodiment of... vitriolic, vituperative verbiage” that consistently floods the airwaves, internet, and national media across the nation. The undercurrent of pathos-laden resentment, bitterness, shame, and hatred toward the nonwhite scapegoats of national cultural, racial, and material decline finds its incarnation in the Looks of these killers, and to a lesser degree in the stares and glares received by African Americans and other people of color during everyday life. A constant fixing of white eyes on those marked as a threat soon becomes a fixation that turns into an obsession. Looks that kill are not, then, exceptional; they are made in the U.S.A. It takes a second grand effort of media portrayals and coverage, social commentary, and political moves to make these individuals’ acts seem exceptional and

⁸⁹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 121.

⁹⁰ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 121.

⁹¹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 121.

separate from the racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, and classist elements of American life that bubble just beneath its surface.

The “monsters” McVeigh, Roof, Stroman, Page, Roque and other white supremacists thus demonstrate the hideous elements of a society that consistently produces this figure, this array of monstrous Looks. McVeigh, for Dyson, “is the monster created by the Frankensteins of white hatred. And there’s a great deal of shame in him because he’s out of control and destroying his creators. In this regard, it’s crucial to remember a salient fact: Frankenstein is not the name of the monster but the name of the monster’s creator. The real terror, then, is the mechanisms of reproduction that sustain and rearticulate ideologies of white supremacy, and that sanction the violent attack on black and other minority identities.”⁹² Like those characters in Ronald Milner’s play, “The Monster” (1968), we might naively and indignantly ask each other, “how do they make ‘em, create ‘em like that?! How can they keep coming off like that!?” to which someone inevitably responds, “You know how... a few centuries of practice and all the machinery set-up... turnin’ ‘em out like – like Mustangs and Coupe DeVille’s.”⁹³ These “monsters” which are turned out by deep-abiding historical and cultural forces of the nation are animated and excited by whiteness fantasized in the play as a woman to be protected, groped, and eaten up: “Mygloriouswhitestuff! Myyumyumwhitestuff! Goodwhitestuff! Marvelouswhitestuff!”⁹⁴ In looking at these so-called monsters, it is easy to hide behind one’s own sense of goodness and self-righteousness and say, “Well, at least I’m not like *them*; I don’t look at the world and other people like *that*.” Such an

⁹² Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 121.

⁹³ Ronald Milner, “The Monster,” in *SOS—Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader*, ed. John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 507.

⁹⁴ Milner, “The Monster,” 512.

individualized and de-historicized view rarely leads to a change in one's own life and a collective struggle to change the policies, practices, and organization of society; rather, it often leads to a complacent moral posturing distracted from the necessity of critically looking at oneself, beyond appearances, and at how one benefits from past and current social arrangements, content as it is to be critical and condemnatory of others. If we are ever to label some killer a monster and avoid the trap of using this language to distance their actions from our own and those of the larger dominant culture, we must recall that we are the Frankensteins, the masterminds who imagined this creature and gathered the materials for its self-construction and self-awakening. As long as "whitestuff" continues to nourish the social beings of people as they seek more meaning, satisfaction, and fulfillment in life, there will almost always be wickedness and violence against those who threaten to spoil it.⁹⁵ But what is this "whitestuff," and how does it relate to seeing, especially in terms of Looks that kill?

White Eyes

Later in "Giving Whiteness a Black Eye," Dyson explains that "when we talk about whiteness in the context of race in America, we have to talk about whiteness as *identity*, whiteness as *ideology*, and whiteness as *institution*."⁹⁶ These three elements are crucial in the makeup of what Milner portrays as "whitestuff," but we also add that we need to talk about whiteness as *visuality*, that is, as the many ways white people have imagined, represented, and secured their white substance, their "whitestuff," through visual and perceptual means. First, however, Dyson explains that whiteness as identity is

⁹⁵ For a discussion of "social being," see Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society* (Australia: Pluto Press, 2003), 16.

⁹⁶ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 113.

“the self-understanding, social practices, and group beliefs that articulate whiteness in relationship to American race, especially in this case, to blackness.”⁹⁷ In addition, whiteness “bears a particularly symbiotic relationship to redness and blackness” in that “whiteness is called into existence as a response to the presence of redness and blackness,” and, we should add, brownness.⁹⁸ He explains that, “Only when red and black bodies – from colonial conquest and slavery on to the present – have existed on American terrain has whiteness been constituted as an idea and an identity-based reality. White people’s sense of themselves as being white is contingent on a negation of a corollary redness and blackness, and... the assertion of that blackness as the basis of a competing racial identity.”⁹⁹ White people only saw themselves as white in seeing “others” as black, brown, or red; it was through the “blackening” of these others that eyes painted themselves as white and regarded themselves as such.¹⁰⁰ The eyes of white people painted themselves in white primarily by painting “others” in black. Further, because white identities have mostly been developed “unconsciously” and “invisibly” throughout American history, it is only recently that whiteness has “been constituted as a trisected terrain of contestation: over ethnicity, over ethnocentrism, and over the way groups manufacture and reproduce racial identity through individual self-understanding.”¹⁰¹ But while whiteness as an identity was typically invisible to those who benefited from the prevailing political, social, and economic arrangements of the nation because it was normed so much that it ceased to stick out or bear on one’s conscious life, black people have historically understood the meaning of whiteness. As Dyson says

⁹⁷ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 113.

⁹⁸ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 113.

⁹⁹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 113-114.

¹⁰⁰ See *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “whiting in white.”

¹⁰¹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 114.

elsewhere, “for blacks, the meaning of whiteness was singularly oppressive. The varied expressions of whiteness were viewed as the elaboration of a single plot: to contain, control, and, at times, to destroy black identity.”¹⁰² Interestingly, “for whites, their racial identities were never as concretely evoked or sharply defined as when the meanings of blackness spilled beyond their assigned limitations to challenge white authority.”¹⁰³ The challenge of blackness sketched out the lineaments and counters of whiteness.

These white racial identities that were evoked or further defined when blackness “spilled beyond,” however, were not evoked or defined solely in the abstract, in the realm of pure thought, but also in white actions, gestures, and embodiment as black bodies “spilled beyond” assigned limitations such as neighborhoods and social roles. We should not forget that identities are forged in bodies and in the produced spaces these bodies weave in and out of. Whiteness as *identity* not only includes the self-understandings and self-descriptions of white people in contrast to black and brown people, but also their place-identities. The concept of place-identity, as described by social psychologists Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon, acknowledges “how people invest everyday environments with richly symbolic, aesthetic, moral, and above all, identity-relevant meanings. In other words, questions of *who we are* are intimately related to questions of *where we are*. Places are not only revelatory of identity but are also actively implicated in its constitution and maintenance.”¹⁰⁴ Whiteness as identity has much to do with “territorial entitlement” and labeling nonwhite others as “invasive” or “unmannerly” in relation to both physical, interpersonal, and imagined spaces, such as neighborhoods or national

¹⁰² Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 108.

¹⁰³ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 108.

¹⁰⁴ Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon, *Racial Encounter: The Social Psychology of Contact and Desegregation* (London: Routledge, 2005), 181.

borders.¹⁰⁵ It was the special role of the eyes of white people to watch and look out for any encroachments on their “whitestuff”: whether turf, fields, neighborhoods, bodies, fantasized national space, or social roles and positions.

As an *ideology*, whiteness is “the systematic reproduction of conceptions of whiteness as domination” that is indivisible from the invention of America itself.¹⁰⁶ From its founding, “the discursive defense and political logic of American democracy has spawned white dominance as a foundational myth of American society – a myth whose ideological strength was made all the more powerful because it was rendered invisible.”¹⁰⁷ The ideas of white people defined “the intellectual and cultural status quo” of the nation.¹⁰⁸ Ideas such as freedom, justice, and equality were articulated and deployed within the “intraracial” struggle with Europe over the power of representation and the representation of power, and not with a view to the black and red peoples of the land.¹⁰⁹ For Dyson, “the white race [with] its cultural habits, political practices, religious beliefs, and intellectual affinities” was “socially constructed as the foundation of American democracy.”¹¹⁰ With little to challenge their beliefs, white people could make whiteness to be coextensive with, and inseparable from, Americanness. Indeed, “whiteness and democracy were coextensive because they were mutually reinforcing ideologies that under-girded the state” and which were “encoded in state discourse,” such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.¹¹¹ The “laws of the land,” which reveal the eyes of the law, viewed the world and individuals within it from the

¹⁰⁵ Durrheim and Dixon, *Racial Encounter*, 36-37; 181.

¹⁰⁶ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 114.

¹⁰⁷ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹⁰⁸ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 114.

¹¹⁰ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹¹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

perspective of the eyes of white people and their representative lawmakers. The eyes of the law were white. These laws, according to Dyson, “eroded the social stability of African American people, first as slaves and then as subjugated victims of the state through debt peonage, sharecropping, Jim Crow law, the assault on the welfare state, and so on.”¹¹² Furthermore, “also written into the laws of the land was the explicit articulation of black racial inferiority and the implicit assumption of white racial superiority.”¹¹³ In other words, the eyes of the law were also whitening eyes. Importantly,

These two poles [of black inferiority and white superiority] were reproduced ideologically to justify white supremacy; the mutually reinforcing structures of state-sponsored racial domination and the ideological expression of white racial superiority solidified the power of white people, white perspectives, and white practices. As a result, whiteness in its various expressions was made to appear normative and natural, while other racial identities and ideologies were viewed as deviant and unnatural.¹¹⁴

Finally, Dyson speaks of whiteness as *institution*, by which he means those institutions, such as homes, schools, governments, and churches, that “compose the intellectual and ideological tablet on which has been inscribed the meanings of American destiny.”¹¹⁵ Giving the example of churches, Dyson notes that “while ostensibly free from state rule, religious communities were not impervious to secular beliefs; the theological discourse of many faiths actively enunciated the ideology of white domination.”¹¹⁶ Along with Manifest Destiny that “bled through” the theological articulations of the churches, “the belief in blackness as an innately inferior identity galvanized the missionary activities of most religious communities as they sought to

¹¹² Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹³ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹⁴ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹⁵ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹⁶ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

contain and redeem the black slave's transgressive body."¹¹⁷ In this way, "black identity became the ontological template for the reproduction of discourses of racial primitivism and savagery," discourses repeated today not only in relation to African Americans, but especially to Muslims and immigrants with the related labels of "terrorist," "drug dealer," and "criminal."¹¹⁸ From this perspective, everyone placed in these categories need some kind of salvation. On this point Dyson insightfully claims that, "the black body became a contested landscape on which the torturous intersections of theology and ideology were traced: it was at once the salvific focus of the white missionizing project and the foremost example of what unchecked transgression could lead to."¹¹⁹ Certainly whiting eyes painted in "colors" that contained both positive and negative moral and theological values. In seeing nonwhite "others" as dangerous, deviant, savage, or helplessly poor, a trigger was pulled within the consciences of white people to act towards these racialized others in two seemingly contradictory extremes: in paternalistic fashion, acting the part of the savior and deriving moral and personal benefits from such help given to those "less fortunate," or in violent confrontation wherein the threat to white purity and Christian morality must be eliminated. In both cases, distinct and inviolable human modes of being were lost in the eyes of white people, and instead there existed a project to be managed, an evil to be exorcised, an example to be made, or a danger to be removed.

Whiteness as institution thus points to those organizations formed with a view to surveilling, controlling, and dealing with nonwhite people in the United States to secure white property, space, values, and life, i.e. "whitestuff." These institutions, such as law

¹¹⁷ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 115.

¹¹⁸ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 116.

¹¹⁹ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 116.

enforcement or real estate organizations, were created as much to display for the white public the negative, moral dross of whiteness as they were to provide for “public” peace, accommodations, and order. White (eye) power stigmatizes and marks those threats to the racialized economic and social order to hold onto its own privileges and advantages.

Whiteness as eye power refers to those concrete policies, laws, and practices that attempt to contain, control, “blacken,” or destroy “other” identities and bodies, however they be articulated or enfolded, so they do not rise and disturb the status quo as imagined, represented, and (re)produced by white people. These “blackened” identities and bodies are contained, controlled, or destroyed insofar as the eyes of white people have succeeded in their desire to dictate the terms of appearing, presencing, and living for “their” others. This dictation of the terms of visibility has occurred primarily through the power of imagining, representing, and surveilling black, brown, and red bodies at both personal and organizational levels: whiteness as *visuality*.

Visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff has recently spoken of *visuality*, as distinct from mere vision, to understand social orderings of control through various forms of imaging and imagining the world and others in the world, and the technological, media, economic, political, and military apparatuses that increase surveillance over these others. He refers to an early work in visual culture, Hal Foster’s *Vision and Visuality* (1988), where vision refers to “the physical processes of sight” and *visuality* to a “social fact” which itself could not be so easily separated from the former given the role of society in eye production.¹²⁰ Mirzoeff quotes Foster to the effect that, “the difference between the terms [vision and *visuality*] signals a difference within the visual... a

¹²⁰ See Nicholas Mirzoeff, “On *Visuality*,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006): 53.

difference, many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein.”¹²¹ Mirzoeff himself describes visibility in several other ways: as “that authority to tell us to move on” and as “that exclusive claim to be able to look.”¹²² It is the power to say and enforce the saying, “there’s nothing to see here.”¹²³ Yet for Mirzoeff, visibility is also “an old word for an old project” that originally pointed to a specific “visualization of history,” progress, and civilization that rendered other non-Western, emancipatory, or revolutionary ways of being human as backward, primitive, uncivilized, barbarian, or savage.¹²⁴ As explained in his article, “On Visibility,” Mirzoeff locates the origins of the term visibility in the work of the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle in his lectures *On Heroes* (1841). Carlyle, himself “opposed to Chartism, panopticism and all the emancipatory movements that stemmed from the French Revolution... imagined a moral imperialism led by great men in a visualized narrative that came to have considerable resonance in the period.”¹²⁵ The initial coining and use of the term visibility “emerged into Western discourse at a specific and charged moment of modernity as a conservative critique of Enlightenment and its emancipations.”¹²⁶

The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for “visibility” includes four examples of the word by Carlyle himself, and among the definitions given are “the state or quality of being visual or visible to the mind,” “a mental picture or vision,” and “visual aspect or representation; physical appearance.”¹²⁷ What Mirzoeff stresses is the importance of

¹²¹ Mirzoeff, “On Visibility,” 55. See Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visibility* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1988), ix.

¹²² Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visibility* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

¹²³ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 1.

¹²⁴ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 2.

¹²⁵ Mirzoeff, “On Visibility,” 54.

¹²⁶ Mirzoeff, “On Visibility,” 54.

¹²⁷ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “visibility.”

finding “a mode of thinking about visuality that incorporates its embodied dimension at an individual and collective level, together with visuality as cultural and political representation.”¹²⁸ To understand whiteness as visuality is to think of the many ways white people have sought to impose their own mental visions of the world and other groups of people on reality, and how the appearances of these others were made visible, or represented, in the eyes and minds of white people. The question of visuality is therefore a question of reality: how is reality to be “taken,” that is, seen, viewed, apprehended, understood, and captured (both materially and perceptually)? Whiteness as visuality claims that “reality,” that which *is*, is to be “taken” according to the desires, values, aspirations, ends, and projections of white people and their ideas of life and “civilization,” and all other takes on reality must conform to this vision of the world; it is assumed to be the only “correct” vision.

Last, whiteness as visuality refers to those “great white hopes,” or white heroes, who are *seen* as representative of, and embodying, (white) “American” values and whose moral, political, or physical victories over nonwhite others become a cause of great celebration and public acclaim.¹²⁹ These heroes of whiteness are cast in “a conservative mode of anti-emancipation,” and are, to use the words of Carlyle, “flowing light-fountain[s]... of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness; in whose radiance all souls [read: white souls] feel that it is well with them.”¹³⁰ Whiteness as

¹²⁸ Mirzoeff, “On Visuality,” 66.

¹²⁹ We take the phrase “great white hope” from its application to various white boxers, such as James Jeffries, who fought against African American champions such as Jack Johnson in the first half of the 20th century to regain the boxing title – and a sense of superiority and manhood – for white men. For an interesting discussion of this fight from a famous American writer, see Jack London, “Johnson vs. Jeffries,” in *At the Fights: American Writers on Boxing*, ed. George Kimball and John Schulian (New York: Library of America, 2011), 1-9. See also the excellent documentary by filmmaker Ken Burns, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (Florentine Films, 2005).

¹³⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes* §2-3. Quoted in Mirzoeff, “On Visuality,” 57.

visuality taps into the nativist imagery from American history and views the American story as one of white intellectual, cultural, spiritual, and physical superiority over immigrants and other nonwhite and non-Christian groups of people. Its heroes are specific individuals such as George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Daniel Boone, Davey Crockett, James Bowie, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, John Wayne, George Wallace, Donald Trump, and often stereotypically represented groups such as police officers, soldiers, and politicians of like persuasion. As Pam Morris noted while speaking about 19th century literature, but which also applies to great white heroes, “the hero embodies a specifically masculine national ideal; the virility of the hero holds at bay threats of cultural effeminacy and racial degeneration.”¹³¹ In terms of visibility, whiteness is the portrayal and memorial of American values and its heroes in masculinist and violent forms that keep the forces of darkness and evil from destroying the nation. Their violence is redemptive, and their masculinity is salvific. Whiteness cannot be understood, at least in this country, without understanding the contestations over, and representations of, Americanness and manliness, especially in its relation to military actions overseas and policing operations at home.

Racializing Eyes

In terms of racialization, it should be clear by now how social meanings, values, and representations shape our perceptions of others, and vice versa. Social constructions such as race get wired into our visual circuitry and we see and experience others, and ourselves, differently as a result.¹³² Theologian Mayra Rivera insightfully explains that,

¹³¹ Pam Morris, “Heroes and Hero-Worship in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 54, no. 3 (1999): 288. Quoted in Mirzoeff, “On Visuality,” 59.

¹³² See Chapter 2 for a deeper explanation, especially the section entitled, “Sociogenic Eye.”

in looking, “the perceived data itself is affected by the sedimentation of social knowledge. Once race becomes encoded as a set of visible differences, it works tacitly through perception. This means that my seeing is colored by racialization, regardless of whether or not I think there is a biological link between phenotype and behavior or believe in the characteristics attributed to a given ‘race.’”¹³³ Even more, “racialization works in and through practices and habits of perception. ‘Gazing’ is performative. The effects of the racializing gaze accumulate, shaping subsequent perception, which in turn impacts the levels of surveillance to which racialized bodies are exposed, the punishments imposed on them, and so on.”¹³⁴ Looks that kill could come in a white union blocking the entry of perceived nonwhite others, racist media coverage, the personal prejudices and actions of a mayor, or a Supreme Court decision like *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923) which ruled that “Hindus” (Indians) were not white and therefore could not be naturalized as U.S. citizens. In all these cases and in many more, the views of white people shaped the social and political landscape, as well as the bodies therein.

Vision and visibility, then, are central components in the construction, use, and reproduction of race and racism; this is precisely why we can talk about a racializing eye. “Race,” according to W. T. J. Mitchell, “is something we *see through*, like a frame, a window, a screen, or a lens, rather than something we *look at*. It is a repertoire of cognitive and conceptual filters through which forms of human otherness are mediated.”¹³⁵ We emphasize racializing *eyes* rather than frames or windows to highlight

¹³³ Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 139.

¹³⁴ Rivera, *Poetics*, 139-40.

¹³⁵ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), xii.

how the socially-constructed medium of race is wired into the biological and neurological circuitry of our eyes and brains; embodied modes of seeing are both racialized and racializing. As such, race is “*both an illusion and a reality... a vehicle for both fantasy and reality.*”¹³⁶ It is “a reality that is constructed out of the Symbolic and the Imaginary—that is, out of words and images, the sayable and seeable, discourse and concrete things, spaces and institutions, prohibitions and taboos, on the one hand, and sensuous experience on the other.”¹³⁷ Racializing eyes are used to make sense of, control, exclude, or defeat those thought and sensed to be “other.” And as Mitchell explains, “Anyone, it seems, is now a candidate for racialization—that is, for characterization as a group whose bodies, psyches, and bloodlines are seen as inimical to the ‘real America’ that is routinely invoked” in mainstream political debate.¹³⁸ Those in the racializing eye’s line of sight includes African Americans, Arabs, Muslims, immigrants, terrorists, “third-world-looking-people,” and Hispanics or Latinxs, those who have been constantly “blackened” in contemporary social and political life.¹³⁹ The racializing eye blackens others, and in doing so it reveals itself as a whitening eye, an eye that moves its carrier to see themselves as whiter, purer, nobler, truer, prettier, and better than “them.” This dynamic is at work in various forms of Looks that kill. In the next chapter we will expand on whiteness as visibility and give a broader picture of our power in looking by exploring human eyes on the personal and the social, the psychological and the world historical.

¹³⁶ Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, 14.

¹³⁷ Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, 16.

¹³⁸ Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, 29. Mitchell mentions Sarah Palin as an example of a politician who has invoked a “real America.”

¹³⁹ Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, 29.

Chapter 2: Eyeballing the Other

*Some view our sable race with scornful eye, / 'Their color is a diabolic die.'*¹⁴⁰

*"Man cannot express that which does not exist – either in the forms of dreams, ideas or realities – in his environment. Neither his thoughts nor his feelings, his sensibility nor his intellect are fixed, innate qualities. They are processes which arise out of the interpenetration of human instinct with environment, through the process called experience; each changing and being changed by the other."*¹⁴¹

*"Thirteen lavatories / At Notting Hill Gate Underground / Thirteen English gentlemen zip their trousers down: / But they cannot straightly pee / For eyeballing me!"*¹⁴²

From the beginning humans have recognized the power in looking. In the realm of interpersonal relations, the looks we give each other communicate a tremendous variety of meanings. Looks can rebuke, warn, caress, intimidate, welcome, and perform a host of other things. We speak of being shot a look or a glance, emphasizing the directness and force with which someone seeks to communicate something to us. Kids almost immediately recognize the look from their parents when they're doing something they shouldn't be doing. We sometimes speak of someone giving us a look that was strange, undecipherable, and which gave us a weird feeling. We speak of an arresting look that stops us dead in our tracks. Looks can also communicate intense animosity and resentment. Consider this Israeli soldier's description of Palestinian teenagers in the occupied West Bank in 1988: "Their eyes show hatred – no doubt. And it is a deep hatred. All the things they cannot say and all the things they feel inside of them, they put

¹⁴⁰ Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," Poetry Foundation, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45465/on-being-brought-from-africa-to-america>.

¹⁴¹ Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, 87.

¹⁴² Calvin Hernton, "Game Life, London 1967 (to Colin MacInnes)," in *Medicine Man* (New York, NY: Reed, Cannon & Johnson, 1976), 72.

into their eyes and how they look at you.”¹⁴³ The soldier, Lieut. Col. Yisrael, explained that the battle he was involved in was “a battle of eyes – Israeli eyes against Palestinian eyes, looks meant to kill against looks meant to intimidate, darting glances versus blank stares, eyes begging for a little friendship meeting eyes round with fear.”¹⁴⁴ Commenting on this “War of Eyes,” sociologist James C. Scott says that, “The feeling conveyed in this case is crystal clear. Knowing they might be arrested, beaten, or shot for throwing rocks, the teenagers substitute looks, which are far safer but which, nonetheless, give nearly literal meaning to the expression, ‘If looks could kill...’”¹⁴⁵

We also regularly speak of the importance of looking someone in the eye when we speak or listen to them, of making eye contact with our audience when giving a speech, and of not seeing eye to eye with someone we disagree with. A look can communicate esteem, but it can also make someone feel like they are only a few inches tall. The plea, “Don’t look at me like that,” is said in a variety of contexts: from a child who can’t bear the disciplining look of a parent or from someone who just wants to stay friends with a wannabe lover. But the total absence of looks from others can make someone feel both isolated and invisible. We speak of craving another’s attention, revealing how we hunger for, and gain sustenance for our sense of self, through the attentive looks of others. Another belief about eyes found in different human societies throughout history is that of the evil eye, which is described by John H. Elliott as “a long-standing and widespread folk concept that some persons are enabled by nature to injure

¹⁴³ Thomas L. Friedman, “For Israeli Soldiers, ‘War of Eyes’ in West Bank,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1988, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/05/world/for-israeli-soldiers-war-of-eyes-in-west-bank.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Friedman, “For Israeli Soldiers.”

¹⁴⁵ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 155.

others, cause illness and loss, and destroy any person, animal or thing through a powerful noxious glance emanating from the eye.”¹⁴⁶ Further, “this belief holds that the eye is an active organ that emits destructive emanations charged by negative dispositions.”¹⁴⁷ The rare English words “eyelight” and “eye-lamp” capture this sense of the outward-projecting nature of the eye, for both words conceive of the eye as shining outward like a light or a lamp. And so, in John Dunne’s poem, “The Ecstasy” (1633), we read about lovers whose “eye-beams twisted, and did thread / Our eyes upon one double string.”¹⁴⁸ While modern science tells us it is light that comes into the eye and is processed by the brain and that is how we see things, our lived experience with looking tells us that deeply felt and sensed meaning happens in the comings and goings of looks. We hold eye-parleys with each other all the time.

Mirroring Eyes

The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once exclaimed, “I live in the facial expressions of the other,” by which he meant that his very self, his identity, his sense of being alive and not merely existing, was dependent on the faces of others.¹⁴⁹ Building on this insight, psychoanalyst Kenneth Wright has made the center of his academic and clinical work the view that the face of the other acts as a mirror for ourselves in early development, out of which we develop our sense of self. His basic claim is that there is in human development “the progressive structuring of a psychic

¹⁴⁶ John H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), xi.

¹⁴⁷ Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*, xi.

¹⁴⁸ John Dunne, “The Ecstasy,” Poetry Foundation, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44099/the-ecstasy>.

¹⁴⁹ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 146.

space (the mind) by the internalization of a developing social reality.”¹⁵⁰ This is particularly the case in the relationship between an infant and the mother in the first few years of life. Wright’s early work, *Vision and Separation* (1991), convincingly demonstrates that “[s]eeing is forming, and the idea that the self, as a conceivable entity, is formed – or de-formed, or re-formed – at that place where the Other’s view meets with the felt substance of the person.”¹⁵¹ Self-consciousness, then, is actually shaped by the look of the other and depends on the other’s look to move from an undifferentiated consciousness to *self*-consciousness. For Wright, self-consciousness

... arises when the subject (the child) becomes aware of the looking of the object. It is the space within which the person looks at himself through the eyes of the Other. I often speak of consciousness as an interface, or inter-*face*. This is to emphasize that both consciousness and self-consciousness, and the symbols that mediate these experiences, only arise between faces, in other words, in an interpersonal setting, within which relations between persons, and relations with objects governed by those persons, are formative.¹⁵²

The necessity of the other for self-consciousness, for developing one’s sense of identity, comes to the fore in what could be called the interfacial matrix of persons-in-community.¹⁵³

In answering the question of how we come to “see” our own self, Wright responds that “the answer will be through the eyes and looks of others, through the image that they bestow upon us,” and that “the experiential underpinning of this mediation by the Other remains essentially visual and that this fact is enshrined in language in the notion of the Other’s view.”¹⁵⁴ Yet for Wright, who analyzes Jean-Paul Sartre’s analysis

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Wright, *Vision and Separation: Between Mother and Baby* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 123.

¹⁵¹ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, xii.

¹⁵² Wright, *Vision and Separation*, xiii.

¹⁵³ “In the beginning, we see the other person’s face, but we do not see our own. What we see in the other’s face is our own reflection, but not yet as a differentiated experience. This reflection gives back to us our sentient selves, amplified and *real-ized* through a circuit of otherness” (Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 15).

¹⁵⁴ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 24.

of the look found in *L'Être et le Néant* (1943), there are instances when the look of the other is not empathic, loving, or nurturing, but domineering, absent, or cold. This latter situation is for him associated with the experience of “being looked at,” whereby a person is the object of an unloving, distant, and uncaring stare from the other.¹⁵⁵ In such a “catastrophic looking which objectifies and destroys,” the other looks at another from a distance “out of contact, far from any possibility of touch or closeness.”¹⁵⁶ Wright continues to describe the self-alienating effects of this unjust look: “we could say that the self that is looked at in this way now has an ‘outside’; but, of course, the trauma is to feel that this ‘outside’ is not just a complement to the ‘inside’ and something that can be integrated with it, but a usurper of it, so that the self becomes completely defined from the outside.”¹⁵⁷ The other’s looking, when it does not recognize, affirm, or respect the other *qua* other, can lead to the other’s alienation from themselves. This is precisely the psychological impact of a Look that kills which Deborah Mathis described so well.

In extreme situations of domination or neglect, as in the history of racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, and classist subordination of people in the United States, the other’s look (or lack of a look) can become a “dislocation from oneself, from a center of subjective experiencing to an *external* position, a locus of otherness, from where one would be obliged to look back on this dreadful spectacle of ‘me.’ It was as though a new ‘object’ were to be forced on one’s awareness, the image of one’s self as one appeared to this Other.”¹⁵⁸ Here Wright is describing how the other’s look can become internalized and

¹⁵⁵ For Wright, “[t]he only way we come to know our self is through the Other’s view of us, and that all self-consciousness and self-knowledge are thus mediated by an Other.” As a result, “[t]his mediation or reflection is thus exposed to all the risks of distortion and misrepresentation that interpersonal perception and communication are heir to” (*Vision and Separation*, 24).

¹⁵⁶ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 26.

lead to a sense of shame, embarrassment, invisibility, or even inferiority.¹⁵⁹ In contrast to “the smiling mother,” the *looking at* which the other performs “reflects back an image of the self” that is concerned solely with appearances, and which also “makes no approach to touch, hold, or comfort.”¹⁶⁰ They are ultimately an “unempathic Other” who dishes out a Look that kills. In face-to-face encounters such as this, “[t]he Other as object is like a bomb – he can go off at any time, and the upsurge of his subjectivity will then destroy me as subject.”¹⁶¹

Mayra Rivera has also noted the importance of the other’s look in the formation of the visual image or representation we have of ourselves, especially our bodies. In her words, “acquiring a visual image of myself makes self-observation possible and thus a new mode of relationship to myself, to my body. But self-contemplation is also associated with the view that others have of my body, and thus a visual body image is inherently linked to imagining how others see me. It makes possible the construction of an ideal image of myself.”¹⁶² What is vital to understand is the sense in both Wright and Rivera that “perception of the world [and others] is not subsequent to self-awareness, but is part of its development.”¹⁶³ The looks of others are the material out of which we construct the image and sense of ourselves (self-images), and we develop and shape our own *looks* as we present ourselves before the looks of others (self-imaging). Initially, at the micro level, it is the mother, father, caregivers, and families who act as this looking

¹⁵⁹ In regard to the experience of being looked at as a cause of shame, Wright notes: “I see myself from ‘out there,’ rather than seeing the world from ‘in here.’ Shame is a kind of crisis, a moment of danger that puts in question both my self and my relation to the Other. This self which I am for the Other, will it still be loved? This Other’s view cannot be ignored” (*Vision and Separation*, 30).

¹⁶⁰ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 26.

¹⁶¹ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 33.

¹⁶² Rivera, *Poetics*, 69.

¹⁶³ Rivera, *Poetics*, 69.

and mirroring other out of which we develop a sense of self and a self-image. Later, at the mezzo level, our neighborhoods, friends, and other local groups provide the looks; and finally, at the macro level, organizations and structures of society provide us with the looks through which, ideally, we can come to see, know, and experiences ourselves as individuals and communities.

In American racism, the history of white (eye) power in the United States comprises various attempts to force different images and values onto the bodies of people of color, images and values created by white minds and imaginations, and to make it so these images and values were the only viable and acceptable ones that would be received and interacted with in public. Exceptions existed but even the exceptions depended to a large extent on the goodwill of the white people in power. Perhaps no writer has articulated the connection between mirroring and racism better than James Baldwin, who in several essays refers explicitly to the mirror in terms of the role of the other in self-imaging and self-understanding. For Baldwin, “we all exist... in the eye of the beholder. We all react to and, to whatever extent, become what that eye sees. This judgment begins in the eyes of one’s parents (the crucial, the definitive, the all-but-everlasting judgment), and so we move, in the vast and claustrophobic gallery of Others, on up or down the line, to the eye of one’s enemy or one’s friend or one’s lover.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed “it is virtually impossible to trust one’s human value without the collaboration or corroboration of that eye – which is to say that no one can live without it.”¹⁶⁵ The looks of others, their eyes, give us a sense of our own value, of our humanity; they collaborate and corroborate an

¹⁶⁴ James Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons,” in *Selected Articles from The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s/Marek, 1985), 680.

¹⁶⁵ Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons,” 680.

ongoing process of self-revelation. As Michael Eric Dyson says, “There’s a relationship between ethnography and epiphany, between self-revelation and the excavation of the other.”¹⁶⁶ Looks, however, can also harm our sense of value and trust in ourselves and others, or make us wonder what it is, precisely, that other people see in us they find so offensive or disagreeable. Eyes can corroborate the ongoing process of self-revelation or collaborate with the racist, sexist, and classist powers-that-be which say that no such revelation is tolerated. What Baldwin constantly advocated and sought to do with his writing and in how he lived, was to insist with other black men and women “that the white man cease to regard him as an exotic rarity and recognize him as a human being.”¹⁶⁷ Genuine recognition of others – which includes recognizing truths about the past, about history; about the present, in the call to justice and responsibility; and about the future, in terms of hope and life aspirations – leads to a greater recognition of oneself and one’s own desires.

The Eyes of History

Most white Americans react defensively when questions about the lingering effects of slavery, Jim Crow, and racialized economic and sexual subordination come up in public life. These questions, as questions, are taken to be accusations; hence, the defensiveness. Similar defensive statements can be heard in private conversations, classroom discussions, and in various media venues. How can we address these attitudes and the divergent interpretations of historical events and processes along with their legacies? To extend the metaphor of mirroring, it is possible to say that history also

¹⁶⁶ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 485.

¹⁶⁷ James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village,” in *Collected Essays* (New York, NY: Library of America, 1998), 122.

serves as a mirror. Looking at the past, we are also looking at ourselves in relation to others and at the present situations we find ourselves in. As Saidiya Hartman suggests, “If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago.”¹⁶⁸ The pattern of speculation and valuation, which is actually a devaluation, continues. Hartman calls the “skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment” as “the afterlife of slavery.”¹⁶⁹ And so we speak of the past, and as we speak of it, we keep an eye on our present. Yet whose present are we speaking to? Is the present something we can speak of as “ours”? Who is “we”? Whose reality does the past speak to, and what or who from the past do we conjure up? Hartman continues that, “Every generation confronts the task of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on. The past depends less on ‘what happened then’ than on the desires and discontents of the present. Strivings and failures shape the stories we tell. What we recall has as much to do with the terrible things we hope to avoid as with the good life for which we yearn.”¹⁷⁰ Eyes see, interpret, remember, and imagine personal and social worlds of both oppression and liberation that trickle into our present motivations, desires, and actions.

By looking into the mirror of history, we can see that the mirroring process between Europeans and those they encountered in Africa and the New World was both fragmented and destructive; the reflections of themselves that the peoples of Africa and

¹⁶⁸ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 6.

¹⁶⁹ Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 100.

the Americas received from the looks of European explorers, traders, colonists, settlers, and missionaries were often distorting. Eyepower has been around from the inception of human culture, yet “white” eye power first trained itself on the “black” people of Africa beginning in the 1400s. These European eyes were not only after wealth and trade routes, but also in search of lost souls on which they might shed the light of Christianity. Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, a philosopher and theologian from Cameroon, argues that how European Christians viewed Africans was a major factor in the latter’s experience of self-alienation. He would affirm, with Kenneth Wright, that “the self that we know, and love or hate, is the self that is reflected back to us by the mirror of the Other – whether that reflection is a real or imagined image.”¹⁷¹ For Boulaga, the African “discovers himself and recovers after being ‘discovered’ by the imperialist and ethnological view.”¹⁷² According to him, there was a moment “when the boundary was opened between our life as perceived by ourselves and the same life as exposed to different views and outside looks,” when Africans discovered themselves “as an Other for Others.”¹⁷³ As Shannon Sullivan argues, “The white man’s arrival in a black world did not merely shatter black people’s horizons in the sense of their futures; it also shattered their horizons that are their bodies. Or more accurately: black people’s future horizons were shattered precisely in and through the shattering of their bodily horizons.”¹⁷⁴ To generalize, the other’s view

¹⁷¹ Wright, *Vision and Separation*, 272.

¹⁷² Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, “Fetichism and Proselytism,” *Exchange* 33, no. 1 (2004): 22. Here Eboussi quotes Arthur C. Danto who describes the experience of Native Americans vis-à-vis their “discovery” by Columbus, which is extremely relevant to the present discussion: “What Columbus did was to lift the opaque and protective dome beneath which life trod its immemorial paths, and expose to European eyes, as a living museum of curiosities and opportunities, what to those who led it was merely life... the Native American was in position to see that life from the outside, as perceived from alien perspectives he cannot have dreamed of, since, until it was disclosed, the Native American had no sense of being an ‘Other.’”

¹⁷³ Boulaga, “Fetichism,” 22.

¹⁷⁴ Shannon Sullivan, “Ethical slippages, shattered horizons, and the zebra striping of the unconscious: Fanon on social, bodily, and psychical space,” *Philosophy & Geography* 7, no. 1 (February 2004): 15.

of the African, and later the African American, was objectifying, cold, distant, lacking empathy, suspicious, demeaning, and holding a superior attitude. Christian missionaries and laypeople failed to see the other as they were, instead imposing their own categories of being onto them. They could not see past their own anthropological and theological constructions which placed the African in the region of the uncivilized, the possessed, the pagan, the savage, the child, or in some other not-yet-and-therefore-sub-Christian category.

Despite this the missionary could experience a certain deconstruction and reconstruction of who they were in their personal encounter with the African other. Boulaga notes how such an encounter might force someone to combine an internal perception of oneself with an external view of the self “that tends to function as a mirror.”¹⁷⁵ In a genuine, mutual intercommunicative experience, certain operations may exist and thrive which allow “the transition from the self to the other and the other way round, ‘the communication of idioms,’ that may become a way of life expressing itself in speech or in freedom.”¹⁷⁶ Such an intercommunication of selves-in-community begins with a face-to-face encounter wherein one truly sees the other, and sees oneself through the eyes of the other in a mutually affirming and respectful way. “Personal being,” says Boulaga, “is existence in the form of word, that is, it is arrival at self-fulfillment not only in presence to self, but in being in a being-other: in receiving self from the other.”¹⁷⁷ The self is not a given already had, but a gift to be received from others. Yet there was little room for hospitality in the souls and eyes of white people, nor was there any genuine

¹⁷⁵ Boulaga, “Fetichism,” 25.

¹⁷⁶ Boulaga, “Fetichism,” 26.

¹⁷⁷ Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, *Christianity without Fetishes: An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity*, trans. Robert Barr (Münster: LIT, 2002), 126.

sense they needed to go out and meet the other on their own terms and in their own words. What gifts could they possibly receive from these “others” when they already felt gifted with the fullness of being?

Conquering Eyes

Philosopher Enrique Dussel has also studied the first encounters between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of Africa and the Americas in terms of the theme of discovery. In his book, *The Invention of the Americas*, Dussel claims that

The birthdate of modernity is 1492, even though its gestation, like that of the fetus, required a period of intrauterine growth. Whereas modernity gestated in the free, creative medieval European cities, it came to birth in Europe’s confrontation with the Other. By controlling, conquering, and violating the Other, Europe defined itself as discoverer, conquistador, and colonizer of an alterity likewise constitutive of modernity. Europe never discovered (*des-cubierto*) this Other as Other but covered over (*encubierto*) the Other as part of the Same: i.e., Europe.¹⁷⁸

Europeans only saw the indigenous other in terms of the categories of the developing European world system in its religious, cultural, and economic forms. Their seeing covered over, rather than uncovered, the persons and places they visited. The revelation of the “other” was only the revelation of themselves in different guise.

Characteristic of this European eye-set are the words of the philosopher Georg Hegel, who considered a black person as “a human being in the rough,” and Africa as “something isolated and lacking in history, submerged completely in the natural spirit, and mentionable only as the threshold of universal history.”¹⁷⁹ It was only the light of Christianity, of revelation, and of civilization that could pierce the darkness of evil, sin, and primitiveness, putting Africa on the right track in this universal history identified

¹⁷⁸ Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of ‘the Other’ and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995), 15-16.

¹⁷⁹ See Dussel, *Invention*, 22.

with Euro-American ideals. As Dussel relates, “the Europeans (and the English in particular) portrayed themselves as ‘the missionaries of civilization to all the world,’ especially to the ‘barbarian peoples.’”¹⁸⁰ The most developed form of this view of Africa as the dark continent and Euro-American civilization as light we have come across is the illustrated book *Heroes of the Dark Continent* (1890), in which J. W. Buel tells the stories of David Livingstone, Henry Morton Stanley, and other white “heroes” who courageously face the heart of darkness and provided Europeans with ample material for self-construction and self-understanding through their own examples and its negation: Africa and the African. The opening paragraph reveals the extent to which white people exoticized and projected a negative of themselves onto the place and its peoples:

Religion and science, mystery and fact, ambition and disappointment, grandeur and ruin – all the antitheses of human aspiration and realization – find remarkable example in the history of that wondrous country surnamed the DARK CONTINENT. Mystery has, for centuries, hung above it like a gruesome pall, the wild riot of a boundless superstition has hovered over its strange people until the world has whispered the very name with a feeling of dread and gives to it that regard which attaches only to ghostly and ghastly things of distempered fancy. But dark as has been the mantle of dread which enveloped her during the long centuries, Africa has at least been revealed, through the search-light of bold exploration, and now meets our scrutiny with the interest of a newly discovered world.¹⁸¹

Europeans and Americans continually projected onto this continent their worst visions and fears: Africa the land of superstitions, dread, and darkness; shrouded in death and evil forces; a gruesome and strange place now being penetrated by the search-light of exploring eyes, allowing Euro-American peoples to scrutinize the land and its inhabitants in a new way.

¹⁸⁰ Dussel, *Invention*, 35.

¹⁸¹ J. W. Buel, *Heroes of the Dark Continent* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson & Co., 1890), 16.

This scrutiny, this looking, would give distorting images back to Africans themselves. For white Europeans and Americans, however, to whisper the word “Africa” was enough to conjure up, in magical fashion, the shadow-side of European civilization. The role of “throwing shade” on Africa was primarily self-revelatory, to delineate and cast light on white Euro-Americanness and what it is and what it values. Richard Wright described the relationship between “modern man” and Africa in mirror terms:

One does not react to Africa as Africa is, and this is because so few can react to life as life is. One reacts to Africa as one is, as one lives; one’s reaction to Africa is one’s life, one’s ultimate sense of things. Africa is a vast, dingy mirror and what modern man sees in that mirror he hates and wants to destroy. He thinks, when looking into that mirror, that he is looking at black people who are inferior, but, really, he is looking at himself and, unless he possesses a superb knowledge of himself, his first impulse to vindicate himself is to smash this horrible image of himself which his own soul projects out upon this Africa.¹⁸²

The self-image of white Europeans and Americans was thus constructed in part out of the image they had made of others, whether peoples of Africa, Asia, or the Americas. Dussel is clear that “the modern ego was born in its self-constitution over against regions it dominated,” those regions where Europeans subjected the “Other” to the “Same.”¹⁸³ In this image-making, “Europe constituted other cultures, worlds, and persons as ob-jects, as what was thrown (*arrojado/jacere*) before (*ob/ante*) their eyes. Europe claimed falsely that the covered one (*el cubierto*) had been dis-covered (*des-cubierto*).”¹⁸⁴ These worlds, considered immature, primitive, and lacking in cultivation, religion, and civilization, could be taken and subsumed into the European circulation of products and ideas without many scruples of conscience.

¹⁸² Richard Wright, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (New York: Harper, 1954), 158.

¹⁸³ Dussel, *Invention*, 35-36.

¹⁸⁴ Dussel, *Invention*, 34.

Dussel further explains that territorial expansion went with control of “the bodies of the inhabitants, since they needed to be pacified, as it was customary to say in that epoch.”¹⁸⁵ The person-to-person relationship mirrored the person-to-nature relationship of plucking, taking, and subduing. Not surprisingly, Europeans depicted, spoke of, and acted toward newly-explored land as if it were a female virgin waiting to be seduced and plucked. Consider the words of explorer Lawrence Kemys in speaking of Guiana: “Here whole shires of fruitful rich grounds, lying now waste for want of people, do prostitute themselves unto us like a fair and beautiful woman, in the pride and flower of desired years.”¹⁸⁶ Or, consider the emblematic drawing of Johannes Stradanus, also known as Jan van der Straet (c. 1575), where lady “America” is depicted as naked and awaiting the “spearing and plowing” of a worthy man, in this case Amerigo Vespucci. As Margarita Zamora describes the scene, “‘America’ offers him her unclothed and recumbent body; her empty hands show she has nothing else to offer. He reciprocates, erect and in full armor, with his knowledge and his faith.”¹⁸⁷ Terrified Spanish men who refused to fight for the empire and who thus failed to play the man “were tagged as effeminate and violently dispatched.”¹⁸⁸ This virgin territory would be penetrated with masculinist desire and violence, and the “rape” of the land would parallel the rape and sexual exploitation of native women. Looks of desire shot out onto different objects, whether land, fruits, natural resources like gold and silver, or even women. In the words of Peter Mason, America was a male “voyeur’s paradise.”¹⁸⁹ Dussel would add that, “the modern ego of

¹⁸⁵ Dussel, *Invention*, 36.

¹⁸⁶ Laurence Keymis, *A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1596). The text can be read online at Early English Books Online, last accessed April 24, 2019, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A04813.0001.001?view=toc>.

¹⁸⁷ Margarita Zamora, *Reading Columbus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 154.

¹⁸⁸ Dussel, *Invention*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (London: Routledge, 1990), 171.

the conquistador reveals itself as also a phallic ego... In satisfying a frequently sadistic voluptuousness, Spaniards vented their purely masculine libido through the erotic subjugation of the Other as Indian woman.”¹⁹⁰ The colonization of land and people meant also the colonization of their bodies. As Ghassan Hage notes, in general, “the thriving of the human and the thriving of the colonist happens through extractions from nature and the life-world of the colonized. Racial domination, then, resembles the process of dominating natural otherness.”¹⁹¹ The body of the woman would serve as a place to satisfy the sexual desire of the Euro-American man, and the body of the man would involuntarily serve the new, developing economy. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres writes, “Coloniality is an order of things that put people of color under the murderous and rapist sight of a vigilant ego. And the primary targets of rape are women. But men of color are also seen through these lenses.”¹⁹²

In this order of coloniality, “the same,” says Dussel, “violently reduces the Other to itself through the violent process of conquest. The Other... is denied as Other and is obliged, subsumed, alienated, and incorporated into the dominating totality like a thing or an instrument. This oppressed Other either is interned (*encomendado*) on a plantation or hired as salaried labor on estates (*haciendas*) or, if an African slave, regimented into factories turning out sugar or other tropical products.”¹⁹³ The conquistador, as representative of the European explorer and conqueror, “constitutes and extends his own

¹⁹⁰ Dussel, *Invention*, 46.

¹⁹¹ Hage, *Is racism*, 53-54.

¹⁹² Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 247-48. For Maldonado-Torres, coloniality “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (243).

¹⁹³ Dussel, *Invention*, 39.

subjectivity through his praxis.”¹⁹⁴ He was “the first modern, active, practical human being to impose his violent individuality on the Other.”¹⁹⁵ It should be stressed that these personal, material, and collective practices resulted from a certain *view* of the land and the people of the land. This view of the land and its people included practices of mapmaking through which Europeans could visualize and efficiently implement their plans for production and profit, but also personal looks that dominated just the same.¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, Dussel notes that when Hernando Cortez first met the Mayan leader Moctezuma it was a rule that “no one was permitted to look into [his] face.”¹⁹⁷ As Dussel describes, “everyone else stared at the earth in front of the emperor. The ‘I-conqueror’ [Cortez] was the first ever with the freedom to look him in the face.”¹⁹⁸ Embedded in Cortez’s act of looking was the notion that Europeans as explorers and conquerors would look at whatever and whoever they desired and back such looking up with force. Thus these early European adventurers would inaugurate not only what would soon become known as colonialism, “a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation,” but a colonality of being and especially of the visible.¹⁹⁹ This colonality of the visible, of how the world and people should be “taken,” would develop along “two axes of power”; first, “the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race,’” and “the

¹⁹⁴ Dussel, *Invention*, 39.

¹⁹⁵ Dussel, *Invention*, 38.

¹⁹⁶ Mirzoeff notes that “the map extended the human sensorium beyond its physical capacities and integrates itself with it as ‘a technical prosthesis that extends and refines the field of sensorial production, or rather, a place where ocular vision and the mind’s eye meet.’” (*Right to Look*, 58).

¹⁹⁷ Dussel, *Invention*, 42.

¹⁹⁸ Dussel, *Invention*, 42.

¹⁹⁹ Maldonado-Torres, “Coloniality of Being,” 243.

constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources.”²⁰⁰ Conquering eyes would dramatically shape the inner and outer worlds of the conquered.

Genres of Seeing – “Inner Eyes”

The work of Sylvia Wynter also demonstrates how a unique view of the world and of other people categorized as different has been conceptually and linguistically processed by Europeans at different points in their history. Wynter argues that Europeans justified their exploratory and colonial conquests by identifying universal human nature with themselves and by relegating non-Europeans to not-quite-human or non-human status. To justify their exploitation, Europeans’ perceptions of others around the globe were continually shaped to occlude the diverse modes of being human they encountered. Wynter herself claims that “the eye is not only a physiological organ which looks at me; it is the other person as consciousness. Thus, the look of the Other includes all classes of judgements and valuations. To be seen by the Other means to apprehend oneself as an unknown object of unforeseen configurations.”²⁰¹ Here she points to the dynamic reality of how our self-understanding and self-imaging is constructed out of the eyes of others and the looks they give to us.

Throughout her work Wynter is concerned to understand “the inner eye with which Europe would look through its physical eyes upon the reality of the Others,” borrowing the language of Ralph Ellison.²⁰² Pointing out one configuration of how Europe looked at “their others,” Wynter notes that “through the institution of the latifundium in the Iberian Peninsula, and the plantation in the New World, the black

²⁰⁰ Maldonado-Torres, “Coloniality of Being,” 243-44.

²⁰¹ Sylvia Wynter, “The Eye of the Other: Images of the Black in Spanish Literature,” in *Blacks in Hispanic Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. Miriam DeCosta (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977), 9.

²⁰² Wynter, “Eye of the Other,” 10.

entered the Western architecture of signs conjoined as fact and fiction – black slave. He was black (*negro*) because he was naturally a slave (*esclavo*); he was a slave (*esclavo*) because he was naturally black (*negro*). To be a Negro was to be a slave.”²⁰³ Like Dussel, Wynter argues that “all non-Christian peoples and cultures became perceivable only in terms of their usefulness to the European states in securing their this-worldly goal of power and wealth.”²⁰⁴ This perception of others, and therefore of themselves, by white Europeans and later Americans would undergo shifts throughout history, and Wynter is keen to track these changes. The question of who would fill the “matrix slot of otherness” for European self-understanding and self-definition would be answered at first in religious terms, and later on in terms of “race,” which was the “non-supernatural but no less extrahuman ground... of the answer that the secularizing West would now give to the... question as to the who, and the what we are.”²⁰⁵ Europeans who initially thought, described, and performed humanness in primarily religious terms and categories later did the same in secular, biological, economic, and racialized terms. As one commentator notes of Wynter’s project: “while she is concerned to anchor the human and its projects in its material (social and bodily) conditions, her concern is to track the ‘codes’ and ‘genres’ in terms of which the understanding (including self-understanding) is constituted. It is not the body’s materiality itself that interests her so much as the ideological hegemonies – race principal among them – that come to be imprinted on it in

²⁰³ Wynter, “Eye of the Other,” 10.

²⁰⁴ Sylvia Wynter, “1492: A New World View,” in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 17.

²⁰⁵ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument,” *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 264.

such a way that we live their inscriptions as the historically varying modes of our truth.”²⁰⁶

The major argument that Wynter makes is that Europeans’ “inner eyes,” defined both as an order of consciousness and mode of perception, could not tolerate seeing themselves relativized by other rational humans. Europeans regarded themselves as the Absolute Man/Being, possessing humanness and be-ing to the full. To avoid being relativized by their new encounters with others, Europeans saw others “as less, not-quite humans, and, as such, logically classifiable, and institutionalized, as ‘Indians’ and ‘Negroes.’”²⁰⁷ As Katherine McKittrick comments, “the figure of Man – in Wynter’s formulations – is the measuring stick through which all other forms of being are measured.”²⁰⁸ These “all other forms of being,” such as indigenous peoples of the New World and Africa, had forms of life and modes of being human seen by Europeans as “the irrational Lack of their own” or, later, as lower on the evolutionary ladder. Such a Lack of Europeanness meant simultaneously a lack of humanness, of rationality, of civilization, of cultural refinement, of redemption, of light, and other associated realities. For when a European or American mode of being human is instituted and performed as “the only, universally applicable mode of being human,” it remains impossible to imagine an “other,” one outside this domain, who can also lay claim to full recognition as human; something would always lack.

²⁰⁶ David Scott, “The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter,” *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000): 121.

²⁰⁷ Sylvia Wynter, “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of *Désêtre*: Black Studies Toward the Human Project,” in *Not Only the Master’s Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 140.

²⁰⁸ Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 3.

The shifts in the genres of being human, of the experience of what it is *like to be* human, represent what Wynter calls a “politics of being,” that is, “a politics that is everywhere fought over what is to be the descriptive statement, the governing sociogenic principle, instituting of each genre of the human.”²⁰⁹ Such a governing sociogenic principle allows people to see and experience themselves as having a certain ontological fullness, a substance of humanness, or, of being human, in distinction to other modes or forms of life. For Wynter, what remains necessary is a recognition, not only of those fitted into the matrix slot of otherness, but of ourselves as a “population, who, as in the case of all other genre-specific human populations, inscript and auto-institute ourselves as human through symbolic, representational processes that have, hitherto, included those mechanisms of occultation by means of which we have been able to make opaque to ourselves the fact that we so do.”²¹⁰ This leads us from ontogeny to sociogeny, from a biologically-reproduced eye to a socially-produced eye, which are inseparable even as they differ.

Sociogenic Eyes

In brief, the sociogenic principle points to how various senses of self in relation to others gets imposed or inscribed onto the brains and consciousness of individuals within each cultural system. The principle points to a transcultural constant that refers to the culturally programmed rather than genetically articulated (ontogeny) sense of self. It highlights the cultural-specific governing code of what it means and feels like to be human: “how we identify ourselves... how we subjectively experience ourselves *as*

²⁰⁹ Wynter, “Unsettling,” 318.

²¹⁰ Wynter, “Unsettling,” 328.

human, is everywhere discursively and institutionally constructed.”²¹¹ Sociogeny calls into question a “purely biological definition of what it is to *be*, and therefore of what it is *like to be*, human.”²¹² In filling out the meaning of sociogeny, Wynter taps into the work of Frantz Fanon. In Fanon’s well-known chapter on “L’Experience Vécue Du Noir” in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), sociogeny is the word he uses to explain the always socialized nature of our modes of being human and our experiences of what it is like to be human. For Fanon, sociogeny occurs through “a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly, with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio, penetrate an individual – constituting the world-view of the group to which one belongs.”²¹³ A purely ontogenic conception of the human would represent the species “as existing in a purely continuist relation with organic life, defining it on the model of a natural organism.”²¹⁴ Wynter states elsewhere that “in place of the genetic programs that regulate the behaviors of all organic species, we developed our own culture-specific programs by which our human behaviors – cognizing, affective, and actional – came to be rule-governed and lawfully regulated.”²¹⁵ The sociogenic principle gets at how social meanings and “looks” transform matter, the basic neural and other physiological processes that make up our experiencing of the self. As Wynter argues, “the transformation of subjective experience, is, in the case of human, culturally and thereby, socio-situationally determined, with these determinations in turn, serving to

²¹¹ See Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” footnote 14.

²¹² Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of ‘Identity’ and What it’s Like to be ‘Black,’” in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, ed. Mercedes Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31.

²¹³ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 32. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 118.

²¹⁴ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 35.

²¹⁵ Wynter, “1492,” 7.

activate their physicalistic correlates. In consequence, if the mind is what the brain does, what the brain does, is itself culturally determined through the mediation of the socialized sense of self, as well of the ‘social’ situation in which this self is placed.”²¹⁶ Here Wynter touches upon how the experiences of ourselves are formed by the social imaginations, descriptive statements, representations, valuations, looks, and actions of others in terms of what it is like to be human. We sense our being and self in and through the “takes” that others have of us; reality, in other words, is “a naturalized autopoietic social system.”²¹⁷

The prime example in Fanon’s work of the way social meanings and categories of the other come to alter the subjective experience of this other is when Fanon himself travels to France from Martinique and a little boy glances and points at him with the words: “Look a nigger! Mama, the nigger’s going to eat me up!”²¹⁸ Fanon realizes that he no longer has the option, as in his native country, to behave *like* a “nigger” or not; in these white eyes “he *is* a nigger.” The boy’s “cry and look fixes him in that subhuman status” as “a chemical solution is fixed by a dye.”²¹⁹ The glances of white people, epitomized in the little boy who clings to his mother in fear of Fanon, impose on him and others ostensibly like him a certain sense of self originally foreign to his own sense of self before he encountered the white glancers. The glance imposes a self from its own imaginary, its own coding of the human, and this image of a “nigger” is put on Fanon through a look and through words. The result is that his neural processes light up differently in such a situation, and he is forced to make sense of himself in relation to

²¹⁶ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 37.

²¹⁷ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 5.

²¹⁸ See Fanon, *Black Skin*, 86.

²¹⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 82. See also Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 38-39.

such imposed meaning and objectification. The external image of his self is now a part of his internal sense of self, even if in protest.

Fanon will later call this perceptual inscription of stereotypes and negative values of some onto the skins of others as epidermalization.²²⁰ His body and skin, and therefore his sense of self in the world, are reified and objectified according to predetermined meanings and associations. This process is so aggressive “that he is compelled to see himself as he is seen by those ‘white’ eyes, which are the only ‘real,’ because the only ‘normal eyes.’”²²¹ Because of encountering the views of white others – their looks, their words, their imaginaries, their performances – he experiences himself “through the mediation of stereotyped concepts *specific to a particular point of view and visual phenomenology*, in other words *not* as he is, but as *he must be* for a particular viewpoint.”²²² As to the origins of this white viewpoint, or eye-set, that sees the “Negro” as animal, bad, ugly, cannibal, etc., Wynter dives into her history of the hegemonic genres of being human in European and American history. These eye-sets, or inner eyes, produced the “corporeal malediction” that was “to be placed upon all peoples of African hereditary descent, as the ostensibly non-evolved dysselected and therefore ‘racially inferior’ Other to the true human, *Man*.”²²³ As Fanon writes about the work that white eyes have done in his own personal history, “I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why it’s a Negro!”²²⁴ The

²²⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 4.

²²¹ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 42.

²²² Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 43.

²²³ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic,” 44. See Fanon, *Black Skin*, 84.

²²⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 87.

atrocious character and amount of personal and social eyepower sufficient to produce such a subjective experience in someone is staggering. Further, this eyepower, at least as subjectively experienced by Fanon, is like that of a microtome, an instrument “resembling tiny shears” that is itself used to cut thin slices of material, and which allows for preparing samples for observation. Under these microtomes (which are white eyes), Fanon is just another microdissected and sculpted sample of “Negro.”

So when we talk about human eyes, we cannot simply talk about them as things or organs and what these organs do and how they process light and are connected to the neural circuits of the brain, but we also have to talk about what eyes *do* in the realm of human experience, and how the eye’s *doings* are in turn shaped by economic practices, personal encounters, social representations and ideologies, linguistic norms, and other forms of meaning. Put simply, the eye is not simply ontogenically formed, but sociogenically produced to see to the maintenance of one’s own sense of self and view of reality. Therefore, our eyes are both the products and producers of socio-visual realities that give human life meaning; we are both receivers and transmitters of culturally-specific visions of what it is like (or not like) to be “fully” human. We have also seen how white Europeans and Americans throughout history have chiseled negative racialized meanings and images onto the bodies of “others” and the spaces in which they appeared which served two primary purposes: 1) to heighten the experience or sense of themselves as human, Christian, saved, pure, etc. (their “whiteself”), and 2) to justify and secure their appropriation of land, people, and resources (their “whitestuff”). These white eyes both crafted “others” and were crafty towards them; they have also had the technological, political, and social power to make sure it was their eye work that would

be legitimate, ensured, and reproduced in society. Because there is such power in the sociogenic eye, the next chapter is concerned with teasing out an understanding of power that considers both its embodied and organizational aspects.

Chapter 3: Organized Eyepower

*"I am Narcissus, and what I want to see in the eyes of others is a reflection that pleases me."*²²⁵

*"The thing to do is to get organized; keep separated and you will be exploited, you will be robbed, you will be killed. Get organized, and you will compel the world to respect you. If the world fails to give you consideration, because you are black men, because you are Negroes, four hundred millions of you shall, through organization, shake the pillars of the universe and bring down creation, even as Samson brought down the temple upon his head and upon the heads of the Philistines."*²²⁶

*Men drunk with power can no longer see what reality really is.*²²⁷

What kind of power is white (eye) power? In this chapter we seek to answer this basic question through a reading of 20th century German Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's essay, "The Theology of Power" (1960), his theology of concupiscence, and the metaphoric nature of anthropomorphic thinking. The rationale for focusing on Rahner's work as a theologian is to ensure that spiritual matters, such as faith, hope, and love, are factored into this account of power with its own base in material realities and practices. Thus, to say that power is the ability to take, and the actual taking of, matter/s into one's own hand to secure one's substance, as noted in the Introduction, it must be emphasized that sometimes the matter at hand can be spiritual. This should not be overlooked. It is often said that love is the most powerful force in the world, and we want to ensure that our focus on power in terms of politics, social organizations, and economic systems does not lose sight of this truth that admittedly too often becomes a cliché. Yet there is also a danger in theological discourse to understand power in such an overly spiritualized way it

²²⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 165.

²²⁶ Marcus Garvey, *Africa for the Africans* (New York, NY: Messenger Publishing Company, 1920), 89.

²²⁷ Karl Rahner, "The Theology of Power," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 407-8.

remains a world apart, powerless to change the world. We can hope to avoid this danger by uniting the theological with the anthropological – a key feature of Rahner’s overall approach – following the basic movement of the Incarnation, which is the Christian belief that God took up human flesh in Jesus the Christ. Having looked at power from a theological starting point, we can then look at power from an anthropological starting point, especially at the anthropomorphic conceptual metaphors we use to talk about, imagine, and act within and through organizations such as the state.

The Force of Factoring Eyes

Karl Rahner begins his theology of power with the Christian creed where God is called the “almighty.” From this foundation Rahner reasons that the forms of power we encounter in the world come from God and testify to God’s own power, who *is* power “in a super-eminent sense.”²²⁸ God does not simply have power as an attribute or a possession, but *is* power in a superlative, infinite sense. Having grounded all power in God, Rahner argues that power can be defined in a vague and general sense as “a certain self-assertion and resistance proper to a given being and hence as its innate possibility of acting spontaneously, without the previous consent of another, to interfere with and change the actual constitution of that other.”²²⁹ Power, then, is exercised in relation to an “other,” and it is both the ability and freedom to act. Rahner continues by ordering various forms of power according to the “degrees of analogy of the power of beings in general.”²³⁰ For example, in his view, “humility understood as the courage to do what is purely moral though apparently powerless, is on a higher degree of being, of a higher

²²⁸ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 391.

²²⁹ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 391.

²³⁰ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 392.

moral and ontological rank than for instance the power due to the possession of the atomic bomb.”²³¹ Also, love as a real thing and as a potent spiritual power, which is expressed in the realm of human relationships and in the enactment of justice, is more powerful than the power of a gun to kill, even though in a tough pinch the opposite would seem to be the case.

Because of these various ontological ranks of the forms of power and the many questions associated with them, Rahner focuses his study on one kind of power, namely, force. Force is defined as using physical means, “which do not address themselves to the insight and freedom of the other,” to act on the other and change it without its previous consent.²³² Such exercise of power as physical or brute force limits the freedom of the other and disregards the decisions or consent of the other in order to “force facts into their existence.”²³³ For Rahner, power in terms of brute force ought never to have existed. Instead, were it not for sin, humans as individuals and as communities would exist in a state of integrity, free from guilt and concupiscence, defined in Catholic teaching as the inclination to sin or “the tinder of sin” (*fomitem*) that remains in humans because of their primordial disobedience to God.²³⁴ Concupiscence is thus central to Rahner’s take on power as force.

²³¹ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 392.

²³² Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 392.

²³³ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 392.

²³⁴ See Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012), 1515 [Hereafter DZ, followed by Denzinger designation, not page number]. The Council of Trent’s Decree on Original Sin uses *fomitem* (acc. *fomes*, *fomitis*, “chips of wood for kindling/feeding a fire, i.e. tinder) as interchangeable (*vel*) with *concupiscentiam*. Concupiscence is often related to sexual desire or a desire that stems from the “law of the members” (bodily members). It is important to keep in mind the relationship between concupiscence as a general inclination to sin or the strong, felt, and often anxious need or desire to integrate the disparate elements of one’s existence into one’s own orbit of control, and sexual desire. However, concupiscence should not be collapsed in meaning into “lust,” as I was reminded when doing a subject heading search for “concupiscence” in a library’s catalog and received the system message: “*Concupiscence* is not used in this library’s catalog. *Lust* is used instead. Try a search for Lust.”

Concupiscence, Rahner claims, points to the reality within human experience where we find ourselves “unable to integrate fully and clearly the whole reality of [our] existence, in all its dimensions, into the decision of [our] freedom.”²³⁵ Instead, we wrestle with a sharp split between what we desire to be, our ideal, and what we really are, our current reality. In our free decisions we never “fully capture” and “master” ourselves; there is always something missing, out of joint, left out, or looming on the horizon.²³⁶ We passionately desire to integrate all the disparate elements of life into a manageable whole we can watch over and control but find ourselves unable to do so. Why? A partial answer lies in our being “continually being affected by powers and forces from outside [ourselves]” which are not in accordance with our free decision and so make us “suffer.”²³⁷ Concupiscence “is not simply something permanently the same.”²³⁸ Instead, concupiscence is itself “a changing historical entity,” and as such it must be “gradually overcome” by means of “spirit, love, and grace.”²³⁹ For Rahner, those Christians who deny the power of love, truth, courage, and humility, and so fail to fight against power exercised as brute force should be declared a “secret heretic who had fallen away from the truth of Christianity, since he would refuse to admit that this force stems from sin and should therefore be conquered with it.”²⁴⁰ Even though power as force may be necessary in a world of sin, error, and blindness and can in this sense be viewed as “natural,” all steps must be taken to overcome this form of power with more humane, spiritual, and

²³⁵ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 393. For an earlier and more technical discussion of concupiscence, see Karl Rahner, “The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (New York: Crossroad, 1982). For a good discussion, see Erin Kidd, “The Mystical and Political Body: Christian Identity in the Theology of Karl Rahner,” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2016), 139-145; 256-259.

²³⁶ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 393.

²³⁷ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 393. Concupiscence is a consequence of sin or a manifestation of sin, but not proper sin itself.

²³⁸ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 394.

²³⁹ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 394.

²⁴⁰ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 395.

moral expressions of power.²⁴¹ Obviously this overcoming of power as brute force with weightier and nobler forms of power has not been characteristic of the American nation, a nation built on brute force in war and the enslavement and displacement of populations of people, and on the power of the bomb and various arms racing policies and practices. The pithy words of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton speak volumes: “Our city is frankly built on *concupiscentia*.”²⁴²

Rahner next explains that the space or sphere within which humans realize themselves and the many possibilities available to them in freedom “is a space shared in common by *many*.”²⁴³ Because of this “*one* space of material being” wherein human existence takes shape “as the interplay of persons,” the “very exercise of freedom... is at once a restriction of the space of another’s freedom, essentially and inevitably.”²⁴⁴ Rahner also notes in terms of human embodiment that “the bodily nature of [humans] and its supporting environment are always involved in [their] free decisions, which is therefore a physical act.”²⁴⁵ When we make free decisions in this common environment, we inevitably “impinge on the sphere of others, previous to their consent, because physical space is strictly common to all.”²⁴⁶ There is thus a metaphysical violence in every free act of humans, and this is unavoidable due to the one shared material of existence. Rahner explains more simply that when might, or force, is exercised in the world, “something concrete and individual is given reality, without the previous consent

²⁴¹ Rahner himself claims that, “Force is said to be ‘natural’ in this context because it is not in itself at once contradiction and sin against the will of the Creator, because it is only when measured against a higher reality and a transfigured existence that it seems that it should not be, and because, not being of itself sinful, it can have the ambivalence which enables it to be taken up and absorbed by a higher power, that of grace and faith, and so become a manifestation of this grace and faith and hence of salvation” (“Theology of Power,” 397-98).

²⁴² Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964), 143.

²⁴³ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 396. Emphasis in the original English translation.

²⁴⁴ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 396.

²⁴⁵ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 397.

²⁴⁶ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 397.

of another person, in the sphere of his being.”²⁴⁷ We have seen in the personal case of Fanon how even “looking” can forcefully impinge on the spheres of others, on their self-understanding and embodied experiences. Such a recognition of the impact that one’s free decisions and exercise of power has on the world and on the freedom spheres of others is vital if power is to be wielded responsibly.²⁴⁸ There always remains the possibility of a “free agent who uses force” to spread themselves beyond themselves in a limitless expansion, “because it takes place in the wholly universal and common and unlimited medium of the material principle.”²⁴⁹ In contrast to this activity of limitless expansion of one’s scope of freedom and the parallel restricting of the freedom spheres of others, the wielder of power in the world “should have canvassed those who were at its mercy... [and] should have done his best for his part *to eliminate the results of his power on others*.”²⁵⁰ Put more succinctly, power should be “modified” and “absorbed” by love.²⁵¹ Power, says Rahner, “should be used to bring about its own abrogation” and “should be the agent of its own elimination,” though this ideal can only be approached asymptotically.²⁵² However, when power is not used to eliminate itself, when instead power becomes something “that tries to maintain itself definitively,” the true nature of sin

²⁴⁷ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 404.

²⁴⁸ Throughout this chapter, we speak of individuals or groups of people practicing, exercising, exerting, wielding, handling, etc., power or “white power,” but this language is misleading and inadequate for a number of reasons. First, the phrase an “exercise of power” seems to imply an intentional, deliberate action performed in relation to another, yet “inaction” can also be considered an “exercise of power.” Further, an “exercise of power” may be unconscious, that is, not done with intentional awareness. The phrase “exercise white power” implies that white power is some object or thing that one “has,” or “holds,” and then puts to use against others. This, however, is a kind of substantivizing or hypostatization of what really is a *relation* of power between white people and those nonwhite others they wish to control, manipulate, ignore, or eliminate. Finally, power can be actual, potential, or imaginary. When we employ various language to talk about an exercise of power these points need to be kept in mind. For a more complete explanation see Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 50-52.

²⁴⁹ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 404.

²⁵⁰ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 405.

²⁵¹ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 406.

²⁵² Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 406. For Rahner, the cross of Jesus becomes the central Christian reality that points to power bringing about its own abrogation. It is here that the almighty God becomes “might-less” in terms of the world, thereby setting the stage for a new way for human beings everywhere to understand, and wrestle with, power relations.

is revealed: “the desire to be like God, the ‘no’ to service, the installation of self-will and the finite as the absolute, power for power’s sake.”²⁵³ Looks that kill are precisely this “no” to service and a fleshing out of the “installation of self-will” for control, security, and personal gain.

Rahner’s “Theology of Power” is significant because in it he connects power with the theological notion of concupiscence. This connection needs to be made more explicit and developed further. In a different essay Rahner claims that, in general, “the situation entailed by the secular world is one of pluralism and ‘concupiscence.’”²⁵⁴ This link between pluralism in the world and concupiscence is also necessary, for white power is often a reaction to the experienced pluralism in the world in terms of various modes of being human, as we saw in the last chapter. But what exactly is the link between pluralism and concupiscence? “Concupiscence,” Rahner explains, “implies an interior pluralism within man at all levels of his being and in all his impulses, and that too a pluralism of such a kind that it can never be totally or radically integrated into the *single* decision of freedom (either for or against God).”²⁵⁵ This “inalienable state of ‘disintegration’” appears at all levels of human self-fulfillment, from moral acts to “the dimension of knowledge,” and especially in “the ‘disintegration’ of death and of life considered as a *prolixitas mortis* [as an “extension of death”].”²⁵⁶ Yet this personal struggle and profound desire to integrate into a manageable unity the disintegrating and pluralist aspects of one’s existence does not simply stop at the level of the individual, for

²⁵³ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 406.

²⁵⁴ Karl Rahner, “Theological Reflections on the Problem of Secularisation,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 10, trans. Graham Harrison (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 341.

²⁵⁵ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 342.

²⁵⁶ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 342.

the human is “an open ‘system,’ constantly in communication with the world.”²⁵⁷ The world, says Rahner,

is in him and he in it, and what we call the ‘environment’ of man is man himself in his state of radical outward orientation in space and time... The constitution of man as ‘concupiscent’ and as having an ‘interior’ life of his own, and at the same time the constitution of the world he lives in, necessarily correspond to one another. *Thus it is easier to deduce what ‘concupiscence’ properly speaking consists in from the world than to do so by a process of ‘psychological’ introspection into man as he is in himself.*²⁵⁸

These comments point to the fact that the reality of concupiscence should never be reduced to mere personal desires or psychological drives but that it shows up especially in the social world of humans. This social concupiscence displays “exactly the same basic qualities, subject to change from age to age, as does that ‘interior’ element of concupiscence which is in man himself.”²⁵⁹ There is in the social and political world, as there is in the individual person, “a plurality of the objective factors involved and of the various dimensions at which they exist, their state of disintegration, [and] the abiding impossibility for man... of ever achieving a point of unity from which man himself can control all these diverse factors and so overcome this pluralism.”²⁶⁰ This impossibility of ever gaining total leverage and control over the diverse and pluralist elements of the world can fill individuals and groups with great anxiety, fear, or restlessness. When new and diverse elements or people enter one’s sphere and are seen as threatening one’s life or apparently bringing it closer to death (whether social or biological), then the result is often closure (walls), escape (flight), or violence (kill) toward these “different” or “unassimilable” elements. As Rahner explains, “it causes man anxiety not to have any

²⁵⁷ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 342.

²⁵⁸ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 342-343. Emphasis mine.

²⁵⁹ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 343.

²⁶⁰ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 343.

absolute fixed point at his disposal within the integrated instability of the open system of human life.”²⁶¹ Out of this anxiety or “mortal fear” of the sheer unpredictability of life with its uncontrollable factors, individuals and groups sometimes accord “absolute value” to “one particular element in the non-integrated and pluralist world,” such as whiteness, capital, Americanness, or even being *the* man.²⁶² Unable to bear the relativization of their mode of being human, of their sense of self, and of their ability to act in the world in freedom, they hold onto these things all the more tightly and direct aggression and animosity toward those who brought on such a relativization.

It should now be clear that tremendous force and violence takes place when facts are forced into the existences of others, because underlying these acts is the attempt to make one’s own version of reality fit into another’s who, as Rahner claims, should be revered and loved for “the mystery of the *individuum ineffabile* [ineffable individual]” that is in them as a person.²⁶³ In this light, white power is the self-will, self-expansion, and forceful *factoring into* the freedom spheres of nonwhite others, restricting their space of freedom and the possibilities available to them for exercising their free decisions for self-actualization. Because the free expression and exercise of freedom by the racialized other is deemed a threat, white power practitioners tend toward brute force and away from the power of love and truth to relate to this other. Instead of attempting to eliminate the results of their power on nonwhite others, exercisers of white power pile on the effects of their power on others and display these results as a perpetual reminder to everyone of their own supremacy. As will be seen in Part II, a major aspect of white (eye)

²⁶¹ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 346.

²⁶² Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 346.

²⁶³ Rahner, “Theology of Power,” 405.

power is this ability to show or display its power over others. White power is the attempt to maximize the space, material, and environment for the self-expression and self-realization of white people to the exclusion of others constructed as different, and less than, races. If social organizations and institutions also embody and carry out this goal, the power is all the more effective and expansive. However, even without the official backing and support of organizations and institutions, exercising white power as force can still reveal itself in individual acts from people who feel they need to take matter/s into their own hands.

To quote Rahner and adopt his words to what I am trying to say about white power and its practice: “[white] men [and women] in his [or her] self-will and fear elevates it [whiteness and its proxies]... to the single and all-dominating point of reference for the integration of the world which, it is claimed, will be autonomously achieved. This is what takes place at the theoretical level in that which constitutes a bad ‘ideology’ [white supremacy], and at the practical level in that which in simple terms is called sin [Looks that kill].”²⁶⁴ The only “point of reference” that white people allow is that which is *on top* of the world and others, literally, metaphorically, and forcefully. Merton voiced similar concerns in his famous “Letters to a White Liberal” in the 1960s, writing that white people would rather “*remain on top by the use of force*, rather than admit a change in which [they] will not necessarily be on the bottom, but in which [their]

²⁶⁴ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 346. We are reminded in this context of Pope Pius XI who in an encyclical addressed in German to the bishops of Germany in 1937 stated: “Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community - however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things - whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.” See Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender sorge* (1937), Holy See Website, accessed December 20, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html.

position as top dog will no longer be guaranteed.”²⁶⁵ Writing directly to white people, he claimed, “You will prefer your own security to everything else, and you will be willing to sacrifice the Negro to preserve yourself.”²⁶⁶

Rahner himself connects the drive for security and preservation to concupiscence, noting that often “efforts are made to escape from the non-integrated pluralism of the world by excluding from the outset certain dimensions as not ‘relevant’ to human or Christian life.”²⁶⁷ In terms of white power, those people who bring a different set of eyes, values, and practices into the world are excluded as not relevant or as threatening (the reasons for exclusion run from one extreme to the other). This over-simplification and reduction of the world and the diverse modes of being human is itself a sign that the complexity of the world and of humans cannot be tolerated and so must be ignored, controlled, or eliminated. White power, as a manifestation of concupiscence both in individuals and in social life, is the failure at both a theoretical, perceptual, sensorial, imaginary, and practical level to accept and endure the pluralist and non-integrated reality of the world and of humans. Ideally, humans are tasked to strive for harmony between themselves even in the midst of legitimate tension and conflict.²⁶⁸ Those who leverage whiteness as power reject such an open and unresolved conflict between the different sources of experience and knowledge in the world and opt instead for a homogenizing system of so-called white culture, values, and civilization: *might and white* is right. This view inevitably leads to the actual commission of sin, which, “as a pseudo-integration is

²⁶⁵ Merton, *Seeds*, 37.

²⁶⁶ Merton, *Seeds*, 37. Merton also wrote that, “the blind drive to self-assertion rejects indications that love might be more meaningful and more powerful than force” (*Seeds*, 99-100).

²⁶⁷ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 344.

²⁶⁸ See Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 345-46.

really a strengthening of disintegration.”²⁶⁹ Unable to bear the *agon*, the contest or struggle, of living in a pluralist, non-integrated, unreconciled, and disharmonious world, white power inflicts agonies upon agonies on the lives and bodies of scapegoated, nonwhite people.²⁷⁰

Integrist and Manipulating Eyes

White power is thus a “false integralism” which forcefully attempts to *handle* the disparate and, in its eyes, unwanted elements of the world and human life for its own advantage or security. The language used here again comes from Rahner, who speaks of the phenomenon of “false integralism” that is sometimes apparent within the Catholic Church as an institution.²⁷¹ In a discussion about the relationship of the Church to the world, Rahner claims that integralism “is that attitude, whether at the theoretical or at the practical... level, according to which human life can be unambiguously *mapped out* and *manipulated* in conformity with certain universal principles proclaimed by the Church *and watched over* by her in the manner in which they are developed and applied.”²⁷² Two items from this definition of integralism are worth comment. First, the concupiscent and visualizing aspects of integralism come to the fore both in the false attitude that human life in all its complexities and gaps can be “unambiguously mapped out,” and in the confidence that the principles applied to manipulate human realities can be adequately “watched over” or policed by the Church as an institution. Yet as Rahner claims elsewhere in commenting on institutions in society, “a society simply cannot exist which

²⁶⁹ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 347.

²⁷⁰ See Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 344–45.

²⁷¹ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 321.

²⁷² Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 322.

is constructed and controlled totally and all-embracingly from one single point.”²⁷³ White power, like all totalizing tendencies, is the blind and brutal attempt to do so.

Second, it needs to be noted that the word manipulate as a verb means to handle, and that as a noun manipulation – a direct borrowing from the French *manipulation* – originally meant “a method of digging silver ore.”²⁷⁴ Interestingly, the first instance of the French word *manipulation* appears in 1716 in an account of silver mines in colonial South America.²⁷⁵ Following this linguistic trail, integralism is the “taking” (in terms of visibility and in actual practice) of the world as predictable, mappable, and able to be completely controlled by the hands of humans. Today we sometimes speak of being manipulated by others because we recognize their hand, or power, in shaping our lives to negative effect. We constantly recognize the truth, sometimes painful, that other people are factors and shapers (manipulators?) of our lives. Yet manipulation was a material practice in the French colonies of South America in the 18th century, when native peoples were forced to dig in silver mines at great risk to their own lives.²⁷⁶ Manipulation was at first labor exploitation, or, the control of the other’s hands by one’s own, forcing them to act as your own. The power of all forms of false integralism, such as white power, is that the world is visualized and practically handled according to the wishes and desires of a certain group of people either directly through their own hands or indirectly through appended human hands or technologized hands. White power, at least in its origins, is

²⁷³ Rahner, “Institution and Freedom,” 116.

²⁷⁴ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “manipulation.”

²⁷⁵ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “manipulation.” The dictionary notes that the sense of manipulation as “a method of digging silver ore” was “the sole sense recognized in English dictionaries down to and including Todd, 1818.”

²⁷⁶ The most famous mine of the period, and perhaps “the richest silver mine in the history of the world,” was found “more than 15,000 feet altitude in the Andes in Potosí (present-day Bolivia)” in 1545. Even though nothing grew at such heights, during the six decades the followed, the local population swelled to 160,000, equal to that of London or Paris at the time. Potosí’s rich mountain (*cerro rico*) may have produced 60% of all the silver mined in the world in the second half of the 16th century. See Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (Fall, 1995): 201-221.

power carried out by factoring (“making”) hands out of human matter and manipulating human facts with a view to the reproduction of white lives and modes of inhabiting the world.

False integralisms, then, display a certain kind of relationship between theory (“eyes”) and praxis (“hands”) in which nothing and no one may come between the two or resist the process from one to the other. As Rahner states, “integralism... implicitly presupposes that in his acts man simply puts his theory into practice, and that the world and its history, considered as the material field in which these acts of his are posited, is sufficiently predictable, malleable and submissive to his will, to make such a procedure possible.”²⁷⁷ In simpler terms, those holding an integralist attitude towards the world and others believe that the world is there for them to do whatever they want with. There is little or no pause or hesitation between what one *sees fit* and what one actually *does* in the world or to others. Little attention is given to the autonomy and claims of “others.” Consider as an example the words of Benito Mussolini in 1932 when speaking of his relationship to the Italian “masses”: “When I feel the masses in my hands, since they believe in me, or when I mingle with them, and they almost crush me, then I feel like one with the masses. However there is at the same time a little aversion... Doesn’t the sculptor sometimes break the marble out of rage, because it does not precisely mold into his hands according to his vision?... Everything depends on that, to dominate the masses as an artist.”²⁷⁸ The integralist has a vision of the world and the material of the world at

²⁷⁷ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 322.

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 21.

his hands, or so he thinks, and attempts to sculpt the world and others according to his own delight and for his own purposes. This is precisely what Looks that kill aim to do.

Although tremendous planning can be involved, integralist attitudes and actions betray a basic avaricious impulse and desire – a concupiscence – that is the real fire behind them. As Pope Paul VI taught in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967), “Both for nations and for individual men, avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment.”²⁷⁹ Again, the thought runs (whether consciously or not): *the world is there not only for our taking, but for our making, and we will ignore or suppress any resistance we encounter from the material at hand, whether the material be human or otherwise. We have matter/s (human bodies, natural resources, political and social agendas) in our hand and we will squeeze them for profit, for pleasure, for moral catharsis, for the rewards of being missionary, for security, for a sense of accomplishment and progress*, and so on. “The will that is obsessed with power,” says Merton, “can refuse to see and to assess vitally important realities. It can remain obdurate and closed in the presence of *human facts that contradict* its obsessions.”²⁸⁰

The integralist further believes that they, or the Church, or white people, or the West, or “America,” are “already in possession” of all the most important principles, values, and techniques needed for the good life.²⁸¹ They believe that their own institutions, race, culture, or nation is without a doubt “the guide of the world.” Because these claims are false, giving up integralist affects, takes, attitudes, and practices toward worldly matters means leaving this world and others to be themselves in their own

²⁷⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* §19. Translation from “Encyclical Letter of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*,” in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 257.

²⁸⁰ Merton, *Seeds*, 99. Emphasis mine.

²⁸¹ Rahner, “Problem of Secularisation,” 322.

freedom and responsibility. Because white power is at its source white hands (individually and collectively) trying to control, manipulate, or cut off “dark” hands (individually and collectively) for their own purposes, resistance to white power often takes the form of actions and demands that white people give up their grasp on the world and others as malleable and able to be manipulated, and let go of the attitude that assumes they can get people to do what they want and if they don’t then: tough luck. As Merton asked the “white liberal” in his day: “Is there no alternative but violent repression, in which, reluctantly no doubt, you decide that it is better for the establishment to be maintained by the exercise of power which is entirely *in white hands*, and which ought to remain *in white hands* because they are white (because, of course, Negroes are ‘not ready’ for any kind of power)?”²⁸² White power is the view and construction of reality by white eyes and white hands – although these hands manipulate “other” hands – that will not be budged from its vantage point at the top of society. White power is the clamor and hammer for order at all costs, whether through law or violence. The power it exercises is direct, and it uses blunt force to immobilize and shape human matter according to its own image and designs.²⁸³

The Power of the Body (Politic)

²⁸² Merton, *Seeds*, 41. Emphasis mine.

²⁸³ The hammer-like nature of power as force – and “white” power when its exercise is racialized – can be seen not only in the “Hammerskin Nation,” but in “Operation Hammer,” initiated by Los Angeles Chief of Police Daryl Gates. This operation was a largescale attempt to crack down on violence and other crimes associated with gangs in the city. Over the course of one weekend in 1988, 1,453 people were arrested by one thousand police officers in South Central. An overwhelming number of people were never charged, and citizen complaints of police brutality increased 33% from 1984-1989. Consider also “Operation Viking Hammer,” a joint CIA-Special Forces military operation in northern Iraq against Ansar al-Islam forces in 2003; the task force was named Viking Hammer because of the European roots of the team. See Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2004). The *mythoi* of Vikings, Thor, Hammers, and the like, continues to be strong in white supremacist circles, as seen in the popularity of “Nordic Fest” and Thor’s Hammer symbols and tattoos. See ADL Hate Symbols Database, “Thor’s Hammer,” accessed April 26, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/thors-hammer>.

White power is embodied and often organized; it is the power of the white body organized for maximum influence, control, or elimination of those outside privileged cultural, ideological, economic, or religious systems. White power is exercised when white individuals and communities take matter/s into their own hands regardless of the presence, views, rights, and claims of those sensed, and often marked, as “others.” White power has been realized in various organized forms, but especially in the foundational organization of the American nation, which imagined and actualized itself as a white body politic. The word “organization” itself hints at its embodied nature, a fact that usually gets lost in our everyday use of the word. “Organization” is a biological term used to describe “the development or coordination of parts (of the body, a body system, cell, etc.) in order to carry out vital functions.”²⁸⁴ In medicine, the term refers to “conversion into fibrous tissue,” and in social terms organization refers to “systematic ordering or arrangement” of social activities or institutions. As a verb, to “organize” means “to give organic structure or function to,” or socially, “to coordinate or manage the activities of (a group of people); to set up (an institution, enterprise, society, union, or other political organization).”²⁸⁵ Clearly, the medical uses of the term are related to the social uses and describe an analogous process: just as cells form into tissues, and tissues into muscles, and muscles into arms, so also individuals organize into cells, and cells into groups, and groups into larger organizations. Although organizations are realities larger than individual human persons with their biological bodies, organizations do not lose their embodied character. Instead, organizations, through the mobilization of the attitudes, thoughts, views, and actual bodies of people, extend and strengthen each

²⁸⁴ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “organization.”

²⁸⁵ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “organize.”

individual's embodied capacities and processes through the individual's active participation in the organization. Instead of the sole individual's eyes, this individual now sees – organizationally – with the eyes of all other affiliated individuals, albeit in an analogous sense. Likewise, joining a militia adds other arms to one's own two arms, so one's self-defense is made more secure by organizing or linking up with other arms to combat perceived enemies. In the remainder of this chapter we come to an understanding of power from the bottom-up, that is, from the anthropological, by exploring anthropomorphic thinking about power: society as a body politic and the eye-hand coordination of this body politic as necessary for the exercise of power.

The understanding of society or the state as a body politic has a strong pedigree. A classic example of this line of thought in political theory is presented in Swiss writer Emer de Vattel's *The Law of Nations* (1758), a work highly influential during the early formation of the American nation and in debates over the admission of Missouri into the union as a free or slave state in and around 1820.²⁸⁶ In the opening line of his work, Vattel claims that "nations or states are bodies politic, societies of men united together for the purpose of promoting their mutual safety and advantage by the joint efforts of their combined strength."²⁸⁷ Human societies and states are here likened to a body, and each member of the body is important for its collective safety and advantage, that is, for its power. The very purpose of the establishment of a society is to procure, "to those who are its members, the necessities, conveniences, and even pleasures of life, and, in general, every thing necessary to their happiness,—of enabling each individual peaceably

²⁸⁶ Translated from the French original, *Le droit des gens. Ou Principes de la loi naturelle, appliques a la conduit & aux affaires des nations & dessouverains* (*The Law of Nations, or Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*).

²⁸⁷ Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, trans. Thomas Nugent, ed. Béla Kapossy and Richard Whatmore, *Natural Law and Enlightenment Classics* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2008), 67.

to enjoy his own property, and to obtain justice with safety and certainty,—and, finally, of defending themselves in a body against all external violence.”²⁸⁸ Through social and political organization, an individual as a member of this body is afforded better protection against external violence, aided in his or her quest for justice, and supported in the procurement of life’s necessities and pleasures. It is good, obviously, to have a personal body, but even better to be “in a body” that is social.

The danger was that the distinctly European visualization of the social and political body that Vattel’s thinking represents was taken to be the right way to think and for all peoples. One form of social organization, one genre of being human, and one way to describe and interpret this social world – the European form – was presumed to be both natural and applicable to all. Any groups of people who did not accept this social organization, activity, and parallel interpretation were lacking, incomplete, or worse, savage. Thus, the visualization and production of the body politic, especially as this related to land use and social space, was by no means neutral: there were beneficiaries and victims of such a social organization, imagination, and visibility. In Vattel’s time the victims were people around the world who Europeans saw as persisting in an “idle mode of life,” of hunting and living by their flocks, and who “usurp more extensive territories than, with a reasonable share of labour, they would have occasion for.”²⁸⁹ These peoples, therefore, have “no reason to complain, if other nations, more industrious, and too closely confined, come to take possession of a part of those lands.”²⁹⁰ So even while he

²⁸⁸ Vattel, *Law of Nations*, 126. Paragraph 15 of Book I reads: “The end or object of civil society is to procure for the citizens whatever they stand in need of, for the necessities, the conveniences, the accommodation of life, and, in general, whatever constitutes happiness,—with the peaceful possession of property, a method of obtaining justice with security, and, finally a mutual defence against all external violence” (Vattel, *Law of Nations*, 86).

²⁸⁹ Vattel, *Law of Nations*, 130.

²⁹⁰ Vattel, *Law of Nations*, 130.

acknowledges that the conquest of civilizations such as the “empires of Peru and Mexico” was “a notorious usurpation,” Vattel claims that the establishment of colonies on the North American continent “might... be extremely lawful.” For Vattel, “the people of those extensive tracts rather ranged through than inhabited them.”²⁹¹ Those who range through the land and do not view the land and put their hands to the land as is “natural,” like the Europeans do, are justifiably colonized. Although they may have roots in the land, they have no complete nation, no body politic of their own, no rights and legal claims to a space and place of their own, and can therefore serve as a colonized people, appropriated and appended as hands onto the body politic of the white nations. And if not appended, then extirpated. This logic was still on full display over a hundred years after Vattel’s time, when U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt claimed in 1894 that, “the white settler has merely moved into an uninhabited waste; he does not feel that he is committing a wrong, for he knows perfectly well that the land is really owned by no one.”²⁹²

Anthropomorphic Thinking and Metaphor

Thinking through the formation and role of organizations and society in terms of a body might seem too literalist or physicalist, the danger being that organizations naturalized in such a way as to be like other biological processes and entities can always resist challenge or critique by replying, if they reply, “it’s just the natural order of things.” However, we need to think of organizations as the primary means for the increasing of one’s own embodied power so we can also think about people in society in

²⁹¹ Vattel, *Law of Nations*, 130.

²⁹² Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894 [1989]), 119.

a way that connects the personal to the social, bodies to structures. In the varied discourses surrounding race, racism, and racialization, it is typical nowadays to hear talk of institutional, structural, cultural, or systemic racism, which are to be distinguished from personal bias, acts of bigotry, stereotyping, and other forms of racist prejudice.

While these distinctions are real and important, we also need to show how racism, even at a structural and institutional level, does not lose its embodied and personal character, although these characteristics are transformed when cast at an organizational level.

Following Rahner, organizations and social bodies bear the imprint of concupiscence just as concupiscence shows up in the lives of individuals. To understand how this is so, we need to take a quick detour through the world of cognitive linguistics to understand how our minds think about bodies and organizations in such an interconnected way.

What has been described above, namely, the thinking of organizations in terms of the human body and its members, is an example of anthropomorphism. In anthropomorphic thinking, humans think and talk about something in their world of experience in human terms and with the human form in mind. The classic example of this type of thinking is found in theology, where God is described in anthropomorphic ways: God hears, God regrets, God walks in the garden, God flares his nostrils in wrath, God speaks, God fights like a warrior, etc. In these cases, and in numerous others, God is depicted in human form, in human ways, doing human things. This thinking seeks to understand the less well known, in this case God, with something more known, human experience. Anthropomorphic thinking, as we have seen, also appears in our talk about society and social organizations. We speak of the body politic, corporations (again, from the Latin *corporare*, “to embody”), members (French, *membre*, classical Latin *membrum*,

limb, part of the body), eyes of society, military arms, brain trust, brain drain, hands (as in, “Fallujah fell into the hands of U.S. forces”), military posturing, and mobilization (relying on human motility for comparison). The way we talk about people getting together and doing things together takes the embodied, sensorimotor experience of humans as its basic reference.

A common response to this kind of thinking is that these notions are mere metaphors, that obviously the army as a collective doesn’t have *real* hands, corporations are not *actual* bodies, and the law *truly* doesn’t have eyes. These analogies stem from a primitive mind and represent an outmoded, or a poetic, way of thinking. But this is to miss the point and the unique way of thinking that anthropomorphisms represent. According to cognitive linguists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, the work of “matching and aligning the elements of two domains, finding the common schematic structure that motivates an analogy between them, are now recognized as formidable feats of imaginative work to which the current state of computational modeling cannot do justice.”²⁹³ The everyday analogies of organizations as bodies and related themes are “completely taken for granted by human beings at the conscious level... [and] seems like no work at all.”²⁹⁴ Psychologists, neuroscientists, and cognitive linguists now discover that analogy, “as a cognitive operation, [is] intricate, powerful, and fundamental.”²⁹⁵ In standard analogical reasoning, says Fauconnier and Turner, “a base source or domain is mapped onto a target so that inferences easily available in the source are exported to the target. We can thus reason about the target.”²⁹⁶ In many examples cited above, the source

²⁹³ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2003), 12.

²⁹⁴ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 12.

²⁹⁵ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 14.

²⁹⁶ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 35.

or domain is the experience of a human body, which gets mapped onto the target domain of social and community life. This conceptual process gives us insight into social organizations and the ability to reason about the nature of institutions and social life.

Theologian Robert Masson has done a great deal of work in reading and synthesizing much of the work in the burgeoning and diverse field of cognitive linguistics. As he explains, cognitive linguistics “conceives metaphor and related figurative language as conceptual mappings grounded in the neural mapping of the brain itself.”²⁹⁷ Following the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Masson argues that standard, or popular, accounts of metaphor suggest that metaphors are, 1) a mere matter of words, 2) based on similarity, 3) just a feature of poetic or rhetorical language, 4) deviations from the proper usage, and 5) at best only substitutes for literal language.²⁹⁸ Yet cognitive linguists have shown that these standard assumptions are false. Instead, “evidence indicates to the contrary not only that metaphors can make proper and irreducible truth claims, but that nearly all truth claims, at the very least, presuppose some underlying metaphorical or figurative conceptualization.”²⁹⁹ As Steven Winter aptly states, “all thought is irreducibly imaginative.”³⁰⁰ By this he means that “meaning arises in the imaginative interactions of the human organism with its world, and these embodied experiences provide both the grounding and the structure for human thought and rationality.”³⁰¹ If these statements were applied to the specific case of looking, then the way we think is directly influenced by the way we see, and the way we see is directly

²⁹⁷ Robert Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God: Theology after Cognitive Linguistics*, Studies in Philosophical Theology 54 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 4-5.

²⁹⁸ Masson, *Without Metaphor*, 10-11.

²⁹⁹ Masson, *Without Metaphor*, 11.

³⁰⁰ Steven L. Winter, *A Clearing in the Forest: Law, Life, and Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 115.

³⁰¹ Winter, *A Clearing*, xii.

influenced by the way we think; but both seeing and thinking are related to our body positions in the world and in social life. Similarly, the way we experience our bodies interacting with the world and other people impacts how we understand and experience social bodies. Zoltan Kövecses, another prominent cognitive linguist, claims that “the metaphors we use to understand... intangibles [time, inner life, mental processes, emotions, abstract qualities, moral values, social and political institutions] may become crucially important in the way we actually experience the intangibles in a culture.”³⁰² To give an example, if a primary conceptual metaphor by which we understand a nation is as a body politic, then this metaphor, which is based on our embodied experiences, might actually shape how we experience the various elements and institutions that make up society.

So when we speak of the eyes of the law, the head of government, a body of troops, or the hand of God, although these are all metaphors, they are all attempting to speak truly and faithfully about diverse human experiences so it connects the personal to the social, the embodied to the more abstract or even spiritual. We can *experience* – feel, sense, be aware of, and know – the eyes of society, the public eye, the eyes of the law, and the strong hand of government. These experiences of larger bodies with their eyes and hands cannot be simply reduced to what we encounter on a person to person basis, nor can they be completely severed from it. Someone can feel used or manipulated not just by a person but by a system. For example, in precarious situations, falling into the hands of the police could mean more than simply being cuffed by an individual police officer; it could also mean to be in the power and at the mercy of an entire system, the

³⁰² Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

Man, who was historically created by and for white men and “their” women. What is scary might not necessarily be the individual officer, although this is sometimes the case, but who or what backs them and who or what they represent. Similarly, one might experience the eyes of the police, or the FBI, or ICE, without referring to or pointing to the eyes of an individual officer. There might be something in the air, something atmospheric, or even a vibe or feeling that one gets from being watched or monitored.³⁰³

Anthropomorphisms are not primitive thinking but are rather a way for humans to understand realities in the world, as they come to them, out of their own personal and embodied experiences. As seen in the previous section, a basic anthropomorphic metaphor used for power both in our everyday thinking and speech is the hand. If power is the ability to take matter/s into one’s own hands to secure one’s substance, then we must consider not only the seeing aspect of “take” in the definition, but also its handling aspect. One not only sees the world a certain way, processes it, and imagines what it could be, thereby “taking it all in,” but also desires and attempts to impose their own image of the world on reality and make it actual. The ability to do this is power; power, because in this way humans display their creative spirit, ingenuity, and will to live, but also because they attain a certain degree of control over themselves and their worlds. To have power means to secure life in the broadest sense for oneself as a person and group. At this most basic level, power is the ability to keep on being able, to keep on having enough for life, to live a unique mode of being human. Negatively put, to be *in the grip* of addiction, or of disease; to be *in the hands of* another person or group; to suffer *at the hands of* another person or group; all these phrases refer to the experience, no matter how

³⁰³ See the documentary film, *The Feeling of Being Watched* (2018), directed by Assia Boundaoui. See <http://www.feelingofbeingwatched.com/>.

short or long, of powerlessness. To *grasp* an idea; to *get a grip* [on things, on oneself, on reality]; to *comprehend* [from the Latin *comprehendere* meaning to grasp or seize]; to *hold on* to life in the face of death; to *take in* a view; all these ways of speaking reveal how our primary sensorimotor experiences of grabbing, holding onto, and touching ground and imbue our conceptual frameworks and linguistic articulations when we think of power in our lives. They also speak to how hands are a vital and basic way for humans to gain and maintain power over their worlds and everything that makes up these worlds. To get ahold of something means that one can use it for one's individual or collective advantage. Yet to grab life by the horns, it is vitally important to see where life is, to visualize its possibilities. A major way that humans have control and power over their worlds and other people is through using their eyes, their power of vision and perception, as hands.

Power, then, is the ability to take, and the actual taking of, matter/s into one's own hands to secure one's substance. This power can be exercised on the level of an individual with their body but also through extensions of themselves via technology or organization with other people. Human power is directly related to this ability for persons to anthropomorphize themselves in the world (self-anthropomorphization). Several points related to this basic definition should be clarified now. First, when someone loses the ability to directly or indirectly secure their substance, their very life, they are in a powerless situation. When someone can indirectly secure their substance, for example, by relying on someone else or a group practice, then they have relatively more power. When someone can both directly and indirectly secure their substance, they have even more power. Again, to *take* something should be understood both in terms of a reading,

understanding, interpretation, or view of reality (“eyes”), and a concrete appropriation or possession of reality (“hands”). *Matter/s* means both material reality, matter, like soil, land, water, fruit, trees, atoms, or oil, and also matters in terms of circumstances or life situations. In the definition, the phrase *one’s own* should not be understood in a purely individualistic sense. *One’s own* can refer not only to a single person, but also to the group of people this person identifies with, feels with, and shares a common life with. As we have seen, white power is the restriction of *one’s own* to those who are perceived as “white” and the exclusion of the nonwhite other as not common and not a part of one’s life and what one considers to be one’s own. It follows that *one’s own* can be construed as limited to a certain family, tribe, city, region, nation, or hemisphere, or it can include all people to various degrees. *Substance* refers to property, wealth, money, relationships, social esteem, and anything else related to one’s livelihood, and biological life itself. *Substance* is one’s “stuff” in the multivalent sense of the word; stuff as in objects, things, but also as in one’s character (“what kind of stuff are you made of?”) and quality of life (“that’s the stuff!”). *Substance* is the somewhat older English word that gathers all these aspects of life and livelihood into one word. Again, humans organizing together into groups or using various technologies can serve to extend their corporeal and mental abilities and capacities to secure and protect their substance. This is precisely what is meant by self-anthropomorphization, that is, to extend one’s self with its embodied and sensorial abilities by linking up with other people and various technologies, whether guns, plows, hammers, political parties, labor unions, militias, or corporations. Self-anthropomorphization is the ability to spread or expand the shape and form of one’s life into the external world, especially the social world with its many organizations, to realize

one's life all the more fully. In terms of the history of white power in the United States, the self-anthropomorphization of humans has taken shape along racialized lines and has often excluded or used nonwhite others. People exerting white power attempt to limit the self-anthropomorphization of nonwhite others, that is, their extension of self and embodiment through space and time, even as they aggrandize white people and their communities.

To sum up Part I, white (eye) power is the organized “seeing to” of the socially constructed terrain of the world and mode of being human in order to secure and distribute substance along certain prescribed lines, especially the color line. This color line, following McKittrick, is not just a philosophical idea, but “an urgent geographic expression of the displacement of difference, a poetics-politics which sites/sights ‘physical extent fused through with social intent.’”³⁰⁴ Racialized demarcations are made in the personal and organizational realms and are employed to control access to substance, broadly construed, whether healthy food, affordable housing, standards of beauty, lawmaking, etc. By following human eyes and hands with their actions, their gestures, their power or their relative powerlessness, one can come to understand more intimately what we call struggles for power that take place individually or collectively. One can also come to a better understanding of the eye-hand relationship, and how Looks that kill should be understood as visual power grabs. Our looking is prehensile, that is, capable of grasping or holding; looks are tactile, sometimes violently so. Looks that kill can come from individuals or from various social bodies, including the body politic, and they arise out of an integralist “take” on the world. As a manifestation of concupiscence,

³⁰⁴ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 23.

Looks that kill stem from a lust for power, control, and domination. Looks that kill are a show of force, an attempt to assert one's own exclusive claim upon, and vision of, the world; they are territorial. In Part II we continue to explore this visual violence by looking at various white figures and groups throughout American history who sought to control people of color through various practices of looking ("eyecraft"), and the lingering effects of these practices in contemporary communities.

Part II: Eye Stems and Legacies

*Legacy, n. in extended use, a tangible or intangible thing handed down by a predecessor; a long-lasting effect of an event or process.*³⁰⁵

*Evil is the word! Those who have seen, at first hand, the eerie glow in the eyes of the racist, those who have heard their peculiar silences as they stand together in the shadows waiting for the forces within them to reach some mysterious point where inner confusion and self-hate turn into violent fury – those who have seen this are aware of what it means to see apparently good and harmless men possessed with an evil so total and so complete that they prefer not to understand it, or refer to it, or treat it as if it existed.*³⁰⁶

*Quiet as it's kept, whether we are "rioting" or not, most African Americans live every day with greater or lesser amounts of rage toward white people and the system that gives them the power and privilege to decimate our lives. I know I do.*³⁰⁷

In Part II we look at historical forms of unjust looks – four “eyes” – that linger in and around the manifestation of Looks that kill in contemporary life: the overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes. To a greater or lesser degree, the practices and habits that trained these eyes in the past still influence contemporary practices of seeing, especially as directed at people of color. The four eyes, or concrete modes of visibility, are the eye stems, the visual roots, of unjust looks that get thrown or shot at people today, whether from racists or from organized eyepower like the military or the police. These eyes with their looks are legacies because they are intangible things handed down by white American predecessors with tangible effects on our nation and on the lives of numerous individuals. The four eyes represent white (eye) power in concrete, historical situations, performing specific functions, which depended on both the eyes of individuals and the eyes of the body politic or other social bodies for their success.

³⁰⁵ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “legacy.”

³⁰⁶ Merton, *Seeds*, 81.

³⁰⁷ Barbara Smith, *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 103.

Success was implicitly or explicitly defined as the production, maintenance, and reproduction of the substance of white people (“whitestuff”).

In what follows the four eyes and the figures most associated with them – plantation overseers and masters, slave patrollers and slave catchers, Ku-Kluxers and segregationists – are explored chronologically and are all seen as involved in eyecraft, or, the skillful use of the eyes. Just as in various practices of handicraft a person uses and trains their hands to work with greater skill and dexterity at a task, so also in eyecraft a person or corporate group uses and trains their eyes to do efficient and skillful work on various materials, whether words on a page or, as we will see, human bodies. The advantage of using the language of eyecraft to describe a central function of these figures’ eyes is that it helps us to see the interconnection between making and seeing, laboring and vision, praxis and theory, hands and eyes. The language also helps to highlight how looking *works on* others, chiseling meaning onto them, marking them, or circumscribing them into certain roles, tasks, appearances, or behaviors. By delineating the eyecraft of various individual and social eyes, we can come to a better understanding of how seeing is a kind of praxis that works to shape reality according to a particular vision of the world.

After examining eye forms from the past and the figures who actualized them in the concrete, we will explore the continuity between these eyes and the policing eye in contemporary American life, a site/sight of immense public contestation. We suggest that the watchful eye of the police is an eye which has, at least, been shaped by the very forces behind the production of the overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes. This history needs to be recalled and acknowledged so that those who see in the

police a vital institution for the common good can also come to some understanding of how other people might not share the same view. Because policing institutions are one place where the eye and the hand of the body politic issues forth with “force” in society, they often become the focal point for contrasting judgments on the state of justice in society. Police actions and behaviors often serve as a litmus test for how just or unjust, how racist or “color-blind,” the whole American system is. Further, Looks that kill have been experienced by some people as issuing not just from “bad racists” like Roof, Page, or Stroman, but from police officers and other figures associated with the criminal justice system. Local events from Milwaukee in August 2016 fit the pattern found elsewhere around the nation where antagonism and open conflict between communities and the police flared up in the aftermath of police shootings and other instances of police brutality. Was this or that shooting yet another instance of a Look that kills, or was it simply someone doing their job? Is it somehow both?

Part II addresses these questions by characterizing the contemporary “eye” complicit in Looks that kill as a spectral eye, that is, an eye experienced as the convergence and reappearing of the overseeing, patrolling, and cycloptic eyes felt to have the same material impact on lives today as these eyes had on others in history. Such a spectral eye does not mean an eye, or way of seeing, that isn’t real or that is solely immaterial, but an eye that haunts, that appears and vanishes in different historical moments and at different geographical locations but is generally experienced as the presence of “someone-*looking-to-put-me/us-down*.”³⁰⁸ This spectral eye gives off the

³⁰⁸ In the phrase, “someone-*looking-to-put-me/us-down*,” we intentionally leave “put-me/us-down” ambiguous, as it could mean *to put down* as one “puts down” a pet (as in kills them), or as one “puts down” a rebellion (like a slave rebellion), or as one “puts down” another person with an insult or show of disrespect, or more literally as one physically “puts down” someone (like what happened to Rodney King). In these examples, individuals or groups could be targeted by such a “looking,” hence the “me/us” in the phrase.

same vibe as the title to a recent horror movie: *It Follows* (2015).³⁰⁹ In Sherman Park, Milwaukee as in other neighborhoods across the country, the spectral eye, the “It,” that creepily follows and watches people of color as it watched those in the past, most forcefully materializes itself in the looks of police officers and others perceived and felt to be exploiting the community, whether physically, socially, or economically.³¹⁰ Before analyzing the spectral aspect of Looks that kill, however, we need to understand the production of watching eyes in the past that set the stage for its enfleshed hauntings today.

³⁰⁹ The phrase “it follows” can also be related to the infamous *partus sequitur ventrem* law, whereby “the condition of the slave mother is ‘forever entailed [better: *follows*] on all her remotest posterity.” This *sequitur*, the slavery condition that follows, is paralleled by an eye, an unjust look, that *follows*. For a discussion of the slavery law see Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, No. 2 (Summer, 1987): 79.

³¹⁰ We are not claiming to give a definitive interpretation of the events in Sherman Park, nor do we think such a definitive interpretation is possible. In fact, there are as many interpretations of what was happening as events unfolded as there were people involved, and the number grew even more as people watched the news or followed events on the Internet or through the newspapers. For a great series on a number of local perspectives three years after the events, see Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service’s “Unrest in Sherman Park: Three years later,” accessed December 11, 2019, <https://milwaukeeenns.org/tag/sherman-park-three-years-later>.

Chapter 4: In White Fields

*“However varied the useful kinds of labour, or productive activities, may be, it is a physiological fact, that they are functions of the human organism, and that each such function, whatever may be its nature or form, is essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles, etc.”*³¹¹

*“Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward. We shall constitute one-third and more the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.”*³¹²

*“If you wus out widout a pass dey would shore git you. De paterollers shore looked after you. Dey would come to de house at night to see who wus there. If you wus out of place, dey would wear you out.”*³¹³

In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Karl Marx states that “the forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.”³¹⁴ For him, the five senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling are not simply neutral givens in the constitution of humans, ready-made for immediate and impartial use, but are produced by human history and culture through concrete practices and parallel mental constructions. The senses are not just biologically or

³¹¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1967), 71.

³¹² Booker T. Washington, “The Standard Printed Version of the Atlanta Exposition Address,” September 18, 1895, in Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 3 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 585-86. For a recent look at Washington’s rhetoric of “hands” in this famous address, see Paul Stob, “Black hands push back: Reconsidering the rhetoric of Booker T. Washington,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 2 (2018): 145-165.

³¹³ Library of Congress, Digital Collections, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938*, Work Projects Administration, *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*, vol. 11.1, North Carolina, 134. Hereafter FWP, state volume.part, page number. For a discussion of issues related to historiography, background, and the uses of the collection, see John W. Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 4 (November 1975): 473-492; Donna J. Spindel, “Assessing Memory: Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives Reconsidered,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 247-261; Norman R. Yetman, “The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection,” *American Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (Autumn, 1967): 534-553; and Norman R. Yetman, “Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery,” *American Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 181-210.

³¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 141. Marx’s statement also appears as an epigraph to the collection of essays: David Michael Levin, ed., *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

genetically given but are also socially and culturally produced. Building on Marx's observation, David Michael Levin claims that "since history is not only the past, but is also always in the making, our sensibility is an unfinished social task, a current social responsibility."³¹⁵ The forming of our human senses is both a task and a responsibility. For Levin, we are responsible for the "collective task" of "the *humanization* of our sensibility and the *culture* of our capacities for perception."³¹⁶ If our modes of perception are indeed capacities to be developed and not merely automatically given by nature, if they are sociogenic, then we must continue to reflect on the many ways our senses become unjust and dehumanizing, whereby we unjustly see, hear, touch (or "handle"), speak to, and even smell one another. Along these same lines, Levin speaks of the need to reflect on what he calls "the ethical character of vision" and how the way we see others is trained in just or unjust ways throughout history.³¹⁷ "The full realization of our humanity in its *bodily* being," he says, "is certainly not possible, and not in the end conceivable, without the full support of a social and political context."³¹⁸ These social and political contexts, however, have historically produced and distributed the substance of human life along certain racialized, gendered, classed, and other marked lines, thus training the senses of millions to receive the world in stereotypical ways: "the conditions of society as a whole bear in many decisive ways, some of them oppressive and destructive, on the development of individual predispositions and capacities."³¹⁹ While this determining of

³¹⁵ David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 31. Commenting on Marx's statement elsewhere, Levin states that, "if our vision, our capacity for seeing, is historical, it is precisely not a 'fate,' a mere event of nature, but a disposition that is at least partially subject to our volition, our second-order desires, our reflexive, self-critical rationality – and is thus a matter that calls on our responsibility" (Levin, *Sites of Vision*, 63-64).

³¹⁶ Levin, *Body's Recollection*, 31.

³¹⁷ Levin, *Body's Recollection*, 39.

³¹⁸ Levin, *Body's Recollection*, 32.

³¹⁹ Levin, *Opening of Vision*, 10.

the individual's capacities for perception by societal conditions is never total or absolute, it must be recognized and considered. For, as Steven Lukes claims, "the supreme and most insidious exercise of power" is precisely "to prevent people... from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial."³²⁰ A critical view of perceptual production in society thus seems a fruitful place to begin a brief history of the eyecraft that is so important in producing and shaping Looks that kill.

Eye Production

Marx's statement that the cultivation or production of the human senses is a labor further challenges us to explore the connection between laboring and looking. What, if any, is the connection between unjust economic practices or systems and Looks that kill? We have seen how European and American conquest and subsequent colonization and settling in parts of Africa, Asia, and the Americas contributed to the factoring of "Negro" and "slave," and the "manipulation" of nonwhite hands for use in mines, fields, and houses. Labor history itself can be understood as a history of asceticism, of a training of the human senses oriented toward the production of something, toward an object. But in producing something – and through our methods, means, and learning necessary to produce this something – we also produce ourselves, our senses, our corporeal and intellectual comportment toward the world and other humans. How we *take* matter shapes our *take on* matters, and vice versa. As Bryan Nelson teaches about Marx's take on

³²⁰ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 24.

empiricism, “the very organisation of experience is not given *a priori*, before the subject, but develops according to the process of the subject’s self-constitution through experience itself.”³²¹ The subject is “that which unfolds or emerges from the field of experience itself,” and can in no way be disconnected from its concrete, embodied practices, especially its labor. Also, the subject cannot be disconnected from the social and historical: human subjectivity is “composed not in isolation, generated from *thin air*, but against the particular social arrangements which constitute his basic material productive relations.”³²²

Because the senses “are composed through the appropriation of their objects, which themselves possess a particular history, society, set of human relations, the senses themselves must be understood as historical.”³²³ In his interpretation of Marx, Nelson distinguishes between the “direct senses” and the “social senses,” what he calls “two sides” of the senses.³²⁴ Direct senses “represent the passivity of experience as need: practical, asocial or pre-social, the biology of the sense organs which belong to a natural history of the species.”³²⁵ Our direct senses have evolved out of “the immediacy of experience” and point to “the unmediated force or vivacity of sense impressions.”³²⁶ But the social senses embody a related, though distinct, history. As Marx states, “apart from these direct organs, *social* organs are therefore created in the *form* of society.”³²⁷ Our senses have “a social, inter-subjective quality as *social organs*.”³²⁸ Indeed “the *human*

³²¹ Bryan Nelson, “Politics of the senses: Karl Marx and empirical subjectivity,” *Subjectivity* 4, no. 4 (2011): 401.

³²² Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 403. Emphasis in the original.

³²³ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 407.

³²⁴ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 407.

³²⁵ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 407.

³²⁶ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 407.

³²⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 140. Italics in original.

³²⁸ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 408.

eye,” says Marx, “takes in things in a different way from the crude non-human eye.”³²⁹

The fact that humans are both social and historical means that their eyes, their “taking-in-of-things” and “take on matters,” are involved in a much more complex process than can be found in other animals. The processes involved in human seeing cannot be reduced to physiology, biology, or even neurology; sociogeny is involved. The social organs or senses of a society thus represent “collective human praxis” in their appropriation of its objects.³³⁰ It is important to note that the eyes of society are different for each society and arise out of the *form* the society takes in its collective practices towards its objects, which are its very life externalized and objectified. Interestingly, Marx will write that it is in their immediate praxis that “the senses become *theoreticians*.”³³¹ Put differently by Nelson, “as they appropriate their objects, the senses become the active expression of their particular historical conditions; they embody and reflect, as it were, the social character of their appropriated objects.”³³² Embedded in the concrete looks of a person are all kinds of social ideas and theories that they have consented to whether consciously or not.³³³

It would be wrong, therefore, to say that capitalism is *just* the organization of production, for it is *also* the “organization of experience itself,” and especially the organization of our sensorial comportment toward matter/s.³³⁴ While on one level, the direct senses, humans “take in” the world in a similar way across time and cultures, as

³²⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 140. Italics in original.

³³⁰ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 408.

³³¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 139. Italics in original.

³³² Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 409.

³³³ Importantly, the English word “consent” is related etymologically to the Latin *consentire*, to feel together, agree, accord, harmonize. The Latin word is made up of *con-* together + *sentire* to feel, think, judge. Consent is not only an intellectual matter but an embodied and sensed one. *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “consent.”

³³⁴ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 409.

they are all members of the same animal species, on another level, the social senses, humans under a capitalist system do, in a real sense, “take” the world differently and experience the world in a way that others not trained and formed by capitalism, or other systems of production, do not. Capitalism, for Marx, “represents the corruption of the senses, the deterioration of their social quality, their inability to experience in a *human way*” because “as the senses are composed according to the experience of private property, the diversity of the senses, as the very possibility of experience, is reduced to a one-dimensional sense of possession, of *having*.”³³⁵ As Marx bluntly states, “private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital or when we directly possess, eat, drink, wear, inhabit it, etc., in short, when we *use* it.”³³⁶ For him, the emancipation of the senses could only come about with the supersession of private property, in which objects would be restored as a “truly collective, social object.”³³⁷ As Marx says in a revelatory footnote, “In practice I can relate myself to a thing humanly only if the thing relates itself humanly to the human being.”³³⁸ Under a capitalist system where private property is a major feature, it is difficult to relate humanly to things because these things are regarded and used in privatized fashion, thus destroying the social character of these things and so the possibility of a human sense of them. Whether or not one agrees with his analysis of private property, our senses are shaped by social practices. The *having*-character of senses formed within various capitalist “takes” on matter/s means that *having* is a crucial factor in the seeing of those who grow, develop, and live within these societies.

³³⁵ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 409. As noted in the last chapter, even Pope Francis will talk about the process of how our fundamental comportment toward reality can be one of “having,” and the problems that result from this.

³³⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 139.

³³⁷ Nelson, “Politics of the Senses,” 410.

³³⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 139.

As we have seen, human eyepower has been used as a coercive and violent force throughout history to control various human populations to produce certain desired benefits for some at the expense of others. The subjects considered in this chapter put their eyes to work to earn a living, or simply to secure their own substance in the face of the claims of others. However, their eyes also performed the vital social functions of extracting labor from other humans and controlling their movements to stabilize the production process. The overseeing and patrolling eyes were not isolated from the rest of the eyes of white society, but were a part of the general policing of the free and enslaved black population which sought to subordinate them to an inferior social, economic, and political status in society. In terms of American overseeing, a racialized eyecraft was employed in fields of indigo, tobacco, sugar cane, and especially cotton. White fields would become the preserve of white people, whose visual domination of the productive activities of the field greatly shaped their own field of vision and gave them a sense of who belongs where, who matters to what, and who is the master of the field, of its productive and reproductive processes.

The Overseeing Eye

The history of overseers and their Latinized counterparts, *supervisors* (from *super*, “over,” “above,” and *videre*, “to see”), allows us to explore how commodities, whether from fields or factories or corporate offices, are produced in part by someone seeing to workers and their embodied actions to bring about a desired outcome: profit. The production of goods occurs because of a prior look or regard that values matter/s in a certain way, and this matter includes not only raw materials but human bodies. In this dynamic process people come to be looked at, or considered, with a view to what their

efforts can contribute to making a product to be sold in the market for profit. In this look that considers humans as a means to help along making a product, and ultimately a profit, there is a certain blurring of what Levin calls the “ethical character of vision.” The end goal of the productive process, which ought to be the life of the human which is expended as energy to make something, is actually to turn a profit. The drive and competition to make the most profit possible incentivizes cutting costs throughout the production process, including the cost of labor. When looking for cheaper labor, or basically free labor in the system of slavery, the goal of profit has usurped the goal of a free and flourishing human life. The consideration of people in terms of labor power alone is a reductionist consideration of them as a means, as an instrumental part of the process, and not as the very goal of this process. As Marx said about the proletarian, but which could be equally applied to the enslaved person: “political economy can... advance the proposition that the proletarian, the same as any horse, must get as much as will enable him to work. It does not consider him when he is not working, as a human being; but leaves such consideration to criminal law, to doctors, to religion, to the statistical tables, to politics and to the poorhouse overseer.”³³⁹ This is precisely why people protest exploitative businesses with the slogan, “People Before Profit!”

One historical profession explicitly charged with putting profit before “people” – so long as the “people” were somewhat maintained in health and functioning – was the overseer in the antebellum American South and various colonies around the world. According to historian William Scarborough, “to the overseer were entrusted the welfare and *supervision* of the Negroes; the care of the land, stock, and farm implements; the

³³⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 72.

planting, cultivation, and harvesting of both staple and subsistence crops; and many other responsibilities associated with the management of a commercial agricultural enterprise.”³⁴⁰ The “supervision of the Negroes” included the disciplining of enslaved persons for breaking plantation rules, taking care of their medical needs, ensuring that they were “properly fed and reasonably clean,” and making “periodic inspections of slave cabins” to make sure everyone was accounted for and to look for weapons.³⁴¹ Finally, “upon the overseer depended, ‘to a large extent, the security of the whites against uprisings of slaves.’”³⁴² Overseers not only saw to the economic security of families within the white community but also to their security and survival as a social body. As John Spencer Bassett wrote in 1925, “The planter might plan and incite, and the slave might dig, plow, and gather into barns: it was the overseer who brought the mind of the one and the muscle of the other into cooperation. As he did his part well or poorly the plantation prospered or failed.”³⁴³

William E. Wiethoff hits on another aspect of the overseer’s role when he claims that “perceptions of overseers were frequently negative, but in response to public concern over slave revolts, southern legislators fashioned an apparently meritorious public image: the spy.”³⁴⁴ In the public’s interest (that is, the interest of the white public), overseers as spies “were authorized to monitor slave activity, take the initiative to disrupt suspicious

³⁴⁰ William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), xi. Italics mine. While Scarborough’s work is dated in many respects, I am using it mainly for quotations and statistical data, not for his more interpretive analysis of the overseer, which has a slightly apologetic and rehabilitative take on overseers as a group.

³⁴¹ See Scarborough, *Overseer*, 67–68.

³⁴² Scarborough, *Overseer*, 68. Quoting V. Alton Moody, “Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, VII (April 1924): 209.

³⁴³ John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer: As Revealed in His Letters* (New York, NY: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 2.

³⁴⁴ William E. Wiethoff, *Crafting the Overseer’s Image* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 133.

behavior, and punish offenders on the spot.”³⁴⁵ In the words of Judge David Johnson of South Carolina, it was “imperative” to require through statute “a white spy upon [slaves’] conduct.”³⁴⁶ Some overseers seemed weary of this work of surveilling enslaved people, as did one Alabama overseer who bemoaned that “to make a spy of himself, and to be clandestinely peeping and prowling about Negro houses when honest men should be asleep, is, to my mind, a *small* business.”³⁴⁷ Yet to the minds of the white community, someone had to do this business – and a *business* it was – to secure their life and property. The “peeping” aspect of overseeing which involved regularly looking through windows and doorways of the houses and quarters of enslaved persons in order to “check on them,” meant that the private and intimate spaces of the lives of enslaved persons were in constant threat of being violated. The whole scheme and experiential mode of living the private and the public was often denied to enslaved people.³⁴⁸ White people held for themselves the prerogative to invade the intimate spaces of black people, including their bodies, wherever and whenever they chose. McKittrick, in describing the experiences of black women, notes that in this system of subjection “geographies of whiteness, white femininity, white masculinity, and white corporeality are, for the most part, rendered protected and protectable. Slave quarters, plantation homes, fields, kitchens are, for black women, unprotected – it is in the material landscape, at work, in the home, and within the

³⁴⁵ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 133.

³⁴⁶ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 133.

³⁴⁷ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 133. Italics in original.

³⁴⁸ According to Luis Althusser, “The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its ‘authority’. The domain of the State escapes it because the latter is ‘above the law’: the State, which is the State *of* the ruling class, is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private.” The purpose of sharing this quote is to highlight the fact that “private” and “public” are not “natural” realities that are experienced in the same way (or at all) by all classes of people, but are immediately related to, and dictated by, social relations of domination and subordination, with the dominant ones setting the laws and conditions for what is public and private and which are experienced as such. See Luis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 97.

community, where the body is rightfully retranslated as inferior, captive, and accessible to violences.”³⁴⁹ Looks that kill often seem disrespectful, rude, or invasive; they are forcefully intimate and personal. They *subject* others to the degrading experience of being treated and used as an *object*, especially in places meant to act as cover against outside forces and gazes.

More generally, Nicholas Mirzoeff has described “the ordering of slavery” as “a combination of violent enforcement and visualized surveillance that sustained the new colonial order of things.”³⁵⁰ As he explains, “visuality’s first domains were the slave plantation, monitored by the surveillance of the overseer, operating as the surrogate of the sovereign,” or the master.³⁵¹ The oversight of plantations helped to maintain “a delineated space in which all life and labor were directed from its central viewpoint because the production of colonial cash crops, especially sugar, required a precise discipline, centered on surveillance, while being dependent on spectacular and excessive physical punishment.”³⁵² The surveilling and disciplining practices that took shape in fields would go a long way in shaping the field of vision through which white individuals and communities saw themselves in relation to nonwhite others, and vice versa. As James Scott states, “A work party of serfs or slaves in the field under the supervision of an overseer on horseback is both a discursive affirmation of power relations and, of course, the process of material production itself.”³⁵³ The symbolic and material power of violent force was used to *impress upon* these “others” their subordinate position within the social order and their functional position in the economic field. White people were masters of

³⁴⁹ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 82.

³⁵⁰ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 2.

³⁵¹ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 2. On “visuality,” see Chapter 2: Eyeballing the Other.

³⁵² Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 50.

³⁵³ Scott, *Domination*, 46.

the field, that is, of the *field* of experience, the cotton *field*, the *field* of vision, and even the *field* of battle should rebellion or armed conflict arise. We emphasize the “field” in these articulations not only to point out their interrelationship, but also to highlight the spatial and territorial aspects of the overseeing eye.

Interestingly, the philosopher Martin Heidegger also tied the practices of command and domination to the overseeing eye, a phenomenon he located not in colonialism but in the *imperium* of ancient Romans. But his comments give insight into European and American overseeing eyes, which themselves were tied culturally and linguistically to Roman law and practices. According to him,

Command, as the essential ground of domination, includes being-superior, which is only possible as the constant surmounting of others, who are thereby the inferiors. In this surmounting there resides again the constant ability to oversee. We say that to “oversee” something means to “dominate” it. This overseeing, which includes the surmounting, involves a constant “being-on-the-watch.” That is the form of acting which oversees everything but still keeps to itself: in Latin, the *actio* [“activity”] of the *actus* [“act”]. The surmounting overseeing denotes the dominating “sight” expressed in the often quoted phrase of Caesar: *veni, vidi, vici* – I came, I *oversaw*, and I conquered. Victory is only the effect of Caesar’s seeing and overseeing, whose proper character is *actio*.³⁵⁴

The overseeing eye commands and dominates a flurry of activity performed by inferiors, which is contained within its own act of seeing, or, visualizing. The very nature of overseeing is to have something or someone “under” its eye, whether people, things, or activities. As a practice of visualization, the overseeing eye greatly shaped white European and American perceptions of themselves as “being-superior,” a “being-superior” that was always protected through the constant social and visual practice of “being-on-the-watch.” *I came, I oversaw, I extracted...*

³⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 40-41.

In the context of plantations, the “central viewpoint” from which life and labor processes were directed in the field belonged to the eyes of the planter or master and his surrogate eye, the overseer, who applied technical knowledge and equipment not only to cash crop production, but also to the surveilling and disciplining of enslaved persons.³⁵⁵ It was the overseer’s task to position the enslaved person as seeable “in their place,” that is, the place where white people desired them to be. For the cuffed person, “the logic of visualization and patriarchal knowledge means that her place and body are seen to be, and understood as, naturally subordinate to whiteness and masculinity.”³⁵⁶ It was the enslaved person’s “seeable presence” that gave white people, especially the masters, a “sense of place” and a sense of security.³⁵⁷ In white fields one expected to see black hands, a site/sight which in the master’s own eyes no doubt confirmed his sense of power, of accomplishment, of control, and of character as a true gentleman. Overseers themselves probably aspired to such a vision of life and of themselves.

Overseeing had historical precedents in colonial America both in the North and the South. Eminent historian Carter G. Woodson noted back in 1918 that, “knowing the likelihood of the Negroes to rise during the French and Indian War, Governor Dinwiddie wrote Fox one of the Secretaries of State in 1756: ‘We dare not venture to part with any of our white men any distance, as we must have a *watchful eye* over our Negro slaves,

³⁵⁵ See McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 40, where McKittrick discusses the experience of Linda Brent as related in Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life*. It is noteworthy that McKittrick uses the language of visualization to describe these site/sights or fields of domination and subordination: “that which is used to geographically displace and regulate black women during slavery, specifically patriarchal ways of seeing and white colonial desires for lands, free labor, and racial-sexual domination, rest on a tight hierarchy of racial power and knowledge that is spatially organized. This organization assumes white masculine knowledge and the logic of visualization, which both work to objectify [the enslaved person] and her community and negate their unique sense of place.”

³⁵⁶ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 40.

³⁵⁷ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 40.

who are upwards of one hundred thousand.”³⁵⁸ Later, as we have seen, *fleshing out* this watchful eye became the job of the overseer and others like him who would carry out the socio-visual practice of watching and directing others. Many states enacted laws requiring an overseer on each plantation and in doing so revealed a practical desire to control and coerce people to produce through such oversight: “following an abortive slave revolt in St. John the Baptist Parish, the Louisiana legislature in 1815 specified that there should be one white person in residence on a plantation for every thirty slaves.”³⁵⁹ It was also legislated that fines of up to \$500 were to be given to any offenders. Wiethoff has traced this history of states requiring oversight of plantations even further back in time. He notes that “Carolina’s general assembly decreed in 1696 that ‘one or more white person’ must reside on every ‘plantation or Cow Penn’” or else “absentee owners could be fined five pounds for each six-month period in which proper supervision was lacking.”³⁶⁰ When Georgia legalized slavery around 1750, a planter was required to “employ ‘one white Man servant’ capable of bearing arms and between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five for every ‘four Male Negroes or Blacks’” enslaved on a plantation.³⁶¹ Again, failure to comply with this law would be met with fines. Wiethoff recounts an incident in Alabama in the 1850s when the state ruled against one William P.

³⁵⁸ Carter Godwin Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1918), 12. Italics mine. Robert Dinwiddie (1692-1770) was a British colonial lieutenant governor of Virginia from 1751-1758. The quote can be found in his *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, vol. 2 (Richmond, VA: Virginia Historical Society, 1883), 414. In another letter to the Earl of Halifax following a British defeat against French and native forces, dated July 23, 1755, Dinwiddie wrote: “I must leave a proper number [of men] in each county to protect it from the Combinations of the Negro Slaves, who have been very audacious on the Defeat on the Ohio. These poor Creatures imagine the French will give them their Freedom. We have too many here, but I hope we shall be able to defeat the Designs of our Enemies and keep these Slaves in proper Subject’n” (114). This note reveals a fear that the black population will *organize*, that is, “combine” their corporeal powers (arms, eyes, etc.) and so cast off the “proper subjection” imposed on them by the British. Elsewhere Dinwiddie acknowledges his fear of such “audacious” resistance: “The villainy of the Negroes on any emergency of government is what I always feared” (102). Both eye training and organized eyepower are recurrent themes throughout his correspondence.

³⁵⁹ Scarborough, *Overseer*, 14.

³⁶⁰ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 135.

³⁶¹ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 136.

Molett because, even though he was residing “four miles distant” on another plantation he owned, he had endangered the “peace and good order, and security of life and property” by not dwelling on his own Mill Place plantation.³⁶² The eyes of the white body needed overseers to see to its own substance, and its looks toward others would continue to demonstrate a sometimes obsessive concern for the order, security, and property of white people. Not surprisingly, by 1860 nearly 38,000 people worked as overseers on plantations in the United States.³⁶³

Drawn primarily from “the yeoman or middling classes,” overseers were paid to professionally supervise, or literally “watch over,” enslaved people to coerce their bodies to labor with a view to profit.³⁶⁴ For Mirzoeff, the overseer’s “looking is... a form of labor that compels unwaged labor to generate profit from the land.”³⁶⁵ Similarly, Robert F. W. Allston wrote in 1863 it was “absolutely necessary” to have his overseers “for the security and proper *police* of... negroes together with the direction of their labor in producing.”³⁶⁶ Another planter on the colonized island of Saint-Domingue noted that the main job of the overseer was “to never leave the slave for an instant in inaction; he keeps the fabrication of sugar under surveillance, never leaving the sugar-mill for an instant.”³⁶⁷ Scott aptly notes the overseeing logic: “those in involuntary service need close

³⁶² Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 136. This ruling disregarded the fact that Molett’s different plantation lands were contiguous.

³⁶³ See Scarborough, *Overseer*, 10.

³⁶⁴ See Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 84. Merritt dispels the myth that overseers were poor white men, or “poor white trash” as they were sometimes called in order to demean their characters or reputations. Instead, “sometimes the younger sons of affluent slaveholders spent parts of their early adulthoods learning to manage slaves, buying time until they could purchase their own land and slaves or acquire them through inheritance. Overseers often were paid well... [and] the vast majority of overseers needed to know how to read and write, and many were required to have basic math skills” (84).

³⁶⁵ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 52.

³⁶⁶ R. F. W. Allston to the Secretary of War, January 5, 1864, in J. H. Easterby, ed., *The South Carolina Rice Plantation: As Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 278-279. See Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 177. Emphasis mine.

³⁶⁷ Quoted in Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 55.

supervision, inasmuch as any lapse in surveillance is likely to result in a precipitous decline in the apparent enthusiasm of their performance.”³⁶⁸ In these systems, what was needed was an eye, backed with the symbolic threat and actual use of force, that could keep the “hands” moving and working.

Patty B. Semple, a correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*, described one Kentucky farmer in antebellum days: “A practical farmer, he insisted that the work should be properly done, and to keep the indolent, careless Negroes up to the mark required an immense amount of *oversight*. His horse was saddled before breakfast, and he was mounted, and about the farm early and late, knowing the old maxim that *the eye of the master will do more work than both his hands*.”³⁶⁹ Sure enough, “at ‘sun-up’ his stentorian voice would be heard *starting the hands*.”³⁷⁰ Any maxim, like the one articulated here, is shared wisdom among people who also share a common approach to life and its tasks. The eye of the master or overseer “works” more than his hands because its threatening, practical, and directing look *starts*, moves, or causes other “hands” to work. In starting these hands with his eye, their labor becomes his own, an extension of his own body and personality. This is manipulation in its basic form: to direct and control the hands of another, their actions, as if they extended one’s own. A master or overseer thus doesn’t have simply two hands, but perhaps four, or a dozen, or a couple hundred. The above maxim reveals a reduction of the human to equipment that is ready-at-hand to be used by another for their own desires and ends.³⁷¹ Ultimately, the “Negroes” needed to

³⁶⁸ Scott, *Domination*, 110.

³⁶⁹ Quoted in Booker T. Washington, *A New Negro for a New Century*, ed. J. E. MacBready (Miami, FL: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969), 315-316. Italics mine.

³⁷⁰ Washington, *A New Negro*, 316. Italics mine.

³⁷¹ As Levin states, “The gesturing of our hands is not only the first, but also the foremost manifestation of *das Ge-stell* – the setting down or placing which makes something permanently present and always available for our use” (Levin, *Body’s Recollection*, 134).

be kept “up to the mark.”³⁷² The forced labor and physical violence endured by enslaved persons was rooted in a look that did violence to their humanity because they were regarded and treated as tools. In this context, Looks that kill were dispatched to extract the labor power of others and put it to use for one’s own practical purposes. Just as “the care-burdened man in need has no sense for the finest play,” and “the dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value but not the beauty and the unique nature of the mineral... [because] he has no mineralogical sense,” so the overseer sees the use value of the bodies of enslaved persons and puts them to good use.³⁷³

Speculating Eyes

It should come as no surprise to find the auction block, like the field, as a site where the visionary practices of the white community further ingrained a distorted view of other humans. As Katherine McKittrick notes, domination is “a visible spatial project that organizes, names, and sees social differences (such as black femininity) and determines *where* social order happens.”³⁷⁴ The auction block, like the field, was socially and physically produced to shape the sights of white people, to train their regard for black people in terms of use and exchange value, labor potential, and sexual functioning. Labor power, for McKittrick, was “secured by the auction block” because “the meticulous observations of bodies, coupled by the need for healthy working bodies, guaranteed

³⁷² Yet the standard is a killer, as James Baldwin noted in an interview with Nikki Giovanni: “the standards which have almost killed you are really mercantile standards. They’re based on cotton; they’re based on oil; they’re based on peanuts; they’re based on profits.” Giovanni, Nikki, “Dialogue Between Nikki Giovanni and James Baldwin,” in *James Baldwin, Nikki Giovanni: A Dialogue* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1973), 19-20.

³⁷³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic*, 141. Slave traders and speculators were concerned with seeing the exchange value of enslaved persons. Karl Marx defines use-value simply as “the utility of a thing” and as that which “become[s] a reality only by use or consumption” (Marx, *Capital*, 36). Exchange value is “the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort” (36). These two values are characteristics of a “commodity,” which is “an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another” (35). In the American plantation economy, the commodification of human beings took place especially through practices of looking and speculating.

³⁷⁴ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xiv.

(forced) economic advancement and progress.”³⁷⁵ Also, the forced display of enslaved people in the fields or on auction blocks naturalized the presence of black people in certain places, both physically and socially, rather than others: “race becomes attached to place in detrimental ways because local conditions reify and naturalize identity-difference.”³⁷⁶ One witness from Florida, Edward Lycurgas, shared his memory of the site of speculative looks:

They’d bring a slave out on the flatform and open his mouth, pound his chest, make him harden his muscles so the buyer could see what he was gittin’. Young men was called ‘bucks’ and young women ‘wenches.’ The person that offered the best price was the buyer. And dey shore did git rid uf some pretty gals, Dey always looked so shame and pitiful up on dat stand wid all dem men standin’ dere *lookin’ at em wid what dey had on dey minds shinin in they eyes.*³⁷⁷

The violence to the human person, as displayed on a platform, occurred through prodding and pounding the enslaved person’s body, checking their teeth, squeezing their breasts, making them jump, and calling them bucks and wenches, or elsewhere, studs, hands, and help. To use the words of philosopher George Yancy, “Under the pressure of so many white hands touching, grasping, pulling, tearing, ripping, desiring, threatening, testing, and examining, the Black body functions as an exotic object placed on display; it is a spectacle.”³⁷⁸ The auction block, as a public and communal practice, is a visual ritual whereby economic security and desire for profit intersected with sexual exploitation and desire, thus normalizing the dehumanizing looks of those persons in bondage and other free people classified as “black” or “Negro.”

³⁷⁵ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 78.

³⁷⁶ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 12.

³⁷⁷ FWP, Florida 3.0, 206. Italics mine.

³⁷⁸ George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, 2nd ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), xiv.

The white buyers valued economic productivity and sustainability; they checked men for muscles and strong breeding potential, and they valued women not only for their physical strength for work in the fields, but for their reproductive capacities and as objects with which to gratify their own desires for sex and power. As McKittrick notes, “the feminine flesh is not just blood, muscles, hair, skin; it is also womb, breasts, the space between the legs.”³⁷⁹ Through the scrutinizing looks of white buyers, sellers, doctors, and even sex predators and traffickers, “the black female purchased on the auction block is rendered a public, rape-able, usable body-scale.”³⁸⁰ The following was related in 1937 by Richard Macks in Baltimore, Maryland, and shows not only the connection between auction block practices and sexual exploitation, but also black women’s resistance to such degradation:

The slave traders would buy young and able farm men and well-developed young girls with fine physique to barter and sell. They would bring them to the taverns where there would be the buyers and traders, display them and offer them for sale. At one of these gatherings a colored girl, a mulatto of fine stature and good looks, was put on sale. She was of big spirits and determined disposition. At night she was taken by the trader to his room to satisfy his bestial nature. She could not be coerced or forced, so she was attacked by him. In the struggle she grabbed a knife and with it, she sterilized him and from the result of injury he died the next day. She was charged with murder. Gen. Butler, hearing of it, sent troops to Charles County to protect her, they brought her to Baltimore, later she was taken to Washington where she was set free... This attack was the result of being goodlooking for which many a poor girl in Charles County paid the price.³⁸¹

The overseeing eye buttressed these speculative and violating looks that sought to position the enslaved person as a useful and gratifying object within the white field of vision and experience.

³⁷⁹ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 81.

³⁸⁰ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 81.

³⁸¹ *FWP*, Maryland 8.0, 53. This woman then “married a Government employe, reared a family of 3 children, one is a doctor practicing medicine in Baltimore and the other a retired school teacher.”

It is important to emphasize here that regulation of the social condition and labor of enslaved persons occurred both through legislation and concrete practices of vision given off by many figures on behalf of the entire white community. The eyecraft of overseers, masters, auctioneers, slave traders or speculators, patrollers, and slave catchers were all involved in the work of maintaining the field of economic profitability and the concomitant subordination of racialized others. These looks were buttressed by legal norms, informal habits and customs, and both the threat and use of violent force. Consider these comments by travelers to the South in the 19th century that Scarborough weaves into his own description:

the overseer could always be distinguished by his badge of office, a whip, “which is ever in his hand.” He could usually be seen riding back and forth through the fields, whip in hand, *inspecting* the work of the Negroes. *The presence of an overseer in the field had a pronounced effect upon the exertions of slaves working under his watchful eye.* One observer... noted the following scene: “I passed the hoe-gang at work in the cotton-field, the overseer lounging among them carrying a whip; there were ten or twelve of them; *none looked up at me.* Within ten minutes I passed five who were plowing, with no overseer or driver *in sight*, and every one stopped their plows *to gaze at me.*” A visitor to a Louisiana sugar house during the grinding season found the overseer holding “a short-handled whip, loaded in the butt, which had a lash four or five times the length of the staff.” The overseer took no notice of his visitors but *eyed the slaves*, “*quicken[ing] the steps of a loiterer* by a word, or threatening with his whip, those who, tempted by curiosity, turned *to gaze after us.*”³⁸²

This description is filled with references to concrete visionary practices. Notice how the “watchful eye” of the overseer is said to have a “pronounced effect upon the exertions of slaves.” His vision causes others to work harder, to sweat. This overseeing eye had the power, through the threat of violence and actual violence, to cause energy to be expended

³⁸² See Scarborough, *Overseer*, 8. Italics mine. The quotes are taken from A. De Puy Van Buren, *Jottings of a Year's Sojourn in the South* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Print, 1859), 151; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860), 176; and Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The Southwest* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), I, 237.

by another human, energy which might not always be replenished by the fruit of their labors. Such a look that causes life to go out of another against their will is a Look that kills.

Eying enslaved persons might “quicken” their steps, but too much quickening of their steps could lead to exhaustion and even death, an unquicken of life. Ninety-year old Mary Ella Grandberry from Alabama recalled: “De overseers was terrible hard on us. Dey’d ride up an’ down da fiel’ an’ haste you so twell you near ‘bout fell out. Sometimes an’ most inginer’ly ever’ time you ‘hin’ de crowd you got a good lickin’ wid de bull whup dat de driver had in de saddle wid him.”³⁸³ Yancy has explored how white oversight of enslaved persons was meant to “get the Black body to internalize the white oppressive gaze... [so that] the enslaved Black body would behave in subservient ways in the absence of actual surveillance by the white oppressor.”³⁸⁴ He cites Frederick Douglass’ own description of the tactics of Edward Covey, “the quintessential overseer/overgazer,” regarding enslaved persons: “one half of his proficiency in the art of Negro breaking consisted, I should think, in this species of cunning. We were never secure. He could see or hear us nearly all the time. He was, to us, behind every stump, tree, bush and fence on the plantation.”³⁸⁵ The overseeing eye is a seemingly omnipresent and breaking eye, one that sought to deny distinctly human aspirations, movements, and potentiality to fit others into certain prescribed actions and roles, much like someone breaks in a new shoe or breaks a horse for human use. As a breaking eye, the overseeing eye attempts not only to *break in* others, but also to *break down* the spirits and will to

³⁸³ FWP, Alabama 1.0, 158.

³⁸⁴ George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, 1st ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 169.

³⁸⁵ Yancy, *Black Bodies*, 169. From Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 216.

resist in others it wants to manage and control. This eye, as a mode of Looks that kills, violently demands submission.

The overseer also had some power to control who or what enslaved persons might be curious about. His job was to make sure their concern was the ground and what grows from it, and especially not other white people. As bell hooks exclaims, “the politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that the slaves were denied their right to gaze.”³⁸⁶ While the travelers in the paragraph above could gaze upon enslaved people with immunity, persons in bondage had to wait for the overseers to be out of sight before looking upon their onlookers. Both the overseer and the onlookers saw the enslaved people through what Maurice O. Wallace has called a “picture-taking racial gaze” that “fixes and frames the black subject within ‘a rigid and limited grid [better: *field*] of representational possibilities.’”³⁸⁷ For white onlookers, black people only took on meaning and value, and could only show themselves, in certain contexts and in prescribed places. Finally, in the quoted passage is the notion that gazing upon others is a “temptation” for enslaved people, but for white people a natural prerogative that required no reflection or justification. The onlooking and overseeing eye can roam over the entire field of vision, imbuing what falls within its line of sight with its own values, names, and meanings. After this “taking stock” of the field (an actual field or socio-political “terrain”) is systematized, the overseeing eye directs and manages whatever and whoever is within this field for its own good. This eye determines who goes where and attempts to hold them in that place. As Yancy states, “within the context of white racist America,

³⁸⁶ bell hooks, *Black Looks*, 115

³⁸⁷ Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 135. Quoted in Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 20.

whites inherited the privileged status of being the ‘lookers’ and gazers, with all the power that this entailed.”³⁸⁸

Ultimately, the overseer’s task was to ensure that enslaved people put their eyes to the ground and their hands to the task, and to prevent them from seeing eye-to-eye with white people. It was much easier for overseers to look down on others from a horse, and “keeping down” the gazes of enslaved persons was the first concrete step in “keeping down” black populations from rising in revolt. Alec Bostwick, a formerly enslaved person from Georgia, remembered one overseer who “got de slaves up wid a gun at five orclock an’ wukked ‘em ‘til way atter sundown, standin’ right over ‘em wid a gun all de time. If a Nigger lagged or *tuk his eyes off his wuk*, right den an’ dar he would make him strip down his clo’es to his waist, an’ whup him wid a cat-o-nine tails.”³⁸⁹ The white community believed that such visual and physical discipline would ensure their security and economic prosperity. During times of insecurity, visual tactics would be emphasized to keep free and enslaved persons “down.” Following Denmark Vesey’s attempted insurrection in 1822, a South Carolina lawyer and editor wrote in a pamphlet that, “we regard our Negroes as the *Jacobins* of the country, against whom we should always be upon our guard, and who, although we fear no permanent effects from any insurrectionary movements on their part, should be *watched with an eye of steady and unremitted observation*.”³⁹⁰ The same man, Edwin C. Holland, later wrote that, while it was impracticable for a slave insurrection to succeed, “it is nevertheless indispensable to

³⁸⁸ Yancy, *Black Bodies*, xviii.

³⁸⁹ *FWP*, Georgia 4.1, 108.

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Benjamin Griffith Brawley, *A Social History of the American Negro* (New York, NY: Macmillan & Co., 1921), 118. Emphasis mine. See Edwin C. Holland, *A Refutation of the Calumnies Circulated against the Southern and Western States, Respecting the Institution and Existence of Slavery Among Them* (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1822), 61.

our safety *to watch* all their motions *with a careful and scrutinising eye* – and to pursue such a system of policy, in relation to them, as will effectually prevent all secret combinations among them, hostile to our peace.”³⁹¹ A similar sentiment was expressed following Nat Turner’s rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831. In his preface to Nat Turner’s *Confessions*, Thomas R. Gray admonished his readers that, “each particular community should *look to* its own safety, whilst the general guardians of the laws, keep *a watchful eye* over all.”³⁹² Lawmakers and law “guardians” worked in tandem; various laws were enacted by white communities following these events to keep free and enslaved people from meeting together without white supervision, and some made it unlawful for black people to be taught reading and writing. A steady, observing, unblinking, and watchful eye (of the law, of the overseer, of society) would ensure that the eyes and hands of enslaved people were on their work and not at the throats of white people.

Coercive practices that directed members of black and brown bodies when to move, how to move, and what to move toward led many enslaved persons to act in certain ways rather than others when in the presence of white people. “Reduced to the machinery of bodily physical labor,” says hooks, “black people learned to appear before whites as though they were zombies, cultivating the habit of casting the gaze downward so as not to appear uppity.”³⁹³ If the “slaves” were permitted to look or stand, it was only

³⁹¹ Holland, *A Refutation*, 82. Interestingly, and perhaps revealing his own ambivalence toward slavery, the slaveholder Holland wrote about “the origin and progress of that odious and detestable commerce [the slave trade]” as follows: “The eagle eyes of commercial avarice in England, ever on the watch, were no sooner directed to this new and fruitful source of national wealth, than the government followed with the most active steps... Such was the unbounded spirit of commercial speculation in this iniquitous traffic, that in a few years after its first exploration, millions were invested in its prosecution, and the shores of Africa were crowded with the sails of the English shipping to the comparative exclusion of the flags of all other nations” (16). Here speculating and factoring eyes are predatory.

³⁹² Thomas R. Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, Va.* (Baltimore, MD: Lucas & Deaver, 1831), 5.

³⁹³ hooks, *Black Looks*, 168.

to look or stand in fear. The field of vision was dominated by the white gaze, which meant that whatever or whoever appeared within this field appeared only with the meanings and values of the white community inscribed upon them. As political philosopher Judith Butler has said: “The visual *field* is not neutral to the question of race; it is itself a racial formation, an episteme, hegemonic and forceful.”³⁹⁴ For her, the “*field* of visibility” is “racially saturated,” or bathed in an excess of white, racially-infused looks which structure “what can and cannot appear within the *horizon*.”³⁹⁵ The looks of the overseeing eye were therefore “not a simple seeing, an act of direct perception, but the racial production of the visible, the workings of racial constraints on what it means to ‘see.’”³⁹⁶ Yet this white control of the field through meaning-laden vision had its blind spots; the overseer was not omnipresent. In these gaps in vision, at the peripheries of the overseeing eye, enslaved people dared to look back.

As hooks explains, “even in the worse circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one’s gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency.”³⁹⁷ According to her,

spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, naming what we see. The “gaze” has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that “looks” to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating “awareness” politicizes “looking” relations – one learns to look a certain way in order to resist.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ Judith Butler, “Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia,” in *Reading Rodney King / Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (London: Routledge, 1993), 16. Italics mine. In another place Butler claims that “the *field* of the visible is racially contested *terrain*” (17).

³⁹⁵ Butler, “Endangered/Endangering,” 16. Italics mine.

³⁹⁶ Butler, “Endangered/Endangering,” 16.

³⁹⁷ hooks, *Black Looks*, 116.

³⁹⁸ hooks, *Black Looks*, 116.

One embodied example of an oppositional, resisting look is the “eye roll” that was used by some enslaved people to challenge or critique, even in such a small and subtle way, overseeing domination. As described by Simone Browne, “in a June 14, 1783, runaway notice in the *Royal Gazette* that offered ‘twenty dollars reward’ for sixteen-year-old Sam... Sam is described by the subscriber as ‘five feet high, slim made,’ and ‘remarkable in turning up the white of his eyes when spoke to.’ Sam’s bold refusals, or his facetiness, are agential acts, at first ocular, looking back – to at once return and dismiss the gaze with the gesture of the eye roll – and then to go missing or steal himself and make his own place.”³⁹⁹ Such a place, “his own place,” would have to be hidden from the site/sights of white masters and overseers, either underground, in a garret like Harriet Jacobs, or away from the reach of the slave catchers’ line of sight and the technological extension of the white gaze, the newspaper advertisement, which was used to activate, mobilize, and train the eyes of more white people in more distant locations.

Nevertheless the “woods was full,” as Lucy Chambers and Gill Ruffin, both formerly enslaved, agreed: the woods, swamps, native and maroon communities, the Underground Railroad, and other sites/sights developed on the peripheries and within the cracks and blind spots of white fields that would become places of refuge from Looks that kill.⁴⁰⁰ For example, after being “whipped almost to death by the ‘Pader Rollers’” because he was off the plantation without a pass, the uncle of Celestia Avery “stole off to the depths of the woods where he built a cave large enough to live in.”⁴⁰¹ As she tells it, “A few nights later he came back to the plantation unobserved and carried his wife and

³⁹⁹ Browne, *Dark Matters*, 72. Browne defines “facetiness” (not “facetious”) as “a rejection of the colonial condition of lived objectification and a refusal to stay in one’s place” (72).

⁴⁰⁰ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 3.

⁴⁰¹ *FWP*, Georgia 4.1, 24.

two children back to this cave where they lived until after freedom... No one was ever able to find his hiding place and if he saw any one in the woods he would run like a lion.”⁴⁰² Invisible geographies like the one created by Uncle Williams often developed “through human networks rather than scientific/cartographic writings,” provided routes for fugitives and, in the words of Frederick Douglass, gave them “invisible agency.”⁴⁰³ Because of this, white communities aggressively sought to fill in these gaps in vision off the plantations through the local organization of slave patrols, the utilization of slave catchers or hunters, and the continued development of the eyes of the law that saw to the return of “fugitive slaves” to their owners.

The Patrolling Eye

Along with overseers the group of Southerners most responsible for watching enslaved persons was the slave patrol.⁴⁰⁴ First officially created in South Carolina in 1704, historian Sally Hadden notes that by the revolutionary era “the main contours of patrols became evident.” These contours included: “except in urban areas, patrols served as separate groups, apart from militia, constables, and sheriffs. They hunted runaways, looked for weapons and stolen goods in slave cabins, questioned slaves they met on the road, and broke up slave meetings.”⁴⁰⁵ They were also occasionally charged with the duty “to suppress illegal nighttime business deals between whites and slaves.”⁴⁰⁶ Still, slave patrols were primarily tasked with controlling the movements of enslaved persons, who in the eyes of the white community needed to be policed and controlled to ensure that

⁴⁰² FWP, Georgia 4.1, 24.

⁴⁰³ See McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 18.

⁴⁰⁴ For an excellent summary of the respective roles of overseers and slave patrols, see Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 81-82.

⁴⁰⁵ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 40. For another description of slave patrol duties, see Gladys-Marie Fry, *Night Riders in Black Folk History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 86.

⁴⁰⁶ Wiehloff, *Crafting*, 142.

agricultural production went its normal course. People in bondage needed to be *planted on* and *rooted in*, just like seeds and plants, the fields and plantations they worked, as any excessive movement – *uprootedness* – among those enslaved could bring about a crisis to the production process and hence to communal well-being. Dennis Simms, a formerly enslaved person who grew up on a tobacco plantation in Maryland, had this to say in 1937:

when we behaved we were not whipped, but the overseer kept a pretty *close eye* on us. We all hated what they called the ‘nine ninety-nine’, usually a flogging until fell over unconscious or begged for mercy. We stuck pretty close to the cabins after dark, for if we were caught roaming about we would be unmercifully whipped. If a slave was caught beyond the limits of the plantation where he was employed, without the company of a white person or without written permit of his master, any person who apprehended him was permitted to give him 20 lashes across the bare back.⁴⁰⁷

The overseeing eye worked in tandem with both the patrolling eye and the eyes of white society in general.⁴⁰⁸ Note how “any person” who apprehended an enslaved person “beyond the limits of the plantation” could apprehend and punish them to keep them in their place. The patrollers were simply another formal instantiation of the eyes of the community whose task was to seek those enslaved persons illicitly beyond plantation limits before they left the local area. This task of looking for beyond-the-limits, beyond-the-*field*, enslaved persons provided an important social service, while also providing monetary reward for some patrollers.⁴⁰⁹ Historian Gladys-Marie Fry explains the white rationale for patrols: “unsupervised slave excursions from one plantation to another might

⁴⁰⁷ *FWP*, Maryland 8.0, 60-61. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰⁸ Hadden notes elsewhere that, “slave plantation overseers served on many slave patrols, and patrollers (as a group) shared some characteristics with overseers” (*Slave Patrols*, 81). For our purposes, their basic shared characteristic was their eyecraft.

⁴⁰⁹ *FWP*, Maryland 8.0, 32: “There were a number of slaves on our plantation who ran away... To intimidate the slaves, the overseers were connected with the patrollers, not only to watch our slaves, but sometime for the rewards for other slaves who had run away from other plantations.”

also result in unnecessary fights and brawls among slaves, thus endangering the life and limb of valuable property. Further, the *efficiency of the slave* would be greatly reduced because of the loss of sleep *and energy* from his aimless carousing.”⁴¹⁰ What was most important in the slavocracy was that human energy be preserved and used only in ways that would be profitable and beneficial to white life and property. As Belle Buntin told interviewers in the late 1930s, “If you was out after seven o’clock the patrollers git you. They would beat and take you home. Some masters say to them ‘You done right,’ and some say, ‘You bring my hands home; I’ll whoop them myself.’”⁴¹¹ While a bizarre expression, “bringing my hands home” was precisely what the patrolling eye was tasked to do; hands needed to be firmly attached and directed by the master’s and overseer’s gaze were white life and property to be maintained.

Patrollers monitored and circumscribed the movements of enslaved persons so they would be contained within the purview and managing power of the white community, and thus rendered predictable, stable, and profitable. According to Wiethoff, “the size and frequency of patrols varied, though legislators typically sought from three to six members to patrol their counties once every two weeks.”⁴¹² Such regulation meant that patrollers were conspicuous and a regular feature of Southern life. As we read in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), “at every gate through which we were to pass, we saw a watchman – at every ferry a guard – on every bridge a sentinel – and in every wood a patrol. We were hemmed in upon every side.”⁴¹³ This circumscribing surveillance brought peace of mind to the white community and arrested,

⁴¹⁰ Fry, *Night Riders*, 83-84. Italics mine.

⁴¹¹ FWP, Arkansas 2.1, 330.

⁴¹² Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 139.

⁴¹³ Quoted in Browne, *Dark Matters*, 22. From Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Lanham, MD: Start, 2012), 103.

or brought to a standstill, any unwanted movements among enslaved people. Unseen or erratic movements among them were feared as a threat to the white community; “hands” missing from the fields could cause financial disaster, and enslaved or free black people massing together could cause rebellion and subsequent death to white people.⁴¹⁴ The logic of the overseeing and patrolling eyes was clear to at least one formerly enslaved person, who recalled that “if slaves stayed in deir places de warn’t never whipped tar put in chains.”⁴¹⁵ But, if they tried to get off their place, “our oberseer would put chains on dere legs wid big long spikes ‘tween dere feets, so dey couldn’t git away.”⁴¹⁶ The patrollers were the routinized, legalized, lethalized, and embodied appearance of the white gaze, of Looks that kill, a gaze encapsulated in a warning that appeared in the *South-Carolina Weekly Gazette* (1783), but which would have been understood by any white Southerner for years to come: “keep a strict eye over your black walking property.”⁴¹⁷ Yes, this “property,” unlike furniture with legs, could get up and move.

One strategy used to train white eyes, especially the eyes of patrollers, to see their “black walking property” was to sometimes require enslaved persons to wear badges, as happened in large towns such as Wilmington and Charleston, and through various curfew laws. According to Hadden, “a slave’s failure to wear the badge could result in punishment, incarceration, and fines for the slave owner.”⁴¹⁸ Badges, much like branding, visibly marked the bodies of the enslaved and allowed white eyes to keep a close watch on them and to regard them superficially as property, less than, and whose only worth

⁴¹⁴ Wiethoff notes that, “slaves’ freedom of movement worried the gentry as a prelude to escape, and statutory regulation of slave travel along the Atlantic coast was common by the late 1600s and early 1700s. Slaves needed written permission from their overseer, among others, for travel and assembly” (*Crafting*, 39).

⁴¹⁵ *FWP*, Georgia 4.3, 128.

⁴¹⁶ *FWP*, Alabama 1.0, 67.

⁴¹⁷ Quoted in Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 162.

⁴¹⁸ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 59.

resided in their function within a social and economic system of subordination. One interviewee in the 1930s, Dennis Simms, recalled that, “Sometimes Negro slave runaways who were apprehended by the patrollers, who kept a constant watch for escaped slaves, besides being flogged, would be branded with a hot iron on the cheek with the letter ‘R’.”⁴¹⁹ Such a branding, a readily visible identification, served to more easily target, identify, and secure enslaved people if they ran away. One slaveholder in North Carolina, Micajah Ricks, advertised for a runaway enslaved person: “A few days ago before she went off, I burnt her with a hot iron on the left side of her face; I tried to make the letter M, and she kept a cloth over her head and face, and a fly bonnet on her head so as to cover the burn.”⁴²⁰ Marks proved notoriously difficult to conceal, especially if the mark was made on one’s face, or, if the mark was one’s own skin color.⁴²¹ These practices not only brought economic stability to the white community, but also psychological security. Badges and brands were marks that, according to Colette Guillaumin, “expressed (and imprinted) the fact of belonging to a definite social group.”⁴²² As she explains it, “characteristics of the mark vary, and its indelibility, as well as its more or less close proximity to/association with the body, is a function of: (1) the assumed permanence of the position that it is a sign of; and (2) the degree of

⁴¹⁹ FWP Maryland, 8.0, 61. Simms said he knew “two slaves so branded.” The letter “R” probably stood for either “Runaway” or the first letter of the owner’s name.

⁴²⁰ Quoted in J. Saunders Redding, *They Came in Chains: Americans from Africa* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1950), 36.

⁴²¹ As Frederick Douglass noted well, “Of all the races and varieties of men which have suffered from this feeling [of prejudice], the colored people of this country have endured most. They can resort to no disguises which will enable them to escape *its deadly aim*. They carry in front the evidence which *marks* them for persecution. They stand at the extreme point of difference from the Caucasian race, and their African origin can be instantly recognized, though they may be several removes from the typical African race... They are Negroes – and that is enough in *the eye of this unreasoning prejudice* to justify indignity and violence. In nearly every department of American life they are confronted by this insidious influence. It fills the air.” See Frederick Douglass, “The Color Line,” in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 649. Emphasis mine.

⁴²² Colette Guillaumin, “Race and Nature: the system of marks,” in *Racism, sexism, power and ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 140.

subjection that it symbolizes.”⁴²³ For example, marks directly on the body were “a sign of the *permanence* of the power relationship,” while the mark of status “is inscribed in a reversible fashion when it signifies *contractual* subordination.”⁴²⁴ Even clothing and dress, which are easily capable of change, serve as marks of belonging to a particular social station or “place in social relations.”⁴²⁵ White control of enslaved persons and their movements was greatly aided by various marks beyond skin color, which was itself used as a “natural” marker to point out a social group for exploitation and control.

Mobilizing Eyes

In another historical moment, that of Jewish people under Nazi Germany, badges were also used to make sure that the German community made social and racial distinctions among themselves through the way they looked at each other.⁴²⁶ As Boaz Neumann explains in an excellent article, “The Phenomenology of the German People’s Body (*Volkskörper*) and the Extermination of the Jewish Body,”

techniques of observation were central to racial practice. They sought to *mobilize the eyes* of all Germans... [but] at the same time, the Nazis were not satisfied with simply *training the German-Nazi gaze*. Expression of Nazi angst over the Jews’ loss of their corporeal otherness is found also in the growing obsession *to mark them by various means*, including yellow stars. In *exposing Jewish bodies to the German gaze*, the yellow star also exposed the Jews’ bodies to themselves... Jews forced to wear the yellow star avoided going out in public as much as possible... When Yitskhok Rudashevski *espied* from his window a group of Jews donning their patches, he was pained *to see how they were stared at*. He experienced the yellow star as something ‘burning’ him, *branding* him. He could not, in fact, bear it. ‘I felt a hump, as though I had two frogs on me.’ After being forced to wear the yellow star, Klaus Scheurenberg wrote, ‘I felt terribly ashamed... It seemed to weigh many stone... I had the feeling that everyone *was staring at me*. But they

⁴²³ Guillaumin, “Race and Nature,” 140.

⁴²⁴ Guillaumin, “Race and Nature,” 140.

⁴²⁵ Guillaumin, “Race and Nature,” 140.

⁴²⁶ Our point in making this connection is not to claim that the experiences of enslaved people in the American South and Jewish people in Nazi Germany were the same, but to show how various regimes throughout history have attempted to propagate their own social and racial ideologies through the concrete training of people’s vision and the use of visual markers (badges, patches) to do so.

weren't; I was feverish, as if naked!' The yellow star imprisoned the Jewish body within itself... The Jew was once again a *Fremdkörper* ["foreign body"] in *the eyes of the Nazis*, as well as in *his own eyes*. All that was left to do was to get rid of him.⁴²⁷

The psychological and physical violence entailed in such a Nazi "mobilization" of the eyes of Germans is clearly a Look that kills. The quotation also reveals the social and ethical character of vision, that eyes can be trained by social forces and institutions beyond the interpersonal.

The sinister look of "the German-Nazi gaze" toward Jewish people is brought out even more completely in conversations between top Nazi officials as they debated whether to put Jews in ghettos or simply force them to wear insignias. As early as 1935 there is record of Adolf Hitler stating to members of his party that Jewish people would be placed "into a ghetto, enclosed in a territory where they can behave as becomes their nature, while the German people look on as one looks at wild animals."⁴²⁸ By displaying Jewish people in a rundown and dirty environment, Germans might see Jewish people in such a place as inherently impure, morally dangerous, and inferior. The negative conditions of a place would cause negative moral evaluations of the people living there. As McKittrick aptly notes, "*who* we see is tied up with *where* we see."⁴²⁹ In his book on the ghetto in history, an idea applied in history to both Jewish and African American neighborhoods, sociologist Mitchell Duneier points out that "when discussing ghettos with his Nazi ministers early in his reign, Hitler referred to ghettos as zoolike places in which to display Jews."⁴³⁰ If there was no "natural" way for Germans to see Jews as

⁴²⁷ Boaz Neumann, "The Phenomenology of the German People's Body (*Volkskörper*) and the Extermination of the Jewish Body," *New German Critique* 106, vol. 36, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 174-75. Italics mine.

⁴²⁸ Mitchell Duneier, *Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, The History of an Idea* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 14.

⁴²⁹ McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xv.

⁴³⁰ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 14.

socially inferior, as diseased, or as morally decrepit, then it was necessary for the Nazis to force Jews to appear as poor and less than human by providing them with poor and less than human living conditions.

In the November 12, 1938 debate among top officials over insignias versus ghettos as the preferred means to control and keep an eye on the Jewish population in towns and cities, Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Nazi security service, proposed that “Jews should be forced to wear an insignia to make it easier for the police to *keep an eye on them*.”⁴³¹ Field Marshal Hermann Göring objected, seeing the insignia as a way to get around the ghetto, to which Heydrich replied: “We don’t want to let the Jew live in the same house with the German population; but today the German population, their blocks or houses, force the Jew to behave himself. The control of the Jew through *the watchful eye of the whole population* is better than having him by the thousands in a district where I cannot properly establish a control over his daily life through uniformed agents.”⁴³² Because uniformed agents were limited in their surveilling capacities, Heydrich believed it was necessary to train and utilize the eyes of the entire German population to make sure that Jews “behaved” themselves and stayed in their place. While this debate never reached a definitive conclusion, Duneier notes that the Nazis embarked on “the next-best thing: a dramatic social marginalization of Jews in German society. The idea was to isolate and demoralize Jews by preventing them from entering the daily routine of German life until a better solution could be found.”⁴³³ Consider this description of the measures taken by the Nazis in 1938-1939: “Jews were segregated in special ‘Jew

⁴³¹ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 16. Italics mine.

⁴³² Duneier, *Ghetto*, 16. Italics mine.

⁴³³ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 17.

houses' located alongside the Christian population. They were forbidden to enter German theaters, share train cars, or bathe with Germans on beaches and resorts from the fear that touch pollutes. They were also prohibited from purchasing fruit or candy when entering shops."⁴³⁴ To arrest the movements of Jews, regulations prevented them from having driver's licenses or owning cars, and from going into governmental districts, public squares, and hospitals. They also could not send their children to German schools.⁴³⁵ As explored in the next chapter, the parallels here to the visual workings of Jim Crow America are remarkable.

Eventually ghettos with their attendant barbed wires did go up, especially in Eastern Europe, and almost overnight. Duneier argues that it was barbed wire in particular that "enabled the Nazis to make good on Hitler's earlier wish to display Jews as wild animals."⁴³⁶ He refers to one report from May 1942 sent to the Polish government in exile, which reads: "every day large coaches come to the ghetto; they take soldiers through as though it were a zoo... Often soldiers strike out at passers-by with long whips... They set up genre pictures (old Jew above the corpse of a young girl)."⁴³⁷ Again, the Nazis desired Jews to appear in certain ways – as animal-like and sub-human, parasitic and murderous – to justify their repressive practices. Jews would be made to appear in public, not according to their own free self-expression, to the look they gave themselves, but as a type or "genre picture" that matched Nazi imaginations and which in circular fashion justified Nazi views. This forcing of Jewish people to appear in public, before the gazes of others, as matching the stereotypes that were generated by Nazis had

⁴³⁴ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 17.

⁴³⁵ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 17.

⁴³⁶ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 19.

⁴³⁷ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 19.

their intended effect. As one German soldier stated, “their appearance is the best *visual education* that our people could receive on the Jewish question.”⁴³⁸ Another claimed that “only after he and a group of his peers had visited the Jewish quarter in Kraków did they realize the importance and necessity of the racial laws of their führer.”⁴³⁹ By being made to appear in a certain way and within a certain environment, stereotypes and negative ideas about Jews were naturalized and thus made to appear as the way things naturally were rather than as violently produced by larger social forces and agencies. As David Sibley states, “power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments.”⁴⁴⁰ The German population’s visual education, therefore, was to literally see poor, unclean, and starved Jews in an inhumane environment fit for animals, thus confirming the imagined type and justifying the punitive measures to protect oneself or one’s race against this type. In the words of Sylvia Wynter, who in her context was speaking of black faces, Jewish faces were “made seeable only through the prism of its negative signifying function.”⁴⁴¹

A similar mobilization of the eyes of white people took place in the American South and was enforced by slave patrols. According to Hadden, “in city patrolling, one can see most prominently the distinctive Southern pattern linking race and slavery with public authority and control.”⁴⁴² Usually appointed by militia captains or county courts, patrollers had the legal sanction to question and detain any suspicious persons and to inspect the fields and houses of local community members. This sometimes led to

⁴³⁸ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 20.

⁴³⁹ Duneier, *Ghetto*, 20.

⁴⁴⁰ David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London: Routledge, 1995), ix.

⁴⁴¹ Sylvia Wynter, “‘A Different Kind of Creature’: Caribbean Literature, The Cyclops Factor, and The Second Poetics of the Propter Nos,” *Annals of Scholarship* 12:1/2 (1997): 159.

⁴⁴² Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 41.

conflict between planters and patrollers because the former wished to exercise power and control, in paternalistic fashion, over “their own,” without outside interference, while patrollers represented the powers of a larger civic community. However, for enslaved people in the American South, the patrolling eye was one more instantiation of the white hegemonic gaze that marked their very skin and flesh with racialized and social valuations even without patches or badges, although the latter did help white authorities distinguish between free and enslaved black people.

Offing Eyes

White eyes like the patrolling eye frequently factored black people and their bodies as *off* when they weren’t *on* the plantation or in designated sections of towns; they pointed to and marked them out as spatially and socially off their proper place and associated this *offness* with corresponding mental and moral states: wrong, abnormal, odd, and “not in one’s right mind.” Unable or unwilling to comprehend the reasons their “walking property” would go up and off, many masters and overseers resorted to the logic that they must not have been in their right mind, that they didn’t know what was good for them. Sure enough, to be off (spatially, mentally, socially) meant, for the enslaved person, the threat of being offed by a Look that kills, whether shot by a patroller, a slave catcher with the help of a bloodhound, or a random member of the white community.⁴⁴³ As Spencer Barnett from Holly Grove, Arkansas recalled, “When I was a

⁴⁴³ The use of animals such as dogs in manhunting is another example of the self-anthropomorphization of humans through technological extensions of the self. In this case, the dog, especially its nose/smell and eyes/sight, enhances or extends the nose and eyes of humans so that humans can smell and track their prey more efficiently. The use of the dog to extend the capacities of the human self also reveals something about the quality of the human’s *sensing* (smelling, seeing) of the “other” in times when this technology is utilized. It reveals that the look that it gives the human other is one that is wholly shared with animals when they track and hunt. In one sense this is an enhancement of human sensorial capacities, but in another it is a reduction. In the dog’s smell and look there is inevitably lost a sense for the human that only humans can have for each other, even though the dog is indeed smelling human beings. In some cases

little boy I could hear men runnin' the slaves wid hounds in the mountains. The landmen paid paddyrollers to keep track of slaves. Keep em home day and night.”⁴⁴⁴ Enslaved persons could only mitigate the marked, threatened status of offness when they returned to their “natural” place in space and society: obediently *on* the plantation. However, being on the plantation proved yet again that the *condition* of offness that had supposedly been spatially and socially resolved in the return was actually a legally, socially, and violently enforced *state* that could also be passed down from generation to generation through slavery. White eyecraft had, in a deeper and long-lasting sense, marked black people and their bodies as off, as missing the mark of humanity, of intelligence, of moral goodness, of beauty, and of orderliness. Ironically it was this purported offness that justified keeping enslaved people on plantations and farms. Being *off* so as to be *on*; this is precisely the condition of one rendered extraneous and alienable, to be better subjected to the will of another: “Capture and the slave trade set in motion a process through which the captive was rendered extraneous and thus prepared for his or her state as absolute alien in the society into which he or she was delivered.”⁴⁴⁵ Enslaved people could be fugitives to full humanity and “society,” but not to the eye of the master, who did his best to close the distance between his eye and his “property.” Proximity of eyepower brought control and stability, while remoteness of eyepower brought insecurity and instability.

Aggressive looks from patrols, slave catchers, and other white people were often concretized in shots being fired or in lashes being given to out-of-place people. As we read in an account from the Federal Writers’ Project: “every member of the patrol was

this loss of a sense of the human is tragic (as in hunting for runaway enslaved people who are treated like animal prey), but in other cases it is no matter, as dogs can be used to heroically smell, find, and rescue humans in disaster situations.

⁴⁴⁴ FWP, Arkansas 2.1, 117.

⁴⁴⁵ Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*, trans. Alide Dasnois (London: The Athlone Press, 1991), 67.

required to carry a pistol while on duty. They were required to arrest all slaves found outside their master's domain without a pass, or who was not in company with some white person. He was empowered to whip such slave with twenty lashes. He also had power to search for offensive weapons and fugitive slaves."⁴⁴⁶ The patrolling eye tracked down enslaved persons not only locally in slave patrols, but also along border states and in the North in the person of the slave catcher. As Hadden explains, "Unlike patrollers who functioned as officials of the county or state, slave catchers were not appointed by their local communities; they merely advertised their ability to capture runaway slaves, and masters hired them for short-term jobs, typically paying ten, fifteen, or twenty-five dollars for capturing a runaway."⁴⁴⁷ It was necessary for the white community to have access to trained eyes outside their own immediate area, and slave catchers filled the void in vision.⁴⁴⁸ In these situations, white eyes were the hunters, the predators, and enslaved people were the hunted, the prey.

"Slaveholding domination," according to Grégoire Chamayou, "does not arise from an open struggle but rather from a relationship, which is dissymmetrical from the outset, of manhunting. Here, even before operations begin, the hunter is already in a position to be the master. He knows his power and his material supremacy. The prey, taken by surprise, is not in a position to confront a group of hunters. At first, it has no choice but to flee."⁴⁴⁹ The dynamic of manhunting that occurs in the tracking and hunting down of runaway people produces "radical anxiety" in those hunted because they are

⁴⁴⁶ From *FWP*, Georgia 4.4, 322.

⁴⁴⁷ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 80.

⁴⁴⁸ For more on slave catchers, see especially Stanley W. Campbell, *Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970).

⁴⁴⁹ Grégoire Chamayou, *Manhunts: A Philosophical History*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2012), 58.

“constantly on the watch.”⁴⁵⁰ Consider this excerpt from Olaudah Equiano’s account of being tracked as he hides in a forest: “[I] began to consider that, if possibly I could escape all other animals, I could not those of the human kind... Thus was I like the hunted deer: ‘Ev’ry leaf, and ev’ry whispering breath / Convey’d a foe, and ev’ry foe a death.’”⁴⁵¹

Through patrolling and slave catching practices, training white eyes on black people became both a personal and national habit; it became both routine and normalized to view and mark nonwhite people as out of place and therefore as “off.”⁴⁵² For Chamayou, manhunting was “a means of *ontological policing*: a violence whose aim is to maintain the dominated in correspondence with their concept, that is, with the concept that the dominant have imposed on them.”⁴⁵³ White eyes controlled both the bodily and social movements of black people, and the “concept” imposed on them, which can be taken to mean their forcibly-positioned state/place in society with its associated meanings, values, and affects. This is a factoring eye. As Claude Meillassoux explains, “Otherness, combined with the class relation which developed with exploitation within the slave-owning society, provoked a racist reaction to slaves. This is because both somatic traits (ugliness, heaviness) and character traits (stupidity, laziness, shiftiness) were always associated with the state of the slave.”⁴⁵⁴

With the demise of official slave patrols, maintaining such a “racial hierarchy” was passed on to various policing organizations or more informal vigilante networks such

⁴⁵⁰ Chamayou, *Manhunts*, 59.

⁴⁵¹ Quoted in Chamayou, *Manhunts*, 59. See “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano,” in *Slave Narratives*, eds. Williams L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates (New York: Library of America, 2000), 68.

⁴⁵² Even if one escaped the overseeing and patrolling eyes, federal laws like the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 were created to further mobilize the eyes of the entire white population in finding out enslaved people on the run and imposing penalties on those who tried to help them. For background and a fascinating example, see Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson’s Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵³ Chamayou, *Manhunts*, 10.

⁴⁵⁴ Meillassoux, *Anthropology*, 75.

as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, or the White League.⁴⁵⁵ In the memories of formerly enslaved people and their children, there was not always a clear dividing line between patrollers and Klansmen, just as there was not always a clear line separating slave patrols and later police. Wiethoff himself notes that many “former slaves failed to distinguish between a prewar patrol and a postwar Klan.”⁴⁵⁶ Perhaps this is because their *looks* and the vibe they gave off was so similar: “de white folks were the ‘Paddle-Rollers’ and had masks on dere faces. They looked like niggers wid de *devil in dere eyes*.”⁴⁵⁷

The testimony of Albert Brooks, a free Richmond stable keeper before the Civil War, demonstrates the continuity between slave patrolling and policing functions in the South: “it was Mayor [Joseph] Mayo who in former days ordered us to be scourged for trifling offenses against slave laws and usages; and his present police, who are now hunting us through the streets, are the men who relentlessly applied the lash to our quivering flesh.”⁴⁵⁸ Hadden herself explains that “in the South, the ‘most dangerous people’ who were thought to need watching were slaves.”⁴⁵⁹ Further, “the history of

⁴⁵⁵ As Hadden notes, “Their [the slave patrols’] law-enforcing aspects – checking suspicious persons, limiting nighttime movement – became the duties of Southern police forces, while their lawless, violent aspects were taken up by vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan” (*Slave Patrols*, 4). Here Hadden makes too much of a separation between the “law-enforcing” nature of police forces and the “violence” of vigilante groups. In reality the lines between the two were and are often blurred, as seen recently in the case of the “Punishers” gang within the Milwaukee Police Department. An image and character from comic books, the “Punisher” has been used by military and police personnel as a kind of *alter ego* of taking the law into one’s own hands and punishing people, especially people of color, for their perceived disrespect to law, the United States, or enforcement officers. The famous “American sniper” Chris Kyle also had a large Punisher logo, which consists of a skull with long teeth, emblazoned on his pickup truck. See John Diedrich, “Milwaukee police looked into ‘Punishers’ group,” *Journal Sentinel*, January 5, 2011, accessed May 9, 2019, <http://archive.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/112982324.html>.

⁴⁵⁶ Wiethoff, *Crafting*, 143.

⁴⁵⁷ Quoted in Fry, *Night Riders*, 87. From WPA Files, “Slave Narratives” (Marshall Butler, Dist. No. I, May 8, 1937). Fry importantly notes that, “in historical publications the Civil War draws a temporal line of demarcation between the patrol system and the Ku Klux Klan, but Black folk do not have this same neat chronology in their oral tradition” (*Night Riders*, 155). Early Klansmen sometimes “blackened up” and disguised themselves as black people, following minstrel tradition (see Chapter 5: White as a Ghost).

⁴⁵⁸ Quoted in Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 193. See *New York Tribune*, June 12, 17, 1865.

⁴⁵⁹ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 4.

police work in the South grew out of this early fascination, by white patrollers, with what African American slaves were doing. Most law enforcement was, by definition, white patrolmen watching, catching, or beating black slaves.”⁴⁶⁰ Mirzoeff, in describing the history of Haiti after the revolution, has noted a similar passing of the torch, of the powers of white visibility, from individual overseers and masters to various policing organizations. For him, “the functions of plantation oversight that foreshadowed panoptic discipline were thus directly transferred to the police, but with no pretense that moral reform was intended.”⁴⁶¹ The result was that “the state of exception was no longer localized to the plantation, as it had been under slavery, but was nationalized and enacted under the supervision of the police.”⁴⁶² After the Civil War, African American communities would no longer be watched and policed primarily by overseers and patrollers, but by more formal policing organizations and the eyes of vigilantes. Fearing that the eyes of the white body politic, itself being “taken over” by black members, could no longer secure their own substance (their honor, manhood, womanhood, position in society, economic success, “whitestuff,” etc.), many white people would organize their eyepower in new and alternative ways to see to the new threat.

⁴⁶⁰ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 4.

⁴⁶¹ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 161.

⁴⁶² Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 161.

Chapter 5: White as a Ghost

“Ancient maps of the world – when the world was flat – inform us, concerning that void where America was waiting to be discovered, HERE BE DRAGONS. Dragons may not have been here then, but they are certainly here now, breathing fire, belching smoke; or, to be less literary and biblical about it, attempting to intimidate the mores, morals, and morality of this particular and peculiar time and place.”⁴⁶³

“Their God is their stomach.”⁴⁶⁴

“Raght atter de war de Ku Klux got atter de colored folks. Dey would come to our houses an’ scare us mos’ to death. Dey would take some of de niggers out and whup ‘em and dose dat dey didn’t whup dey tied up by dere fingers and toes. Dese Ku Klux would come to our windows at night an’ say; ‘Your time ain’t long acomin’. De Ku Klux got so bad dat dey would even git us in de daytime. Dey tuk some of de niggers an’ throwed ‘em in de river to drown. Dey kep’ dis up ‘twell some folks from de North come down an’ put a stop to it.”⁴⁶⁵

“All his eye-roots crackled in the flames.”⁴⁶⁶

Historians frequently reference the fact that the Ku Klux Klan has made three major appearances in American history: first, in the years immediately following the Civil War up through the early 1870s; second, in the years following World War I up through the 1920s; and third, in the decades of the civil rights movement, the 1950s-60s. Each appearance had their own distinct approach to social issues, ethos of hate, terror activities, looks, and targets. The Klan of cross burnings and white robes so much a part of popular American culture today stems mainly from the “Second Coming” of the Klan in the 1920s when it reached the height of its power across the nation. However, the first appearance of the Klan was primarily a rural and small-town Southern phenomenon that drew much of its mystique and costume from modern trends in popular culture. This Klan

⁴⁶³ Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons,” 679.

⁴⁶⁴ Philippians 3:19 NAB.

⁴⁶⁵ FWP, Alabama 1.0, 163.

⁴⁶⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey* 2.9, 458, trans. William Cowper (1791).

targeted local freedpeople and their white allies, especially those who were members of Union Leagues or the Republican Party. African Americans made significant gains in terms of holding public office and economic influence, a fact bitterly resented by many white people and the “secret fraternity” seeking to bring about redemption of the former Southern way of life.⁴⁶⁷ Klan activities were quickly quelled, however, due to the passage of a series of Enforcement Acts by Congress in 1870-71 following the ratifications of the 14th and 15th Amendments; intense federal prosecution of their crimes; and using the federal army as a policing force in the defeated South. Yet the Klan’s disappearance was also due to the reality that by the end of the 1870s Reconstruction had ended and the Klan and other southern leaders had achieved their goals of the “electoral disfranchisement and economic subjugation of black people.”⁴⁶⁸

The Klan of the 1920s found its inspiration from D. W. Griffith’s film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which depicted freedpeople and “carpetbaggers” as “running amok, assaulting white women, and threatening white power,” and its greatest centers of influence were the states of Indiana and Oregon.⁴⁶⁹ This public, mass-oriented Klan relied on a business model replete with advertisements, membership campaigns, and various forms of media to spread its views. While African Americans were still a target for this Klan, Jews and Catholics became prominent targets for their hate due to their presence in the North and their perceived “foreignness” and roles in several conspiracy

⁴⁶⁷ Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing, 2017), 2.

⁴⁶⁸ The Compromise of 1877 settled the dispute over the election of 1876, in which Rutherford B. Hayes took office with the unwritten understanding that he would pull federal troops out of the South, appoint a Southern Democrat to his cabinet, and give southern leaders the right to “deal” with blacks without northern interference. See Gordon, *Second Coming*, 2.

⁴⁶⁹ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 26.

theories popular at the time.⁴⁷⁰ The Klan also targeted immigrants and bootleggers for their role in staining American life with foreignness and immorality respectively.

Scandals involving top Klan leaders eventually doomed this iteration of the group that considered itself the moral police of white America. Finally, the Klan of the civil rights era organized to resist the fight for social and political equality for African Americans and other people of color. This Klan articulated itself along segregationist lines and resorted to acts of violence and intimidation, especially bombings, to stop “integration,” which for them meant not only social equality between blacks and whites, but also the disturbing prospect of interracial sex and intermarriage.

In terms of the original Ku Klux Klan, Sally Hadden claims that “the Klan’s reign of racial terror in the late nineteenth century emphasized the most extreme elements of earlier slave patrol behavior.”⁴⁷¹ She describes the early formation of the group after its first meeting in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865: “claiming boredom, six young men created the club (they said) to play pranks on local freed men; club members rode around dressed as ghosts to scare former slaves.”⁴⁷² Even in the days of masters and overseers it was sometimes a tactic for these figures to tell ghost stories or even dress up as ghosts to scare slaves into staying on the plantation. As Fry, who has explored this phenomenon in *Night Riders in Black Folk History*, states, “the master or his guards could be in only one place at any given time, but a ghost could appear any place at any time in a kind of *all-seeing*

⁴⁷⁰ The most popular conspiracy theory regarding Jews was articulated in the forgery, “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” (1920), published by Henry Ford, which was purported to be the minutes of a late 19th century meeting “where Jewish leaders discussed their drive for global domination through control of the world’s finances and press” (Gordon, *Second Coming*, 11).

⁴⁷¹ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 4.

⁴⁷² Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 207. As noted by historian Gladys-Marie Fry, the Klan sought to control newly freed slaves through “the use of psychological control based on a fear of the supernatural” (Fry, *Night Riders*, 45).

capacity.”⁴⁷³ Continuing the use of this “supernatural” visual power, as early as 1867 the Klan had transitioned to “systematic brutality” and its members “routinely resorted to violence – beating, lynching, and shooting – to punish freedmen for their political convictions and to prevent the enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment.”⁴⁷⁴ For Klansmen, the eyes of new federal laws no longer saw or regarded formerly enslaved people as they did, and this reality pushed them to take matter/s into their own hands. They were determined that their view of things would win out over the changes taking place in their midst.

The Klan and their supporters also had an economic incentive to their actions, as explained by historian William Peirce Randel: “if idle Negroes could be frightened... perhaps they could be persuaded to resume work, and something like the prewar balance could be restored – the plantation system that kept the Negroes subservient and at work, producing the income that white men had been accustomed to.”⁴⁷⁵ Williams, describing the similarities between the roles of the patrollers and that of Klansmen, explains that “like the slave patrols, the Klan was organized locally, operated mostly at night, drew its members from every class of White society, enforced a pass system and curfew, broke up Black social gatherings and meetings, searched homes, seized weapons, and enforced its demands through violence and intimidation.”⁴⁷⁶ For Hadden, “whites who had once mistrusted their slaves but controlled them through physical intimidation now sought to

⁴⁷³ Fry, *Night Riders*, 59. Fry also importantly says that “the use of ghost stories and supernatural disguises by masters and overseers helped restrain the nocturnal ramblings of their slaves between visits of the county patrols. Fear on the part of the Blacks was the key emotion *produced*, but it was not so much fear of unknown ghosts as it was of known whites. For the whites had achieved their goal – indeed, the goal of all such *manipulators* – in creating a climate of terror in which rumors of the *omniscience* and vengefulness of those in authority can flourish” (79-80, italics mine). Fry also notes the use of “a rotating false head, which gave the appearance of *all-around vision*” by patrols (88, italics mine).

⁴⁷⁴ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 207.

⁴⁷⁵ Quoted in Fry, *Night Riders*, 112. From William Peirce Randel, *The Ku Klux Klan* (Philadelphia, PA: 1965), 8-9.

⁴⁷⁶ Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 127.

control the freedmen in order to diminish their fears. Terror was the key.”⁴⁷⁷ The terrorizing disguises and ghostly appearance of the Klan was a manifestation of the white hegemonic gaze stripped of all legal trappings. Looks that kill were exposed for what they truly were, and still can be: monstrous.⁴⁷⁸

The Cycloptic Eye

To come across a monstrous eye is to come across a devious, strange, hideous, frightening, abnormally formed, and seemingly inhuman, wicked eye. This monstrous eye is white eyepower backed by violent force and intimidation.⁴⁷⁹ In an entry that appeared in *The Christian Recorder*, the official newspaper of the AME Church, on November 7, 1868, we read the following description:

What is the origin of the “Ku Klux Klan?” It will be observed that the official announcements are always in the name of the “Grand Cyclop.” This name “Cyclop,” led the writer to the following reflection, and, as he believes, just conclusion: Cyclops is from Cyclopea - *kuklo* in Greek, *circules*, meaning “a circle”... The Cyclops inhabited the western part of Sicily, ever kept their bodies mystically covered, their faces concealed in masks, in the center of which was but one hole, so that they were thought to have but one eye in the center of the upper part of the faces, by the terror stricken people. They were believed to be all powerful, and went about taking human life, destroying and devastating all kinds of property, fortifications, and even whole cities and communities... Now take all the facts in connection with this most dangerous organization, their manner of dress, being covered with sheets and masks; and of assembling, whether indoors or mounted on horseback, in a circle; they only recognizing the rights of *white* men; carrying always glittering weapons; shooting in the dark by volleys, representing *lightning* and *thunder*, and you cannot fail to recognize the true origin, intent, and the meaning of the “Ku Kuk Clan.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 209.

⁴⁷⁸ “There was no pretense of racial neutrality, and so there was less concern with the abstract aim of controlling ‘crime’ than with the very concrete task of controlling Black people. Black people were, in a sense, criminalized – but more importantly, they were permanently deemed objects for control” (Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 128).

⁴⁷⁹ Bizarrely, the Klan was associated in popular imagination with nearly a dozen “monstrous births” (babies born with abnormalities) in the South, especially Alabama, which were taken to be “a perfect representation and facsimile of a disguised Ku Klux.” See Fry, *Night Riders*, 115-117.

⁴⁸⁰ “The Ku Klux Klan,” *The Christian Recorder*, November 7, 1868, vol. VIII, no. 33, ed. Benjamin T. Tanner (Philadelphia, PA).

This fascinating breakdown of the cycloptic nature of the Klan moves us to consider the eye of the white racist and hegemonic gaze in its monstrous mode in terms of the mythical Cyclopes. This monstrous eye is a cycloptic eye and Looks that kill are scare tactics.⁴⁸¹

Like the famous Cyclops from Homer's *The Odyssey*, the cycloptic eye is lawless, or better, a law unto itself. As we're told in the story, they're a "lawless and prideful people... They live near crests of high mountains in hollow caves and each man lays down laws for his children and wives. No one Kuklops cares for another (*oud allelon alegousi*)."⁴⁸² The surrounding community puts little to no restrictions on this eye that devours flesh and feeds on blood, as it can operate outside the bounds of the law and in relative isolation; it carves out the space and presumes the freedom to take matter/s into its own hands. It can do what it wills and desires with little external check on its power, not even from the gods: the "Cyclopean disdain for neighbors is an expression of their contempt for Zeus and the civility he oversees."⁴⁸³ The cycloptic eye stems from an ethos of rugged individualism, where the independence and self-autonomy of the law-giving father figure in his cave is esteemed above all else. It believes itself to be the absolute source and goal of authority and power; all things in the world are referred solely to itself. In this sense, the cycloptic eye can be considered a concupiscent eye, concupiscence being described in its negative form by theologian Leo Scheffczyk as the

⁴⁸¹ There was tremendous speculation at the time as to where the name "Ku Klux Klan" originated. Some thought that the sounds of the three words resembled the "cocking and discharging of rifles and shotguns," others deriving the name from ancient Scottish clans, or from a Hebrew term found in an old Jewish work, or from Mexican mythology (Cukulcan, the god of light). Fry states that "the most commonly accepted origin of the term is that Ku Klux was coined from the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning a circle... 'a circle of friends.'" An overlooked theory, which Fry considers to be on to something, is the connection with the word "*Clocletz*, the name of a phantom Indian chieftain whom the Georgia Blacks believed led his skeleton followers over the swamps and savannas of Georgia." See Fry, *Night Riders*, 117-122.

⁴⁸² Homer, *Odyssey* 9.105-115.

⁴⁸³ Rick M. Newton, "Assembly and Hospitality in the *Cyclôpeia*," *College Literature* 35.4 (Fall 2008): 18.

“the will to self-preservation... raised to the status of an absolute.”⁴⁸⁴ This eye desires its own self-preservation, its own being and security, at all costs, and the world around it is forced to cater to these base needs. It is fitting that in later tradition the Cyclopes are known as “builders of walls,” for example, “those of Argos, Tiryns, and Mycenae.”⁴⁸⁵ They must protect their territory and expel (or eat) all their guests.

In terms of Looks that kill, the cycloptic eye is a concrete mode through which white people, whether Ku Klux or not, have sometimes seen nonwhite others. As described by George Yancy: “reproduced through circuits of desire and power, and through embodied, habituated forms of racism, whiteness... strives for totalization; it desires to claim the entire world for itself and has the misanthropic effrontery to territorialize the very meaning of the human.”⁴⁸⁶ The cycloptic eye is territorializing because protects its own turf, and also terrorizing for those who threaten its domestic space and dominant mode of being human; as we have seen, it even territorializes the bodies of others. This eye seeks to totalize, to bring everything within its orbit, and flows out of the monstrous and cycloptic nature of totalizing systems, as described by Enrique Dussel:

Totality, the system, tends to totalize itself, to center on itself, and to attempt – temporally – to eternalize its present structure. Spatially, it attempts *to include within itself* all possible exteriority. Having *an infinite hunger*, the fetish attempts to install itself forever in *an insatiable cannibalism* [*antropofagía*]. Face-to-face proximity disappears because the fetish eats its mother, its children, its siblings. Totalized totality, *Cyclops* or Leviathan on earth, kills as many alien faces (persons) as question it until finally, after a long and frightful agony, it sadly

⁴⁸⁴ Leo Scheffczyk, “Concupiscence,” in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968), 404. For more on the nature of concupiscence, see Chapter 3: Organized Eyepower.

⁴⁸⁵ Polyphemos himself builds a wall around his cave (9.185). See Pura Nieto Hernández, “Back in the Cave of the Cyclops,” *American Journal of Philology* 121, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 360.

⁴⁸⁶ Yancy, *Black Bodies*, 91.

disappears from history, not without first sealing its final days with innumerable injustices.⁴⁸⁷

The man-eating eye oversees its flock and cave “stock” exclusively for feeding on it, as in the expression: *feast your eyes!* There is no “face-to-face proximity” with others, no enriching relations with guests, because the cycloptic eye disappears these others in its aggressive accumulation and protection of its stuff, that is, its substance.

The Cyclop’s eye is not concerned with the world around it – the animals, the land, the plants, the people, etc. – as it is, or for any of its transcendental qualities (beauty, truth, goodness, etc.), but only for the substance, sustenance, and gratification it can get out of it. It is difficult to imagine any contemplative life for the Cyclopes; as monsters, they have no heart and soul, even though they talk about the gods and even call upon them occasionally.⁴⁸⁸ Klansmen, as will be seen, were good churchgoers. But the cycloptic eye is not contemplative in any sense. Rather, it is fit for the active life: its single, monocular eye is geared for a razor-sharp look, a beam or a ray, that is finely tuned for the practical work of cutting, crafting, drilling, or killing. Binocular vision, by contrast, is the creation and integration of two views from two sources, adding depth and dimensionality to vision and therefore to the world it sees. The cycloptic eye sees without depth, without the richness of dimensionality, content as it is with appearances and the posing of reality as a uniform slab for its own self-imposition.

As was pointed out above in the paragraph from *The Christian Recorder*, both the Cyclopes and the Klan are associated with the *circular* and the *circumscribing*. Just like

⁴⁸⁷ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 49. Italics mine. The description of an infinite hunger and insatiable cannibalism point to the concupiscent nature of this eye.

⁴⁸⁸ According to Euripides in his play, *Cyclops* (5th c. BCE), Cyclopes are “the one-eyed children of the sea-god [Poseidon], inhabit remote caves – and kill people.” See Euripides, *Cyclops* 21-22; from “Cyclops,” in *Heracles and Other Plays*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 103.

the patrolling eye that circumscribes, or moves around, black communities to choke its movements and activities, so also the Klan assembles in circular formation. A circle is the position best suited for attack on horses, as when a group in battle encircles an enemy, and it is also well suited for a defensive position, as in the colloquialism, circling the wagons. The Klan collectively gave a Look that sought to encircle the black community to keep them in place, to contain and separate them from the white community and from access to political and social power. Along with circumscribing, the cycloptic eye represents a totalizing eye, an eye which sees no value in the other except the moral imperative to put down or destroy. In its obsession with maintaining a grip on access to and control over the substance of life, it pegs the other it deems a threat or rival in more ways than one. To refer again to Dussel on totality, the cycloptic eye kills alien faces.

The Ku Klux Klan initially emerged on the local and national scene “as a solution to the problem of southern white defeat.”⁴⁸⁹ The cycloptic eye that gained concrete visual power after the Civil War came primarily from those men who, according to historian Elaine Frantz Parsons, “were not at all certain that they could maintain their *grip* on resources and power in the South after losing the war.”⁴⁹⁰ They intimidated, threatened, and killed because they themselves felt threatened, as if their values, vitality, manhood, and way of life were being crushed into the ground.⁴⁹¹ Originally, however, the Klan was not a group who simply wanted to restore the past in a fix of nostalgia, but were looking for new ways to live out their values and secure their substance within rapidly changing social and political conditions. Further, the original members of the Klan in Pulaski were

⁴⁸⁹ Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1.

⁴⁹⁰ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 1. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁹¹ “The sight of organized black groups of any sort in the early Reconstruction years made many Democratic whites sweat.” Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 2.

not, as imagined, from the lower classes of white society, but were instead, as one local recalled, “the nicest and most cultured young men in the town and country.”⁴⁹² They knew Greek and Latin, practiced law and other prominent professions in town, and none of them were plantation owners. For Parsons, “the Ku-Klux’s ideas, structure, and early energy came from professional young men living in the Upper South, in town, inhabiting an intellectual universe in which northern ideas and institutions played an important part.”⁴⁹³ Later, members claimed that the Klan was not initially formed for racial conflict, but instead for entirely social and entertainment purposes. Some members of the Klan were musicians and participated in the American minstrel tradition, whereby white entertainers “blackened up” their faces to act out crass, stereotypical roles of African Americans or to sing folk songs for similar effect. Yet the Klan was, according to Parsons, distinctly “modern,” that is, stemming from social relations beyond local contexts of interaction; having “a sense of discontinuity and rupture with the structures of the past;” having a “secular framing” parallel to a break with a providential view of history; and involving “a search for a role that indicates no expectation of secure status.”⁴⁹⁴ Out of the chaos left in the wake of the Civil War, the Klan promised order to both white men’s psyches and to “their” world.

Interestingly, scholars have repeatedly connected the Klan’s early formation with the modern experience of boredom, and Parsons adds that the words the men who created the Klan used to describe their own motives was “restlessness” and “longing.”⁴⁹⁵ Along with boredom, the experiences of restlessness and longing cast the early formation of the

⁴⁹² See Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 31.

⁴⁹³ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 38-39.

⁴⁹⁴ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 37.

⁴⁹⁵ See Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 39-40.

Klan in the vocabulary associated with concupiscence, that constant longing to integrate the pluralist aspects of one's reality into a coherent frame that can be overseen and controlled from a central viewpoint. It may be surprising to hear that boredom is a crucial aspect of the modern experience of concupiscence, yet boredom too evinces the experience of no longer being *satisfied* with one's life and its prospects, one's cultural expressions, or one's values. Boredom is, in its own way, the flipside to restlessness and longing, their very negative. As Parsons explains, "if boredom emerges 'whenever the promise of political emancipation is frustrated' and 'marks the discrepancy between the actual and the imagined,' those young and able Pulaski men, defeated soldiers and civic boosters with precious little to boost, were prime candidates for the very modern experience of boredom."⁴⁹⁶ Boredom reigns in the "discrepancy" between the real and the ideal, between the actual and imagined, between the intense longing for more and the constraints of one's present.⁴⁹⁷ "Boredom," argues Parsons, "often expressed the failures of the much-touted new regime to deliver *satisfaction*: the thwarted promise of science to give human beings control over nature and of the era's political revolutions to give individuals agency within their societies."⁴⁹⁸ The Klan was a way to channel the agencies and energies of white men denied, or at least felt to be denied, by the newly reconstructed social and political institutions of the South. As Parsons puts it, "The Ku-Klux served to alleviate the restlessness of southerners as it had that of the Pulaski founders by reframing problems in a way that made meaningful action seem possible."⁴⁹⁹ It was a group

⁴⁹⁶ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 40.

⁴⁹⁷ Karl Rahner would similarly claim that a part of the experience of concupiscence is "a dualism between what he ["man"] wishes to be and what he really is" ("Theology of Power," 393).

⁴⁹⁸ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 40. Italics mine. On boredom, see Elizabeth S. Goldstein, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁹⁹ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 79.

organized to take matter/s into its own hands, to secure its grip on the levers of social control and reproduction, which included stopping organized groups of free black men and women, especially militias or unwanted political organizations.⁵⁰⁰

Parsons sums up the goal of many white people during Reconstruction by noting that, “Continuing a long tradition of *surveilling* and preventing slaves’ congregation in groups, whether for religious, social, or other purposes, postwar white Democratic southerners were convinced that any meeting of freedpeople and their white allies was in itself an impediment to their efforts to reassert their monopoly on power.”⁵⁰¹ Organized expressions of white racial violence, even when exaggerated in terms of their organizational efficiency or numbers, thus tracked and targeted organizations, especially militias, that incorporated black members. Attacks on the actual bodies of black people were also attacks on the social bodies of which they were a part. What was important for white people was to limit the self-anthropomorphization of black people through organizing themselves and through the technological extensions of themselves. The goal for Klansmen and other sympathetic white people was to prevent freedpeople from forming bonds that would increase their own ability to take matter/s into their own hands, and especially from increasing their arm and eyepower through acquiring, and training with, guns.⁵⁰² The reason for this basic concern is, as Parsons claims that, “the act of

⁵⁰⁰ The Democratic *Columbia Daily Phoenix* proclaimed as early as 1868 that, “We now have two intensely hostile elements organized and organizing, and facing each other – the Ku Klux Klan, or secret society of white men, on the one hand, and the loyal league association, or secret society of negroes, on the other, each struggling for supremacy, and each of a race alien in civilization and ideas to the other.” Quoted in Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 266-267. See *Daily Phoenix*, April 15, 1868, p. 1.

⁵⁰¹ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 117. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁰² Parsons claims that “attacks on formal groups like militias and the league [Union Leagues] were also a subset of, and little different from, a much larger body of attacks that targeted all efforts by freedpeople and their white Republican allies to form themselves into coordinated groups” (*Ku-Klux*, 115). For a specific example, see the Colfax Massacre of 1873 (Easter Sunday) in Louisiana, where around 150 African Americans were killed by white Democrat forces attempting to take back a courthouse from a legal, though unwanted by white people, militia force.

organization itself, for any purpose, was civilly empowering.”⁵⁰³ She quotes Walter Johnson to the effect that, “Collective resistance is, at bottom, a process of everyday organization, on that... depends upon connections and trust established through everyday actions.”⁵⁰⁴ And so it was a central goal of the Klan to undermine “black organization in part by claiming, and attempting to demonstrate, that freedmen’s organization was false, corrupt, inappropriate, or hollow.”⁵⁰⁵ Klansmen “wanted to destroy whatever organizational structures freedpeople had managed to build, and expected that in doing so they would reveal that freedpeople lacked the solidarity and integrity to make these associations legitimate and robust; they would thus *mark* freedpeople as incapable of true civic association.”⁵⁰⁶ The end result of this marking was that “the visible organization of the Klan was meant to highlight and contrast with black disorder.”⁵⁰⁷

White people were portrayed as orderly and black people as disorderly, even as Klansmen pulled people from the privacy of their homes at night, marched them to isolated places in the yard or the woods, and (un)ceremoniously dealt with them. This method of taking solitary individuals off to isolated spots to threaten, beat, or kill them was, according to Parsons, also symbolic: “The isolated victim was not just practically but experientially completely outside and beyond hope of rescue by his friends.”⁵⁰⁸ Here again the place of the crime signified the place in political life that Klansmen desired to relegate black people and their allies: outside. Their own organized attack was “a ritual of

⁵⁰³ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 116-117.

⁵⁰⁴ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 117.

⁵⁰⁵ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 114.

⁵⁰⁶ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 115. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁰⁷ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 115.

⁵⁰⁸ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 122.

exclusion, in which the subject was *excised from the body politic*.⁵⁰⁹ Cut off from friends and organizations who might rally to their defense, the Klan's targets were cut out of the body politic by the cycloptic eye, an eye trained to be excisive, excessive, and exclusionary. Upon finding free black people in their "cave," that is, in the domestic, social, and political space believed to be reserved for their dominant self-assertion alone, they committed acts of inhospitable violence to preserve their substance. Scholars have pointed out that the Cyclops story "is an exercise in non-*xeneia*," or, "a hospitality-scene gone awry."⁵¹⁰ As one witness from Union County, South Carolina recalled in a memoir: "Throughout the County there were several Klans, and each Klan could make its own raid. They undertook to govern all things at their own sweet will."⁵¹¹

Performing Looks

In terms of white manhood, the Klan's "performance was, in part, an expression of white Southern men's sense of disempowerment and failure as patriarchs after the war."⁵¹² Because men at the time were "expected to protect and sustain dependents," it was hard for many white men to deal with the fact that they could not do this during the war and in its aftermath. Further, "many southern white men had grounded their

⁵⁰⁹ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 126. Emphasis mine. Elsewhere Parsons notes that, "the significance of taking a victim to an isolated place was to demonstrate the victim's disqualification for participation in the body politic." Further, she notes that women were often not taken away from the home because of the "gendered claims they were making on the female victim." Klansmen would rape women or demand their domestic services such as building a fire in the house or serving food and drinks. Such "violence in or near the home would heighten the shame of the victim's kin who failed to protect her" (*Ku-Klux*, 122-123).

⁵¹⁰ The features of the story that break hospitality norms of Homer's ancient world are: "Odysseus' uninvited entrance into his 'host's' cave, Polyphemus' inquiring after his 'guest's' name before offering a meal, the monster's eating of his visitors instead of feeding them, and his guest-gift of promising to consume 'No One' last." See Newton, "Assembly and Hospitality," 2. A major title for Zeus in the Greek world was "*Xenios*," or "protector of suppliants and *xeinoi* (guests)." See Yoav Rinon, "The Pivotal Scene: Narration, Colonial Focalization, and Transition in 'Odyssey' 9," *American Journal of Philology* 128, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 315.

⁵¹¹ Quoted in Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 257. See Robert Wallace Shand, "Incidents in the Life of a Private Soldier in the War Waged by the United States against the Confederate States, 1861-1865 [1907-8]," 58, Robert W. Shand Papers, University of South Carolina Library, Columbia, SC.

⁵¹² Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 77.

manhood on their right to inflict unmanning violence upon slaves.”⁵¹³ This “unmanning” and *re*-manning violence would show itself most explicitly in sexual violence done to black women, and in numerous acts of castration that often preceded the execution of black men.⁵¹⁴ These ritual and performative acts of violence against freedpeople and their white allies was a way for white men to feel like they were still the masters of social, political, and sexual forces in life, and they presented this violence “as constructive of a new and stable southern social order.”⁵¹⁵ The form in which their racialized violence was presented “was drawn self-consciously from the newest trends, from popular entertainment to contemporary forms of organizational structure.”⁵¹⁶ Klan costuming and disguise drew heavily on popular carnival scenes, minstrelsy, masquerade balls, and sensationalist fiction, such as detective novels, so popular at the time. Their bizarre costumes thus presented a certain *look* that infused their looks of others with an unsettling character. Their disguises spread terror through the grotesque character of their makeup coupled with the odd behavior of the people donning them: “Ku-Klux attackers sometimes committed violence in a comic mode, self-consciously wearing costumes or employing formulas from the minstrel stage not only to confuse, frighten, and demean victims but also to obscure accounts of their deeds.”⁵¹⁷ Their costumes varied from red flannel pants with white stripes along the seams, to masks made with squirrel skin, to

⁵¹³ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 77.

⁵¹⁴ According to Parsons, “Ku-Klux attacks... often appeared to have the purpose of disrupting familial bonds. Ku-Klux rapes of freedwomen presented freedpeople’s families as failed associations. In doing so... they revealed freedpeople’s claims to civic competency as fraudulent. The capacity to effectively exercise public power, as a citizen, required that a man be able to interact as an equal with his neighbors while also exerting control over his household. Freedmen, their opponents argued, were ‘the opposite of independent and masterful men.’ Ku-Klux attackers ‘creat[ed] situations that forced black men to fail as protectors.’” Further, such beliefs about freedpeople’s “supposed lack of commitment to family was a minstrel staple” (*Ku-Klux*, 121).

⁵¹⁵ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 78.

⁵¹⁶ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 79.

⁵¹⁷ Parsons, *Ku-Klux* 197.

papered hats, to white gowns, to ribbons and tassels, to horns stuffed with cotton, to women's clothing, and to cows' and mules' tails or mules' ears.⁵¹⁸ According to Parsons, and which should be expected by now, "The favorite animal feature... was that most phallic of accessories, the bull's horn."⁵¹⁹ The look of the Klan, just like its violent actions and its perverse looks, was intentionally portrayed as beastly and manly, a mix that confused and terrorized its victims as it fascinated white audiences around the country. Their looks gave the cycloptic eye a satyric vibe.

The cycloptic eye avoided a face to face encounter with others it regarded as a threat to its own territory. By using various disguises to cover their identities and remain anonymous, Klansmen tried to enact what Jacques Derrida has called "the supreme insignia of power: the power to see without being seen."⁵²⁰ The faceless Klansmen took on the appearance of ghosts, "moon-men," "denizens of hell," "outlanders" or foreigners, animals, Native Americans, and blackface performers, carrying out their brutal activities in strange fashion.⁵²¹ As ghosts of the returning Confederate dead and "no longer limited by mortal flesh... [they] could follow freedmen anywhere, appearing at any time, any place."⁵²² Like the Cyclopes, they "kept their bodies mystically covered, their faces concealed in masks," and in this anonymity they thundered around town and shot fire like the dragons they claimed to be. Following popular minstrel and carnivalesque traditions, Klan activities and dress showed "that while the threatening black, Indian, or beast had not been truly civilized, he had been captured."⁵²³ Klansmen could safely "mobilize

⁵¹⁸ See Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 83-84; 94.

⁵¹⁹ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 84.

⁵²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006), 8.

⁵²¹ See Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 81, 84, 93, 95.

⁵²² Fry, *Night Riders*, 136.

⁵²³ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 100.

savagery for their own purposes.”⁵²⁴ Whether from hell, Shiloh, or the moon, the Klan desired domination of the social and political terrain, and it would do so in part by appropriating the other for itself through their violent performances.

Reduxing Eyes

In her book *The Second Coming of the KKK*, historian Linda Gordon teases out several features that distinguished the reformed Klan of the 1920s from its earlier manifestation, and which also helps us to see a transformation in the cycloptic eye as we move into the Jim Crow era of American history.⁵²⁵ According to Gordon,

[the] “second Klan”... differed significantly from its parent. It was stronger in the North than in the South. It spread above the Mason-Dixon line by adding Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and bootleggers to its list of enemies and pariahs, in part because African Americans were less numerous in the North. Its leaders tried to prohibit violence, though they could not always enforce the ban. Unlike the first Klan, which operated mainly at night, meeting in hard-to-find locations, the second operated in daylight and organized mass public events. Never a secret organization, it published recruiting ads in newspapers, its members boasted their affiliation, and it elected hundreds of its members to public office. It was vastly bigger than the first Klan, claiming, in what was almost certainly an exaggeration, four million to six million members.”⁵²⁶

Despite these differences with its predecessor, the second Klan shared a similar concern with manliness and the maintenance of social hierarchies, and most crucially shot a similar look at those perceived as others. A new target would be “non-Nordic” people, especially Catholics and Jews. “The second Klan,” says Gordon, “took off by melding racism and ethnic bigotry with evangelical Protestant morality.”⁵²⁷ This was simply the cycloptic eye in a different guise, shaped to meet the needs of a new age of American history. As Klan leader Hiram Evans would state in 1926, “We are demanding, and we

⁵²⁴ Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 100.

⁵²⁵ On the “Jim Crowing Eye,” see Chapter 6: Hate-Stares.

⁵²⁶ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 2.

⁵²⁷ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 15.

expect to win, *a return of power into the hands* of the everyday, not highly cultured, not overly intellectualized, but entirely unspoiled and not de-Americanized, average citizen of the old stock.”⁵²⁸

Gordon herself lists six main ideological components of the second Klan: racism, nativism, temperance, fraternalism, Christian evangelicalism, and populism. Due to the constraints of Northern law, economy, and society at the time, the Klan attempted to legitimize itself by avoiding blatant acts of violence against African Americans that could be pinned on them, and instead focused on economic boycotts and electing pro-Klan officials to public office.⁵²⁹ Some Klan publications insisted that the Klan had no problem with black people if they stayed in their place. A bigger concern, following new waves of immigration from southern and eastern Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, was preserving “American” identity from perceived foreignness. As Imperial Wizard Evans wrote, “the Negro is not the menace to Americanism in the same sense that the Jew or the Roman Catholic is a menace.”⁵³⁰ Following other conservative groups such as the American Protective Association (APA), the Klan opposed the immigration of “Romanish” and Jewish people and advocated for the deportation of all “non-Nordic” peoples: “The country should expel ‘certain types and races which will not in a hundred years of residence here be anything but a menace. They should be kept out – and put out.”⁵³¹ One reason the Klan and others gave for why immigrants, especially Catholics,

⁵²⁸ Hiram Wesley Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” *North American Review* 223, no. 830 (Mar. – May 1926): 33-63. Emphasis mine. The next issue included separate responses to the Ku Klux Klan written by Martin J. Scott, SJ, and W. E. B. Du Bois.

⁵²⁹ According to Gordon’s tallies, “sixteen senators, scores of congressmen (the Klan claimed seventy-five), and eleven governors, pretty much equally divided between Democrats and Republicans,” were Klansmen. Supreme Court Justices Hugo Black and Edward Douglass White were Klansmen, as well as President Harding and President Truman, at least for a time. See Gordon, *Second Coming*, 164-65.

⁵³⁰ Quoted in Gordon, *Second Coming*, 41.

⁵³¹ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 27-28. The quote is from Hiram Evans, “Immigrants Pouring In,” *Searchlight* (KKK Newspaper), March 25, 1922, p. 4.

should be kept out was because they were considered the “source of all the social vices,” especially drunkenness. Liquor was associated with loose morals, prostitution, corruption, and all other kinds of social problems throughout the Progressive Era. The Klan polished up its public image by supporting good, conservative, and Christian virtues such as temperance. As famed lawyer Clarence Darrow put it in 1924: “The father and mother of the Ku Klux is the Anti-Saloon League. I would not say every Anti-Saloon Leaguer is a Ku Kluxer, but every Ku Kluxer is an Anti-Saloon Leaguer.”⁵³²

By gaining the backing of local Christian leaders, the Klan could mainstream its message and appeal to a broad audience. As a form of populism, the Klan made the “claim to be the authentic voice of ‘the people,’ and a manifestation of ‘the people’s’ will.” Their targets were, therefore, inauthentic, disloyal, corrupt, or impure; in other words, not “100%.”⁵³³ Hiram Evans’ own position essay, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926), reveals this positioning of the Klan as speaking for, and representing the “vital” spirit of the American people: “the Klan has shown a power to reform and cleanse itself from within, to formulate and vitalize fundamental instincts into concrete thought and purposeful action, to meet changing conditions with adaptability but without weakness, to speak for and to lead the common people of America.”⁵³⁴ According to Gordon, “Populist rhetoric often asserts that the nation is being stolen by those who do not represent the people; that the people are being robbed of their birthright.”⁵³⁵ The Klan, like other populist movements, claimed “a unique authenticity that... evokes a mythical, doctrinal, ahistorical concept of ‘the people,’ a concept that

⁵³² Quoted in Gordon, *Second Coming*, 29.

⁵³³ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

⁵³⁴ Evans, “The Klan’s Fight,” 33.

⁵³⁵ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

often demands racial ‘purity.’”⁵³⁶ Populism in another sense could be understood as a form of social integralism, a theme which has continued to surface throughout this study. As integralists, populists are “illiberal, uncomfortable with diverse opinions, and disinclined to protect dissenters.”⁵³⁷ Further, in “imagining the existence of one genuine nation” they also “call for the people to be undivided in their will.”⁵³⁸ For integralist individuals and movements, there can be no dissent, no division, and no pluralism allowed in social and political realities. The Klan, like all other integralists, “formulated and imposed a singular set of beliefs.”⁵³⁹ According to Gordon, the result is that populists like Klan members are often “hypernationalist, hostile to internationalism and cosmopolitanism.”⁵⁴⁰ Klan leader Evans would himself claim that, “The whole history of the world... has been one of race conflicts, wars, subjugation or extinction. This is not pretty, and certainly disagrees with the maudlin theories of cosmopolitanism, but it is truth. The world has been so made that each race must fight for its life, must conquer, accept slavery or die.”⁵⁴¹ Such a survival-of-the-fittest view of the world can only deal with otherness through its assimilation or elimination. Evans’ comments reveal that the kluxing eye cuts down the social realities of a nation or community to its own size; its own self-image becomes the measure of all things social and political. The Klan professed to have eyes to see who was really America’s own, “the people,” and who were the pretenders, imposters, interlopers, or “aliens” that threatened genuine Americanness

⁵³⁶ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

⁵³⁷ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

⁵³⁸ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

⁵³⁹ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34. While we are concerned in this project in pointing out the “integralist” and concupiscent character of white power movements and ideologies, integralism as such need not be confined to “conservative” social and political movements. One could equally expect to see integralist ideologies and practices coming from other places on the political spectrum from “right” to “left.”

⁵⁴⁰ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 34.

⁵⁴¹ Evans, “Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” 53.

as defined by their popular imaginings. The Klan assumed the prerogative of determining who looked American, who behaved American, and who should be regarded and dealt with as “Un-American.”

Clearly, one thing that distinguished the Klan of the 1920s from its predecessor was its focus on Americanism and its nationalist vision. The original Klan was, mostly, more localized in its concerns and actions, and, as former Confederates, despised federal government and military “interference” in their lives. Yet the roughly fifty years between the two Klans would see the increasing influence of national media organizations, the expansion of the federal government, the growth of American imperialism abroad (especially in the Philippines), and a surge of nationalism because of World War I. The rhetoric of the 1920s Klan was cast in a nationalist mode even as it later advocated for states’ rights and decried federal government interference in its “way of life.” The Klan’s views and actions toward nonwhite, non-Protestant, and non-American others can best be understood not simply as “racist” but as “nationalist.” These “others” were for them, as the imaginary figure of the Muslim terrorist or “illegal alien” is for many people today,

the other that continuously threatens our desire to feel in control of our environment. It generates in us a very particular set of affects associated with the threat of loss of sovereignty. The more an object’s ungovernability endures, the more it haunts and threatens us. It puts us face to face with our vulnerability and the limitations of our sovereign power and makes us desire to govern it even more intensely while at the same time fearing that it will be forever ungovernable.⁵⁴²

Then, as now, a major way to seek out and govern the “ungovernable” was through the mobilization, organization, and technological enhancement of eyepower.

The “All-Seeing” Eye

⁵⁴² Hage, *Is racism*, 81.

What is of special interest for our purposes is the self-conscious adoption of eye power language and imagery by Klan members throughout the 1920s, a phenomenon which can be noticed even in the titles of Klan newspapers at the time: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, *Watcher on the Tower*, and *Searchlight*. The self-presentation of the Klan as a watching eye enhanced their audience's sense of the expansive scope of the Klan's activities and interests, and intimidated people into behaving as the Klan saw fit. In a letter to the *Giddings News* editors in 1922, a local Klan chapter ended a brief message with the words: "The eye of the 'invisible' hath seen. We see all, hear all, and know all. We were here yesterday, are here today, and will be here forever."⁵⁴³ Klan intimidation tactics required masquerading as divinity, as eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient.

Further, Christian language, imagery, and the social and moral influence of churches around the nation were utilized to spread the message of the Klan. A representative article appeared in the *Tyler American* on May 26, 1922, which reported a large gathering at Grace Baptist Church where a pastor, A. S. Poindexter, preached on "The Ku Klux."⁵⁴⁴ During the sermon, Poindexter recalled witnessing a Klan parade in Tyler, Texas where Klansmen held up placards with their values written on them: "Social Purity and Chastity"; "Race Supremacy"; "One Flag, One Bible, One School"; "Protect Our Women"; "Good Treatment of Good Negroes"; "Bootleggers, It's Your Move;" and "Married Men Spend More Time at Home"; all of which the preacher agreed with, at least in principle. In his words, "The Ku Klux stands for supremacy of the White race.

⁵⁴³ From the pro-KKK newspaper based in Houston, Texas: "Giddings Klan Busy," *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, February 18, 1922, vol. 1, no. 22. This issue of *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly* contains a host of articles related to typical Klan concerns: how to have a happy marriage; the deleterious effect of jazz dance and music on the morality of young people; a "Negro" porter is severely beaten by masked Klansmen for "making dates" for white women at a Texas hotel; a Klan parade in Ft. Worth; the problem of "licker lappers" and bootleggers; a strong concern for young white girls' modesty, and so on.

⁵⁴⁴ "People There in Large Numbers," *Tyler American*, May 26, 1922, vol. 1, no. 17.

Shall I oppose them? If I do, what shall I stand for? It will be either equality of the negro or the supremacy of the negro. I can do no other than to advocate the SUPREMACY OF THE WHITE RACE and stand with the Ku Klux Klan on that principle.” In the same issue, “the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Lodge No. 242 of the city of Marietta, Okla.,” expressed their gratitude to Rev. Hub DeLay for “a successful four weeks revival” that was attended by more than a thousand people in Tyler, Texas.⁵⁴⁵ In the middle of DeLay’s final sermon, “three members of the Ku Klux Klan entered and marched down the aisle and deposited a letter upon the altar containing a liberal donation in cash. When they turned and started out, the congregation applauded them.”⁵⁴⁶ The Marietta Klansmen appreciated DeLay’s pastoral work and stated their own allegiances: “We stand for the tenets of the Christian religion. We uphold Christian purity and Christian righteousness for which the preachers and all good praying men and women in the churches stand. We not only uphold and believe in constituted Law, but hereby pledge the entire support of the Marietta Klan in the support of the Law, and will stand behind the officers county and city.” The statement then warned: “Husbands, look after your own home and let other men’s homes alone. Gamblers beware. Bootlegger and whiskey venders beware. Adulterers beware. Automobile night riders beware, both young and old. The Knights of the INVISIBLE EMPIRE are holding their *burning eye* upon you and your conduct. BEWARE. God ever bless all the forces of righteousness operating in our town and community.”⁵⁴⁷ Here the threat of a “burning eye” makes “immoral” persons fear for their lives, or at least to fear enough to change their sinful ways: “You can break the ten

⁵⁴⁵ “Rev. Hub DeLay and The Ku-Klux Klan,” *Tyler American*, May 26, 1922, vol. 1, no. 17.

⁵⁴⁶ “Rev. Hub DeLay,” *Tyler American*. According to Gordon, this tactic of invading a church service was common and was usually prearranged with the minister (*Second Coming*, 89).

⁵⁴⁷ “Rev. Hub DeLay,” *Tyler American*. Italics mine.

commandments in the name of the law,” declared *The Fiery Cross*, “but you cannot hide the fragments of your evil deed from *the eye of the Klan*.”⁵⁴⁸ The Klan’s brand of visuality altered the behavior of those who threatened American values, morals, and institutions as they were interpreted by the Klan.

The pro-KKK newspaper, *Badger American*, which was published in Milwaukee, created its own hymn that followed the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” again showcasing the Klan’s desire to police American communities through organized eyepower. The lyrics to the opening stanza of “The Klan Is Marching On” read: “Our eyes have seen the coming of a dangerous treacherous foe, / We are finding out the secrets that they thought we’d never know, / But the day is not far distant when to all the world we’ll show, / The Klan is watching on.”⁵⁴⁹ The sighting of a “dangerous treacherous foe,” typically immigrants, Jews, and Catholics, here coincides with a kluxing look that claims to see through the secret designs of their enemies. Such a look was especially turned toward the Pope. *The Texas American* exhorted its readers on February 1, 1924: “we must ‘dig deep’ and work with an ‘all seeing eye’ to prevent this Vatican control of our life.”⁵⁵⁰ Catholics were accused of disloyalty, of seeking world domination, of engaging in monetary and political conspiracy, of advocating “deformed” masculinity (celibate priests), and of enslaving nuns in convents for sex and labor.⁵⁵¹ Instead of seeing the coming of the glory of the Lord, this Klan claimed the visual

⁵⁴⁸ John Eight Point, “Sparks from the Fiery Cross,” *The Fiery Cross*, October 26, 1923, vol. 2, no. 52. Italics mine. In this issue, *The Fiery Cross* noted the “Klan’s Program for 1923-24,” which included: 1) “Militant, old-fashioned Christianity and operative patriotism,” 2) “Back to the Constitution,” 3) “Enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment so long as it is on the statute books,” and 4) “Enforcement of present immigration laws and enactment of more stringent laws on immigration.”

⁵⁴⁹ “The Klan Is Marching On,” *Badger American*, December 1, 1923, vol. 1, no. 9.

⁵⁵⁰ “The Loud Speaker,” *The Texas American*, February 1, 1924, vol. 2, no. 50.

⁵⁵¹ Gordon, *Second Coming*, 46-47.

capacity to sight and uncover enemies of “true” or “right” American values. It was their own “glory” that would illuminate the deeds of darkness. Further, the sighting of foreign, immoral, or un-American threats coincided with Klan calls for a fortress mentality that sought to protect its own. The lyrics of “The Klan Is Marching On” continue: “We have gathered here together in this our sacred cave, / To perpetuate the nation that to us our fathers gave, / Let us be a living monument to those within the grave, / As we go marching on.” The lyrics are especially pertinent in their reference to how the Klan felt it their “birthright” to control the nation and its peoples, and to “our sacred cave,” where those threatened by foreign intrusions and the perceived breakdown of pure American values and institutions might go for refuge to plan a counterattack. The cave is a fitting space for training and nurturing a cycloptic eye, an eye that throws up walls and is geared toward blunt, direct sightings of perceived intruders. It is also fitting that “Exalted Cyclops” was the name the Klan gave to the head of a local chapter, or “Klavern.” Naturally, the head of the Klan body had only one eye.

Sometimes the posing of the Klan as the great “all-seeing” eye could take on epic proportions. Again, in an article in *The Texas American* entitled, “The Klan: A Tribute to America’s Greatest Force For God,” we read:

I am a Searchlight on a high tower. I run my relentless eye to and fro throughout the land; my piercing glance penetrates the brooding places of Iniquity. I plant my eyes and ears in the whispering corridors of Crime. Wherever men gather furtively together, there am I, an austere and invisible Presence. I am the Recording Angel’s proxy. I am the haunted dread of the depraved and the hated Nemesis of the vicious. When the Law is weak, then I am strong. When Justice stands impotent and dumb, then do I speak with majesty and power. I am an outstretched arm to Society’s unrequited victim – the swift avenger of Innocence despoiled... Always and ever I speak for the sanctity of the home, for a stainless Flag, and for the preservation of these benign institutions of the free... I am a bulwark and bell-tower to Democracy... The poor man here is as rich as the richest and the rich man as poor as the pauper. I know but one distinction, and that

is unsullied manhood. I am the burning beacon in the uplifted hand of Liberty. I am the Sword and Buckler of that mighty, invisible Emperor of a free people – Justice.⁵⁵²

Here the cycloptic eye is a “relentless eye,” a “piercing glance,” an eye that has an “austere and invisible presence” within American communities. It is an eye concerned with seeing to the sanctity of the home, discovering criminal activities, and giving justice to innocent victims. The eye’s practices of seeing are promoted as a force for good and not evil. Further, this eye is concerned with its own purity and that of others. The rhetoric of cleanliness and purity is essential: the cycloptic eye looks to a “stainless Flag” and knows only the distinction of “unsullied manhood.” Yes, the cycloptic eye always bears a *machismo* obsession with control over the domestic and sexual spheres of life.⁵⁵³ Finally, the cycloptic eye seeks self and national “preservation” in searching out “Iniquity” and “Crime,” and poses as the protector of national life and white womanhood. The self-image of the cycloptic eye is that of the hero of the nation, of the American “race,” or, as Hiram Evans liked to say, “the pioneer stock.”⁵⁵⁴ The Klan tried to mask its violent marking out, its violent looking, by adopting an angelic guise and a heavenly viewpoint. As “the Recording Angel’s proxy,” the cycloptic eye would discover the sins against Americanness, mark out the sinful, and dish out its own brand of justice. Ironically, this accusatory eye performs the original function of “satan” in the Hebrew Bible: the accuser

⁵⁵² “The Klan: A Tribute to America’s Greatest Force for God,” *The Texas American*, February 1, 1924, vol. 2, no. 50.

⁵⁵³ According Umberto Eco, “Since both permanent war and heroism are difficult games to play, the Ur-Fascist transfers his will to power to sexual matters. This is the origin of *machismo* (which implies both disdain for women and intolerance and condemnation of nonstandard sexual habits, from chastity to homosexuality). Since even sex is a difficult game to play, the Ur-Fascist hero tends *to play with weapons* – doing so becomes an ersatz *phallic* exercise.” See Umberto Eco, “Ur-Fascism,” *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/>. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁵⁴ See Evans, “Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” 52.

(*ha satan*), adversary, or even the prosecuting attorney in God's heavenly courtroom.⁵⁵⁵

The cycloptic eye is all judgment, leaving no room for mercy.

Finally, an ode written by "D. D. B." (Daisy Douglas Brushwiller, a Hoosier Klanswoman) entitled "The Soul of America," put into poetic form the shared convictions and self-understanding of the Klan organization:

My *hand* typifies strength,
 And although untrained in cunning
 Its movements *mark* the quaking
 Of the enemies of my country.
 My *eye*, though covered, is *all-seeing*;
 It penetrates the dark recesses of law violation,
 Treason, political corruption and injustice,
 Causing these cowardly culprits to bare their unholy faces
 In the light of my *all-seeing* revelations.
 My *vision* is so broad
 That my daily meditations force upon me new problems,
 New situations and new obligations.
 My feet are swift to carry *the strength of my hand*
 And *the penetrations of my all-seeing eye*.
 My nature is serious, righteous and just,
 And *tempered with the love of Christ*...
 I am the Spirit of Righteousness.
 They call me the Ku Klux Klan.
 I am more than the uncouth robe and hood
 With which I am clothed.
 YEA, I AM THE SOUL OF AMERICA.⁵⁵⁶

In this description of the Klan, many of the themes from this project come together: the hand understood as a metaphor for power; the "marking" capacity of eyes and hands as they craft images of "alien" others; the self-ascribed "all-seeing" capacities of the Klan as organized eyepower; the "penetrating" aspect of Looks that kill which violates land, social terrain, and human bodies; the rhetoric of moral goodness and Christian virtue; and the language of purity to justify mastery over the "unclean." The popularity of the Klan at

⁵⁵⁵ See especially Zechariah 3.

⁵⁵⁶ "The Soul of America," *The Fiery Cross*, July 20, 1923, vol. 2, no. 37. Emphasis mine.

the time further suggests that their claim to being “the soul of America” was not entirely without merit. In the next chapter we will explore another mode of white (eye) power that existed on mutually beneficial, and often overlapping, terms with the cycloptic eye and which itself shows the true scope of white visuality as personal, social, and even atmospheric: the Jim Crowing eye.

Chapter 6: Hate-Stares

“What does it mean... to write race on a social body whose substance is not tissue, organs, blood, or skull, but trains and buses, waiting rooms, lunch counters, drinking fountains, restrooms, and movie theaters?”⁵⁵⁷

“As a colored woman, I may enter more than one white church in Washington without receiving the welcome which any human being has a right to expect in the sanctuary of God. Sometimes the usher is stricken with a peculiar kind of color blindness which prevents a dark face from making any impression on his retina, so that it is impossible for him to see colored people at all. Or, if his eyesight happens to be normal, he will keep these dusky Christians waiting a long time when they have had the temerity to thrust themselves into a temple where only fair faces are expected to worship. Then he will ungraciously show them a seat in the rear – the Jim Crow section of the house of God.”⁵⁵⁸

“There is also a sign, on an old beatup Southern store that reads NEGRO KEEP OUT. There are signs like this all over America. And where there are no written signs, brains have been marked, so that the same sentiment leaps out of people’s eyes.”⁵⁵⁹

Much of the analysis so far has attempted to show how unjust looks shot by white people have historically been official, that is, publicly sanctioned, and geared toward sexual and labor extraction from, and the maintenance of social domination over, those marked as “black” or “Negro” or some other contrived label. Looks, stares, and gazes given by an individual, such as an overseer, slave patroller, or Kluxer, often manifested the eyes (read: values, judgments, desires) of the white group in power. Unjust looks do not operate on a personal basis alone, as the look of even one individual is to a large extent socially produced through the imitation of models such as peers, family upbringing, education (or its lack), legal rulings and precedents, linguistic practices, political discourse, and cultural norms and habits. We have also explored how looks have

⁵⁵⁷ Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 16.

⁵⁵⁸ Mary Eliza Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Washington, D.C.: Ransdell Inc. Printers and Publishers, 1940), 385-86.

⁵⁵⁹ Imamu Amiri Baraka, *Home: Social Essays* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1966), 205.

been used to demarcate space and place as to who belongs where and what can be done in these spaces and by whom. There is something like a topography of vision by which the eye moves over the contours of space and collectively with other similar-seeing eyes, the eyes of society, comes to regard such space as valuable, useful, or important to their lives. Eyes produce space in terms of how it will be experienced and what relations various people will have to this space and that which is within it. Having seen “value” in a space – which is itself not always a conscious activity and is formed by accumulated historical practices and present needs – one decides how to relate to that space, what goes with that space, and what is out of place, that is, who or what threatens the space as valuable and good for one’s life. The eyes of the law help to solidify or fix a certain regard or perspective toward spaces, as in property, real estate, or vagrancy laws, and this legal eye adds legitimacy to the eye claims being made by those with social, political, and enforcing power in communities. When these eye claims are threatened or taken away, the deprived eyes can turn monstrous and get brutally territorial.

The Jim Crowing Eye

As we saw in the last chapter, the rise of various forms of organized vigilantism and the cycloptic eye came about when white eye claims were most felt to be challenged. These satyric and brutal forms of organized eyepower remained in force until the social and political subjugation of the free black population was largely secure by the late 1870s and subsequently appeared only when new “threats” were seen on the horizon. White communities both North and South increasingly sought to hold power against African Americans through informal practices and laws that discriminated against them in the social realm. As Elizabeth Abel notes, “Especially in urban areas where patterns of racial

subordination were least entrenched, white Southerners worked quickly after the end of Reconstruction to devise a horizontal urban grid to replace the vertical structures of supervision and subordination that had ensured that the proximities of slavery would remain hierarchical and unthreatening.”⁵⁶⁰ In terms of the developing modes of white visibility, the grid would come to gain importance over the field as people moved from rural areas to towns and cities, and especially as African Americans moved *en masse* to Northern industrial cities in what has been called the “Great Migration.” As the grid came to be more important in terms of white social, spatial, and visual control of others, urban planning, real estate, retail, public transportation, and school districting practices, among others, would come to be the areas where attempts at social domination and active resistance to these attempts were most played out.

Note, however, that the visual shift from the field to the grid was never complete or total; visual practices related to the field informed and shaped practices related to the grid, and vice versa. This mutuality can best be seen in the rise of prison plantations in the South following emancipation, which were really a kind of field/grid hybrid. In the prison plantation, a grid, as “an arrangement of parallel bars with openings between them,” was superimposed on the field as prisoners were forced to labor without payment.⁵⁶¹ The prison plantation, such as the Louisiana State Penitentiary known as “Angola,” was a carceral field or a field with bars. Despite this crucial overlap, the white grid in town and urban settings would become a principal way for white communities to visualize and implement social control over African Americans. As “a network of lines” generally, and more specifically as lines “provided on a map as a means of specifying the

⁵⁶⁰ Abel, *Signs of the Times*, 4.

⁵⁶¹ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “grid.”

location of places and objects,” white visuality in grid mode mapped racialized meanings onto spaces and those within them, with the ultimate goal being the arresting of unknown, feared, or simply unwanted social forces.⁵⁶² As Abel, using the language of David Delaney, astutely explains, “Jim Crow’s *trompe l’oeil*... is its manifestly disciplinary grid... a ‘geography of power’ contrived to manage the ‘interplay between (largely white) territoriality and (largely black) mobility’ through the ‘de juridification of race’... [and] ‘the promulgation and proliferation of *laws*’... that constructed a ‘legal landscape’ of ‘lines and spaces.’”⁵⁶³ This mode of white visuality that persistently attempted to superimpose a grid of legal and social meanings and values on others to control and relegate them to second-class citizenship is explored throughout this chapter as the Jim Crowing eye. The last part of the chapter highlights the personal lives of those who continued to look back, to look white people in the eye, to create a liberating and protective space for their themselves and their communities.

Staging and Barring Eyes

In his classic *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955), C. Vann Woodward defined Jim Crow as “the public symbols and constant reminders of [the Negro’s] inferior position” that were enshrined in “segregation statutes” or laws.⁵⁶⁴ Other scholars have defined the Jim Crow era as “a combination of the de facto second-class citizenship and racial separation that emerged in 1877 at the end of Reconstruction, and the de jure

⁵⁶² *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “grid.”

⁵⁶³ Abel, *Signs of the Times*, 15.

⁵⁶⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 7. John W. Cell defines “segregation” as “an interlocking system of economic institutions, social practices and customs, political power, law and ideology, all of which function both as means and ends in one group’s efforts to keep another (or others) *in their place* within a society that is *actually becoming unified*.” Italics mine. See John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 14.

arsenal of laws and official regulations that came to fruition in the 1890s.”⁵⁶⁵ The term “Jim Crow” itself came from the American minstrel tradition of the 19th century; Abel explains that, “As the name of the legendary black stableman or servant whose dance was imitated to wild acclaim by T. D. Rice in blackface around 1830, Jim Crow has come to signify the expropriation of black expressive culture, the repudiation of black social mobility (to enhance that of the blackface performer), and, by extension, the construction of the system of restrictions that constitute segregation.”⁵⁶⁶ In this way a “cultural scenario gave its name to a political formation, which continued to enlist cultural forms to instantiate its message.”⁵⁶⁷ During his own performances, “Rice darkened his face, acted like a buffoon, and spoke with an exaggerated and distorted imitation of African American Vernacular English.”⁵⁶⁸ These acts became so popular that ‘Jim Crow’ became a common “stage persona” for white performers in blackface. Jim Crow became a performance of white people mocking black people and humiliating them for entertainment and social value.

From these origins, we can initially say that the Jim Crowing eye was a *staging* eye; it worked to forcefully display and position black people on the social stage in deprecating and caricatured fashion. James Scott explains that while dignity is “at once a very private and a very public attribute,” it is nevertheless clear “that any indignity is compounded greatly when it is inflicted in public. An insult, a look of contempt, a physical humiliation, an assault on one’s character and standing, a rudeness is nearly

⁵⁶⁵ William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2001), xxiv.

⁵⁶⁶ Abel, *Signs of the Times*, 6-7.

⁵⁶⁷ Abel, *Signs of the Times*, 6-7.

⁵⁶⁸ “The Origins of Jim Crow,” Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, accessed February 8, 2019, <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/origins.htm>. This museum housed at Ferris State University is invaluable for teachers and students alike.

always far more injurious when it is inflicted before an audience.”⁵⁶⁹ Enrique Dussel importantly defines the “public sphere” as “the mode that the subject adopts as an intersubjective position in a ‘field with others,’ a mode that allows the subject to operate as an ‘actor’ whose ‘roles’ or actions are ‘represented’ *before the gaze of all other actors*.”⁵⁷⁰ A staging eye tries to force other “subjects” into adopting certain modes of subordinate intersubjective positions, operations, and appearances before the gaze of all others, rendering them less intersubjective and more subjected. And a staging eye attempts to control the public sphere by controlling how other subjects are made to appear before the gaze of all; it tries to make all other subjects *subject to* its own gaze. These other subjects, themselves seeking to adopt their own intersubjective positions, operations, and appearances before the gaze of all others, continually face the checks of other eyes that objectify them and so debilitate, to a greater or lesser degree, their subjectivity in public. A staging eye tries to dictate who can act and exercise their own subjectivity in public, and also who must be acted on and moved about in public as any other object of contempt, use, or ridicule. As Barbara Fields explains, “With the end of slavery, in which owners exploited laborers by owning their persons, employers commanded labor by controlling access to the means of labor, subsistence, and livelihood... and those seeking access understand full well the protean quality of the force that blocks them, as well as the complicated rituals through which they must dramatize their own subjection.”⁵⁷¹ Jim Crow social dramatization included performance,

⁵⁶⁹ Scott, *Domination*, 111.

⁵⁷⁰ Enrique Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George CiccarIELlo-Maher (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 8-9.

⁵⁷¹ Fields, *Racecraft*, 86.

masks, ritual, and staging, all for the effect of positioning white people on top of all others.

The Jim Crowing eye as a staging eye saw to it that the virtues of whiteness were displayed in public in and through the parodic presencing of “blackness.” Meanings and values of blackness not staged and controlled by white people were violently kept offstage, at the peripheries of the white public’s eye. Unwanted or threatening meanings of blackness that propped up on the public stage were contested and typically eliminated through violence, threat, ridicule, or economic and social reprisals. What was important was that, at least in the eyes of society, white mores, virtues, manners, beauty, and character – white looks – would forever eclipse black looks and remain the shining, dazzling star of the show. If there were “other” bit parts to be played in society, then white people would stage these parts for themselves, making even “blackness” or “otherness” exhibit their own qualities. Or, if these others played parts for themselves, their parts or roles were to be tailored to fit the desires of white people. As we will see, such a fantastical view of the world and humans would not last, as a great deal of people were not willing to play the part assigned to them by the white world.

Another major feature of the Jim Crowing eye in its legal mode was a hyper-legislation of everyday spaces as people moved toward towns and cities and came into increasing contact with one another, and a reliance on individual white people to serve as a micro-policing force of these various laws and informal social arrangements. As Abel elucidates, “Reinforcing and exceeding [the] legal landscape was a more pervasive system of surveillance sustained by *the watchful eyes* of white residents, whether formally organized into units such as the Ku Klux Klan or informally bound in a common

project of vigilance backed by a range of extralegal threats.”⁵⁷² These white, watchful eyes that channeled the eyes of society and the eyes of the law into everyday life situations were a mobile grid that marked the movements, gestures, and self-presentation of “colored” others and often arrested their social mobility. The beams stemming from white eyes served as invisible bars for African Americans and people of color which, while they were never absolute and were often permeable, attempted to bar them from various spaces in shops, parks, movie theaters, train cars, hospitals, cemeteries, labor organizations, professional organizations, and other positions in society. The Jim Crowing eye, then, was also a *barring* eye.⁵⁷³ As Malcolm X stated in an interview with psychologist Kenneth Clark in 1963, “If you’re born in America with a black skin, you’re born in prison, and the masses of black people in America today are beginning to regard our plight or predicament in this society as one of a prison inmate.”⁵⁷⁴ Yet as the makeup of the grid reveals, there were always “openings” between the parallel bars of white looks, and these bars were constantly tested for their strength and no doubt broken on numerous occasions.

Importantly, Jim Crow existed not only in abstract laws, regulations, and structures, but in the dynamic interrelation between the personal and the social, between individual agents and socio-cultural laws and customs. “In order to maintain dominance,” we read in *Remembering Jim Crow*, “whites needed more than the statutes and signs that

⁵⁷² Abel, *Signs of the Times*, 15.

⁵⁷³ In the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ statement, “Discrimination and Christian Conscience” (1958), there is a quote from Pope Pius XII which reads, “It is only too well known, alas, to what excesses pride of race and racial hate can lead. The Church has always been energetically opposed to attempts to genocide or practices arising from what is called the ‘color bar.’” While this statement is problematic in many respects, it nevertheless again reveals the basic image of racist discrimination and practices as a “bar.” See “Discrimination and Christian Conscience,” *Journal of Negro Education* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 68.

⁵⁷⁴ Kenneth B. Clark, *The Negro Protest* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963), 24.

specified ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’ only; they had to assert and reiterate black inferiority with every word and gesture, in every aspect of both public and private life.”⁵⁷⁵ One gesture, such as a Look, was often a way to “assert and reiterate black inferiority.” In this sense it is appropriate to speak of a Jim Crow-*ing* America alongside a Jim Crow America, to emphasize that everyday encounters and gestures produced a social grid and environment just as much as laws and other social policies; these encounters and gestures allowed for flexibility in the seemingly rigid structure of segregation. Jim Crow was *done* and *performed* as white people attempted to dictate the very terms in which contact between white and black people could take place.⁵⁷⁶ For the editors of *Remembering Jim Crow*, “there was neither escape from, nor redress for, the ubiquitous, arbitrary, and cruel reality of *senseless* white power” during this brutal time of American history.⁵⁷⁷ Ironically, it is the development of white hypersensitivity to black people and contact with them that rendered their actions so senseless.

Blighting Eyes

Yet the most consistent and underlying feature of Jim Crowing America was “that blacks and whites were different *in the eyes of their society*.”⁵⁷⁸ The social character of vision, the eyes of society, regarded some lives as of more worth than others. Informant Lillian Smith, who grew up in a predominantly black neighborhood in Wilmington, North

⁵⁷⁵ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 1.

⁵⁷⁶ In a brief remark by Mary Church Terrell, “About Colored People Who Won’t Sit Down to Eat,” we read similar language concerning “Jim Crow” as something done to someone: “It is discouraging and shocking to see colored people in the National Capital insisting upon standing up to eat a meal, as they have been forced to do in a number of eating places for many years, when it is now possible for them to sit down and eat like other racial groups. And yet, as unbelievable as it may, there are many colored people right here in Washington who prove definitely they like to be jim-crowed by standing up.” In *Unpublished Papers of Mary Church Terrell* (Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 2004), 1.

⁵⁷⁷ *Remembering Jim Crow*, xxix. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷⁸ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 3. Emphasis mine.

Carolina in the 1930s, recalled that, “The question would always come back that we were living in a country that had segregated laws, and [we were] called ‘colored’ people at that time. See, the signs said ‘colored.’ You were not *looked upon* as having full rights that all other citizens should have. We should be treated differently.”⁵⁷⁹ To give just one example of how unjust societal looks showed up in the concrete, one need only to look at city or state budgets and the amount of money spent on segregated black and white schools. Census statistics from Beaufort County, South Carolina in 1910 revealed that, “while state expenditures per white pupil averaged \$40.68, the average black pupil received \$5.95. The average value of a white school was \$30,056, and \$3,953 for a black school. Similarly, Macon County, Alabama spent \$57,385 on 1,435 white students and only \$27,813 on 7,145 black students – the majority of the school population.”⁵⁸⁰ These statistics were not exceptions to the norm but were rather the rule. Further, interviewees who grew up at the time testified to the lack of other resources that black schools received when compared to white-only schools, from hand-me-down textbooks and sports equipment to less money to pay black teachers at these schools. The budgetary priorities placed on these institutions, while a number on paper, were realized and made visible in nicer-looking schools for white children, with more educational and recreational resources, and neglected or inferior facilities for black children. The superior spatial products were naturalized, or made to appear natural, for white people, and blighted or neglected spatial products were likewise naturalized for black people. The same phenomenon could be seen not only in educational settings, but also in the relative condition of housing, businesses, and even prisons. As we saw in Chapter 4 while

⁵⁷⁹ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 7. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸⁰ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 171.

discussing Jewish ghettos in Poland, these socially-produced spaces could signal to an observer the “moral qualities” of the people inhabiting these spaces; they could visually educate the people moving in and out of these spaces. White observers of segregated areas could find “empirical” confirmation for their beliefs about “colored” people which might be used justify further discriminatory practices: *they* (black people) *must be lazy, dirty, immoral, or have low standards, and we* (white people) *must be clean, upright, hard-working, and morally respectable*. Spaces were thus made to visibly reveal the legal codes separating white and black people, a phenomenon which went hand in hand with their social and moral separation through the associations of respectability and cleanliness with white people and indecency and uncleanness with black people. Jim Crowing eyes consistently linked the ontological values of various people to their localities and attempted to determine and present the being-situatedness of black people on its own terms: *We’ll situate you... over here... like this*.

Relatedly, the Jim Crow situating/sighting of African Americans was based on what the Fields call “sumptuary codes” that “enforce social classification” by governing “what goes with what and whom.”⁵⁸¹ According to them, “sumptuary codes consist of rules, written or unwritten, that establish unequal rank and *make it immediately visible*.”⁵⁸² Like sumptuary laws in the past that regulated consumption of various status-bearing foods, luxury items, and clothing, or that regulated levels of consumption, it was important for white people to put social relations of domination and subordination on display both to naturalize these relations and to remind all parties not only of the way things were, but also how they *ought* to be. Sumptuary rules worked to “produce a

⁵⁸¹ Fields, *Racecraft*, 33; 25. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸² Fields, *Racecraft*, 33.

regular supply of circumstantial evidence about what the world is made of and who belongs where within it.”⁵⁸³ Scott puts his finger on the importance of sumptuary codes in what he calls the “public transcript” of social life:

Regardless of the particular form of domination, it is a safe bet that a vital sector of the elite-choreographed public transcript will consist of visual and audible displays of rank, precedence, and honor. Here I have in mind such expressions of domination as terms of address, demeanor, speech levels, codes of eating, dressing, bathing, cultural taste, who speaks first, who gives way to whom. By the same token whenever the public transcript is breached – whether inadvertently or by design – it is also a safe bet that such breaches will disrupt or desacralize the ceremonial reverence.⁵⁸⁴

In Jim Crowing America sumptuary codes, as part of the public transcript controlled by white people, were a key feature of imposing white grids on socio-spatial reality. As “intimate yet public practices,” they helped to “organize individual perception of physical appearance.”⁵⁸⁵ The Jim Crowing eye was both a shaper of, and shaped by, social displays of the appearances and actions of people and the meanings of these appearances and actions; it sought to exhibit “coloreds” in such a way, and in such places and times, that the space between white perceptions of these others and the moral evaluations of these others would collapse. Our senses can’t lie, right?

Sumptuary codes that organized perceptions created environments where everyone not only *knew* their place but *sensed* their place. They could also do the opposite work of creating environments where everyone sensed what or who was out of place.⁵⁸⁶ From wearing the “wrong” kind of fabric or dress, to purchasing expensive

⁵⁸³ Fields, *Racecraft*, 35.

⁵⁸⁴ Scott, *Domination*, 105.

⁵⁸⁵ Fields, *Racecraft*, 70.

⁵⁸⁶ For a related discussion of the creation of “designer environments” that accords status and protection to white property today, especially in the form of gated communities, see Erin Kidd, “The Scaffolding of Whiteness: Race and Place in the Christian Imagination,” in “*You Say You Want a Revolution?*”: 1968-2018 in *Theological Perspective*, ed. Susie Paulik Babka, Elena Procario-Foley, and Sandra Yocum, Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 2018, vol. 64 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019), 16-26.

items or services, to being found in the “wrong” neighborhood, social and moral status markers created by white people could be policed with a Look. In addition, these social and moral status markers were made visible and sensible, filling the spaces and neighborhoods of towns and cities with meaning. Consider these comments made by G. K. Butterfield in *Remembering Jim Crow*: “When you live in the South and have been in the South all your life, you could find places to eat and sleep *instinctively*... Southern towns are laid out in the same fashion, basically, and you could *use your senses* and *sense* where you are and where you’re not. And if you keep driving, you can *see* the quality of the housing decreasing and blight setting in – abandoned cars and people hanging on the streets and then you can begin *to see* blacks.”⁵⁸⁷ Seeing “blacks” in Southern towns meant seeing them in blighted sections of the town, and “the quality of the housing” was often *seen to reflect* the quality of the people living there, and vice versa. According to the editors, “Decayed buildings and dirt roads were primary markers of a person’s entry into the black section.”⁵⁸⁸ Further, “travelers usually knew they were entering the ‘black section’ of a particular city or town based on increasing *signs* of ‘blight.’”⁵⁸⁹ These socially-produced spatial environments served as the space within which black people “appeared” before the eyes of white people – as dirty, poor, and blighted. The visual learning that resulted from visiting or seeing these “realities” would serve to continually reaffirm both the legal discrimination and the economic policies and practices designed to benefit white people and keep African Americans “in their place”; it would not be long before it was common to refer to the “blighted” sections of town as “ghettos.”

⁵⁸⁷ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 146. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸⁸ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 100.

⁵⁸⁹ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 145. Emphasis mine.

The Jim Crowing eye in its social, legal, and personal modes worked in various ways to produce a climate, or atmospheric vibe, that signaled to one's senses the "whiteness" or "blackness" of certain areas with their corresponding mental, moral, and affective associations. While "blight" is typically used to describe negative environmental impact on plants, such as insects or disease, in this case the definition could be equally spoken of the Jim Crowing eye: "Any baleful influence of atmospheric or invisible origin, that suddenly blasts, nips, or destroys plants [or people]." ⁵⁹⁰ The Jim Crowing eye as a blighting eye is quite fittingly atmospheric and climatic; a crow is a bird of flight. This mode of white visibility shaped spatial and interpersonal environments so that white people were revealed in all their goodness, cleanliness, status, wealth, and beauty, while it blighted all nonwhite others along with their living spaces. As Durrheim and Dixon note, "Ecological arrangements form part of a meaningful and constantly evolving system for experiencing, interpreting and managing social relations." ⁵⁹¹ To be Jim Crowed was to be blighted by the eyes of white people who sought, whether consciously or not, material confirmation of their prejudicial and discriminatory beliefs and practices. To use a crasser metaphor, under Jim Crowing America nonwhite others were subjected to the continual threat of being s— on by white people, as if a flock of birds hovered overhead seeking either bowel release or a perch. As a blighting eye, the Jim Crowing eye created a toxic environment for those gridlocked into nonwhite spaces, whether through restrictive covenants, zoning laws, neighborhood planning, transportation services, policing practices, "sundown" towns, school districting, employment discrimination, or interpersonal encounters. Dozens more concrete practices

⁵⁹⁰ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. "blight."

⁵⁹¹ Durrheim and Dixon, *Racial Encounter*, 58.

could be named, but the overall shape of these practices is clear: white people posing and posturing as socially superior and entitled to the best quality of life, and black people legally and forcibly positioned to receive the handouts and leftovers of white society. For white people seeking control over reality and various access points to livelihood, the presencing of African Americans within certain socio-spatial scenes was made to feel obscene; the Jim Crowing eye made sure of it. As Calvin Hernton explained in the early 1970s,

in any racist society, the physical presence of black men and women in public is secretly and openly perceived as something terribly vulgar. This is why white people have always tried to keep black people off the scene, i.e., *Negroes in public are “obscene”*; they must hide themselves or act in such a way as to draw as little notice to their physical presence, their bodies, as possible; they must become “invisible.”⁵⁹²

From this line of thinking we can see that the Jim Crowing eye shares with the overseeing, patrolling, and cycloptic eyes the visual concern with keeping African Americans “in their place,” in a circumscribed social, economic, sexual, and political position of subordination. When they appeared in public they were made to deal with the manicuring and curating eyes of white people, with eyes that trimmed environments to fit white standards of beauty and cleanliness and with eyes that selected, organized, and looked after “others” as items in a collection or exhibit. As we have seen, keeping an individual or a group in place itself assumes the connection between spatial practices and social status. Kenneth and Mai Young spoke about this reality in an interview in 1994 about growing up in Alabama and Georgia under the Jim Crowing eye: “The black folks learned early *their place* in life and you got along fine as long as you didn’t step over the line. You knew who was white, you knew who was black and you don’t make a mistake.

⁵⁹² Hernton, *Coming Together*, 29.

In other words, white men and women were addressed as ‘Mr. and Mrs.’ You didn’t address blacks that way... White folks Mr. and Mrs., blacks by their first name,” or the more denigrating shorthand, “boy.”⁵⁹³ The “line” that the Youngs learned not step over was both a social one and a spatial one, manifested in railroad tracks, roads, doors or entrances, and other neighborhood boundary lines. The Jim Crowing eye afforded approving looks to white people and their dominant/independent status and maturity (as revealed in the “nice and clean” spaces they moved within) and disapproving looks to African Americans and their subordinate/dependent status and immaturity (as revealed in the “bad and dirty” spaces they moved within). What was it like to move within this environment where white looks staged and barred you from certain places and positions, rained down on you like a storm, blighted you like a plague, or stabbed in your direction? And how would you look back?

Leering Eyes

As has been well documented, there was an almost obsessive interest among white men during this period of history in protecting the honor of “their” women. Willie Harrell, who grew up sharecropping on a mid-twentieth-century plantation, stated bluntly: “Shit, you couldn’t even look at a white woman hard back then when I come up. You would get hung... Blacks couldn’t look at no white. But whites could look at blacks all they wanted.”⁵⁹⁴ When the white writer and reporter John Howard Griffin went “undercover” in 1959 to experience what life was like for African Americans, one black woman who thought he was too ignorant of the ways of white folk told him:

⁵⁹³ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 201. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁹⁴ *Remembering Jim Crow*, 44.

you don't want to even look at a white woman. In fact, you look down at the ground or the other way... you may not know you're looking in a white woman's direction but they'll try to make something out of it... If you pass by a picture show, and they've got women on the posters outside, don't look at them either... Somebody's sure to say, 'Hey, boy – what are you looking at that white gal like *that* for?'⁵⁹⁵

Griffin, who dyed his skin black and exposed himself to ultraviolet radiation in order to experience the impact of racism in the South, notes throughout his book, *Black Like Me* (1960), the negative impact of white looks toward him. While riding on a bus one time, Griffin smiled and indicated to a white woman that the seat next to him was available. Sure enough, “Her blue eyes, so pale before, sharpened and she spat out, ‘What you looking at me like *that* for?’”⁵⁹⁶ In another place he describes the “hate stare” as “far more than a look of disapproval one occasionally gets,” for it is “exaggeratedly hateful.”⁵⁹⁷ Griffin describes what it’s like to be on the receiving end of a hate-stare: “Nothing can describe the withering horror of this. You feel lost, sick at heart before such unmasked hatred, not so much because it threatens you as because it shows humans in such an inhuman light. You see a kind of insanity, something so obscene the very obscenity of it (rather than its threat) terrifies you.”⁵⁹⁸ He was so terrified of the hate-stare that he would even have nightmares about it: “White men and women, their faces stern and heartless, closed in on me. The hate stare burned through me. I pressed back against a wall. I could expect no pity, no mercy. They approached slowly and I could not escape them.”⁵⁹⁹ Griffin only experienced the hate-stare for a couple of months; one wonders how he would have fared if he had to face it for a lifetime.

⁵⁹⁵ John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (San Antonio, TX: Wings Press, 2004), 60.

⁵⁹⁶ Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 22.

⁵⁹⁷ Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 51.

⁵⁹⁸ Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 52-53.

⁵⁹⁹ Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 117.

While hate-stares were often deeply personal, public contestations over looks and their meanings were also prevalent. Historian Danielle McGuire relates the story of one forty-two-year-old man and father of nine children, Mack Ingram, who in North Carolina in 1951 was charged with “eye raping,” that is, sexually assaulting by look, an eighteen-year-old white woman.⁶⁰⁰ The woman claimed that Ingram “leered at her” as he drove along the highway, and then, after he stopped the car and got out to walk across the field “about seventy-five feet” behind her, she screamed and ran when she realized he was headed in the same direction. She told her brother that Ingram was “looking at her in a leering manner,” and they called the police who came and arrested Ingram. At trial a couple of weeks later, the woman admitted Ingram never spoke to her, but her father argued that his “eyes were all over her.”⁶⁰¹ Ingram was initially convicted and sentenced to two years hard labor. The case was eventually thrown out by the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1953 with the help of the NAACP.⁶⁰² Although this Court found Ingram’s explanation that he was only looking to borrow a trailer “rather lame,” it held that, “It cannot be said that a pedestrian may be assaulted by a look, however frightening, from a person riding in an automobile some distance away.”⁶⁰³ The Court even defined “leer” straight out of Webster’s dictionary: “a look askance, conveying the suggestion of something sly, malign or lustful,” even though the defendant using the word said it meant only “a curious look.”⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ See Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 61-62.

McGuire does not, however, cite the legal actions and decisions involved and so leaves out some important information, such as the fact that Ingram was driving along the highway when the woman first felt he “leered” at her and that Ingram stopped the car and walked through the field a short distance only a short time afterward. See *State v. Ingram* 74 S.E.2d 532 (1953).

⁶⁰¹ McGuire, *Dark End of the Street*, 62.

⁶⁰² See McGuire, *Dark End of the Street*, 62.

⁶⁰³ *State v. Ingram*.

⁶⁰⁴ *State v. Ingram*.

Similarly, in narrating his experiences growing up in the Jim Crowing South, Richard Wright often alluded to the deep fears and anxieties he had about being caught looking at a white woman. Wright wrote in his highly acclaimed *Black Boy* (1941) that, while working at a hotel as a bellboy and bootlegging liquor to white woman who engaged in sex work,

I grew used to seeing the white prostitutes naked upon their beds, sitting nude about their rooms, and I learned new modes of behavior, new rules in how to live the Jim Crow life. It was presumed that we black boys took their nakedness for granted, that it startled us no more than a blue vase or a red rug. Our presence awoke in them no sense of shame whatever, for we blacks were not considered human anyway. If they were alone, I would steal sidelong glances at them. But if they were receiving men, not a flicker of my eyelids would show.⁶⁰⁵

He then recalled an episode one night when a “huge, snowy-skinned blonde” was staying on his floor and had a customer. In Wright’s words:

One night she rang for service and I went to wait upon her. She was in bed with a thickest man; both were nude and uncovered. She said that she wanted some liquor, and slid out of bed and waddled across the floor to get her money from the dresser drawer. Without realizing it, I watched her. ‘Nigger, what in hell are you looking at?’ the white man asked, raising himself upon his elbows. ‘Nothing, sir,’ I answered, looking suddenly miles deep into the blank wall of the room. ‘Keep your eyes where they belong if you want to be healthy!’ ‘Yes, sir.’⁶⁰⁶

As Wright tells it, white men took it upon themselves to police the looks of black men when it came to white women’s bodies. Like land, white women’s flesh was the terrain that only white men could speculate on and satisfy their desires with. This not only increased their own sense of manhood and self-esteem, but also perpetuated the myth of a southern white womanhood that must be protected as a virginal flower. White womanhood, according to bell hooks, existed as an “object of the phallogentric gaze.”⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ Richard Wright, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1963), 221.

⁶⁰⁶ Wright, *Black Boy*, 222.

⁶⁰⁷ hooks, *Black Looks*, 119.

These accounts and others like them display the operation of what Michael Eric Dyson has described as the mythos of black male sexuality, namely, “that black men are imagined as peripatetic phalluses with unrequited desire for their denied object – white women.”⁶⁰⁸ Calvin Hernton would say the same: “While the Negro is portrayed as a great ‘walking phallus’ with satyr-like potency, he is denied the execution of that potency, he is denied the most precious sexual image which surrounds him – the white woman.”⁶⁰⁹ It can be said that white power was not, and is not now, abstract, but embodied, extending its hands, eyes, and members – both sexual members and organizational members – to diminish or cut off its embodied rivals through looking, shooting, handcuffing, black eyeing, sexual humiliating, and castrating. All these efforts were made to secure the dominance and gratification of the white man, whose power lay most of all in the power to look as he desired. Even today, with the “controlling images” of “the black sexual predator and the white savior,” white supremacists “attempt to reinforce the normativeness of white sexuality while punishing people of color for their real or imagined sexual improprieties.”⁶¹⁰ For Barbara Perry, these myths, images, and the actions they inspire are “a means of degrading the bodies of the Other, with an eye to controlling them.”⁶¹¹ Those who challenged the boundary-making and boundary-crossing practices of white male bodies (personal and social) were in for a desperate struggle for their lives.

⁶⁰⁸ Dyson, *Dyson Reader*, 138.

⁶⁰⁹ Calvin C. Hernton, *Sex and Racism in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 7. Elsewhere Hernton will claim “that whites conceive of the Negro male predominantly in genital terms – that is, as a ‘bull’ or as some kind of ‘walking phallus.’ To the pornographic mind this may be either disgusting or attractive, but it is always exciting!” (39).

⁶¹⁰ Barbara Perry, “‘White Genocide’: White Supremacists and the Politics of Reproduction,” in *Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism*, ed. Abby L. Ferber (New York: Routledge, 2004), 86.

⁶¹¹ Perry, “‘White Genocide,’” 86.

Eye Warriors

The Jim Crowing eye could show up in massive public gazing events, such as a lynching, or in the everyday business of life; it could be deployed in various modes as staging, exhibiting, humiliating, blighting, or barring African Americans from organizing too much, gaining too much political, economic, or social influence, having too much of a will of their own, or challenging white standards and values. A final example in this chapter that shows the functions of the Jim Crowing eye is Melba Pattillo Beals' memoir *Warriors Don't Cry* (1994), where she recalls her experiences as one of nine African American high school students who fought to integrate Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. Through her story we can trace not only the manifold Looks that kill shot her way, but also understand more fully the intimate yet social visual power of the Jim Crowing eye and the intense fight against it. The unjust looks thrown at Pattillo also bring to the surface the psychological harm that Looks that kill can do to those hit by them. Her story is a testimony to her courage to stand up and face the eyes of a white community which sought in more ways than one to make her disappear from the scene.

After the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Pattillo was chosen to be a part of a group of high school students who would enroll in the all-white Central High in Little Rock, thus delivering a practical blow to segregation in public school systems. But for most white people in Little Rock, sending black children to white schools meant eventual "social equality," an eye to eye situation, and even more feared, intermarriage. According to historian Karen Anderson, the fear that "desegregation portended a loss of patriarchal control so serious that it could lead to consensual interracial sex on the part of one's own children... was broadly shared with

other segregationists, giving emotional power to their states' rights arguments and justifying extreme measures."⁶¹² A leading segregationist of the time said: "Smith and Wesson, Colt, and whoever made the grass rope have kept the nigger out of the white bedroom. If you integrate your schools, you invite the niggers to marry your daughter."⁶¹³ No one ever seemed to ask black people if they wanted to marry, let alone intercourse with, white folks.

On September 3, 1957 Pattillo and the other eight students were blocked by angry mobs of white people, and even the Arkansas National Guard sent by Governor Orval Faubus, from entering the school building in defiance of a federal court order. The mob was "shouting and pointing," yelling such things as "Niggers, go home!"; "Niggers, go back where you belong!"; and the barely more original, "Two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate."⁶¹⁴ What was vital for the white mob was that black people stay in their place, something they had been attempting to do for quite some time. After this first failed endeavor to get into Central High, Pattillo and her family were mobbed by threatening phone calls at nearly all hours of the day. Faced with these threats and backed by the superb legal minds of the NAACP such as Thurgood Marshall and the tireless work of Daisy Bates, Pattillo and others continued to seek legal injunctions against the attempts of the governor to block their entry into Central High.⁶¹⁵ Yet for Pattillo there

⁶¹² Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance at Central High School* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 44.

⁶¹³ Anderson, *Little Rock*, 44.

⁶¹⁴ Melba Pattillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1994), 48.

⁶¹⁵ See Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1986). Bates herself tells the story of how one African American veteran of World War II, "a young army captain," told her about how he walked into a restaurant on Main Street in Little Rock "without thinking" and, "As I approached a table, I suddenly became aware of a screaming silence prevailing in the room... As I looked around the room, the cold raw hatred that I saw in the eyes of the waitresses and customers stabbed more deadly and with greater pain than the fragments of the shell that injured my leg in Germany" (45). For this American hero, Looks that kill hurt more than bombshells.

were few other allies in Little Rock. For her, “the integration dispute made me feel as though we were much more vulnerable. Whites had control of the police, the firemen, and the ambulances. They could decide who got help and who didn’t. Even if the Ku Klux Klan ravaged one of our homes, we wouldn’t call the police for help. None of us was certain which of our city officials wore civic uniforms by day and the white sheets at night.”⁶¹⁶ The segregationist Capital Citizens’ Council even ran an advertisement that claimed that white children who had “been reared to believe in a segregated society” would find in integration a “way of life foreign to their training, contrary to their convictions, and *nauseating to their esthetic being*.”⁶¹⁷ It seemed to Pattillo as if the whole white world was sensually trained to reject any form of contact, let alone integration, with anyone like herself; if integrated, she would be vomited out.

On September 23 Pattillo and the other students finally snuck into Central High with violent crowds surrounding the building.⁶¹⁸ Shuffling through the hallways to find her homeroom, Pattillo suffered verbal and physical abuse from both students and adults. One scene she describes is particularly sinister: “Suddenly I felt it – the sting of a hand slapping the side of my cheek, and then warm slimy saliva on my face, dropping to the collar of my blouse... A woman stood toe-to-toe with me, not moving. ‘Nigger!’ she shouted in my face again and again. She appeared to be a little older than my mother. Her face was distorted by rage. ‘Nigger bitch. Why don’t you go home?’” she lashed out at

⁶¹⁶ Beals, *Warriors*, 103.

⁶¹⁷ Anderson, *Little Rock*, 111. Emphasis mine.

⁶¹⁸ Anderson describes the scene: “Once the crowd got the news that the African American students had entered the building, the level of rage intensified and the promise of violence was unleashed. Cries of ‘the niggers are in’ joined with exhortations for white students in the high school to come out. Carol Thomason shouted, ‘My daughter’s in there with those niggers.’ Angry whites turned on a small group of African American newspapermen, yelling ‘Kill them, kill them.’ They kicked Alex Wilson of the Memphis *Tri-State Defender* and hit him on the head with a brick” (*Little Rock*, 69-70).

me. ‘Next thing, you’ll want to marry one of our children.’”⁶¹⁹ In another place Pattillo recalled that, “as I walked through the crowded spaces, I felt almost *singed by their hostile words and glares*.”⁶²⁰ Again, the power of vision is on full display; looks, like weapons, can do violence to another person.

Once in homeroom Pattillo received glares and insults from other students with no intervention from the white teacher. One student lashed out, “Are you gonna let that nigger coon sit in our class?” while another voiced, “Look, it’s twenty of us and one of her. They ain’t nothing but animals.”⁶²¹ As glares and stares shot at her like arrows and bullets, Pattillo was reminded of a piece of wisdom from her grandma: “God loves you, child; no matter what, he sees you as his precious idea.”⁶²² The fact that God saw her as precious, as dignified and deeply loved, proved to be a powerful counter to the unjust looks being thrown around at Central High. Yet the mob outside the school continued to push for blood; school administrators even debated whether to “sacrifice” one child to save the rest or not. Because of this “disgraceful” display, U.S. President Eisenhower finally ordered 1,200 federal troops into Little Rock to provide escorts and protection for the students, which even though spotty sometimes, was better than the free-for-all that took place before their arrival.

To assert her own place and space in the school as a human being who would not suffer to be treated as “less than,” Pattillo herself engaged the power of vision to ward off potential attackers. She dared to look back, to look others in the eye, thus asserting her equal dignity and personal power. This looking was even more necessary since Pattillo

⁶¹⁹ Beals, *Warriors*, 111.

⁶²⁰ Beals, *Warriors*, 136.

⁶²¹ Beals, *Warriors*, 111.

⁶²² Beals, *Warriors*, 112.

and the other African American students were often “taunted by large groups of students who picked certain days simply to stare at us. They came to be known as ‘stare days.’”⁶²³ During these stare days “large, boisterous groups of hecklers stared intensely and harassed the living daylights out of us.”⁶²⁴ Here displayed as a collective activity, vision had the power not only to objectify the Little Rock Nine, but also to communicate a dizzying number of items to them, such as: *you’re less than, you’re nothing, you’re an animal, you’re not worthy, you’re stupid, you’re not welcome, you don’t belong, you’re filthy, you have no right, you’re not our equal...* and on and on. The negative psychological impact of these collective stares of Pattillo and the others suggests that unjust looks were often just as harmful as punches, slaps, kicks, or golf balls wrapped up in paper thrown across the hall at them.⁶²⁵

When white students realized that Pattillo and the others were likely to stay at Central High for the foreseeable future, their tactics shifted from physical hostility to the cold shoulder. She writes that, “It was frustrating to have people so close, have them chatting to each other while saying absolutely nothing to me, and *never even looking me in the eye*. Occasionally students stood or sat close enough to touch, talking over and around me as though I didn’t exist. It was a very painful insult I didn’t know how to combat. They were treating me as if I were invisible.”⁶²⁶ Sometimes she would even pinch herself to feel if she was really there, for she thought, “They don’t see me as a real

⁶²³ Beals, *Warriors*, 234.

⁶²⁴ Beals, *Warriors*, 234.

⁶²⁵ Anderson describes the white students’ “long-term war of attrition designed to drive the black students from Central High” as follows: “Taking advantage of the vast size of the school building and grounds, they orchestrated a campaign of verbal threats, name-calling, and physical harassment that ranged from shoving and tripping to spilling ink on students’ clothes and putting broken glass on the floor in the gym’s shower room. J. O. Powell called it ‘a kind of Chinese torture, over a long period of time’” (*Little Rock*, 99).

⁶²⁶ Beals, *Warriors*, 208.

person.”⁶²⁷ She wanted to shout: “I’m Melba, don’t you see me?”⁶²⁸ Her desire to be seen was a desire to be recognized and treated as a person with legitimate desires, pleasures, likes and dislikes, hobbies, and skills, yet such recognition rarely happened because her peers did not take the first step of looking her in the eye. Those white students who did try to help in little ways were often met with hostile looks from their peers. One white student reported in 1959 that after lending a few cents to an African American student at lunch, “The whole cafeteria got quiet. I went back to my seat. I felt like people just followed me with their eyes.”⁶²⁹ Anderson reports that many white students succumbed to the “peer pressure to ostracize the black students and turn a blind eye to the violence those students were experiencing.”⁶³⁰

As graduation came closer Pattillo noticed that “using new tactics, with more frequent attacks that involved more people, the segregationists watched and followed us constantly, looking for ways to isolate us.”⁶³¹ This occurred both inside and outside of school. According to Anderson, school board members who approved of the token integration plan at Central High “hoped that placing a small number of African American students in a student body of almost two thousand at Central High would create such a sense of isolation for the black students that they would voluntarily return to Mann High School [the all-black school in Little Rock].”⁶³² Further, rumors were circulated about one of the nine students, Ernest Green, who was accused of having a “roving eye and was flirting with a particular white girl.”⁶³³ Such an allegation was typically the prelude to

⁶²⁷ Beals, *Warriors*, 209.

⁶²⁸ Beals, *Warriors*, 209.

⁶²⁹ Anderson, *Little Rock*, 213.

⁶³⁰ Anderson, *Little Rock*, 102.

⁶³¹ Beals, *Warriors*, 295.

⁶³² Anderson, *Little Rock*, 35.

⁶³³ Beals, *Warriors*, 295.

violence or death for the accused. One particularly boisterous white segregationist student, Sammie Dean, deliberately tried to charge Green with making sexual advances toward her. According to one teacher's account: "You should have seen Sammie Dean in the cafeteria today. She paraded to and fro past Ernest Green four times, staring hard at him each of the eight times she passed his table. Ernest never raised his eyes."⁶³⁴ To raise his eyes could have led to violent recriminations. Hernton would call these looks given to black men "hate-stares," which for him stemmed from "a prurient conception of the black male as a sexual being... [and] from a mixture of repulsion and attraction toward the very qualities and features which racism in America has stereotyped as 'vulgar,' 'animal,' and 'revolting' – the black man's genitals, his style of behavior, and the blackness of his skin, along with his Negroid features: in a word, his Negritude."⁶³⁵ The cumulative effect of such hate-stares was to make it so that, "the black man is vulgar upon *perception*."⁶³⁶ Here again, Beals' grandma countered this distorted perception of the black man as vulgar with a different, theological perception of Ernest in order to reassure her in their common struggle: "God's watching after Ernie just like he's watching over you."⁶³⁷ In her mind, God sees especially those who are under the threat of racialized and sexualized Looks.

Ernie Green became the first African American to graduate from Central High in May 1958, but governor Faubus, through legal action (or foot-dragging) and the efforts of leading segregationists, closed the school for the 1958-59 school year contrary to the Supreme Court's desegregation plan. The school would open again for 1959-60 but not

⁶³⁴ Anderson, *Little Rock*, 122.

⁶³⁵ Hernton, *Coming Together*, 24.

⁶³⁶ Hernton, *Coming Together*, 24.

⁶³⁷ Beals, *Warriors*, 302.

without bitter resistance. Beals herself would complete her senior year of high school in California; become a journalist and professor; and continue to write about her experiences in Little Rock and her faith. Having experienced a full offering of Looks that kill, Beals ended her “searing memoir” with the admonition: “The task that remains is to cope with our interdependence – to see ourselves reflected in every other human being and to respect and honor our differences.”⁶³⁸ To be an eye warrior like Beals, then, is to fight with visual and perceptual tactics against those Looks that seek to restrict or control the presencing of those deemed “different” or “other” within the field or grid of vision. These Looks communicate an ultimatum: either disappear as this or that, or from this place, or don’t appear. In contrast, eye warriors not only open space in the grid of vision for full recognition as equals, but also *re-envision* the space of seeing itself – shifting the terms in which people can appear and be recognized as unique instances and genres of the human. When people, social organizations, and the laws refuse to see with justice, then eye warriors use their own eyepower to resist such blindness and seek new ways of envisioning life and society.

⁶³⁸ Beals, *Warriors*, 312. Italics in the original text.

Chapter 7: Eye for an Eye

“... because I look anyone who addresses me in the eye, they feel that I may start a riot anytime.”⁶³⁹

“There is a saying here that every Milwaukee policeman has a thousand pair of eyes... the extra ‘eyes’ are those of people here – men, women and children who have come to be accepted as an arm of law enforcement.”⁶⁴⁰

“The rage of the disesteemed is personally fruitless, but it is also absolutely inevitable; this rage, so generally discounted, so little understood even among the people whose daily bread it is, is one of the things that makes history.”⁶⁴¹

“Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony.”⁶⁴²

The overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes were genetic elements involved in the production of the policing eye in history that gradually moved from informal night watches, city guards, and other individual roles such as the sheriff and constable into what we recognize today as a modern, organized police force. According to Kristian Williams, distinctly policing activities can be characterized by 1) the authority to use force, 2) a public character and accountability, at least in principle, to some central governmental authority, and 3) general law enforcement duties (as opposed to limited, specified duties such as parking enforcement or animal control).⁶⁴³ With these criteria in mind, it is clear that overseeing and slave patrolling could be considered policing roles only in a limited sense, although the second much more so than the first, as patrols had both the legal authority to use force and a public character with some

⁶³⁹ George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994), 185.

⁶⁴⁰ “How One City Keeps its Streets Safe,” *U.S. News and World Report*, September 28, 1964, 68-71. I am grateful to William Tchakirides for this reference.

⁶⁴¹ Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village,” 121.

⁶⁴² Derrida, *Specters*, 46.

⁶⁴³ See Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 53. To be considered “modern,” policing must involve 1) the investment of responsibility for law enforcement in a single organization, 2) citywide jurisdiction and centralization, 3) an intended continuity in office and procedure, 4) a specialized policing function, 5) twenty-four-hour service, and 6) personnel paid on a salary basis rather than by fee (53).

accountability.⁶⁴⁴ However, patrols did not have general law enforcement duties but were limited to the control and oversight of the population of enslaved persons in a local area. As Williams argues, “while slave patrols did anticipate the creation of modern police, it must still be remembered that they were not themselves modern police.” Rather, “The slave patrol, which began as an offshoot of the militia... provides a transitional model in the development of policing.”⁶⁴⁵ For their own part, overseers can only be considered a form of private or domestic policing at best, although even here they did have some authority to use force. They were mainly accountable to planters and masters and not to some public authority, although overseers were often legally required to be on plantations.

As we have seen, there was also a great deal of overlap between overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, Jim Crowing, and policing eyes in history, a reality that can be felt even today. For example, overseers sometimes served on slave patrols, and patrollers might serve in various policing capacities in towns and cities.⁶⁴⁶ After emancipation, both policemen and former patrollers could be involved with vigilante groups like the KKK or the American Legion. According to the memoirs of former Atlanta Police Chief Herbert Jenkins, during the height of the Klan’s power and influence in the 1920s, “it was helpful to join the Ku Klux Klan to be an accepted member of the force. This was your ID card, the badge of honor with the in group, and it was unfortunately often an allegiance

⁶⁴⁴ In terms of an overseer’s authority to use force, this often depended on the will of the master. Sometimes the master forbid overseers to beat or whip their slaves, either because they didn’t allow such a practice at all or because they reserved the right to do that for themselves. Sometimes masters brought lawsuits against overseers who had beaten their “slaves” too severely or killed them, with different outcomes depended on the case and location.

⁶⁴⁵ Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 75.

⁶⁴⁶ Consider this testimony from a former slave: “I don’t think the Ku Klux ever got after any us but I seen em, I reckon. I don’t know but mighty little. The paddyrollers [patrollers] is what I dreaded. Sometimes the overseer was a paddyroller.” Quoted in Fry, *Night Riders*, 89.

stronger than the policeman's oath to society... The Klan was powerful in that it worked behind the scenes with certain members of the Police Committee and the City Council... The Klan was like a kind of Mafia in dirty sheets."⁶⁴⁷ Williams has documented instances of Klan-Cop connection throughout the 20th century, and so it will not be repeated here, but his conclusion should be noted even if some might consider it overstated: "The police did not create the racism in American society... But the police have, since their inception, enforced and defended the racist status quo – by controlling slaves, maintaining segregation, resisting civil rights efforts, and generally terrorizing the Black community and other people of color."⁶⁴⁸ As the eyes and hands that enforced the laws, views, and judgments of a white body politic, it should be no surprise to find that various policing figures and organizations operated *against* black communities and *for* white communities. If the body politic with its organized eyepower remained segregated it would continue to keep watchful eyes on those "outside" forces and threats to white lives, property, and morality, i.e. their substance. In this chapter we explore aspects of the policing eye as they relate to contemporary visitations of Looks that kill, suggesting that, although the struggles for civil rights and battles for integration would bring about changes to this eye, violent eye habits from the past still hang around and result in talionic and spectral moments of mistrust, fire, and violence.

The Policing Eye

⁶⁴⁷ Quoted in Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 151. From Herbert Jenkins, *Keeping the Peace: A Police Chief Looks at His Job* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 4.

⁶⁴⁸ Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 171-172. See also Michael Novick, *White Lies/White Power: The Fight Against White Supremacy and Reactionary Violence* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995), especially the chapter titled, "Blue by Day, White by Night: Organized White-Supremacist Groups in Law Enforcement Agencies and the Military," which documents those "military units, prisons, and police departments" involved with white supremacists from the 1970s-90s (69-82).

As the forceful expression of the hand-eye coordination of the white body politic, policing institutions, through repeated gestures, movements, and activities, were historically organized and trained to protect the substance of white communities (bodies, property, status, morals) from black and otherwise “unsubstantial” others.⁶⁴⁹ This idea is related to what Judith Butler argued in her reflection on the police beating of Rodney King in 1991: “the police are... structurally placed to protect whiteness against violence, where violence is the imminent action of that black male body.”⁶⁵⁰ The policing eye was trained to forcefully protect against threats to “whitestuff,” which was justified in part by the consistent interpretation of the actions of the nonwhite other as being violent themselves. White eyes were trained to see violence or resistance in the actions of the nonwhite other. Butler continues, “because within this imaginary schema, the police protect whiteness, their own violence cannot be read as violence; because the black male body... is the site and source of danger, a threat, the police effort to subdue this body, even if in advance, is justified regardless of the circumstances.”⁶⁵¹ With Rodney King, not even a video of the event, which at the time was thought to provide a neutral and objective view of the scene, could disrupt “the racist production of the visual *field*.”⁶⁵² Even while on the ground with numerous officers surrounding him, King was still viewed as a threat; he could still, somehow, inflict harm.

Butler’s comments about the black body can refer not only to Rodney King’s black body, but to black social bodies in their coordination and organization in history.

⁶⁴⁹ “Unsubstantial others” can be defined as those without land, property, wealth, “whiteness,” and therefore social status and moral respectability according to the dominant view of society. They are also the “scarecrows” that are scapegoated and stuffed with the anxieties, fears, desires, and pathologies of the dominant and used as objects for manipulation or ritual sacrifice.

⁶⁵⁰ Butler, “Endangered/Endangering,” 18.

⁶⁵¹ Butler, “Endangered/Endangering,” 18.

⁶⁵² Butler, “Endangered/Endangering,” 21. Italics mine.

We can insert one word into, and excise “male” from, her quote to expand the meaning: “the police are... structurally placed to protect whiteness against violence, where violence is the imminent action of that black [social] body.” Historically, a primary goal of overseers, patrollers, and law enforcement officers was to prevent, out of fear of revolt, illegal activities, or interracial mixing, the unsupervised congregation of black people. In social bodies, black people might, and often did, “compare injustices, scheme, conspire, and foment revolutionary intrigues.”⁶⁵³ James C. Scott, quoting Albert Raboteau, notes that, “The plantocracies of North America and the West Indies regulated very closely the circumstances in which their slaves could assemble. In the United States, ‘gatherings of five or more slaves without the presence of a white observer were universally forbidden.’”⁶⁵⁴ The purpose of such surveillance was to prevent people from sharing their common experiences and aspirations and from developing common cause with one another. The best way to do that was to keep individuals relatively isolated, to atomize them so they could not link up in a body with others in a stable and powerful manner. One individual was relatively controllable, three or four was a loose grouping that should probably be watched, a dozen or more should be made illegal outside supervised contexts and always broken up, while twenty and up was a potential organized body that posed a real threat, especially if they got arms beyond their physical arms. Scott summarizes the strategy well: “The least dangerous assemblies of slaves were, therefore, small, supervised, work parties during the daylight hours; the most dangerous were large, unauthorized, apart from work, and at night.”⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ Scott, *Domination*, 64.

⁶⁵⁴ Quoted in Scott, *Domination*, 63.

⁶⁵⁵ Scott, *Domination*, 64.

White eyes which sought to control black populations through a racialized visual field or grid were not historically limited to the South. In Boston, for example, a curfew was instituted in 1703 to control the city's black community, and the city watch was ordered in 1736 to "take up all Negro and Molatto servants, that shall be unseasonably Absent from their Masters Families, without giving sufficient reason therefore."⁶⁵⁶ In his monumental sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), W. E. B. Du Bois refers to a 1693 ordinance about "Negro slaves" which ordered

the Constables of Philadelphia, or anie other person whatsoever, to have power to take up Negroes, male or female, whom they should find gadding abroad on the said first dayes of the weeke, without a ticket from their Mr. or Mrs., or not in their Compa, or to carry them to gaole [jail], there to remain that night, and that without meat or drink, and to Cause them to be publickly whipt next morning with 39 Lashes, well Laid on, on their bare backs, for which their sd. [said] Mr. or Mrs. should pay 15d. to the whipper.⁶⁵⁷

Here constables or "any other person whatsoever" had the power to "take up" male or female "Negroes" who were "gadding abroad" without a pass and put them in jail to be whipped. Similarly, Booker T. Washington recorded that "in 1710 the city of New York passed an ordinance forbidding slaves appearing in the streets after dark without a lighted lantern, on penalty of being locked up in the watch-house that night, and sent to prison the next day until the master paid the fine; after which the slave received fifty lashes and was discharged."⁶⁵⁸ Again in 1713 the Common Council of New York City passed a "Law for Regulating Negro & Indian Slaves in the Nighttime" (amended in 1731) which declared that "no Negro or Indian Slave above the age of fourteen years do presume to be or appear in any of the streets... on the south side of the fresh water in the night time

⁶⁵⁶ Williams, *Enemies in Blue*, 74.

⁶⁵⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, PA: Schocken Books, 1899), 235-36.

⁶⁵⁸ Washington, *A New Negro*, 96-97.

above one hour after sun sett without a lanthorn and a lighted candle.”⁶⁵⁹ “Negroes” and “Indians” must be made visible, whether through natural or artificial means, to be controlled.

For Simone Browne, these “lantern laws” were a “prosthesis made mandatory after dark, a technology that made it possible for the black body to be constantly illuminated from dusk to dawn, made knowable, locatable, and contained within the city.”⁶⁶⁰ These laws and others are examples of what Browne terms “racialized surveillance,” whereby the white community and its police utilized various technologies, whether lanterns, badges, brands, newspaper advertisements, etc., as a way to “reify boundaries, borders, and bodies along racial lines” and to “exercise a ‘power to define what [or who] is in or out of place.’”⁶⁶¹ The streets, being public byways, were controlled by the gazes of white people who therefore controlled not only *who* or *what* appeared in the streets, but also the flow of movements within that space (of people, of goods, of ideas, etc.). As Browne pithily states, “surveillance is nothing new to black folks. It is the fact of antiblackness.”⁶⁶² The policing eye was a biased surveilling eye; and its many looks in history regarded people of color as suspicious, dangerous, or criminal.

The Profiling Eye

Since the 1990s one controversial but real aspect of contemporary policing practices is that of racial profiling, which social psychologist Jack Glaser defines as “the

⁶⁵⁹ Browne, *Dark Matters*, 78.

⁶⁶⁰ Browne, *Dark Matters*, 79.

⁶⁶¹ Browne, *Dark Matters*, 16. The light from lanterns could also be used subversively as a way to communicate escape plans: “Jes’ as soon as he got out again [from the ‘nigger box’], George an’ dis Ezra slipped off. Dey had a sign dat dey would give each yuther eve’y night attar sundown. George would hang de lantern in de window, an’ den he would take it outen de window an’ hand it raght back in dar ag’in... I axed him one day whut he was adoin’ dat for. He say dat ‘fo’ long I’d know ‘zackly what it all about. Dis was de sign of how long dey have to wait ‘fol dey try to git away” (*FWP*, Alabama 1.0, 162).

⁶⁶² Browne, *Dark Matters*, 10.

use of race or ethnicity, or proxies thereof, by law enforcement officials as a basis for judgment of criminal suspicion.”⁶⁶³ Sociologist Karen Glover reminds us that while the term “racial profiling” is “relatively new, emerging in 1980’s discourse... the targeting of people of color by law and law enforcement is an American tradition.”⁶⁶⁴ Glaser himself argues that such profiling is concerning because “if police pay more attention to (are more likely to stop and/or search) members of some racial or ethnic groups, then regardless of actual criminality or offending rates, those groups will bear a disproportionate share of sanctions.”⁶⁶⁵ Among these sanctions is higher rates of incarceration and monetary fines. For Glaser, “a non-trivial proportion of Americans, especially young men, are under correctional supervision, and that proportion is dramatically higher among minorities, particularly black people. The impact is dire; in 2003, the Bureau of Justice Statistics projected that, assuming existing incarceration rates persisted, 5.9% of white men born that year would be incarcerated at some point in their lifetime. For Latinos it would be 17.2% and for African Americans 32.2%.”⁶⁶⁶ The disparities cannot be explained away by offending rates either. After discussing surveys from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007), which showed that “Blacks were only slightly more likely than Whites to report having used illicit drugs in the preceding month (9.5% and 8.2%, respectively)” and that “Black students were less likely (17.2%) to indicate that they had carried a weapon at some point in the preceding 30 days than were White students

⁶⁶³ Jack Glaser, *Suspect Race: Causes and Consequences of Racial Profiling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3. As Glaser explains, “the inclusion of ‘proxies thereof’ is important because it recognizes that law enforcers are typically only making *inferences* about race or ethnicity” (16).

⁶⁶⁴ Karen S. Glover, *Racial Profiling: Research, Racism, and Resistance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 11.

⁶⁶⁵ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 3.

⁶⁶⁶ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 5-6.

(18.2%) or Hispanic students (18.5%),” Glaser concludes: “while offense rates appear to be higher among Blacks for some crimes, and lower for others, even when they are higher, these discrepancies are not enough to explain the much more dramatic overrepresentation of Blacks in the criminal justice system.”⁶⁶⁷ Rather, “we must consider... the possibility that some of the racial disparities in those who are caught and punished result from racial bias in law enforcement.”⁶⁶⁸ Considering the history of policing and the control of enslaved and then free black populations, this conclusion, correct as it is, must seem tautological for those who experience various forms of profiling in its everyday expressions.

The strength of Glaser’s analysis lies in using the latest social psychological research to explain aspects of profiling. For example, he defines a stereotype as “a belief about a trait being disproportionately possessed by members of a particular social group,” and says that stereotyping serves three primary functions: 1) to rationalize inequities, 2) to boost in-group esteem and, by extension, self-esteem, and 3) to serve as “cognitive shortcuts,” which allows people “to make quick inferences without considering all the information one would need to make a 100% certain determination.”⁶⁶⁹ Some stereotypes are sinister, as when black people and Latinxs are associated with criminality. In addition, experiments conducted by social psychologists have shown that “merely seeing a Black face instantaneously causes people, including police officers, to think of crime, and vice versa.”⁶⁷⁰ The phenomenon known to researchers as “shooter bias” also points to the

⁶⁶⁷ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 6-7. The HHS put out the “National Survey on Drug Use and Health,” and CDC put out the “Youth Risk Behavior Survey.”

⁶⁶⁸ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 7.

⁶⁶⁹ See Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 56-57.

⁶⁷⁰ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 68.

potentially lethal impact of these implicit or automatic associations and stereotypes.

Glaser describes one experimental scenario that tests for shooter bias:

Seated in front of a video monitor with your hand on a control stick, you are instructed that you will see a series of photographs of men. Each will hold either a gun or a harmless object like a cell phone. Your job is to “shoot” by squeezing the trigger on the stick as quickly as possible whenever there is a gun and to pull back as quickly as possible whenever there is no gun. Partway through the task you realize that some of the men are Black and some are White.

The results of this experiment show that even “well-intentioned” people “*do* tend to shoot Black men faster and erroneously shoot more unarmed Black men.”⁶⁷¹ Glaser draws out some important considerations when moving “from the lab to the field”: “The implications of shooter bias need not be constrained to shooting incidents. Rather, the phenomenon is likely representative of the potential for a much broader class of troubling forms of unintended discrimination, including more commonplace uses of nonlethal force as well as judgements of suspicion, decisions to search, and so forth.”⁶⁷² Because these biases often, but not always, operate without explicit reflection, their subtle normality and everydayness renders them all the more troublesome as they are difficult to notice and control. Profiling eyes, biased eyes, and stereotyping eyes, whether intentionally or not, can skew the vision of organizations and lead to injustice and violence, especially if they become habitual.

As James Baldwin noted in his own time, “The white racist has ruled the world for a long time, and the crises we are undergoing now are involved with the fact that the *habits of power* are not only extremely hard to lose; they are as tenacious as some

⁶⁷¹ Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 85.

⁶⁷² Glaser, *Suspect Race*, 87.

incurable disease.”⁶⁷³ Habits, obviously, develop over time through repeated and accumulated performances of like actions – whether linguistic, economic, bureaucratic, perceptual, etc. – and are eventually done in an unconscious manner as second nature. Habits of power, as in organized eyepower, are not developed in the abstract, but in concrete and embodied practices. They are formed and coercively applied even through something as basic as seeing, watching, and looking, in Looks that kill. Habits of seeing formed and developed at both a personal and organizational level through a discriminatory social and economic regime became so ingrained, such a part of “nature,” that their impact is still felt in our mental and perceptual comportment toward the world and to other humans. Unjust looks still infiltrate our street of vision and seek to dominate it. According to George Yancy, “the production of the Black body is an effect of the discursive and epistemic structuring of white *gazing* and other white modes of anti-Black performance. And while these performances are not always enacted consciously but *the result of years of white racism calcified and habituated with the bodily repertoire of whites*, whites are not exempt from taking responsibility for the historical continuation of white racism.”⁶⁷⁴ The policing eye was historically formed by the white community as a watching eye, shaped as a profiling eye, and did not ever really see eye to eye with various black communities in which it made its rounds and arrested the movements, bodies, and even spirits of people with a look: *Freeze!*⁶⁷⁵ These freezing looks that arrest

⁶⁷³ James Baldwin, “From *Nationalism, Colonialism, and the United States: One Minute to Twelve – A Forum*,” in *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings*, ed. Randall Kenan (New York: Viking International, 2011), 11. Italics mine. The quote is from Baldwin’s talk given on June 2, 1961 at a forum hosted by the Liberation Committee for Africa on nationalism and colonialism and United States foreign policy (10).

⁶⁷⁴ Yancy, *Black Bodies*, xix.

⁶⁷⁵ In the course of describing the embodied reaction of a white woman who backs up and clutches her purse as he walks into an elevator, Yancy notes: “not only does the white woman in the elevator ontologically *freeze* my ‘dark’ embodied identity but she also becomes ontologically *frozen* in her own embodied (white) identity. For she only ‘sees’ a criminal, a predator, a phantasm” (*Black Bodies*, 19). To “freeze” someone with a look is thus to see them through the

the hearts of community members are felt across the nation and elicit impassioned, even fiery, responses.

The Talionic Eye

The phrase “An eye for an eye!” was one among many slogans shouted in anger and frustration at a line of uniformed police officers in the aftermath of the shooting of Sylville Smith in the Sharman Park neighborhood of Milwaukee in August 2016.⁶⁷⁶ Smith had been pulled over and was fleeing the police when he was shot twice by officer Dominique Heaggan-Brown, first while attempting to throw his firearm over a fence, and again 1.69 seconds later in the chest as he lay on the ground. According to the testimony of Heaggan-Brown’s partner, Ndiva Malafa, whose body camera recorded the brief chase and fatal shooting: “I saw Mr. Smith exit the vehicle. I observed the firearm and at that point, we made eye contact. At that moment, I believe I started to – I see him running northeast. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Heaggan-Brown chase him as well.”⁶⁷⁷ As in so many other cases, the “eye contact” made between Smith and the officers proved disastrous, with one eye putting out the other.⁶⁷⁸ By nightfall the clash of eyes had grown in proportion, as a large body of people took to the streets to protest the killing. They would be met by a body of police officers donned in riot gear. Some eyes were

lens of “types” (“criminal,” “predator,” etc.) that bear only upon surface appearances and ignore the depth, dignity, inviolability, and potentiality of the unique individual mode or genre of being human.

⁶⁷⁶ See Gina Barton, Rick Romell, Ashley Luthern, and Calvin Mattheis, “A night of conflict, chaos and courage in Sherman Park,” *Journal Sentinel*, August 20, 2016, accessed May 28, 2017, <http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2016/08/20/night-conflict-chaos-and-courage-sherman-park/88994022/>.

⁶⁷⁷ See Darran Simon and Tony Marco, “Sylville Smith’s family sobs at body cam footage of fatal police shooting,” CNN, June 15, 2017, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/15/us/sylville-smith-heaggan-brown-body-cam-video/index.html>.

⁶⁷⁸ Heaggan-Brown was charged with first-degree reckless homicide, of which he was found not guilty in 2017. He was later convicted in a separate case of sexual assault and soliciting prostitution and is now serving three years of jail time. He has also filed a lawsuit against the Milwaukee County Sheriff’s Office for alleged mistreatment while in custody. See Theo Keith, “Disgraced ex-cop Dominique Heaggan-Brown files lawsuit alleging mistreatment at Milwaukee County jail,” Fox6 News, July 9, 2018, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://fox6now.com/2018/07/09/heaggan-brown-files-federal-lawsuit-against-the-milwaukee-co-sheriffs-office-alleging-mistreatment/>.

militarized and armed, while others remained organic. Other eyes watching events unfold on a television or computer screen saw a numberless variety of things: some saw their stereotypical beliefs about “inner-city” life with its rampant violence and criminality supposedly confirmed; others saw a missionary opportunity for either spiritual or economic redemption; others saw the inevitable failure of government policies and social welfare; others saw a rising social revolution; others saw the anger, frustration, and delinquency of adolescents out of control; others saw yet another instance of institutional racism; others saw a repeat of the “Burn, Baby Burn” mentality of the 1960s; others saw a repeat of 2014 when the streets were taken after Dontre Hamilton, a young black man with a history of mental illness, was shot fourteen times by officer Christopher Manney in a public park; still others saw nothing worth noting.⁶⁷⁹ As for myself, I saw eyes everywhere and the power in looking, as well as an after-image of a Look that kills. Defined as “a visual sensation which remains after the stimulus that gave rise to it ceases,” an after-image fittingly describes the connection between the lighting up of an African American man by the police and the subsequent lighting up of a neighborhood via urban riot.⁶⁸⁰ The fires in the streets pointed to the gunfire that was itself trained by a targeting eye. The unfolding scene suggested an underlying talionic logic: the eyes, or their proxies, that violently light up others will themselves be lit up. *An eye for an eye!*

As is well known and documented, African Americans throughout the 20th century sometimes considered white (eye) power and its embodied carriers, police officers, to be the greatest threat to their lives. This divide between the police and various

⁶⁷⁹ On Dontre Hamilton and his family’s fight for justice, see the haunting documentary film *The Blood is at the Doorstep* (2017), <https://www.thebloodisatthedoorstep.tv/>.

⁶⁸⁰ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “after-image.”

African American communities is nothing new. According to James Baldwin, who on this occasion is speaking of Harlem, “None of the Police Commissioner’s men, even with the best will in the world, have any way of understanding the lives led by the people they swagger about in twos and threes controlling.”⁶⁸¹ He continues,

Their very presence is an insult, and it would be, even if they spent their entire day feeding gumdrops to children. They represent the force of the white world, and that world’s real intentions are, simply, for that world’s criminal profit and ease, to keep the black man corralled up here, in his place. The badge, the gun in the holster, and the swinging club make vivid what will happen should his rebellion become overt. Rare, indeed, is the Harlem citizen, from the most circumspect church member to the most shiftless adolescent, who does not have a long tale to tell of police incompetence, injustice, or brutality. I myself have witnessed and endured it more than once.⁶⁸²

There are still “long tales” being told in various neighborhoods around the nation about the police and those holding power over large swaths of their lives, a hidden transcript that the dominant public would most likely reject vehemently, refuse to hear, or simply ignore. The police officer also remains “a perfect representative of the people he serves,” just as in Baldwin’s day.⁶⁸³ They are not merely individual persons representing their own personal good intentions, charitable wills, and concern for all people, but more importantly they represent, as embodied symbols, the eyes and hands, the members, of the dominant body politic. This means that their policing “has its explicit or implicit burden the cruelty and injustice of the white domination,” of white eye power, both historical and contemporary.⁶⁸⁴ The accumulation of unjust practices leads to the “accumulating contempt and hatred of a people,” and so, an eye for an eye is heard.⁶⁸⁵

What might this shout, this hidden transcript bursting into public, mean today?

⁶⁸¹ James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” in *Collected Essays* (New York, NY: Library of America, 1998), 176.

⁶⁸² Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” 176.

⁶⁸³ Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” 176.

⁶⁸⁴ Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” 176-77.

⁶⁸⁵ Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown,” 176.

Hearing the *lex talionis* in the streets signals that something is off with justice in society, especially regarding actions pertaining to bodies and the compensation for harm done to these bodies. It signals that eyes are confronting each other not in terms of a seeing *with*, an eye-to-eye situation, but a seeing *against*, an eye-for-an-eye situation. As has been hinted at, the shout clues us into the reality that the Sherman Park episode, variously labelled a riot, rebellion, uprising, or civil disturbance, is a talionic moment, that is, a moment that gives back “in kind” what has first been received. Here, what is given back “in kind” (from the Latin *talis* which forms the base of *talionis*) are calls for revenge and acts of violence and destruction. Note, however, that what is given back “in kind” (*talis*) is not applied literally; no one is killed for killing a member of the community. As we will see, other material realities served as substitutes, or scapegoats, for the eye of power that killed. In this context, an eye for an eye should be evaluated more for its rhetorical and situational function than its presupposed good or bad morality. It would be irresponsible to make moralizing claims that an eye for an eye is primitive, terroristic, barbaric, or even unchristian, before attempting to understand what such a shout and others like it might reveal about a social phenomenon. That the shout was heard in Sherman Park meant that, at least in the eyes of one person, “just legal, political, and social institutions” had failed in their duties to justice.

“An eye for an eye!” ringing out in Sherman Park thus discloses the perceived breakdown of what Dussel terms “institutional systems of legitimation” that allow for the “creation of mediations between the political community as a whole and its leaders, who are necessarily much fewer in number.”⁶⁸⁶ Under ideal circumstances, community

⁶⁸⁶ Dussel, *Twenty Theses*, 50. According to Dussel, “‘Institutional systems of legitimation’ came about slowly through factors including representation, discussion according to rules (with voting and other instruments) in organs that decide

members can see and experience themselves in these social institutions, such as judicial bodies or police organizations, and this experience of coming to see and know oneself as objectified in social institutions is what makes these very institutions legitimate in the eyes of the people. They are seen by community members as expressions of their own wills, of their very selves, and as such the people will consent to the demands made upon them by these institutional powers because they trust these forces as their own self-expression and self-representation.⁶⁸⁷ Therefore, institutions are legitimate insofar as they provide a real link between people and how they objectively organize themselves into a community through their delegated representatives who make laws and enforce them.

The eye for an eye shout calls into question the legitimacy of certain social institutions. For some community members, these institutions, such as the police, are no longer, or never were, legitimate, as they cannot see themselves in these bodies as in a mirror. They do not trust these institutional forces, because they are not perceived and experienced as the people's own self-expression, as a product of their consensual will, but are rather experienced as their own destruction at the hands of another (an-"other"). Instead of binding people to their own objective and institutional self-expression to create an environment for the flourishing of all members of the community, the mediating force of the police – ideally mediating between the people and the objectified laws they create

and decree laws, the appearance of codes in which definite behaviors begin to be stipulated as worthy of reward or punishment, the formation of quasi-political bodies to apprehend offenders, the oversight of judges with the authority to pass judgment" (50-51).

⁶⁸⁷ "People" can be understood, following Dussel, as that "category that can encompass the unity of all the movements, classes, sectors, etc., in political struggle. And so the *people* is that strictly political category (since it is not properly sociological or economic) that appears as absolutely essential, despite its ambiguity (and indeed this ambiguity does not result from misunderstanding but rather from inevitable complexity)" (*Twenty Theses*, 73). However, the people is a "*collective political actor* rather than being merely a substantial and fetishized 'historical subject'" (75). The people is a "a social bloc 'of the oppressed' and excluded, and in this the *plebs* can be distinguished from both the entire dominant community as well as from the future community (the *populus*)" (76). Here "bloc" is understood in the Gramscian sense of "a whole that can be both integrated and disintegrated. It can have 'contradictions' at its very heart... and it appears forcefully in a moment and disappears when it has completed its task (that is, if this task is accomplished, since the *people* often fail)" (75).

for themselves as enforcers of the law – have attacked and wounded; they have taken an eye. In response, the eye for an eye shout expresses the attitude that if those charged with embodying and enforcing the eyes of the law cannot see straight or cannot see with the people they are charged to protect, then they shouldn't be allowed to see at all. This eye, too, must be taken. And so we hear yet another shout in Sherman Park: "We want blood like y'all want it!"⁶⁸⁸ These potent words, along with those that called for an eye for an eye, manifest an intense desire for retribution. If the words sound "savage" it is because they are in response to a previous "savagery." They call into question the very legitimacy of social institutions because these institutions are perceived as destructive of the very lives they are meant to represent and protect. Following David Michael Levin, it is always legitimate "to call the body politic into question from the standpoint of the well-being of the human body."⁶⁸⁹

An eye for an eye also speaks to the embodied character of justice and to reality that mistrust and antagonism between community members and the police is at least partially rooted in conflicting practices of looking with a history of their own. An eye for an eye is necessarily an eye versus an eye, the eye of the police, of the law and those who enforce it (policing eye), versus the eye of those in the streets (talionic eye). For an eye for an eye to be heard in Sherman Park there must already be a perceived institutional failure to see to the needs of the people and to see with them, from a shared cultural and existential perspective. Instead, one eye has failed to see the other, to mirror the other, and has set itself against the other and harmed them. As Kimberlé Crenshaw and Gary

⁶⁸⁸ Barton, "A night of conflict."

⁶⁸⁹ David Michael Levin, "The Body Politic: Political Economy and the Human Body," *Human Studies* 8 (1985): 237-8.

Peller explained regarding L.A. in the early 1990s, and which still applies sometimes today:

In a deep sense, Blacks in L.A. live in a different world from whites, in something like a different nation. *They and the police are like foreigners to each other.* And understanding this distance means comprehending relations, not according to norms of universal equality and equal treatment, but as the rule of one community over another. From this counternarrative, what is needed is not color blindness on the part of the police force, but the redistribution of power so that the police force is not an outside occupier, but rather *a part of the community itself*, subject to regulation by the Black community in L.A. The community doesn't need formal equality from the police, but actual control *over* the police – as well as other public institutions.”⁶⁹⁰

The feeling that the police are “foreign” does not go away even if the officer is African American or grew up in the same neighborhood, like Dominique-Heaggan Brown. Embedded within the badge and uniform are symbolic connotations and historical threads difficult for many to “see past” or “see through.” While in other communities, such as the white suburban communities of Chicago and Cincinnati I grew up in, the eye of the police and the eyes of community members seemed to be one, as they saw the world from the same viewpoint and with the same values placed on what is seen, for some in Sherman Park there is no such seeing-with but only a being-watched, a looking-at, a sharp – and legal – Look that kills. An eye for an eye means, in this local context, that the policing eye must be blinded before it kills again. Having met this eye violence in the past, the talionic eye is conjured up again to meet it and defend against it in the present. If the specter of Looks that kill continues to loom in the streets, so also will the specter of the talionic eye and its scripted production: the urban riot.

Blinding a Spectral Eye

⁶⁹⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw and Gary Peller, “Reel Time/Real Justice,” in *Reading Rodney King / Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (London: Routledge, 1993), 69. Italics mine.

The poet Calvin Hernton wrote a poem called “Jitterbugging in the Streets” in 1967 in which he likened urban riots across the country to “the rage of a hopeless people / Jitterbugging in the streets.”⁶⁹¹ In this brilliant and explosive poem, Hernton explores problems associated with the urban ghetto and white people’s attitudes, violence, and callous indifference to them, all the while invoking the image of a specter haunting America. The opening stanza includes the lines, “The only Messiah we shall see this year / Staggers / To and fro / On the LowerEastSide / Being laughed at by housewives in Edsel automobiles / who teach their daughters the fun of deriding a terror / belched up from the scatological asphalt of America.”⁶⁹² According to the poem, there’s no celebrating the Fourth of July this year, no “Holyman crying out,” no Santa Claus, no “Jesus Christ born this year,” only “the Messiah” that is “a bullet / In the belly / of a Harlem youth shot down by a coward crouched / behind an outlaw’s badge.” Hernton’s poem ends with his own interpretation (*I say!*) of events: “TERROR is in Harlem, / A Fear so constant / Black men crawl the pavement as if they were snakes, / and snakes turn to bully sticks that beat the heads / of those who try to stand up.” The specter haunting America that the poet speaks of seems to depend on the perspective and position of the person in society. For those living in “the asphalt plantation of America,” the specter is of shots and Looks that kill, of the violence of “inorganic phalluses” cracking your head open, of bodies in the streets because of police work. The specter is poor housing and rats, as well as “absentee slumlords” and “millionaire humanitarian philanthropists /

⁶⁹¹ The popular dance referred to as jitterbugging (associated with swing and the boogie woogie) became popular in the late 1930s, and it consisted of “a few standardized steps augmented by much improvisation.” See *OED* 3rd ed., s.v. “jitterbug.”

⁶⁹² Calvin Hernton, “Jitterbugging in the Streets,” in *SOS—Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader*, ed. John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 279-282. A different version of the poem appeared in Hernton, *Medicine Man*, 83-86.

Forcing little black girls to get down and do the dog before they learn to spell their names.”⁶⁹³ The specter that haunts white people is the black person who commits violence, destroys property, breaks windows, eats “my children,” and messes with white wives and daughters. The former specter produces real violence and destruction, while the latter is largely a product of white people’s imaginations and pathological projections. Those stuck in the urban ghetto contend with an ever-watchful and sometimes destructive policing eye, with its phallic sticks and shooting guns, while white people live in luxury, with nice cars and large bank accounts, producing and maintaining the policing eye as it haunts the streets of others.

Being stuck with this haunting specter, this following “It” – of the ghost of slavery, of organized racism, of police brutality, of poverty, of white (eye) power – is a reality that some people still have to contend with. As Jacques Derrida says, “a specter does not only cause séance tables to turn, but sets heads spinning.”⁶⁹⁴ For some Milwaukeeans today there is a sense of being stuck in a hostile environment, whether due to institutional arrangements, crime, unwelcoming shopkeepers, the school-to-prison pipeline, prevailing economic structures, personal experiences of racism, or harassment from the police. As Robert Gooding-Williams says, “being stuck is... a social condition, since the world and worlds which impinge on us are always and everywhere the products of social histories and ongoing social practices.”⁶⁹⁵ Further, “being stuck... is a matter of being inexorably caught up in a network of political, economic, and cultural *legacies* that escape the aura of the extraordinary. Neither news nor old news, these *legacies* constitute

⁶⁹³ Hernton, *Medicine Man*, 85.

⁶⁹⁴ Derrida, *Specters*, 159.

⁶⁹⁵ Robert Gooding-Williams, “On Being Stuck,” in *Reading Rodney King / Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (London: Routledge, 1993), 3.

the uneventful conditions of social existence.”⁶⁹⁶ Perhaps people in the community feel stuck —*fixed*— with a spectral eye whose genetic makeup can be traced back to the overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes in their various forms and historical manifestations.⁶⁹⁷ The present still seems to ripple with Looks thrown in the past. The shooting of Sylville Smith became the perfect match for lighting the anger and frustration that already saturated the neighborhood. Those who took to the streets had been force fed unjust look after unjust look, injustice after injustice, and they had enough, they were full; they simply couldn’t take “It” anymore. Lighting up police cars and businesses felt by some to be outside or foreign intrusions, these symbolic burnings could be interpreted as an attempt to distort or smash the seeing presence of the ever-watchful, ever-critical eye; to give back what it had dished out and served up: *an eye for an eye!*⁶⁹⁸ And because a gaze, a stare, a look, and bullets fly through the air and yet must have their launching point on the ground in places such as a squad car or behind a counter, these material scapegoats could be burned as symbolic substitutes. The eye that wants to “put me/us down” was looking from these locations. Who wouldn’t want to put out an eye that

⁶⁹⁶ Gooding-Williams, “On Being Stuck,” 3. Italics mine.

⁶⁹⁷ Hadden’s comments should be noted at this point: “while a legacy of hate-filled relations has made it difficult for many African Americans to trust the police, their maltreatment in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth centuries should not carry all the blame. We may seek the roots of racial fears in an earlier period, but that history does not displace our responsibility to change and improve the era in which we live. After all, the complex police and racial problems that our country continues to experience in the present day are, in many cases, the results of failings and misunderstandings in our own time. To blame the 1991 beating of Rodney King by police in Los Angeles on slave patrollers dead nearly two hundred years is to miss the point” (*Slave Patrols*, 5). It is true that we should not place “all the blame” for present problems on slave patrollers and historical forces in previous centuries and decades, and we *do* always have a responsibility to change and improve our own era. However, it would be equally missing the point if current events are not seen as flowing out of historical productions of racist looking and regarding that have distributed the sensible in certain ways and for certain people over the decades. Thus, it is not a matter of blaming the past but of understanding how the past, especially in terms of social and organizational habits and procedures, is woven into our lives in embodied practices and concomitant mental and cultural constructions and representations.

⁶⁹⁸ It should also be recalled that Calvin Mattheis, a photojournalism student from Ohio University who was working for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* as a summer intern, arrived on the scene and began taking photos. He quickly heard the shout, “Get your white ass out of here! You better not let me (expletive) catch you!” – and then he saw a man charging toward him from across the street. Mattheis took off, dropping his cameras, and got away. Aaron Mak, a summer reporting intern at the newspaper, picked up the broken cameras but was then beaten up by a group of men before being rescued by Vaun Mayes, a local community activist, who informed the attackers that Mak was “Asian-American, not white.” See Barton, “A night of conflict.”

puts one down? Yet the spectral eye, the eye that haunts memories and places, the eye that reappears time and again as the re-collection and visitation of the fragments of the overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes, remains elusive. It is difficult to kill a specter, to take its eye, for it is also a revenant eye: “one cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back.”⁶⁹⁹ The people in the streets of Milwaukee at least attempted to bruise this spectral eye in a gesture of looking back, of returning what they had received, by lobbing bricks like concretized looks.

Amid this spectral event, an event which discloses the “non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present,” one’s mind hovers not only over the present particularities of events in Milwaukee, but flies to other victims of police violence and brutality, whether in Baltimore, Ferguson, L.A., Detroit, Harlem, Newark, Marion, Charleston, Cincinnati, or other places in the past where a similar (same?) eye – overseeing, patrolling, kluxing, or policing – had a similar (same?) lethal impact.⁷⁰⁰ Connections are made in the minds of many between police officers of the now and overseers of the past, as Deborah Mathis did in reflecting on the police beating of Rodney King: “Certainly the police officers, reminiscent of the plantation bosses of yore, had shown no hesitation in their attack on King.”⁷⁰¹ During this spectral event, the accumulated and “reminiscent” sites/sights of violence against black people and other people of color become present to the minds of many, and with this presence the thoughts and feelings of *ah man, another one?!, didn’t this just happen?!, it doesn’t surprise me!, and it’s the same old story*. The scene plays repeatedly before the eyes of many throughout history, and these episodic memories

⁶⁹⁹ Derrida, *Specters*, 11.

⁷⁰⁰ The spectral quality of the eye is that it bears such uncanny resemblance to others in the past and in different locations that it is difficult to tell if it is a different eye, a similar eye, or the same one; they blur in experience and memory.

⁷⁰¹ Mathis, *Yet a Stranger*, 22.

haunt minds, social relations, and material realities. As George Yancy explains, “Given the long history of white racism in North America, it is not unusual to have specific memories that fail to fade, memories that associate the experience of whiteness with instances of lynching, castration, and terror, memories that justifiably push Black people to the precipice of existential fear and trembling.”⁷⁰²

And just as one might turn and flee a policing eye, one might also hide their children from them. This is no exaggeration: one “longtime Sherman Park resident Tyrone Joiner” shared with *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporters that he “doesn’t trust the police and doesn’t want his children to interact with them: ‘I tell my kids to come inside if I see police in the neighborhood. I’m afraid they are going to kill one of them.’”⁷⁰³ While some go inside, others take to the streets: “Whose street? Our street!”⁷⁰⁴ Recall that, as a public location, the street is a place where one acts “before the gaze of all other ‘actors.’”⁷⁰⁵ Taking to the streets is thus a way to publicly affirm one’s right to act, to be, to defy, to move, to dissent, and to fight back against those who seek to control the public sphere, the visual grid of intersubjectivity. Taking to the streets affirms one’s right and ability to take place. As George Lipsitz explains, “For black people in the United States, struggles against the oppressions of race have by necessity also been struggles over space. African American battles for resources, rights, and recognition have not only *taken place*, in the figurative term that historians use to describe how events happen, but

⁷⁰² Yancy, *Black Bodies*, 10.

⁷⁰³ Luthern, “Sherman Park unrest.” It would be wrong to dismiss these comments as an exaggeration. As “whiteness theorist” Christine Sleeter notes, “generally people of color know that they may over-interpret race, but can’t afford not to because most of the time the interpretation is correct.” George Yancy adds, “it could also prove fatal for people of color to respond to each situation as if it were *sui generis*.” See Yancy, *Black Bodies*, 11.

⁷⁰⁴ This was a shout heard while people took to the streets in Sherman Park. See Luthern, “Sherman Park unrest.”

⁷⁰⁵ See Dussel, *Twenty Theses*, 8-9.

they have also required blacks literally to *take places*.”⁷⁰⁶ This struggle to take place, to exist, to happen, and to stand before the eyes of others has, as we have seen, often been repressed and put down by various manifestations of Looks that kill.

Given such a history, with such a habitual occlusion of justice, we must creatively reflect on and practice seeing eye to eye as equals at the levels of our personal and social bodies. Social, economic, educational, and political institutions must genuinely be the self-expression of the people and must always have their eye on (*seeing-to*) the people whom they *re-present*. The people are meant to see themselves in the eyes of social and political institutions, which in turn are meant to act as forms of self-mediation for people. People come to see, know, and experience themselves in these institutional objectifications and so have their lives corroborated and enhanced by a stronger social environment. Yet if institutions and social organizations continually fail to regard or see eye to eye with a certain group of people, then can they continue to be legitimate? For example, if the police or other parts of the criminal justice system and the people are strangers to one another, if they do not see eye to eye, if they live in different worlds – then where can justice come from? Must “savagery” and terror reign? These are the questions prompted by the events in Sherman Park and the writing on the walls of urban neighborhoods and bodies.

To get a feel for others, to see them, we must develop a consensus – literally a “thinking or feeling with,” or more interpretively, a “sensing with.” For Nicholas Mirzoeff, a consensus means “not a single point of view, but a uniform range of

⁷⁰⁶ George Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape,” *Landscape Journal* 26:1 (2007): 17.

views.”⁷⁰⁷ And as Dussel explains, “power is the *consensual* will of the community or the people, which in its first moment demands the obedience of the authority.”⁷⁰⁸ Authorities have too often demanded the obedience of the people, and thus reversed the truth. As long as institutional authorities view themselves as the seat of power and deem it as within their rights to demand the obedience of society, rather than the other way around, then there will always be dissent: a counter-thinking, a counter-sensing, a counter-feeling to dominant “sensibilities.”⁷⁰⁹ There will always be sites of resistance, the “streets,” lit up with sights of resistance – people looking back. We might also put it another way and say that those who took to the streets in Sherman Park and elsewhere were acting the dissidents, that is, public opponents of an established system or organization, through their dissing of various businesses and organizations, especially the police. To “dis” the system is to talionically treat authorities without respect, for example, by talking or staring back, or by being purposely rude, insulting, or inconsiderate; it is to be dismissively critical of power structures and of those in power. It is to stick it to the man, or in some minds, to the monstrous. To dis the spectral eye in any of its manifestations is to lampoon it, to harpoon it, and ultimately to blind it so it stumbles around in its own lair of darkness and defeat, starving itself to death. Yet is this the only way?

⁷⁰⁷ Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 146.

⁷⁰⁸ Dussel, *Twenty Theses*, 38.

⁷⁰⁹ Dussel defines “dissensus” as the refusal “to participate in the consensus” whose ideology “grounded the obedience of the people on the ruling power” (*Twenty Theses*, 38).

Part III: Towards Just Looks

“There is a purity of gaze that maintains human beings in a steadfast openness to truth...”⁷¹⁰

“I want to reiterate the message that ‘we must learn to see.’ Seeing here is meant metaphysically as heightened awareness and understanding, the intensification of one’s capacity to experience reality through the realm of the senses.”⁷¹¹

“The saints were capable of seeing through the masks that cover the faces of humanity, and they saw that the masks are unreal. In the innumerable faces of men they saw only one face: the face of love (that is to say, the face of Christ).”⁷¹²

Parts I and II of this project were concerned with finding a way to think and speak about present visitations of Looks that kill and how these Looks historically, socially, and materially developed. We also sought to understand the complex and awesome reality of human looking from as many angles as possible, not only to come to grips with the hurtful and unjust ways we see other people, but to search for openings out of a kind of seeing that is really a violent unseeing. Looks that kill startlingly reveal how human seeing can be imbued with social and political meanings for the purposes of control, intimidation, exploitation, or elimination. We have also seen that, while usually associated with theory on a metaphorical level, human seeing is also a form of praxis, or practice. For Clodovis Boff, praxis is “the *complexus of practices* orientated to the transformation of society, the making of history,” which as such “has a fundamentally *political* connotation.”⁷¹³ Looks that kill are politico-sensorial practices that aim to ensure

⁷¹⁰ Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 36.

⁷¹¹ bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 132.

⁷¹² The quote is from Thomas Merton’s introduction to Ernesto Cardenal, *To Live is to Love*, trans. Kurt Reinhardt (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 8.

⁷¹³ Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 6. Italics in original. As Boff informs us, “praxis comprises the senses, the meanings, that the individual or transindividual human being, consciously or no, invests in it, in the form of theory, latent or patent” (210).

society and history follow the course laid out by the dominant and pluriform modes of white visibility. More specifically, these Looks often make foreign or nonwhite others feel or sense their “out-of-placeness” not only in space, but in the social and political body; they are marginalizing eyes. Looks that kill communicate to others that they are not fully part of the *polis* and have little or no claim to being or identifying as “We the People,” a cultural and existential order providing legal, economic, military, and social protections *and recognition* for those who live, move, and have their being in it. Our seeing, which manifests the unity of theory and praxis in the flesh, works to build a home for us to live in, a web of interpersonal relationships – yet who is “us” and who can appear and live in “our common home”?⁷¹⁴ Answers to these questions can be partially found by tracing something as simple – and as complicated – as a look.

In Part III we offer a theological analysis of seeing that is not intended as a complete and total answer to solving or healing problems associated with Looks that kill and white (eye) power in its various concrete modes. Rather, as a supplement to the work already being done by individuals and organizations to challenge violent, exploitative, and discriminatory eyecraft and organized eyepower – such as the local Milwaukee efforts of Black Leaders Organizing for Communities (BLOC), Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT), and Parklawn Assembly of God – we point out a few areas of Christian belief and practice that might prove especially fruitful for interpreting, combatting, and defending against Looks that kill at a personal and social level.⁷¹⁵ Furthermore, given the unity of love of God and love of neighbor in the Christian tradition, the case is made in Part III that a Christian individual or community who fails

⁷¹⁴ The words “our common home” are taken from the subtitle of Pope Francis’ encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’*.

⁷¹⁵ See the websites: www.blocbybloc.org, www.litmke.org, and www.parklawn.org.

to see, or wrongly sees, other people, especially the poor, oppressed, and those struggling against Looks that kill, are guilty of heteropraxis, an incorrect practice of the faith. A consistent failure to see others reveals that one has failed to see God in Christ, whose own presence is especially seen in the “least ones” (Mt. 25:45). As John Chrysostom exclaimed in a homily on the Gospel of Matthew, “Do you really wish to pay homage to Christ’s body? Then do not neglect him when he is naked. At the same time that you honor him here with hangings made of silk, do not ignore him outside when he perishes from cold and nakedness... Your brother is more truly his temple than any church building.”⁷¹⁶ Just as one cannot love God without loving one’s neighbor, so also one cannot see God if one does not see, or rightly see, one’s neighbor. This situation demands that Christians take seriously the call of Christ to contemplate him in the faces of others, especially in those who are despised and looked down upon. Christians must learn with Christ to see otherwise, against the grain of racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic productions of the visible. Contemplation and action, just like theory and praxis, interpenetrate each other and reveal the other.⁷¹⁷ Our seeing of human others manifests the depth of our vision of God, our faith, or our blindness to the truth.

Part III of this dissertation thus performs the theological task of critically reflecting on a fundamental though easily overlooked aspect of Christian practice, namely, the praxis of seeing. Following liberation theologians in their emphasis on orthopraxy, or correct practice of faith, it is suggested that a central Christian practice is to incarnate the eyes of God in Christ by concretely seeing to the needs and concerns of

⁷¹⁶ John Chrysostom, *On Matthew: Homily 50.4*, quoted in William J. Walsh and John P. Langan, “Patristic Social Consciousness – the Church and the Poor,” in *The Faith That Does Justice*, ed. John Haughey (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 131.

⁷¹⁷ As Boff says, “there obtains... a kind of *perichoresis* between theory and praxis” (*Theology and Praxis*, 210).

others through charity and justice, especially those who are harmed, misshaped, or attacked by the unjust looks of others. “Incarnation” will be seen to be not only a “meaning” concept – referring to the *idea* that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth – but also a “praxic” one, which implies “putting its meaning into practice” and in doing so “generating a better understanding” of what the Incarnation is.⁷¹⁸ What this means precisely will become clearer as we move through some biblical writings and discover that God’s seeing does not remain abstract or detached from the existential order of humans but realizes itself in the tangible substantiation of it. God’s seeing “does” something in the world that goes beyond the mere policing of morality; it is praxic. Furthermore, according to Christian faith, God’s seeing transgresses the boundary between the divine and human, ultimately running “the risk of the relative” through incarnation, passion, and death.⁷¹⁹ God does not force God’s vision for the world on humanity through violent displays of power, but invites humanity to visualize the world and other people from the perspective of an incarnate love that sees itself with and in the other: Jesus the Christ. It is fitting that Jesus’ own invitation to his first followers was “Come and see.”⁷²⁰

In the same Spirit, the eyecraft of Christians is to gently work on the world and other people, not for worldly power, undue influence, or exploitation, but for justice: to assist in opening up spaces for the appearing, freedom, and self-actualization of human persons in societies. This eyecraft can take many expressions: seeing to the recognition and preservation of the dignity, beauty, and truth of the human person as created in the

⁷¹⁸ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 87.

⁷¹⁹ See Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 60.

⁷²⁰ See John 1:39; 1:46; 11:34.

image and likeness of God, or of the natural world; revising canon law so that the eyes of the law (for the Church) are not so judgmental and concerned with outward appearances and behaviors; actively combatting corporate looks (even from the Church) that dish out injustice, such as in the clergy sex abuse crisis; chiseling away at racist and sexist habits of seeing that prevent a full recognition and participation of everyone in the life of the community; rejecting a technocratic vision of the world and people that is overly concerned with use value; looking at Sacred Scripture with a new sensitivity to the views and experiences of others; or moving into the streets, under the public gaze, to protest social injustice. This eyecraft inspired by Christian faith will, following the dynamic movement of God's own seeing, express itself in concrete instantiations of neighborly provision and concern. As Christians flesh out – however imperfectly and asymptotically – God's vision for the world and God's preferential optic for the poor and the oppressed, they can discover and more fully understand some of the central beliefs of their faith (orthodoxy), especially the identity and meaning of Christ and the reality of the Incarnation. By developing a just and orthopraxic regard for all people, the organized eyepower of Christian communities can be a creative force for love and justice in the world. But first and always they must learn to see.

Chapters 8 and 9 accordingly parallel the movement of the Incarnation in the ordering of its material for analysis: God's seeing, then Jesus' seeing, and finally Christians' seeing. From the light gained from our examination of historical and current malpractices of seeing in Parts I and II, we can look anew at places in Christian Scripture and tradition to see what God's own eyepower looks like in practice and what kind of seeing God inspires in humans. In doing so, the ideal of just looks can be more fully

illuminated which in turn can lead us to see each other more faithfully, in accordance with the truth of our various genres of being human. Such an approach follows the “three moments” of liberation theology as described by Zoë Bennett: “the moment of praxis, the moment of reflection on praxis, and the moment of return to a renewed praxis.”⁷²¹

Having adjusted our eyes and perspectives to see what is involved with Looks that kill and the struggle against them, we can read passages from the Bible with a new sensitivity to the power in looking. These readings and interpretations can then inspire personal and organizational practices that seek to counter the dominant distribution of the visible, perhaps even opening beyond it. The focus in Chapter 9 on Pope Francis is also intentional and is not meant to be an argument from authority. Instead, as the most visible Christian leader in the world who is himself an *episkopos* (bishop), or overseer, Francis’ seeing and “takes” on the world and the faith is very influential and authoritative for many. Tracing the lines and modes of his eyepower becomes necessary once we have understood the connection between personal and social bodies as well as exploitative and racist modes of overseeing. As Pope John XXIII once noted, it is the Chair of St. Peter “whence every apostolate draws its motive and life,” so one who sees *ex cathedra* ought to have a sense of justice that is up to the task of genuine Christian mission in the flesh.⁷²²

⁷²¹ Zoë Bennett, “‘Action is the life of all’: the praxis-based epistemology of liberation theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

⁷²² Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul: The Autobiography of Pope John XXIII*, trans. Dorothy White (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 201.

Chapter 8: God's Eye View

“Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees?”⁷²³

*“The helpless are crushed, laid low;
they fall into the power of the wicked,
Who say in their hearts, ‘God has forgotten,
shows no concern, never bothers to look.’
Rise up, LORD! God, lift up your hand!
Do not forget the poor!
Why should the wicked scorn God,
say in their hearts, ‘God does not care’?
But you do see;
you take note of misery and sorrow;
you take the matter in hand.
To you the helpless can entrust their cause;
you are the defender of orphans.”⁷²⁴*

“But whatever else it may be, identity is connected with the fateful appraisals made of oneself – by oneself and by others. Everyone presents himself to the others and to himself, and sees himself in the mirrors of their judgments. The masks he then and thereafter presents to the world and its citizens are fashioned upon his anticipations of their judgments.”⁷²⁵

Recently in a book entitled *God is Watching You*, Dominic Johnson suggested that “the idea that one’s good and bad deeds will be observed, judged, and rewarded or punished by God or some other supernatural agent is a recurring feature of virtually all of the world’s religions, both past and present.”⁷²⁶ Building on scholarly work in evolutionary science and the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), Johnson claims that the ideas of supernatural observation and punishment or reward is an evolutionary adaptation that helped god-fearing people “avoid raising the ire of their fellow man,

⁷²³ Job 10:4.

⁷²⁴ Psalm 10:10-14 NAB.

⁷²⁵ Anselm L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks: The Search for Identity* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959), 9.

⁷²⁶ Dominic Johnson, *God is Watching You: How the Fear of God Makes Us Human* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

[lowered] the costs of real world sanctions, and [raised] the rewards of cooperation.”⁷²⁷

The sense that one is being watched by another person, especially a supernatural agent, modifies one’s behavior due to the anticipated rewards or punishments of certain actions. Johnson also notes that, even outside a religious context, eyes have the power to affect our behaviors. He refers to experiments in which images or replicas of eyes in a room contributed to the cooperation of people in a social situation. As he explains, “the presence of eyes reduces selfish behavior and increases cooperation,” perhaps because the presence of eyes “are thought to subconsciously activate concerns for reputation.”⁷²⁸ God’s eyes have been particularly powerful because “God offers remarkably penetrating detection.”⁷²⁹ Even more, “supernatural agents, though variable in their power and characteristics across and within cultures, often have the ability to be in many places at one time, to observe people’s actions, and even to have access to their thoughts.”⁷³⁰ God or other supernatural agents also mete out severe punishments for bad behavior lasting into eternity. God-fearing people, then, are concerned to adjust their behaviors in the eyes of the divine to avoid God’s judgment or to gain certain rewards. This kind of behavior, according to Johnson, brings about social benefits.

Even today the picture of God as peeping, policing, and judging human behavior floats around in the popular imagination, often to the point of caricature. Much like Santa Claus, God “sees you when you’re sleeping” and “knows if you’ve been bad or good,” a creepy truth to tell children to get them to modify their behavior. Even C. S. Lewis began his book, *Christian Behaviour* (1943), with a child’s impression of God: “There’s a story

⁷²⁷ Johnson, *God is Watching*, 8.

⁷²⁸ Johnson, *God is Watching*, 124.

⁷²⁹ Johnson, *God is Watching*, 72.

⁷³⁰ Johnson, *God is Watching*, 72-73.

about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was ‘The sort of person who is always snooping round to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it.’”⁷³¹ The schoolboy’s notion of God as having a snooping eye and as someone who acts as a cosmic killjoy is found in adults as well. But is this schoolboy notion the heart of God’s seeing? Is God’s seeing primarily connected with surveilling people’s morality and rewarding or punishing them? Such a focus ignores other aspects of God’s seeing, namely, its relation to justice and its basic life-giving, substantiating role. The schoolboy notion of God’s seeing needs to be informed by a mature and theological understanding of God’s seeing that considers both justice and love. Further, a Christian understanding of God’s seeing must include the reality that God’s eye, often depicted as disembodied and floating around in the sky, was incarnate in Jesus the Christ, who as a full human being saw in a human way with two eyes. This event fundamentally shapes, or ought to shape, how Christians internalize the gaze of God and see other people.

The Providing Eye

One example of God’s seeing as a seeing to the needs of humans, and not necessarily as a moral watchdog, occurs in the book of Genesis in the story of Hagar, an Egyptian “maidservant” or slave of Sarai, Abram’s wife. In this story, because she is barren and childless, Sarai tells Abram to “Have intercourse with my maid” so she can have sons through her (Gen. 16:2). Abram, following a widely attested practice at the time, has sex with Hagar and she becomes pregnant. Then Sarai complains that she has “lost stature in her [Hagar’s] eyes,” presumably because Hagar now has the status that

⁷³¹ C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behaviour* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1943), 7.

Sarai could never obtain for herself. Sarai then “mistreats” Hagar so much that the latter runs away. While Hagar is out in the wilderness, “the LORD’s angel” visits Hagar and tells her to return to Sarai, promising that her descendants will be too numerous to count. After this promise, Hagar gives the name *El-roi* to God, saying, “You are God who sees me.” This name, which could variously be translated as “God of seeing” or “God sees,” is the only time in the Bible that someone is attributed with the power of naming God. Womanist theologian Delores Williams notes that in this story God’s seeing becomes an impetus for “a woman’s self-initiated liberation event,” inspiring Hagar “to hope and act.”⁷³² God’s seeing becomes a catalyst for fresh beginnings throughout the Hebrew Bible.

Later in the book of Genesis Abraham is told by God to sacrifice his “only” son, Isaac, whom Sarah miraculously conceived and bore in her old age. As Abraham walks to the place of sacrifice with his son, Isaac asks, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” Abraham responds, “God will provide the sheep for the burnt offering” (Gen. 22:7-8). Abraham builds an altar, binds Isaac, puts him on top, and just as he is about to sacrifice him with a knife the angel of the Lord stops him. Rather than offering his son Isaac, Abraham finds “a single ram caught by its horns in the thicket” which he sacrifices instead, and so we are told Abraham named the place “Yahweh-yireh,” meaning the Lord will see or provide (22:14). Here, as in the case of Hagar, God’s seeing is connected to God’s act of providing. The English word “provide” finds its etymon in the Latin *providere* (*pro* [to, for] + *videre* [to see]), which means “to see in advance, to see beforehand, to foresee,” but also, to see to or to make provision for.

⁷³² Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 10.

In this case, God sees to it, or provides, a ram in place of Isaac for a burnt offering. That God sees means that God is providing for the well-being of people, especially those who might lack other social protections and recognition, whether enslaved persons or children. God's eye is a providing eye, which forms the anthropomorphic basis for the theological notion of God's providence.

In Catholic magisterial teaching God's providence is related to the notion that God is the Lord of history and directs all things according to God's good purposes. In *Dei Filius*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith from the First Vatican Council (1869-70), we read that, "By his providence God protects and governs all things that he has made, 'reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well' (Wis. 8:1). For 'all are open and laid bare to his eyes' (Heb. 4:13), even those things that will be done by the free action of creatures."⁷³³ Here the seeing of God is protecting, governing, ordering, and foreseeing, all for the sake of things being "well" in creation and for humanity. Karl Rahner builds on this basic notion of God's providence and suggests that God is "not merely the sole Lord of time and history, but also guarantees that time shall be shaped and directed in a way that is ultimately meaningful for history, and does not allow this to be fragmented and so to sink into a formless succession of particles of time following one upon the other."⁷³⁴ God's seeing is involved with substantiating personal and collective matter/s of a biological and historical nature and with giving the universe and all peoples an ultimate and glorious end. The reality of God's seeing is not meant to leave people in fear of punishment but to provide a

⁷³³ DZ, 3002.

⁷³⁴ Karl Rahner, "Theological Observations on the Concept of Time," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 290.

new ground for hope in the ultimate transformation of one's own life, community, and world. God's seeing is praxic because it realizes itself in concrete instantiations of provision and help.

From this basic sense of God's providence, we can see that God's eye is a substantiating eye, an eye that gives substance to something or someone. God's seeing gives substance and form to the universe and to humans, including their bodies, and it also gives substance to personal and social histories. In its obsolete meaning, but which is still relevant for our purposes, the verb substantiate means to feed or nourish, whereas in its more common usage the word means to make real or substantial.⁷³⁵ God's seeing feeds and nourishes the inner-depths of human lives and sees to the feeding and nourishment of people, especially in working on the hearts, minds, and consciences of others, moving them to see and meet each other in their immediate needs. The word substantiate also means "to prove the truth of" something or someone.⁷³⁶ God's eye affirms and proves the truth and value of humans, especially when these realities are most denied by other people or systems of exploitation. God's substantiating seeing has the ultimate take on human matter/s, especially in seeing to the vindication of those victimized in various way by unjust looks. Finally, to substantiate can mean "to give solidity to (something); to make firm, to strengthen; to affirm."⁷³⁷ God's substantiating eye performs these myriad functions in relation to the universe and to humans in creation, providence, and salvation, which itself includes the resurrection of the body. God sees to it that human matter/s, whether in terms of bodies or histories, does not or do not become

⁷³⁵ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. "substantiate."

⁷³⁶ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. "substantiate."

⁷³⁷ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. "substantiate."

so fragmented as to “sink into a formless succession of particles.” God gives shape and form to human lives and substantiates them through all available means. For Rahner, God’s seeing and knowing of the world and people is not “strictly the infinite consciousness of the world-cause,” but rather “the eye of the personal God, whose discerning, comprehending and provident gaze penetrates man’s inmost heart and is felt there by him.”⁷³⁸ Such a gaze lends substance to humans, giving them matter and a sense of mattering, a sense of solidity, of existing, of being seen, protected, and loved, and feeds their hearts with strength and affirmation to live in the face of life’s fragmenting forces, such as labor and sexual exploitation, unjust economic policies, police brutality, domestic abuse, or those persistent and habitualized Looks that kill. The substantiating eye of God is the opposite of an exploiting eye which harvests or extracts “stuff” from land or people to fulfill or satisfy itself. God’s eye does not suck the substance out of the world or out of the lives of humans, but rather feeds them with substance, weightiness, and life.

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible we find instances of God’s seeing connected with a concern for the suffering and the oppressed. In the book of Exodus, when the descendants of Abraham and Isaac are enslaved and being exploited by Pharaoh and his overseers, we are told that, “The Israelites groaned under their bondage and cried out, and from their bondage their cry for help went up to God. God heard their moaning and God was mindful of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God *saw* the Israelites, and God knew...”⁷³⁹ God’s seeing of the Israelites immediately precedes the story of Moses’

⁷³⁸ Karl Rahner, “Theos in the New Testament,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 113.

⁷³⁹ Exodus 2:23-25.

call by God to lead the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. God's seeing-to takes the form of a human liberator and freedom fighter: Moses. In another recounting of these events we read, "When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing harsh servitude upon us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression." This God who sees "brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders, and brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Dt. 26:6-9). One feature of this land is that, "It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end" (Dt. 11:12). This is not merely a poetic statement, but one which expresses the belief that God sees to it that the land is fertile and produces various fruits and trees to sustain life. Considered with the eyes of faith, if God "sees" the land, then the land will indeed flow with milk and honey. Without this seeing, the land will be barren. God's substantiating eye provides the *ground* for human life and existence.

The anthropomorphic language of God having eyes and seeing human guilt, wickedness, or goodness, connects with God's understanding of human hearts and their deeds, with God's justice. Yet God's seeing also has a personal touch, a protective concern and regard that sees to human substance both individually and intergenerationally, as seen in God's promises of descendants to both Abraham and Hagar. God's providence is concerned with both seeing to the good and the wicked for justice in society and to bringing all things to their proper end or goal which is God, who is goodness itself. The power of God's eye, that is, when God's eye takes in human matter and matters, consists in its power to prevent these things from falling into the

formlessness and chaos of insubstantiality: “God saw that it was good.”⁷⁴⁰ For Christians, God’s substantiating and providing eye becomes incarnate and takes shape in a human being, Jesus, with radical results.

Prosopagnosic Eyes

In a memorable passage from the Gospel of Matthew we are told that some Pharisees and Herodians preface their entrapping question to Jesus about the lawfulness of paying taxes to Caesar by telling Jesus that “you show no partiality,” or more woodenly translated, “you do not see the *prosopon* [“face” or “mask”] of a human being” (*ou gar blepeis eis prosopon anthropon*).⁷⁴¹ While bypassing the finer exegetical questions, this underhanded yet truthful declaration itself suggests that Jesus is a kind of prosopagnosic in the sense that he is un-seeing regarding the faces or masks of humans. This does not mean that Jesus does not see or appreciate the uniqueness and beauty of other people’s faces. Rather, Jesus is, as it is traditionally put, “no respecter of persons,” that is, he does not consider the outward appearance, position, front, social role, or surface of a person in making judgments. He is the master of “un-seeing” or “un-knowing” the face, or mask, of human beings, the surface level stuff that often covers up and hides the matters of the heart, the true self within. But what does it mean to say that Jesus does not see the “face,” or the fronting, of a human? How exactly does Jesus perceive others in the Gospels? More crucially for those of us living in a world struggling with the constant specter of Looks that kill, does the Spirit of Christ, poured into our hearts by the grace of God, help us to see each other at a level beyond appearances, and if

⁷⁴⁰ See Genesis 1 where this refrain is repeated after each day of God’s creative action.

⁷⁴¹ Matthew 22:16 NET. In Luke’s version it is “spies” sent from the “experts in the law and the chief priests” who pose the question to Jesus. We are told that they “watched [Jesus] carefully” (*parateresantes*). See Luke 20:20.

so, how are we to describe this process theologically and live into this reality in our own lives?

It is a common idea in the Bible that God sees the human heart rather than mere appearances; the corollary to God the prosopagnosic is God the cardignosic, the knower of hearts (from *kardia* [heart] + *gnosis* [knowing]). In the story about the prophet Samuel in search of a new king to replace Saul, we read that the Lord instructed the prophet about Eliab, who Samuel thought might be God's choice for king, as follows: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). In this case, as in others, the fact that God sees the heart is tied to the reality of God's judgment. Basically, because human beings in their seeing have a propensity to settle on appearances and surfaces, and perhaps only glimpse the hearts of others, they are not qualified to judge others in an ultimate and definitive sense. As taught at the Second Vatican Council in 1965, "God, who alone is the judge and the searcher of hearts, forbids us to pass judgment on the inner guilt of others."⁷⁴² Only God, who sees the heart, can judge a human being in this manner, a fact which can be unsettling or comforting depending on the individual. Thus Karl Rahner could write in an essay on a Catholic view of guilt, punishment, and responsibility that every person must eventually "answer for himself and the whole of his life before the divine judgement seat" and so be judged by "a judge who does not regard the mere appearance of life, the 'face', but the freely disposable core of the person, the 'heart'."⁷⁴³ God sees through the fronts that humans put

⁷⁴² *Gaudium et Spes* §28. Translation is from Austin Flannery, ed., *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 2007), 193.

⁷⁴³ Karl Rahner, "Guilt – Responsibility – Punishment within the view of Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 201.

on in relation to others, to themselves, and to God and sees what ultimately matters: the heart, the deepest “stuff” of human life.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus calls the Father the one who “sees in secret” (6:4, 6:6) and who “sees what is hidden” (6:18). These statements about how and what the Father sees appear in Jesus’ discussion of the “hypocrites” who “love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners *so that others may see them*,” and who also “*look gloomy when they fast*” because “they neglect their *appearance*” to “*appear to others to be fasting*” (Mt. 6:5-6). It should be noted here that in classical and Hellenistic Greek the word *hypocrites* can refer to an actor or someone who plays a part on the stage of human life.⁷⁴⁴ Jesus is against the hypocrites because they are what we might call too superficial, caught up in appearances, and because they attempt to draw the gazes of others through a certain presentation of themselves. The hypocrites put too much stock in *prosopon*-based (prosoponic) looks and actions, in those things that are “directed to the eyes (of another).”⁷⁴⁵ Hypocrites live and view themselves and others within a one-dimensional, prosoponic plane. Their regard for themselves and others is based solely on externals, on that which presents itself to the eyes and its desires. Later in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus states about them that, “[a]ll their works are performed *to be seen*” (Mt. 23:5). He also says that the hypocrites “cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence,” and they “are like whitewashed tombs, *which appear beautiful* on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of filth” (Mt. 23:25-27). A fixation on surfaces leads to a neglect of the depths, the heart. Jesus’

⁷⁴⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 559-60.

⁷⁴⁵ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 768.

rebuke of the hypocrites brings together these themes: “you justify yourselves in *the sight of others* (*enopion tou anthropon*), but God knows your hearts (*ginoskei tas kardias*); for what is of human esteem (*hypselson*) is an abomination in *the sight of God* (*enopion tou theou*)” (Lk. 16:15). Again, appearances deceive, and may even fool other people, but God sees the heart, the “freely disposable core of a person.” In the Gospels Jesus sees the heart, and therefore sees through the façades and staging that the hypocrites put on to draw the gazes and honor of others. He also reveals the basic error involved in their judgments of others: they stop at the surface. In contrast, Jesus is both a prosopagnosic and a cardignosic, therefore his judgment is sure and true.

Another aspect of Jesus’ seeing of others as presented in the Gospels is that he sees with compassion. To begin with, catching sight of others, or seeing them, typically precedes important events and healings narrated in Jesus’ life. One such example is the calling of the first disciples; we are explicitly told that Jesus sees Simon and Andrew before he calls them to come after him, as well as James and John, and later even Matthew the tax collector (Mt. 4:18, 21; 9:9). Jesus sees Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever before he touches her hand and heals her (Mt. 8:14). He sees the faith of those bringing a paralytic to him on a stretcher to be healed (9:2). And when Jesus saw the crowds following him, “his heart was moved with pity (*esplanchnisthe*) for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like a sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). Compassion for others results directly from seeing them, a notion repeated later in Matthew’s gospel: “When [Jesus] disembarked and saw (*eiden*) the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity (*esplanchnisthe*) for them, and he cured their sick” (Mt. 14:14). Finally, in Luke 7:13 Jesus encounters a widow whose only son has just died: “When the

Lord saw (*idon*) her, he was moved with pity (*esplanchnisthe*) for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’”

On these occasions Jesus’ vision of others hits him in the guts, those vital organs so necessary for a genuine and transformative encounter with other people. It is as if the neural circuitry in Jesus is powerfully connecting the eye to the affective core of his body and of his person: guts, or elsewhere, the heart.⁷⁴⁶ To use the words of Christopher Castiglia writing in a different context, Jesus fleshes out the insistence “on the connection between witnessing (seeing) and affect (crying), between vision and interiority.”⁷⁴⁷ The soundness of Jesus’ eye floods his entire body with light, and this light allows him to see the other person with heart, with compassion, and even with a sense of justice. In Jesus there is an excess, not a limitation, of light that moves him to be impartial, to be no respecter of persons. Calling Jesus a prosopagnosic does not mean he does not see the individual dignity, beauty, and faces of the people he encounters, he does. He is especially attuned to these realities. Rather, Jesus does not allow the surface to be the “end all be all” of his regard for, and judgment of, other people. Following Jon Sobrino, Jesus embodies a “*praxic* love that swells within a person at the sight of another person’s unjustly inflicted suffering, driving its subject to eradicate that suffering for no other reason than that it exists, and precluding any excuse for not so doing.”⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁶ On another occasion Jesus exclaims: “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat” (Mt. 15:32). The “heart is moved with pity” translates *splanchnizomai*, which in other translations can be “I have compassion” or something like that. Both “heart” and “guts” point to this affective core of the person.

⁷⁴⁷ Christopher Castiglia, “I Found a Life of Freedom All My Fancy Had Pictured It to Be: Hannah Craft’s Visual Speculation and the Inner Life of Slavery,” in *In Search Of Hannah Crafts: Critical Essays On the Bondswoman’s Narrative*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005), 232.

⁷⁴⁸ Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 18.

Some other examples of Jesus' compassionate and visceral seeing of others comes up in the Gospel of Luke in the parables that Jesus tells his followers. In response to the question, "who is my neighbor," Jesus tells of a man who fell victim to robbers and who was left on the side of the road half-dead. The gospel writer tells us that both a priest and a Levite see the man but pass by on the opposite side of the road. But of another we read: "a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved *with compassion at the sight (idon esplanchnisthe)*" (Lk. 10:33). For Jesus, the Samaritan was neighbor to the half-dead man, who saw to it that the man's needs were met and his health was restored. Did the priest and the Levite really see the man on the side of the road? They certainly saw him in a physical manner, as the parable reports, but their vision ultimately failed because they did not allow such a sight to hit them in their core and so they remained unmoved; they didn't budge.

The compassionate vision of the Samaritan is a true seeing-to that considers the human dignity of the other and their immediate situation. This seeing-to is precisely how humans participate in and cooperate with the providence of God as a providing and substantiating eye.⁷⁴⁹ Theologian and monk Maximos the Confessor (c. 580-662 CE) explained providence as follows: "'For providence (*pronoia*),' according to our God-bearing fathers, 'is God's attentive care for all things,' and they also define it as follows: 'Providence is that purpose of God whereby all beings receive their most favorable assistance and direction.'"⁷⁵⁰ The Samaritan demonstrates both "attentive care for" the

⁷⁴⁹ The "cooperation" or "joint action" of human beings with the providence of God has traditionally been discussed in terms of *concursum*, or concurrence, that is, "the divine action which goes with every free act of man," in which "all his actions are encompassed by God's providence, both as regards their presuppositions and their effects." See Ernst Nieermann, "Providence," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 5 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970), 132.

⁷⁵⁰ See *Ambiguum* 10 in Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. I, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 311.

half-dead man and gives him “favorable assistance and direction,” thus fleshing out providence through concrete action. This seeing-to implies a personal stake in the other as well as a personal responsibility and investment in their wellbeing. Neighboring thus means in the first place providing the other with a loving and respectful look filled with heart, a look that engages the whole person in freedom and seeks the concrete good of the other especially in their time of need. This neighborly provision should not be understood in some paternalistic sense, as it was sometimes understood by slave masters who considered themselves to be “providence” to their “property,” but rather in the sense that one be entirely open to and disposed to the truth about the dignity of the other and the related truth of their immediate situation and general life experiences. It also means to be ready to respond to them in whatever way is both desired by others and respects their inherent dignity. This provision ought to be mutual, yet the other can never be coerced into providing such feedback; they must be left to their own freedom. As Enrique Dussel states in *Ethics and Community*, “human beings, be they ever so meritorious or heroic, cannot coerce the self-bestowal of the other person. They cannot force that other to open and to establish the face-to-face. The mutual face-to-face presupposes the free self-proposal of both parties as absolute gratuity.”⁷⁵¹ Finally, let us not forget that this connection between neighboring and seeing is still apparent in the French language, whose word for neighbor, *voisin*, is related to the verb *voir*, to see. The neighbor is primarily the one seen, the one who catches our sight and so engages our hearts and minds in responsible and just action.

⁷⁵¹ Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 37-38.

However, for there to be genuine love and compassion for another human being our vision must be restored, and our perspective shifted. The place from which we view the world and other people must be moved as well. As Pedro Casaldáliga and José-María Vigil explain when speaking of the necessity of being contemplatives in liberation:

“Analogously to what happens with normal spatial vision, there is also ‘perspective’ in matters of the spirit: the place we choose to look from influences what will be in the foreground, the middle ground and background, what will be emphasized and what hidden. Each viewing point brings its own perspective: ‘You don’t think the same from a cottage as you do from a palace.’”⁷⁵² Casaldáliga and Vigil aptly sum up their point with the potent words: “The outlook of the powerful obscures liberation.”⁷⁵³ In contrast, Jesus is eye to eye with those whom he encounters. This can be seen especially in the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector, who is described as someone who “was seeking to see who Jesus was” (Lk. 19:3). In the story about him, we read that Zacchaeus “could not *see (idein)* him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree *in order to see (ide)* Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus *looked up (anablepsas)* and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house’” (Lk. 19:3-5). Perhaps for the first time in his life, Zacchaeus, a short man, did not have someone looking down on him, both physically and metaphorically; he was, after all, a tax collector, and most people would have looked down on him for this despised occupation. Jesus, therefore, encounters tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, lepers, the possessed, the undesirables, and

⁷⁵² Pedro Casaldáliga and José-María Vigil, *Political Holiness: A Spirituality of Liberation*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 108.

⁷⁵³ Casaldáliga and Vigil, *Political Holiness*, 108.

the unsubstantial in society to see them for who they are beyond those labels and categories of social life which ostracize and exclude. Jesus substantiates these people, signified by eating with them. He desires to see into the heart of matter/s, to pass through the appearances that occlude in order to see the person within and without. He is a cardignosic, a heart seer, not content with mere appearances.

Respecting and Despecting Eyes

The variety of looks given by characters in the Gospels can be categorized into two general forms: 1) respecting looks and 2) disrespectful, or “despecting,” looks.⁷⁵⁴ While it might be a truism to say we should respect one another, this word has been dissociated in popular discourse from its more original, ocular sense. “Respect,” etymologically from the classical Latin *respectus* meaning to look round or back, can mean a regard, a gaze, or simply visual attention.⁷⁵⁵ Thus in the King James Bible of 1611 we read in the prophet Isaiah: “At that day shall a man looke to his Maker, and his eyes shall haue respect to the Holy one of Israel” (Is. 17:7). In the Gospels, the eyes of Jesus have respect not only to the Holy One of Israel, but also to his concrete neighbor, considering their existential situation, their appearance or manifestation in the world, and their heart. Jesus’ eyes look round at, or *re*-spect, his neighbor, attentively taking in the whole of the person in a loving, not dominating, manner. Jesus sees not simply someone who is a mere iteration of a more general category, but as irreducible, irreplaceable, and as someone who possesses innate dignity being made in the image of God. An image is

⁷⁵⁴ In our view, talking about “despecting” looks is to be preferred to merely discussing disrespectful looks as the term focuses on the embodied and positional “looking down” on someone that such a look implies. Despecting looks are disrespectful, but are also more than that. They are about asserting positions (whether personal or social) of dominance through subordinating others and the creation of social hierarchies of relative value and disvalue.

⁷⁵⁵ *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “respect.” The base verb in Latin is *specto, spectare*, to see. When connected with this verb, the prefix “re-” means “round” or “back,” while “de-” generally means “down.”

primarily meant to be contemplated, and in the case of a human person, it is hoped that by seeing them our gaze might also be taken in by the incomprehensibility of God in whose image each person is made. A respecting look does a perpetual double take, a continual review, when encountering others, never settling with quick, pre-judged, superficial, or totalizing observations. Never content with false categories, appearances, or quick peggings of people, a respecting look gives to the other what is due to them as a creature of God filled with incredible depth and complexity, and whose own person is a sacrament of the mysterious presence of God that is itself incalculable, unmanipulable, unexpected, and full of wonder. So also a respectful encounter with another person begins with a certain look, an open and warm regard for the concrete neighbor. Such a look opens circuitry to the heart and guts and allows for genuine compassion and justice to manifest itself.⁷⁵⁶ This kind of respecting look is truly no respecter of persons because it sees everyone as associated with the eternal love, compassion, and mercy of God.

But a disrespectful or despecting look, from the Latin *despectus* (looking down), characterizes the hypocrites who put undue trust in appearances and judge others and themselves solely by the external props of life.⁷⁵⁷ These characters shirk a genuine, loving, and fully engaged encounter with others, so their damning judgments of them remain superficial and therefore false. There are numerous examples of this judgmental, disrespectful looking in the Gospels, some of which we have touched on. For example,

⁷⁵⁶ “‘What do you want me to do for you?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, let our eyes be opened.’ Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him” (Mt. 20:32-34).

⁷⁵⁷ A pertinent use of *despectus* can be found in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* §27: “In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon (*iniuste despectus*), a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, ‘As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me’” (DZ, 4327).

when some Pharisees “observed that some of [Jesus’] disciples ate their meals with unclean... hands,” they questioned Jesus’ teachings and practices. In response, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah: “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Mk. 7:6). The hypocrites are so busy despecting others, looking down on others and judging them, that they are blind to themselves. Jesus knows the directionality of their hearts, whether freely moving outward toward others and therefore to God, or trapped within themselves, in the flesh of mortal appearances. But in encountering Jesus these scrutinizers are given a chance to see what is really in their hearts. Jesus acts as a kind of Archimedean point or mirror from which they can get outside of themselves to see from a different perspective who they are and what they really want. In challenging them, Jesus clears the space for that distance from self so necessary for any true self-criticism, conversion, and love. Whether they reject or accept Jesus’ view and judgment of themselves is another matter entirely. Yet it remains the Christian view that in the eyes of Jesus the sight of God which judges according to the truth of God’s own goodness and holiness enters the world in a tangible and historical form and begins the work of convicting and healing the false and unjust looks of humans. As Heinrich Fries says in his *Fundamental Theology*: “God looks at human beings through the face of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁵⁸

Immaculate Eyes

As God in the flesh, Jesus brings together the substantiating eye of God and the neighboring eyes of humans. God looks to substantiate humanity precisely as their neighbor, as one of them. In Jesus, the seeing-to and neighboring of God is given flesh

⁷⁵⁸ Heinrich Fries, *Fundamental Theology*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 318.

and he is empowered by the Spirit to heal and enliven individuals and communities. An important aspect of the Incarnation is precisely the saving reality of God neighboring humanity with concrete looks of love. Yet in the Catholic tradition magisterial teaching on Jesus' sensorial and perceptual powers is slim. The most attention it receives is probably Pope Pius XII's encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Haurietis aquas* (1956), which teaches that "[n]othing... was wanting to the human nature that the Word of God united to himself. Consequently he assumed it in no diminished way in no different sense in what concerns the spiritual and the corporeal: that is, it was endowed with intellect and will and the other internal and external faculties of perception and, likewise, with the desires and all the natural impulses of the senses (*itemque sensuum appetitu omnibusque naturalibus impulsionibus*)."⁷⁵⁹ Moreover, Jesus' heart is "the symbol of that burning love which, infused into his soul, enriches the human will of Christ and enlightens and governs its acts by the most perfect knowledge"⁷⁶⁰ Even more important for my considerations is the statement that "the body of Jesus Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, possesses full powers of feelings and perception, in fact, more so than any other human body" (*magis utique quam cetera omnia hominum corpora*).⁷⁶¹ My intention in quoting this last passage is not to speculate extensively on what it might mean for a human body to have "full powers of feelings and perception," but to note that we have already met these powers of feelings and perception in the biblical portrait of Jesus' heart, or guts, and his eyes. The perceptual and feeling powers of Jesus' human body, because of being radically united with God, is greater than all

⁷⁵⁹ DZ, 3923.

⁷⁶⁰ DZ, 3924.

⁷⁶¹ DZ, 3924.

other human bodies. While being distinct powers, they are intimately united in the soul of Christ and at the disposition of his will, a will which again is disposed to and infused with the reality of divine love. In Jesus there was no perceiving without feeling. This feeling (*sentienti*), though, should not be confused with a vague sentimentalism or mere emotions, but rather with a sense of truth, a sense of justice, a sense of goodness, a sense of beauty, but also more concretely a sense for the met-along-the-way neighbor. These different “senses” get after in a better way what is meant by a verb such as *sentire*, translated here as “feeling.”⁷⁶² This is also why Jesus could encounter others in such starkly different ways, either through powerful rebukes or acts of tender compassion.

One other historical statement especially testifies to the reality that in the human nature of Christ there is an elevation of the bodily senses by divine power. In a letter to Julianus of Cos (449 CE), Pope Leo I writes that Christ “had nothing that was in opposition to his flesh, and no discord of desire produced a conflict of wills; his bodily senses were strengthened without the dominance of sin (*sine lege peccati*), and the truth of his feelings (*affectionum*) under the guidance of his Godhead and the Spirit (*sub moderamine deitatis et mentis*), was not tempted by enticements, nor did it give way in the face of abuse.”⁷⁶³ By virtue of the hypostatic union, through which the Divine Person of the Word assumed a complete human nature, the core of Jesus’ nature was infused with supernatural love and power which perfected his bodily senses, his feeling, and his perception. Jesus’ “outwardness” expressed in seeing and perceiving neighbors was empowered by an inwardness, a heart, that was inseparably united to God. His bodily

⁷⁶² The Latin word *sentire* can mean to perceive, feel, experience, think, realize, see, understand. While it cannot mean all these things at once in every context, it also cannot be reduced to what we generally think of as emotion.

⁷⁶³ *DZ*, 299. The phrase, *sub moderamine deitatis et mentis*, could be translated as “under the guidance of his deity and reason.”

senses were, to use Pope Pius IX's words that defined Mary's Immaculate Conception, "preserved immune from all stain of original sin."⁷⁶⁴ Jesus beheld the world and others with an Immaculate Perception, a pure and holy regard not distorted, distracted, or blinded by the integralist and concupiscent cravings which are such a part of the *lege peccati*, that is, the law or condition of sin that dominates. Jesus' eyes were not concupiscent, desiring to grasp and forcibly integrate the visible into one field or grid for his own self-reference, gratification, or preservation, but rather were open to the truth, unpredictability, and self-standing of those who made themselves manifest.

These statements reveal that the self-communication of God in and to a human being does not only touch, elevate, and perfect the soul as a spiritual substance in isolation from the body, but also elevates human nature in its corporeality and sensibility given the unity of body and soul in a Christian understanding of human nature. If God is love, then the self-communication of God in and to human nature will strengthen this nature's ability to "go out" to others in its own expression of this love they have been graced with. The strengthening of Jesus' bodily senses in their union with the Divine Person of the Word reveals that the love of God is intimately united to the love of neighbor. We see this in the fact that the original and basic way we as humans connect with one another is through sensibility, and it is only once these active powers are developed that anything like love can occur. This love ultimately moves from the heart out to another in self-forgetfulness. As Rahner notes, "He who is really compassionate loses himself, identifies himself with his brother in his need, dares to commit himself to the unknown. His freedom achieves its ultimate act of daring, that of abandoning

⁷⁶⁴ DZ, 2803.

himself.”⁷⁶⁵ The notions that Jesus possessed full powers of feeling and perception, or had strengthened bodily senses, is not something that God performed to show off Jesus as some kind of superman, but to reveal how divine love and compassion fittingly reaches out to humans through other humans. José Comblin beautifully says that, “personhood arises from a cognitive identity, on a visceral level, with other persons. It arises from the contemplation of another person, from love, from physical contact with another.”⁷⁶⁶ Further, a love that did not concretely and tangibly affect how humans go out to one another in sensibility, or “connect” with one another, would not be love, and definitely not the love of God. As 1 John says, “whoever has the world’s possessions (*ton bion tou kosmou*) and sees (*theore*) his brother in need and shuts off his compassion (*splanchna*) against him, how can the love of God reside in such a person?” (3:17).⁷⁶⁷ Or again, “the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (4:20). We might add that the one who does not really *see* her brother cannot even begin to love him. This entails that without truly seeing other people it is also impossible to see and love God.

Further, Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes* teaches that everyone has the obligation to “make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer *unjustly looked down upon (iniuste despectus)*, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not

⁷⁶⁵ See Rahner, “The Works of Mercy and Their Reward,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 7, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1977), 272.

⁷⁶⁶ José Comblin, *Retrieving the Human*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 84.

⁷⁶⁷ The Greek *bios* usually refers to “life,” which is typically translated into Latin as *substantia*, where we get our English word “substance.” Thus, the phrase refers to those who have “substance,” or who have the “stuff of the world” that fills out their being, or substance. The connection between biological life and socio-economic “livelihood” is brought out in this phrase: *ton bion tou kosmou*.

commit, or a hungry person.”⁷⁶⁸ In this vital passage, those who look down on, or disrespect, foreign workers give them an unjust look; they fail to respect their person in the sense we have been giving this word. Such injustice is rooted in a certain sensorial approach to the world and others. Despecting eyes give off looks that say: *You are not my neighbor, I don’t see you for who you are, and you are not proximate – close, equal, and face-to-face – to me*. Looks that kill and other forms of racism are clearly manifestations of unjust, despecting looks whether on a personal or corporate level; they are overly concerned with the skin of phenomena and the reduction of human matter/s to the prosoponic alone. They fail to consider matter/s of the heart and spirit. Finally, those who look down on others for their sins and so write them off completely in a definitive way are usurping the judgment of God, who alone knows the heart and who alone gives a just judgment, a definitive and just look. Jesus was a master of this contact with others, of seeing others, because his heart was radically united with the invisible God who eludes human comprehension and categorization.

Redistributing the Sensible

The French philosopher Jacques Rancière says that, “Human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together; and politics is about the transformation of the sensory fabric of ‘being together’.”⁷⁶⁹ The sensible (of which the visible is a part) is never neutral or a natural given, but is perceived and experienced along “certain” distributions and configurations. It is, as Clodovis Boff states, “always found shot through with culture,

⁷⁶⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, §27.

⁷⁶⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011), 56.

and history, and steeped in the ideological significations that social groups, especially dominant classes, have deposited at its heart.”⁷⁷⁰ Consequently, the sensory fabric – itself interwoven with the fabric of society – is often torn by conflict and is never nearly as uniform and patterned as those groups and people in control of the production process would want people to believe. Further, some people are “hemmed” into subordinate positions in the social and sensory fabric or are given weak materials with which to weave their lives, as we saw in Parts I and II. What transpires in the Incarnation, the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ, is a spiritual and material event that re-weaves the sensory fabric of human existence and redistributes the sensible; social patterns and perceptual lines of demarcation and distinction are reimagined and materially woven anew both personally and organizationally. Through knowledge of God and the power of the Spirit, both Jesus and his followers challenge the way people are “normally” perceived and experienced. While it is common in the American experience to focus attention and vision on the rich ones, the beautiful ones, the glamorous ones, the powerful ones, the white ones, i.e. the substantial ones, Jesus is focused not on appearances, but on the dignity of every human being, on the depths of the heart, and especially on those typically left out of the picture of mainstream culture. Jesus looks for and sees himself in the unsubstantial and invisible ones and sees with them. As revealed on the cross, even though he is God in the flesh, he can take a worm’s eye view of the world, a “view from the victims.”⁷⁷¹ He doesn’t see from a tower but from the perspective of the leftovers in society who are so rarely seen, noted, or substantiated by the public eye, the eyes of society, the eye of government, the eyes of the police, etc. As Comblin explains, “Today

⁷⁷⁰ Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 177.

⁷⁷¹ The phrase comes from the subtitle to Jon Sobrino’s *Christ the Liberator*. See also Psalm 22.

the ‘absolute other’ dwells in our midst by the millions – the ostracized, exiled human being, expelled in every sense of the word, expelled from everything, the leftover person, the one never mentioned lest the nightmare be recalled, the leper of modern times, forbidden to appear in the public square, persecuted by legal and illegal police forces alike.”⁷⁷² The one “forbidden to appear in the public square” is precisely the one whom Jesus encounters and who constantly draws his eyes. He regards them as “another self” (*alterum seipsum*), which flows out of the compassion and mercy of God. According to Rahner, “even God encounters himself in the creaturehood he mercifully accepts, sees himself there as a compassionate man who sees his own need in the beggar whom he succors. For the Word has become flesh, has become the Man of Sorrows and the crucified one.”⁷⁷³ Jesus’ visual attention, his special regard, is on the poor, the outcast, the unsubstantial, the leper, the sinner, the unseen, the despised, the blackened, and the blighted. Jesus, through his preferential optic for the poor, is attuned to the looks, perspectives, and experiences of marginalized and suffering people, to those who are bombarded with Looks that kill. He moves and acts so other people can open their own space to appear before his eyes, in the sight of God, and in the eyes of society, regardless of what labels, categories, laws, mores, or forces had initially excluded them. Jesus, in his personal recognition of other people, challenges and empowers communities, especially the Church, “to act in such a way that these strangers, these strange others, these poor... be allowed to enter social life, to speak (whether or not they can express themselves correctly), to manifest their existence.”⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷² Comblin, *Retrieving the Human*, 55.

⁷⁷³ See *Gaudium et Spes*, §27: “everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as *another self*, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.” See Rahner, “Works of Mercy,” 272.

⁷⁷⁴ Comblin, *Retrieving the Human*, 55.

For the Christian, the eyes and Spirit of Jesus are necessary to truly see others and to challenge the status quo through a critical use of the senses, which must be at the basis of any liberating political practice. On this point, Enrique Dussel claims that a “morality of domination may be defined as insensibility to the sensibility or pain of another. All ethics of liberation is corporeal: it is affirmation of the flesh, of sensibility; it is sensitivity to the pain of another.”⁷⁷⁵ The Spirit of Jesus sensitizes us to others not only in our consciences but also in our sensorial and perceptual comportment toward them. It is “by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God” that we can “see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things.”⁷⁷⁶ The Spirit of God empowers us to take up our own flesh so it is perceptually and affectively engaged with other people; this Spirit moves us to “take” matter/s otherwise than the dominant and exploitative modes in society. In this way we might enter into the process of personal becoming that Comblin describes: “Human beings become real human beings, become persons, when they are converted from their subjective assertion and their will to power, to accept the interpellation of the other and look at the face of the other: the victim, the poor, the widow, the orphan, in biblical terms.”⁷⁷⁷ Other people, especially the poor and unsubstantial ones, challenge us to open up our hearts, minds, and eyes. Following Evagrius of Pontus, “A stranger and a poor man is God’s eye medication. One who

⁷⁷⁵ Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, 62.

⁷⁷⁶ Vatican II Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (1965), §4, Holy See Website, accessed May 6, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html.

⁷⁷⁷ Comblin, *Retrieving the Human*, 51. Dussel also claims that, “When I am face-to-face before another in a (practical) relationship, in the presence of praxis, that person is someone for me and I am someone for him or her. The being face-to-face of two or more is being a person” (*Ethics and Community*, 9).

welcomes them will quickly recover his sight.”⁷⁷⁸ Therefore, it can be said that Jesus and his Spirit redistributes the sensible, which was and is currently distributed according to political, economic, and social strategies that honor and attend to certain fleshly appearances and judgments and thereby benefit the few at the expense of the many. It is a Christian conviction that the Spirit desires to move human beings toward what Dussel calls “a communal unity, an interpersonal face-to-face of respect and justice,”⁷⁷⁹ which is ultimately a foretaste, and fore-sight, of the eschatological eye to eye and “face-to-face” that is the beatific vision. In the fullness of time and by the grace of God, we will see the light of the glory of God shining on the face of Christ, and in his eye-light we will see each other as a communion of holy ones.

Already in the New Testament we see that Jesus’ followers are to carry on the looks of Jesus in a kind of apostolic succession of the senses. As the “body of Christ,” the Church is charged with incarnating the seeing-to of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to send during his earthly ministry. In the book of Acts we hear of a man lame from birth begging for money outside the temple courts in Jerusalem, and, “When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple courts, he asked them for money. Peter *looked directly at him* (as did John) and said, ‘*Look at us (blepson)!*’ So the lame man *paid attention* to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, ‘I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, stand up and walk!’” (Acts 3:3-6). Later when Paul is preaching in Lystra he meets “a crippled man, lame from birth” who “listened to Paul speaking.” Paul, we are

⁷⁷⁸ Evagrius of Pontus, *Maxim* 2.14-15, in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, trans. Robert E. Sinkewicz, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 231.

⁷⁷⁹ Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, 15.

told, “*looked intently at him*, saw that he had the faith to be healed, and called out in a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet’” (Acts 14:8-10). The parallels between Peter and Paul’s “lookings” and healings suggest that these incidents represented the general shape of early Christian preaching and ministry. First, there was eye contact between Jesus’ followers and those left “by the wayside,” followed by the command to stand up. The men stand up on their own in the power and authority of Jesus the Christ; the “crooked” are made “straight.”

Let us not forget either that a basic leadership role in the early Christian community was that of *episkopos*, or overseer. Paul’s farewell address to Ephesian presbyters in Miletus included the admonition to, “Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The imagery of the overseer is intimately connected with Jesus considered as the Great Shepherd, who always moves outside the “usual” frame of reference to see and find his lost sheep. And so, we have the beautiful historical example of one Abercius of Hieropolis (2nd c.), possibly a bishop, who had converted to Christianity and inscribed on his tombstone these words: “I am a disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds the flocks of his sheep on mountains and pastures, and has great eyes that see all things.”⁷⁸⁰ This holy shepherd, Jesus Christ, with great, substantiating eyes that see all things, challenges us to see to each other with a mind and heart attuned to his own. In this way we might exercise a certain kind of episcopacy of all believers, a communal seeing-to-the-other that fulfills the demands of justice.

⁷⁸⁰ Quoted in Rahner, “Encounters with the Risen Christ,” 174.

However, Christians also too often put their trust in appearances. In the book of James we read the exhortation: “do not show prejudice if you possess faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if someone comes into your assembly wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, and a poor person enters in filthy clothes, do you pay attention (*epiblepsete*) to the one who is finely dressed and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and to the poor person, ‘You stand over there,’ or ‘Sit on the floor’? If so, have you not made distinctions (*diekrithete*) among yourselves and become judges (*kritai*) with evil motives?” (2:1-4). Apparently, this early Christian community had little qualms practicing a kind of classism, despecting the poor in their “filthy clothes.” Yet the temptation for them remains the same for us today. Our propensity to put so much stock in appearances and to judge based on externals causes us to lose sight of the kingdom of God that has definitively and tangibly arrived in Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter we will ask how an engaged perceptual and contemplative life might offer strategies into combatting and healing Looks that kill. We will also see how Looks that kill stem in part from a diminished experience of being, a flattening of being that occludes our looking and blinds our sense of justice.

Chapter 9: Apostolate of Seeing

*“Those who are afraid of you have not looked at you in the eyes. Those who are afraid of you do not see your faces. Those who are afraid of you do not see your children.”*⁷⁸¹

*“Ethically, what I am is expressed and defined by the nature of the weapons that I mobilize.”*⁷⁸²

In the previous chapter we saw that that, according to the Christian faith, God’s eye most definitively and intimately sees to humans through the medium of Jesus’ human eyes. After exploring some biblical and systematic highlights of this divine seeing in the flesh, we then connected the seeing of Jesus to his followers who received his Spirit at Pentecost so they could be the eyes of Jesus in the world. The Spirit of Jesus poured into their hearts would, as it did for him, strengthen their bodily senses and perceptual awareness of others so that they might contribute to the work of healing the moral, spiritual, and physical blindness of the world. As Vatican Council II teaches, using a good deal of body language, “As *members* of the living Christ, *incorporated* into him and made like him by baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful have an obligation to collaborate in *the expansion and spread of his body*, so that they might bring it to fullness as soon as possible.”⁷⁸³ The Spirit’s strengthening of the faithful’s sensorial and perceptual comportment toward others was not magic, but the result of a long process of discipleship, prayer, virtuous living, and the practice of holding all things in common with each other.⁷⁸⁴ While they did not have the same vision of God and others that Jesus

⁷⁸¹ His Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, in a speech to refugees at Mòria Refugee Camp, Lesvos, 2016. See Holy See Website, “Visit to Refugees,” accessed May 7, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/april/documents/papa-francesco_20160416_lesvos-rifugiati.html.

⁷⁸² Grégoire Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York, NY: The New Press, 2015), 195.

⁷⁸³ Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* §36. Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 489. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁸⁴ “All who believed were together and held everything in common, and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need. Every day they continued to gather together

did, themselves lacking a divine nature and a direct vision of God, they still participated in the vision of Christ by grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸⁵ This Spirit would show them that God shows no partiality and that the providing, substantiating, respecting, and feeling eyes of God in Christ are meant for all people regardless of distinction and appearance.⁷⁸⁶ As the apostle Peter claimed in his speech to a gathering of Christian leaders in Jerusalem: “God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them [Gentiles] the holy Spirit just as he did for us [Jews]. He made no distinction between us and them, for by faith he purified their hearts” (Acts 15:8). The Spirit’s reweaving of the social and sensory fabric between Jews and Gentiles meant that those Jews and Gentiles living in the Spirit of Christ would no longer see each other as they formerly did; they would now see the image of Christ in their neighbors, who himself is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Whereas they formerly might have seen enemies or the unclean, they now saw in each other what was their “own,” and as such a demand was placed on them to see to the substance of each other and of all people.

It was the Christian’s task to refuse to offer their bodies and senses to be mobilized and organized for the state, a restricted sense of “their own,” or the economy alone, and instead to offer their bodies “as a living sacrifice” to God and to each other. In this way they might collectively “expand” and “spread” Christ’s own body in loving service.⁷⁸⁷ In contrast, because “the subjective yearning for security and power... is what made possible the establishment of nation-states,” the state’s purpose, “like that of any

by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people” (Acts 2:44-47 NET).

⁷⁸⁵ On questions relating to Jesus’ direct vision of God, see Karl Rahner, “Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 193-216.

⁷⁸⁶ See Acts 10:34.

⁷⁸⁷ Romans 12:1.

power, is to increase its power. It attempts to make of its citizens the agents of its growth.”⁷⁸⁸ Christians had to consider (and still do) not only *what* bodies (including the Church) they would help to grow through their own incorporation and participation, but *how* this growth might occur. The Spirit of God, as it did for Jesus, would mobilize and organize their bodies, along with their feeling and perceptual powers, for the work of justice, peace, and healing in the world, provided they were faithful in cooperating with this divine work and mission. Because the substance of Jesus’ followers would be held in common, what and who they considered to be their “own” was found in unity with others by participation in the Body of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. “Persons,” says Comblin, “create their own being with others, not in the sense of helping each other to accomplish their own purposes, but in the sense of creating a common store of common goods.”⁷⁸⁹ Inspired by the vision of God in Christ, Christians would seek to develop and immerse themselves in a new visual commons of love, nonviolence, peace, and mutual recognition. Too often, however, the ways of the flesh, of the world considered solely by the skin of phenomena, would prevent the seeing that Jesus wished for all people with the goal of the flourishing of human life in all its genres of being.

The general aim of this final chapter is to situate just and unjust looks in relation to our relationship to being and to other beings in the world. To do this we explore the latest teachings of Pope Francis on the contemplative gaze and offer the example of the French Trappist martyr Christophe Lebreton as someone who fleshed out just looks in his own life. Their words and example demonstrate that essential to any form of social justice – especially the eradication of Looks that kill – is a contemplative justice, or, an

⁷⁸⁸ José Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 195.

⁷⁸⁹ Comblin, *Church and the National Security State*, 94.

orthopraxic way of seeing the world and other people.⁷⁹⁰ Put in theological language, an “apostolate of seeing” is needed to think about embodying, or fleshing out, the visionary aspect of Christ’s mission of love, compassion, and justice. By thinking through the apostolate of seeing and its connection with being, we are led to critically examine and transform how we as personal and social bodies “take” reality and act on and within it.⁷⁹¹ If our looks are weak, impaired, extractive, absent, prosoponic, blind, or distorted, then injustices are bound to occur; Looks that kill thrive in such an environment. The following description of the apostolate of seeing should not be viewed as an abstract intellectual exercise, but rather as a vital way to realize the interconnections between thinking and living, seeing and acting, and the fact that Christian mission has to do not only with evangelization, acts of charity, works of mercy, and the like, but at a most basic level with concrete seeing and the mental and cultural constructs that accompany this seeing.

It is important at the start to emphasize the connection between seeing and mission. To begin with, the sensorial mission of humans doesn’t take place merely through individual bodily experience, but also through social and political bodies and organizations. “Mission” means, in a religious sense, “A body of persons sent out by a religious organization to evangelize abroad; the enterprise or expedition on which they are sent,” or, “the organized effort involved in preparing, equipping, and maintaining

⁷⁹⁰ The concept of “contemplation” has had numerous meanings attached to it over the centuries and has even come under attack by some critical theorists as a type of seeing that “fixes” an object in its own self-referential field of vision; this description describes true contemplation’s opposite. In order to avoid confusion, contemplation is understood in a sense similar to what Thomas Merton poetically describes as “the highest expression of man’s intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant Source.” See Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 1.

⁷⁹¹ For a critique of our “ocularcentric” culture and even certain philosophical and theological discourses, see David Michael Levin, ed., *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

such bodies.”⁷⁹² Here the body language is explicit; in Christian missions, often called foreign missions or missionary work, the body capacities, especially visionary capacities, of individuals are organized, trained, and mobilized (put in motion) to *be* the embodied presence of Christ and his looks in the world. As has been often pointed out, however, historically this organization and mobilization of Christian mission blended, merged, and was augmented by state and military bodies that enfleshed and deployed a different kind of felt presence and gaze in the world. And so diplomatic and military “corps” incarnated a mission that often had other goals in mind that were at odds with the mission of Christ.⁷⁹³ As we have seen, our senses are not merely receptors for phenomena outside of ourselves and passively received as such, but also the dynamic way in which we “go out” to meet the world and others even without, and before, conscious control or intentionality. These experiences are themselves shaped by biological factors and social histories that genuinely condition how reality, or matter/s, are apprehended by us. How we “take” matter/s and what we understand the nature of “matter/s” to be in the first place, are shaped by biological and social forces and so are not purely natural, although we often experience our “take” on the world as natural and self-evident. And our eye “taking” can be extractive, exploitative, possessive, grasping, or superficial, or it can be receptive, yielding, open-handed, and attentive.

Because it is obvious that we have bodies and sense things in the world, we rarely consider critically reflecting on and incarnating our flesh, that is, developing and filling out our personal and corporate embodied connections to other sensible realities such as

⁷⁹² *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “mission.”

⁷⁹³ Again, “corps” had an earlier spelling of “corpse” which simply meant “‘body,’ in all senses of that word,” but which now refers to, “A division of an army, forming a tactical unit; a body of troops regularly organized; a body of men who are assigned to a special service.” See *OED*, 3rd ed., s.v. “corps.”

other people or the environment.⁷⁹⁴ The visionary aspect of this basic human sent-ness, as rooted in the flesh, is necessary for various missions of justice in the world. As Levin states, “the body (the embodied subject) is *not* an essentially unorganized, autistic, self-contained entity, but is already organized, from the very beginning, for social interaction.”⁷⁹⁵ Our enfleshed encountering of other people’s eyes, faces, and bodies shapes the development of our identities and sense of self from the very beginning, and it is also our primary initiation into receptivity and solidarity which themselves are the pillars of justice. However, numerous economic, cultural, and technological forces are at work in the contemporary world which shake these foundations. We turn to the latest teachings of Pope Francis who provides a diagnosis not only of the flattening of being in our world today, but also proposes a profoundly visionary approach to any solutions we might find.

Apostolic Eyes

The most explicit connection between mission and being in Pope Francis’ teachings occurs in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) when Francis states: “My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an ‘extra’ or just another moment in life. Instead, it is

⁷⁹⁴ The sent-ness of being and the concept of interfaciality are related to what Emmanuel Levinas discusses as “being-for-other” and the “face,” but are different in the sense that, while Levinas often sees the face of the other as a “disruption” of the self, or even doing “violence” to the self or holding it “hostage,” following Levin, the flesh of the self is actually more “naturally” geared toward the faces and bodies of others, even though individual life experience and societal conditioning might disrupt or conceal this initial entwining of flesh. Levinas states in *Alterity and Transcendence*: “Sociality, for me, is the best of the human. It is the good, and not the second best to an impossible fusion. In the alterity of the face, the for-the-other commands the *I*. Ultimately it is a question of founding the justice that offends the face on the obligation with respect to the face; the extraordinary exteriority of the face. Sociality is that alterity of the face, of the for-the-other that calls out to me, a voice that rises within me before all verbal expression, in the mortality of the *I*, from the depths of my weakness.” See Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 103.

⁷⁹⁵ David Michael Levin, “Justice in the Flesh,” in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 38-39.

something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world.”⁷⁹⁶ Here Francis identifies his very being with mission, which connects to the overall theme of *Evangelii Gaudium*: the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world. Throughout this document Francis argues that Christian existence consists in sent-ness, in being-in-mission. Mission in this sense is not to be understood as an external activity or program undertaken by the Christian, but as the very being of a Christian. Further, this being is not a general, abstract, or directionless sent-ness, but a *being-in-the-heart-of-the-people*. Thus, Christian being as sent-ness is primarily a *being-sent-towards-people* at their deepest level. It should not be forgotten that this is the primary movement of the Incarnation: the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, exists as a human being in embodied sent-ness towards other people.⁷⁹⁷ His mission is not something that can be added to or taken away from his being, but constitutes his very being. Jesus’ being-sent-towards-people is indispensable to who he is not only as the Son of God, but also as a human being. Losing this sent-ness-toward-others would mean the loss of his “very self,” a characteristic shared with all of humanity. Much of Francis’ exhortation is concerned with recognizing, or seeing again, this integral connection between being and mission.

⁷⁹⁶ Pope Francis, “Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis,” Holy See Website, November 24, 2013, accessed May 7, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, §273. Hereafter *Evangelii Gaudium* followed by paragraph number.

⁷⁹⁷ Later in *Evangelii Gaudium* Francis states that “Jesus himself is the model of this method of evangelization which brings us to the very heart of his people. How good it is for us to *contemplate the closeness* which he shows to everyone! If he speaks to someone, he *looks into their eyes* with deep love and concern: “Jesus, looking upon him, loved him” (Mk 10:21). We see how accessible he is, as he draws near the blind man (cf. Mk 10:46-52) and eats and drinks with sinners (cf. Mk 2:16) without worrying about being thought a glutton and a drunkard himself (cf. Mt 11:19). We see his sensitivity in allowing a sinful woman to anoint his feet (cf. Lk 7:36-50) and in receiving Nicodemus by night (cf. Jn 3:1-15)” (§269).

Francis analyzes the contemporary world in *Evangelii Gaudium* with a description of the challenges facing humanity. For him, being itself is under attack by unbridled consumerism, the unrestricted free market economy, moral relativism, and extreme individualism.⁷⁹⁸ Such forces provide the environment in which Looks that kill and other forms of unjust looks can develop, for underlying them all is competition and the drive to take matter/s into one's own hand in a restrictive and forceful sense. Driven by the law of competition, whether in the realm of economics, politics, or ideas, a *bellum omnium contra omnes* ("war of all against all") results and the weakest members of society are decimated or ignored.⁷⁹⁹ Francis' proposed solution to these contemporary deficiencies in our vision can only be described in Christian terms as a discipleship in vision, a learning from Jesus how to see the world and others, and which itself bears a direct connection to contemplation. This contemplative way of seeing is foundational for social transformation and justice in the world, and for genuine Christian mission. For Francis and the Christian, through a "renewed encounter" with God's love "we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption" (§8). God can bring us beyond ourselves to attain the fullest truth of our being (§8). However, because the fullest truth of our being is an enfleshed *being-sent-into-the-heart-of-the-people*, a discipleship in vision must not be myopic but continually turned outwards; it must not be a narrowing of vision but an opening of vision.

⁷⁹⁸ "The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labour on them or enslaving them to pay their debts. The same kind of thinking leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. It is also the mindset of those who say: Let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage (*Laudato Si*, §123).

⁷⁹⁹ While Thomas Hobbes in *De Cive* (1642) and *Leviathan* (1651) thought that this state of war or struggle is the "state of men without civil society," that is, in the "state of nature," we think that such a state of war and brutal competition is not wholly "natural" but is produced in large part by specific social and economic practices and relations between people, as well as between people and their environments.

Contemplative Eyes

As a way to relate to others which “truly heals instead of debilitating us,” Francis calls for a true “mystical fraternity, a contemplative fraternity” of humans and all other creatures (§92). Such fraternal love is “capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour, of finding God in every human being” (§92). Such a seeing pushes beyond appearances to view the depth of being in every human person which is so much a part of Christ’s own mission.⁸⁰⁰ “Before all else,” says Francis, “the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others” (§39). The sent-ness of humans is here interpreted as a response to a saving and loving God; a contemplative view of others which recognizes this God in others; and a going-forth to seek the good of others. What better way could there be to describe the apostolate of seeing, at least in the language of Christian theology? A couple of paragraphs later, Francis, in speaking of the “going-forth” of the Church as a whole, states that, “[g]oing out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world” (§46). Rather, “often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way” (§46). The apostolate of seeing, while deeply lived and active on behalf of justice, is also an unhurried and undistracted remaining-with that is more concerned with seeing, listening, and welcoming than with fixing, doing, or with making the world or someone else into an object of our own messianic expedition.

⁸⁰⁰ “In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are *willing to go beyond the surface* of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity” (§228).

Elsewhere in *Evangelii Gaudium* Francis speaks of “seeing reality with the eyes of faith” (§68), of seeing “with the eyes of faith... the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness” (§84). He speaks of looking at our cities “with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in [people’s] homes, in their streets and squares” (§71). Later, and along the same line of thought, Francis describes the work of Christian ministry:

In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and *his personal gaze*. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and *our compassionate gaze* which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life (§169).⁸⁰¹

The contemplative eye is the making present and tangible of Christ’s own gaze, a gaze which is “steady and reassuring,” compassionate, healing, liberating, and encouraging. “Far from being suspicious, negative and despairing,” this “spiritual gaze” is described by Francis as not only “born of deep faith,” but also as “the gratitude which flows from a heart attentive to others” (§282). Such a gaze is inseparable from the closeness of accompaniment and enfleshed encounters with others that is meant to be at the core of Christian mission.

As a faithful interpreter of Catholic Social Thought, Francis connects the attentiveness demanded by the apostolate of seeing with the need for a preferential option for the poor, or, a preferential optic for the poor, never to be reduced to a mere looking at which would make poor people into objects of curiosity or even well-intended benevolence. A gaze in a robust and positive sense suggests mutual presence, face-to-face

⁸⁰¹ Francis states further on that, “[a] preacher has to contemplate the word, but he also has to contemplate his people” (*Evangelii Gaudium* §154).

encounter, a beholding in love and justice that recognizes the other's autonomy, dignity, and image-of-God-bearing quality. It also suggests risk and precariousness, as a gaze is always open to being rejected or misunderstood. A gaze is unique, unrepeatable, and intentionally open to the spontaneity of encounters.⁸⁰² As Francis exhorts his readers, using the image of a magnifying glass to speak of how and where the Church should be looking,

let us open our eyes to our neighbour, especially to our brothers and sisters who are forgotten and excluded, to the "Lazarus" at our door. That is where the Church's magnifying glass is pointed. May the Lord free us from turning it towards ourselves. May he turn us away from the trappings that distract us, from interests and privileges, from attachment to power and glory, from being seduced by the spirit of the world. Our Mother the Church looks "in particular to that portion of humanity that is suffering and crying out, because she knows that these people belong to her by evangelical right." By right but also by evangelical duty, for it is our responsibility to care for the true riches which are the poor.⁸⁰³

Francis makes another evocative connection between the option for the poor and vision in *Evangelii Gaudium* §199. In this paragraph he contends that the church's commitment to the poor "does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance," but in "an attentiveness which considers the other 'in a certain sense as one with ourselves'" (§199).⁸⁰⁴ For the pope, "this loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good" (§199). Again, the "loving attentiveness" that Francis mentions is the beginning of concern for others which in turn leads one to seek the good of another. Put simply, genuinely seeing other people is at the heart of both justice and love. "True love," says

⁸⁰² Pope Francis states in *Laudato Si* that, "We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full" (§226).

⁸⁰³ Pope Francis, "Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis," Jubilee for Socially Excluded People, November 13, 2016, Holy See Website, accessed March 15, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161113_giubileo-omelia-senza-fissa-dimora.html.

⁸⁰⁴ Francis here quotes from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 27, a. 2.

Francis, “is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances” (§199). The apostolate of seeing challenges us to close whatever distances exist between us and other people, to attentively see each other, to refuse to fasten on appearances that distract from the deeper issues at stake, and to seek the other’s own good despite our own, and often narrow, agenda and feelings of insecurity.⁸⁰⁵

Francis next turns to biblical examples of seeing to flesh out more fully the importance of contemplative eyes for the apostolate of seeing and for justice in the world. For him, “[t]he best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart” (§264). He argues that “we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life” (§264). Such a contemplative spirit is not one-sided or one-directional, but imbued with reciprocity and receiving from something or someone outside of oneself.⁸⁰⁶ As Francis states, “[s]tanding before him [Christ] with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: ‘I saw you under the fig tree’ (Jn. 1:48)” (§264). A Christian’s contemplative eye for other humans, for the environment, and for the entire world ought to be caught up in the sense of being looked upon in love by God in Jesus Christ. And if Christians are not convinced

⁸⁰⁵ “Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise” (*Laudato Si* §12).

⁸⁰⁶ Turning his attention to the role of popular piety in the life of faith, Francis begins with the statement that “to understand this reality [of popular piety] we need to approach it with the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love” (§125). In Marian shrines, for example, the pope says that “we can see how Mary brings together her children who with great effort come as pilgrims *to see her and to be seen by her*” (§286). Pilgrims find strength from God in this reciprocal beholding to bear the weariness and the suffering in their lives, thus living into the apostolate of being in all of its dynamism. Ultimately, for Francis, “This interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelization” (§288).

that they are “missionary disciples” on earth, then they should “look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: ‘We have found the Messiah!’ (Jn. 1:41)” (§120). Here again is the dynamic reciprocity of the contemplative gaze, a *being-looked-upon-in-love* which gently moves the Christian to look upon others with tenderness, openness, and compassion, in a word, with love.⁸⁰⁷ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they learn to see others as God in Christ sees them.

In a dialogue with young people on a pastoral visit to Genoa in 2017, Francis reiterated this connection between being, seeing, and mission. In response to various questions, he explained that, “The mission, being missionaries leads us to learn how to look. Listen carefully to this: learn to look. *Learn to look with new eyes*, because with the mission, our eyes are renewed. Learn to look at the city, our life, our family, all that there is around us. The missionary experience opens our eyes and our heart: learn to look also with the heart.”⁸⁰⁸ This is what a discipleship in vision is all about; Christians learn to see as Jesus sees, often in direct confrontation with the way the world, social media, historical and social habits, or the state teaches and trains us how to see. Francis contrasts looking with the heart to being “tourists in life,” with those who “take photographs of everything... and do not look at anything.” Looking at life with the eyes of a tourist is superficial and is unable to “touch reality” as it is. For Francis, “The time of mission prepares us and helps us to be more sensitive, more attentive and to look with attention.”

⁸⁰⁷ Again, “When we stand before Jesus crucified, we *see* the depth of his love which exalts and sustains us, but at the same time, unless we are blind, we begin to realize that *Jesus’ gaze*, burning with love, expands to embrace all his people” (§268).

⁸⁰⁸ Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis,” Pastoral Visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Genoa, Encounter with the Young People of the Diocesan Mission, May 27, 2017, Holy See Website, accessed March 15, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/may/documents/papa-francesco_20170527_giovani-genova.html.

When we don't know how to look, or look with tourist eyes, "we end up ignoring."

Mission requires drawing closer to the hearts of other people and looking with new eyes, but we only develop these eye habits by actually encountering people and their hearts.

"The mission," says Francis, "helps us to look at each other, in the eyes, and to recognize that *we are brothers*," a reality that breaks down a simplified division of the world between saints and sinners, pure and impure, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, white and black. Francis even suggested to one young person on his visit that the way to be a peer to those who are victims of drugs, alcohol, or violence is to begin with "a gesture of love, a look of love." For him, "Love means having the ability to hold a dirty hand and the ability to look in the eyes of those who are in a situation of degradation and say, 'For me, you are Jesus.'" Mission, whether it is comforting people, sharing a conversation, visiting prisoners, giving someone a ride, sheltering the homeless, or proclaiming the Gospel, involves "learning to look with Jesus' eyes, as Jesus looks, at these people." Ultimately, the point of such a mission of vision and love is not self-satisfaction and a feeling of righteousness, but the forming of deeply human bonds with others and reweaving the sensory and social fabric of human life.

Francis focuses his emphasis on the contemplative gaze and the apostolate of seeing in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (2015), which takes up the theme of environmental justice.⁸⁰⁹ Building on the work of his predecessors, the pope begins his reflections on the care for our common home referring to both John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Francis notes both John Paul II's observation that humans "frequently seem 'to see no other

⁸⁰⁹ Pope Francis, "Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home," May 24, 2015, Holy See Website, accessed May 9, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption” (§5), and Benedict XVI’s comment that “creation is harmed ‘where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves’” (§6).⁸¹⁰ The environment has been reduced by many people, as well as economic systems and practices, to nothing more than an object for human use and consumption, disregarding its transcendent referent and ground. Francis recognizes that environmental injustice results from a deficiency of vision, of attentiveness to being, and of a proper comportment to that which is beyond mere appearances. The pope calls to mind the “poverty and austerity” of St. Francis of Assisi, which represents for him “a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled” (§11). Such a refusal to cave in to integralist desires and practices in relation to reality, especially to the environment, directly counters acting in integralist (i.e. racist and sexist) ways toward other humans.⁸¹¹

Reductive and unjust looks toward the environment and to other humans are inseparable: “environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked” (§56). Francis claims that a “correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken [the] social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the ‘Thou’ of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God” (§119). There is a fundamental difference between seeing the environment as mere nature

⁸¹⁰ The quotations come from John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979) §15 and Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bundestag*, Berlin (22 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011), 664.

⁸¹¹ As Francis says, “Our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings” (§92).

and seeing it as creation. In the former case, “[n]ature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled,” whereas in the latter case, “creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion” (§76).

Regarding human beings, Francis suggests that “[t]he biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object” (§86). The apostolate of seeing is the challenge to avoid such reductions and to be both attentive and receptive to the disclosure of being which comes to us as a gift from others, whether from creation or other people.

Domesticating Eyes

The fact that seeing the environment and other species is tied up with seeing other people is also the concern of Ghassan Hage’s recent book, *Is racism an environmental threat?* (2017), in which he develops the insightful notion of generalized domestication. His thoughts, which complement those of Francis, can help us see how Looks that kill presume a certain “domesticating” relation to being in general that attempts to secure not a “common home” in the world, as Francis would advocate, but a restricted “home of the same” without the need to bother with difference or otherness. Looks that kill stem from a mode of being in the world whereby dominating and controlling “otherness” of any kind is the rule. As Hage explains it, generalized domestication is “a phenomenologically understood mode of being,” which can also “be referred to as a mode of enmeshment, a mode of inhabitation, and a mode of deploying oneself in the world.”⁸¹² Generalized domestication is the dominant mode of relating to the world that “in the process of

⁸¹² Hage, *Is racism*, 82.

relating, creates the very world it is relating to.”⁸¹³ This unique mode of relating to the world can be characterized by the struggle “to create a world where the most salient quality of everything that comes into existence is that it ‘exists for’ something.”⁸¹⁴ Put another way, generalized domestication “is a mode of inhabiting the world through dominating it for the purpose of making it yield value: material or symbolic forms of sustenance, comfort, aesthetic pleasure, and so on.”⁸¹⁵ Domestication relates to both home-building and to the “general process of coopting or taming a potentially dangerous or alien social force (such as *The Domestication of Women*).”⁸¹⁶ Domestication also refers to how animals were historically captured and made to reproduce within a human context to meet human needs. In all these cases, domestication requires the use of instrumental reason to domesticate not simply this or that species or social force, but “one’s whole environment.”⁸¹⁷ A domesticating eye, then, is involved in the struggle “to make things partake in the making of one’s home... to create homely spaces or, to put it more existentially... to be ‘at home in the world.’”⁸¹⁸ To speak of domesticating eyes is to speak of how visual and perceptual powers (eyepower) are mobilized in relating to the world in order to secure one’s own homely existence at the expense of others.

This domestication (from the Latin *domus* for home) is inseparable from domination (from the Latin *dominus*). “Generalized domestication,” for Hage, “is the fantasy whereby we make our existence viable by seeking homeliness through aggression

⁸¹³ Hage, *Is racism*, 82-83.

⁸¹⁴ Hage, *Is racism*, 83.

⁸¹⁵ Hage, *Is racism*, 86.

⁸¹⁶ Hage, *Is racism*, 86. The reference is to Barbara Rogers, *The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1980).

⁸¹⁷ Hage, *Is racism*, 87.

⁸¹⁸ Hage, *Is racism*, 91.

and domination” but also attempt to conceal this domination from our own eyes.⁸¹⁹ In addition, great effort is put into “managing the relations between the spaces of aggression and domination... and the homely, cozy, and warm spaces that are equally entangled with them.”⁸²⁰ The mode of generalized domestication “aims not only at positioning things in the proper way to extract value from them, but also at ensuring that the value extracted is delivered in a homely way.”⁸²¹ So the one who desires to “dominate ‘nature’ in order to feel at home in the world and the person wanting to racialize, dominate, and control the ‘Muslim other’ [or nonwhite other] in order to feel at home in their nation are at a fundamental level engaging in one and the same practice.”⁸²² The domesticating eye seeks to secure one’s homely existence, one’s “own,” by the governing or removal of those with their own laws and modes of being at home in the world within “my space.” At both the personal and national levels, we often seek “the eradication of that which can harm us, and the appropriation, positioning, and shaping of the being and mode of existence of whatever we find useful into a being and an existence for us.”⁸²³ This process is like what Martin Luther King Jr. called the “thingification” of people, but in this case all aspects of reality, all beings, are “thingatized” in order to secure one’s own enmeshment or homeliness in the world where one can feel secure and substantial. As Calvin Hernton observes, “The overall emphasis is on the acquisition of expendable and manipulatable things, of machines, appliances, artifacts of all kinds; and where the thingness is not inherent in something’s or someone’s nature – in education or in a

⁸¹⁹ Hage, *Is racism*, 92. “Fantasy” is defined as “a staging of the self that allows the self to come into existence: the creation of a meaningful space whereby, at the same time, one gives meaning to one’s own life as a life worth living” (83-84).

⁸²⁰ Hage, *Is racism*, 92.

⁸²¹ Hage, *Is racism*, 93.

⁸²² Hage, *Is racism*, 93-94.

⁸²³ Hage, *Is racism*, 102.

person, for example – then we tend to do everything in our power to ‘thingatize’ it or him. A thingatized existence, a thingatized life-style and thingatized relations are the order of the day.”⁸²⁴ Even other people within the homely, domesticated space are “thingatized” insofar as they can be moved, positioned, manipulated, or thrown away by those having leverage over the control of social and political space and apparatuses. Generalized domestication is the attempt to secure one’s home in the world through domination, through thingatizing the world and “others” within the world so they contribute to, or remain insignificant to, one’s own homely enmeshment in the world. The attitudes, emotions, visualizations, and embodied practices involved in this mode of “taking” reality make explicit its basic thrust: to render everything within one’s world ready-at-hand to be used, positioned, or disposed of however one sees fit and according to one’s own plan. To secure one’s being-in-the-world everything within the world is regarded and treated as useful *for* this project and is good for little or nothing else. Looks that kill, as gestures of meaning and violence, participate in and advance the cause of “thingatizing” nonwhite others.

Yet Hage importantly notes that “no matter how dominant generalized domestication, capitalism, and modernity are in the West, there was always an outside to this dominance: modes of being that exist in a minor, marginal, or repressed (but in any case less visible) way beneath or around or in the cracks of the dominant mode of life.”⁸²⁵ He looks to critical anthropological studies that have highlighted “reciprocal” and “mutualist” modes of existence in societies around the world, especially those with an animist take on reality. According to Hage, a mutualist mode of existence, which is really

⁸²⁴ Hernton, *Coming Together*, 160.

⁸²⁵ Hage, *Is racism*, 117-118.

“about interexistence,” is one that “underscores a reality where boundaries between self and other, human and animal, and so on, are far less absolute and even nonexistent, and where we experience an interpenetration between self and other.”⁸²⁶ While the domesticating mode of existence “stresses a sense of boundaries concerned with the delineation of a space of sovereignty,” a mutualist mode of existence “is a mode of living and thinking where we sense ourselves and others as ‘participating’ in each other’s existence, where the life-force of the humans and the nonhumans that surround us is felt to be contributing to our own life-force.”⁸²⁷ In mutualist modes of existence what is seen and sensed as one’s “own” is experienced in and with “others.” Any legitimate boundaries between self and other are not necessarily “problematized primarily as one of sovereignty but as a point of contact and exchange.”⁸²⁸ To summarize: “if generalized domestication initiates a mode of being where otherness is always an otherness that is instrumentalized and perceived to exist ‘for me,’ the reciprocal mode of existence highlights a dimension in which otherness exists ‘with me’... in a state of giftedness in relation to me.”⁸²⁹ There are other ways of taking matter/s into one’s hands to secure one’s life that do not involve opposition, force, competition, and “thingatizing.” Taking can include receiving with an attitude of gratefulness and reverence at the gift of life and the gift of being, especially of other creatures. There is, after all, a taking that is open-handed rather than grasping or fisted.

Intriguingly, Hage himself points to Pope Francis as a contemporary who advocates mutualist and reciprocal modes of relating to the world and as someone who

⁸²⁶ Hage, *Is racism*, 118-119.

⁸²⁷ Hage, *Is racism*, 118-119.

⁸²⁸ Hage, *Is racism*, 120.

⁸²⁹ Hage, *Is racism*, 120.

emphasizes “the interconnection between the ecological and the social.”⁸³⁰ Francis’ language and ideas as found in *Laudato Si’* do seem to speak of the phenomenon of generalized domestication, especially in terms of the roles that science and technology play within this mode of existence. The pope claims that many of the world’s problems “stem from the tendency... to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society” (§107). This paradigm causes a certain reductionism in terms of human and social lives, and its products often “create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups” (§107). What is so problematic about this framework, this generalized domestication, at least for Francis, is that it

exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation (§106).

Francis asserts that many people today prize “technical thought over reality,” a mindset which “sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given,’ as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference” (§115).⁸³¹ The reduction and reification of creation through a meticulous technical-scientific rationality constricts the fullness of being and often denies the depth of dignity to both humans and the environment. As Francis states, “Men and women have

⁸³⁰ Hage, *Is racism*, 129.

⁸³¹ Similarly, the pope warns against a “technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with the other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings” (§118).

constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us” (§103). Note the language of “hands” in this statement and whether they follow the giving-receiving mode of being or the domesticating-extracting one that ignores the “order of the gift.”⁸³² In this latter mode, “hands” (technological or otherwise) are predominantly concerned with “taking” matter/s and hammering them into a “useful shape” to secure one’s substance, whether this matter/s be raw materials or human beings. Extractive looks and hands are laid not only on things and animals, but on people; there is a fundamental unity between the practices.

In contrast, just looks that ought to be practiced in an apostolate of seeing are yielding, attentive, caring, circumspective, “letting-be,” relaxed, open, contemplative, and deep, willing to go beyond the surface. They consist of moments of beholding and being beholden within webs of intercorporeality and interfaciality that call for fellowship and solidarity.⁸³³ David Michael Levin himself invites us to “a gaze at peace with itself, not moved, at the deepest level of its motivation, by anxiety, phobia, defensiveness and aggression; a gaze which resists falling into patterns of seeing that are rigid, dogmatic, prejudiced, and stereotyping; a gaze which moves into the world bringing with it peace

⁸³² See Hage, *Is racism*, 120-124.

⁸³³ “To behold is to be *held* by what one sees. To behold is, in this sense, to be also *beheld*. Conversely, since the beheld is that which *holds* our gaze... it is also true to say that the beheld is also the one beholding” (Levin, *Opening of Vision*, 257). Also, intercorporeality is described by Levin as the reality that, “[r]ather than being essentially isolated from others, which is how we have understood ourselves in the discourse of consciousness, we are, as bodies, joined inseparably, inseparably bound, to others.” See Levin, “Justice in the Flesh,” 40.

and respect, because it is rooted in, and issues from, a place of integrity and deep self-respect.”⁸³⁴ Just looks are not dominating, object-posing, controlling, domesticating, manipulative, self-referential, cold, or distanced like Looks that kill; they are enfleshed, genuinely heart-felt, and compassionate. Eyes that see with justice are continually opened by tears, by lament, by a sense of history and understanding, and by a deep empathy for others.⁸³⁵ What would it look like for white Americans to cry over the damage their collective seeing has done, for social organizations and people dishing out unjust looks and even Looks that kill to lament what they have become and what they have done to others? The tears might blur their old ways of seeing, unsettle their previously held absolute points of view, dampen the raging fire of concupiscent desire that feeds their inner eyes, and perhaps give a moment of blindness where the realization it needs the eyes of others to see the world can occur. Ultimately, “the character of our *perception* is a manifestation of our *character*.”⁸³⁶ In the next section we offer an example of one man who fleshed out the contemplative gaze that Francis speaks of so often, and who embodied genuine Christian character and perception in seeking to live out the mission of Christ.

All Gaze

Christophe Lebreton, one of the French Trappist monks martyred in Algeria in 1996, has left us a testimony of how the practices of communal prayer, contemplation, and service to neighbors can open one’s vision to the eyes, faces, and glory of others. In

⁸³⁴ Levin, *Opening of Vision*, 238.

⁸³⁵ Indeed Levin considers crying to be “a will-breaking process of letting go: letting go of our fixed ways of seeing things, our metaphysical habits, our cultural typifications, our obsessions, our defenses... crying must be a crucial phase in the transition from willing to ‘letting be.’” See Levin, *Opening of Vision*, 191.

⁸³⁶ Levin, *Opening of Vision*, 207.

the journals he kept from 1993-1996, we see in Lebreton a poet and a mystic who wrestled deeply with his vocation to be a man of prayer and non-violence in a country historically colonized by his home nation. Interestingly, Lebreton distanced himself from past colonial and missionary enterprises that looked down on Muslims and extracted the region's resources, and rather sought to find a new way for a French man like himself to relate to Algerians without the weapon of a Look that kills. He mused in 1994 that, "In the house of Islam – in the present state of its Algerian structuring (!) – it's probably not opportune to present oneself as the house across the street – structured differently. It's better to be the Body of your Presence resolutely and simply, to be simply there in a relation of love, vulnerable, exposed."⁸³⁷ Lebreton's living in the Spirit of Christ, and his body's mobilization by the Spirit within the Body of Christ, meant that he would try again and again to refuse to relate to Algerians on the basis of force, fear, misunderstanding, superficiality, coercion, manipulation, and violence, at least if he was to live according to the truth of Christ's own witness and mission. His understanding of what it meant to be a "body" of French monks in Algeria centered on "its wide-open ears, its gaze, its Nazarene-Trappist accent: and its child's size."⁸³⁸ His Gospel mission, his apostolate of seeing, was not one of a conquering faith, but of a humble love and a mission "to live the Good News of our relation with Muslims."⁸³⁹ Here the Good News is not a stifling or extermination of one side of the relation (Islam and its faithful), but the relation itself, in which mutuality, reciprocity, and gift are the order of the day. As

⁸³⁷ Christophe Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze of God: The Tibhirine Journal of a Martyr Monk (1993-1996)*, trans. Mette Louise Nygård and Edith Scholl (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), xiv.

⁸³⁸ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 66.

⁸³⁹ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, xiv, 69. Lebreton will write that his mission is to "'Go out into the deep,' toward the great depths of an unknown and unpredictable Islam, beyond fundamentalist entrenchment and our own refusals and reductive prejudices" (135-36).

Lebreton states in an entry from March 23, 1994: “I am not here to defend Christian ideas, an ideological truth that can so easily be exclusive. What remains for us is the freedom of hostages: not the freedom to escape, but the freedom of the person that goes further, breaking through the imprisonment imposed by all violences.”⁸⁴⁰ By freely binding himself to Algeria and its people with all the risks this entailed given their history of struggle against France, Lebreton sought to break out of the imprisoning spiral of violence and find a way toward reconciliation and justice. The looks that Lebreton tried to give Algerians during his life as their neighbor were ones that rejected the violence so crucial to the French colonial enterprise in Algeria; his were looks infused with a look of love and a disdain for Looks that kill. Yet his own looks did not transform by magic or some natural development, but through intentional choices in how he would position his body and soul in Algeria rather than in France; in a monastery rather than in a barracks; humbly bent in prayer and service to neighbor rather than in sighting his foes; and in an existential dialogue with Muslims rather than a detached condemnation of them. From these embodied positionalities he was better able to sense the justice or injustice occurring around him, to feel the pain and poverty of so many of his neighbors, and to develop an aversion to war and violence at a visceral and not merely intellectual level.

Lebreton’s seeing of others was also transformed in part because of his understanding and practice of the Christian life and the centrality of contemplative prayer. Ushered into the experience of the incomprehensibility and the un-handleability of God, Lebreton experienced other people as somehow sharing in this incomprehensibility and un-handleability. As he saw it, the Christian life was not about

⁸⁴⁰ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, xx.

trying to manage or control people and getting them to believe or become just like him, to live out his own mode of being human, but of nurturing loving friendships with people within which a mutual sharing of gifts was possible (which, of course, could include talk about one's heart and religious beliefs). After hearing a homily on the role of religious in the Church as being one of "re-collection," Lebreton reflected that such a recollection meant "to collect all that is seen, prayed and done here: this calls for a watchful interiority... and then for a tireless opening outward, without fear or selective withdrawal."⁸⁴¹ Like Pope Francis, Lebreton suggests that an "interiority" based on learning to see with Jesus provides inspiration for going out into the world, to others, without the obsessive need for security or the use of violent force. With his contemplative eye, Lebreton asked Jesus in prayer to "heal me of the violence lurking inside me: the beast. Make me human according to your beatitudes."⁸⁴² In this call for Jesus to make him human is a longing for the Spirit to take up, train, and mobilize his flesh in a new way, to transform both himself and his relationships with other people: "Human – you, my Lord and my God – human until the end, so that I might today enter into your skin."⁸⁴³ Lebreton recognized that the beastly violence he saw in the world was not simply out there, but within his own skin. Whether he intended it or not, he was connected to patterns, habits, mechanisms, and systems of organized violence and false integralisms that shaped, and destroyed, the worlds he and others experienced. Christ's skin of vulnerability, risk, exposure, service, openness, and love would cover Lebreton with a new self-understanding and way of being in the world.

⁸⁴¹ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 17.

⁸⁴² Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 32.

⁸⁴³ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 22. Elsewhere Lebreton exclaims, "Yes, Jesus needs to go through our flesh in order to express himself as the Living Risen One" (72).

Lebreton's own personal testimony was that he was "cured by being recognized, by being loved" by Jesus, just like the woman at the well.⁸⁴⁴ And his prayer was to transcend his and his culture's own limitations and boundaries: "Make me enter into your infinite respect for the faith of the other: even if it is different or even hidden and sick."⁸⁴⁵ The desire to enter into God's regard for others, a regard of "infinite respect," is also expressed in the final testament of Christian de Chergé, the prior of Lebreton's monastic community and fellow martyr, who imagined what it would be like after his own death: "This is what I shall be able to do, God willing: immerse my gaze in that of the Father to contemplate with him His children of Islam just as He sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of His passion, filled with the Gift of the Spirit whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and restore the likeness, playing with the differences."⁸⁴⁶ For these Trappist brothers, prayer, worship, and a life in common were not just pious actions or a form of spiritual escapism, but a way to struggle against their own biases, stereotypes, latent violences, and concupiscent drive for the total integration of the other into their own world and on their own terms. "Lord," Lebreton prays, "lead all the faithful to where you are disarmed: sunk in prayer, handed over, surrendered to Love."⁸⁴⁷ Prayer was a way to develop "extreme attention to others, to those of the same flesh. Even in the case of enemies. Prayer is the just, the free attitude."⁸⁴⁸ Prayer was a way to get the heart moving along vectors attuned to transcendent, and therefore deeply

⁸⁴⁴ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 88.

⁸⁴⁵ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 88.

⁸⁴⁶ Christian Salenson, *Christian de Chergé: A Theology of Hope*, trans. Nada Conic (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 201. De Chergé often echoes the prayers of Lebreton, as especially seen in one prayer after Emir Sayah Attiyah, who had come to the monastery on December 24, 1993 with an armed group demanding money and medicine, was assassinated: "Disarm me, disarm them" (30-31).

⁸⁴⁷ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 71.

⁸⁴⁸ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 51.

human, ends through which they might break out of heartless, violent, indifferent, and superficial habits toward other people. As Sarah Coakley notes, “the ascetic practices of contemplation are themselves indispensable means of a *true* attentiveness to the despised or marginalized ‘other.’”⁸⁴⁹ Prayer developed a communing eye in Lebreton where differences became not the justification for war, intolerance, or injustice, but the occasion for the joy and surprise found in “playing.”

Lebreton explicitly counters integralist practices and ideologies in his journal prayers: “Sooner or later, this Relationship with You (that is opening a network of other relationships – a communion) is going to collide with a religious totalitarianism that cannot but reject such freedom, such openness, such a breach in the dividing wall, which defy its fundamentalist shutdown, its deceitful order.”⁸⁵⁰ Lebreton’s powerful vision of a “Relationship” with God and others as being ever-expansive and going out to include everyone directly counters all tendencies to close up and shut out others who are sensed as different. The “enclosure” of his community was “not armor-plated” but one that “defines a space of welcome and has the form of an open heart: wounded by the suffering of this world, it offers a resolution of crucified Love in the face of the enemy.”⁸⁵¹ Further, Lebreton’s vision of a “Relationship” that opens and expands in freedom calls into question the basic affect and logic of all totalizing and integralist orders that have no room for divine or human others in “their” space or hearts. In contrast, what is needed

⁸⁴⁹ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay ‘On the Trinity’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 47.

⁸⁵⁰ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 73.

⁸⁵¹ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 34. This is “the enclosure of the Cross: the strictest one when it comes to openness” (52). Lebreton also exclaims, “I desert the ecclesial cocoon” (120).

most is, according to Lebreton, “To see my brother at last as a subject who speaks: a face where the Word unveils itself.”⁸⁵²

It is this loving contemplation and seeing that most characterizes Lebreton’s “Relationship” with God that opens a network or communion of “other relationships.” In reflecting on the biblical story of Tobias and Tobit, Lebreton writes of his experience with “the Gaze” of God his Father: “Being a father is simply to see your son: ‘I see you, my son!’ Do I let myself be seen, looked at? ‘You are my son, Christophe!’ At bottom, my lack of self-confidence nourishes my fears and my violence, and that lack comes from not being present to the Gaze that gives birth to me: you want my joy, you want me to live a free and happy life in the Gift.”⁸⁵³ There is a sense in Lebreton’s words of the mirroring aspect of the soul’s relationship with God, a sense that one is born and develops a true sense of self by a look of love that comes from elsewhere, from a personal God. This birthing “Gaze” that one experiences in the heart says, “I see you,” and substantiates one’s own life and mission, not of domination but of peace. He continues: “I must believe that You love to look at who I am becoming. I must believe your eyes: the nakedness of your *I love you*, that strips me naked. Just like Jesus on the cross: surrendered to your gaze, alone and trusting desperately.”⁸⁵⁴ This intimate seeing, trusting, and surrendering transformed how Lebreton related to other people. By letting himself be seen by God; by presenting himself before God’s gaze; by believing what God’s eyes said about him; and by surrendering to this loving gaze, Lebreton could see others *with* God in the power of the Spirit. One day, when a “sheet-iron maker” asked to

⁸⁵² Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 64.

⁸⁵³ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 122. Elsewhere Lebreton claims that, “Paternity is a matter of seeing” (169).

⁸⁵⁴ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 122.

see Lebreton for no reason in particular, Lebreton mused that the “most essential thing of all” is simply “to see each other.”⁸⁵⁵ Or again, when he speaks of his friend Salim, who “has become very close to me,” Lebreton says, “Friendship and intercession: not so much to pray *for* as to feel my prayer pervaded *by* this brother I’ve received as a friend. I should like to be his shield, his shelter in distress.”⁸⁵⁶ The young French monk also experienced loving gazes with his brother monks as they prayed, sang, and reflected on Scriptures together. Speaking intimately of Jesus’ transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, Lebreton beautifully reflects that,

On the mountain your face changes. The change comes from within, from where the Father is speaking to you, gazing on you. What becomes manifest to the eyes of the disciples is that at bottom you are ALL FACE, turned toward the Father and drawing us into your light. Pure hearts are hearts that are susceptible to that Light. They abide in the ultimate illumination: in the (resplendent) truth. In chapter yesterday morning, a very soft light shone among us: we were ‘all gaze’ as we listened to one another, listening to you.⁸⁵⁷

In these experiences described by Lebreton, wherein one tries to become ALL FACE and ALL GAZE toward God and each other, there is a new light, a truth that appears which disrupts stereotypical, reductionist, integralist, colonialist, racist, sexist, and prosoponic ways of seeing others. Such a light inspires humility, gentleness, and a great respect “for the countenance of others,” as revealed in another prayer of Lebreton’s: “May your Spirit, O Jesus, impress in me your eagerness to come down, and deliver me from pride, so that I may live at eye level with others as a simple brother, an artisan of Hope.”⁸⁵⁸ Instead of a dominating position, Lebreton desires to be on eye level with others in the simple position of a fellow human being, a brother, who also yearns for a

⁸⁵⁵ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 134.

⁸⁵⁶ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 14.

⁸⁵⁷ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 145.

⁸⁵⁸ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 159.

heart that is pure and “susceptible to that Light.” Ultimately, Lebreton testifies to the power of God’s light and vision to shape the enfleshed, organized sent-ness of individuals and communities. As he says, “mission is radically liberated from the schema of colonization to the extent that ‘contemplation,’ the night of the senses and the heart, more than the detachment from one’s own culture, bring about the encounter at the same point of rupture where the Spirit brings about its ‘conversion’ in the very depth of every being and every people.”⁸⁵⁹ The Spirit of God does indeed work on the senses and hearts of all people to convert us from undue attachment to the skin of phenomena, to economies of gratification, and to the addiction of force and to move us toward a new encounter and communion with each other.

⁸⁵⁹ Lebreton, *Born from the Gaze*, 167.

Conclusion

Christophe Lebreton's eye experiences, and others like them, need to be held up in a world where Looks that kill continue to be shot from individual and corporate bodies such as policing agencies, where white men such as Dylann Roof, Wade Michael Page, Mark Anthony Stroman, Frank Silva Roque, and more recently Robert Bowers and Brenton Tarrant, continue to resort to violent and despecting Looks in their contacts with others. For these men, encountering others is not a rupture leading to inward conversion and outward service, but a rupture leading to violence and a denial of human solidarity and the *individuum ineffabile*. Bowers, who killed eleven people and injured seven at a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018, posted on a social networking site before the shootings that, "HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."⁸⁶⁰ Tarrant, who killed 51 people worshipping at mosques in New Zealand, claimed in his "The Great Replacement" manifesto that, "There is no nation in the world that wasn't founded by, or maintained by, the use of force. Force is power. History is the history of power. Violence is power and violence is the reality of history."⁸⁶¹ While claiming to be "just a regular white man, from a regular family," Tarrant imagined himself to be involved in a crusading, Knights Templar-like, anti-immigrant campaign: "We must crush immigration and deport those invaders already living on our soil... It is not just a matter of our prosperity, but the very survival of our people."⁸⁶² His domesticating eye

⁸⁶⁰ See Saeed Ahmed and Paul P. Murphy, "Here's what we know so far about Robert Bowers, the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting suspect," CNN, October 28, 2018, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/27/us/synagogue-attack-suspect-robert-bowers-profile/index.html>.

⁸⁶¹ See Jessica McBride, "Brenton Tarrant Manifesto: The 'Great Replacement' Rant," Heavy, March 16, 2019, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://heavy.com/news/2019/03/brenton-tarrant-manifesto/>.

⁸⁶² McBride, "Brenton Tarrant Manifesto."

presumed the right to use violent force to manage, control, and police European space fantasized as a Great White Home; he claimed to carry out the attacks to “show the invaders that our lands will never be their lands, our homelands are our own and that, as long as a white man still lives, they will NEVER conquer our lands and they will never replace our people.”⁸⁶³ Because these killers’ beliefs and use of violence are less and less officially accepted and enacted by state apparatuses (while also revealing some of the latter’s most fundamental biases, violences, and lusts for security), they take matter/s into their own weaponized arms as the only way to relate meaningfully and powerfully to those “others” they have targeted for exclusion. Out of desperation, anxiety, a sense of home, or a desire to feel strong, their eyes evince a fixated concern with a restricted *our* at the expense of an *us* that includes a true vision for and commitment to a common home.

Attitudes and actions like these which feed off of whitestuff confirm that Looks that kill couple a denial of other people’s shared humanity with an act of violence, whether psychological, social, or biological. These Looks do not *identify with* people perceived as different, but *identifies* them as potentially destabilizing. Looks that kill work through visual means to control or remove a perceived threat to one’s life and sphere of influence; they are involved in eliminating a perceived darkness, evil, or moral corruption that threatens one’s values and sense of self. Looks that kill are ways of seeing those dubbed “others” as enemies to one’s own culture, life, security, or space; they police one’s homely environment and matter/s at hand to secure prosperity and substance for its dispatcher. These Looks can also involve the reduction of another person to the

⁸⁶³ McBride, “Brenton Tarrant Manifesto.”

realm of disposability, communicating that the other, as a mere plaything or consumable thing (commodity), exists only at the pleasure or sadistic delight of the beholder. Looks that kill occlude justice toward other people or groups of people by not giving them a due regard, a just seeing that recognizes the incredible depth, gravity, and complexity inhering in every person. As a prejudiced lens, or way of seeing others solely through superficial appearances or stereotypes, a Look that kills is a narrowing of vision that gets progressively thinner, sharper, and weightier until a bullet appears, the bullet being but the incarnation of a Look that is no longer opening or yielding to another.

Against this show of forceful power, interpretation of history, and restrictive sense of homely spaces, genuine Christian teaching and practice reiterates that there is something more valuable and powerful than force and violence, namely, a contemplative love and respect for others, even if they are one's enemies. As Comblin states, "Love of enemy comprises a relativization of the criterion of security."⁸⁶⁴ Further, Christian witness, especially in martyrdom, demonstrates a hope in a future beyond death that only God can provide, negating the notion that survival and ensuring "a future for my people" is the ultimate goal of human existence. Again, for Comblin, "Because a Christian conversion includes a total conversion of the whole person, nobody may offer to God only his or her internal life; the offering must include the totality of one's human relations, work, and social existence, *including the future of one's people*."⁸⁶⁵ Security, future existence, and homely space, while all legitimate human desires, can never be set up as absolutes in human life, nor can they be used as integralist rallying cries against "outsiders." Jesus and his disciples, such as Lebreton and Pope Francis, show us that

⁸⁶⁴ Comblin, *Church and the National Security State*, 90.

⁸⁶⁵ Comblin, *Church and the National Security State*, 190. Emphasis mine.

expanding a vision of oneself, of one's "own," that includes all beings and all peoples, is the only liberating way to see and live. Christians are also called to enflesh a different kind of look, just looks, that are due to all people regardless of race, national origin, legal status, religion, sex, class, and any other human divisions used to prop up one genre of being human at the expense of others.

In *Looks That Kill* we have seen the complexity of human vision in its personal and social aspects and its healing and destructive impact on our communities. We began with Deborah Mathis' description of an unhospitable Look shot at African Americans and used this image to frame an exploration of white (eye) power as it historically developed along multiple lines and what legacies it has left behind. We ended with stories about Jesus and his disciples to suggest that the Spirit of Christ invites us not to a field, grid, or screen of vision, but to a table of vision where each person sees at eye level with the other and is fed not only by the gaze of God, but by the respectful and yielding looks of one another. Around this table of vision set by God, the light of the glory of God shines on each and all to bring a new kind of visibility, a "visage-ability," to their faces that reflects the image of Christ, the Son of God. In these times when Looks can be so senseless, deadly, and cold, we need a renewed foresight or proleptic vision of the ultimate reality of God's banquet, where God substantiates humans with a loving regard, a secret and unique gaze specially reserved for each member of the human family. Coupled with this soul-gazing of God and others, just looks flowing from a deeper appreciation of the depth, beauty, truth, and goodness of being(s) need to be continually organized to meet Looks that kill in our communities, whether in religious settings or not. Indeed the "inspiring" of human persons by God's Spirit shows itself not in a

forgetfulness or disdain of human bodies, organizations, and matter/s, but in a deeper incarnating and fleshing out of the sensorial and perceptual capacities of human persons in community. Let us organize to see each other in new and liberating ways!

We have also seen that Looks that kill come in a variety of forms and developed out of various legal, economic, political, and religious contexts that need to be further explored on their own terms. Perhaps the net has been cast too wide and, because the label “Looks that kill” has been applied in so many contexts with different associations, it thus loses its capacity to mean anything. This is a risk that was accepted in the belief that the Looks, while multiple across space, time, and context, do have a general form or shape to them; they have a spectral quality. Here in brief is an outline of this general shape of Looks that kill as we have described them:

1) *phallogentric*: related to symbols and practices of masculine sexual dominance and authority or its generative power, which does not mean that *only* men can “shoot” their eyes in this way;

2) *prosoponic*: based on perceived human differences in appearance and the traits and representations associated with these appearances, which in the American context have been primarily marked, performed, and interpreted along racialized and socioeconomic lines;⁸⁶⁶

3) *sociogenic*: revealing how dominant desires, values, meanings, representations, and genres of being human affect the psychological, physiological, and embodied performances of individuals, and the social organizing of individuals’ embodied capacities;

⁸⁶⁶ Here “appearances” means not only how someone “looks,” their outward appearances, but also more socially their appearances in public, “before the gazes of others,” and the roles expressed on the social stage.

4) *capitalistic*: concerned with valuations of, investment in, “thingitizing” of, and the securing of one’s own substance in competition with the substance of others;

5) *concupiscent*: manifesting a lust for control, integralism, and leverage over the disparate and pluralist elements of one’s world and which, in the theological sense, inclines to actual sin and denies transcendent imperatives in relation to these other “elements.”

Looks that kill in the concrete might involve all these characteristics to greater or lesser degrees or might only involve a few, yet they are all present, if not in the actual commission of the Look, then at least in the history and dominant culture within which the Look is shot and from which it draws its inspiration and power. Finally, the above sketch is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive of other meanings attached to such Looks that undoubtedly show up in lived situations; what has been presented is merely the basic shape of Looks that kill as we have studied them in both their personal and organized modes.

It is hoped that by tracing, in the sense of tracers attached to bullets for the sake of seeing their trajectories and impacts, the Looks shot by white people in history we now understand even more the power in looking, especially in its negative modes. Yes, there are examples of white people who regarded African Americans and other people of color in just ways and sought to combat Looks that kill in their personal and organized actions, but our focus has been on the historically more prevalent and viable power of white visibility in its negative modes to better understand the nature of sin and concupiscence as they are manifest through human sensorial and perceptual powers.⁸⁶⁷ Historically, the

⁸⁶⁷ It should also be born in mind that, just as black Americans can think and act out of a white supremacist take on the world, they can also shoot off Looks that kill whenever racialized meanings are internalized and negative meanings and

most dominant, organized, technologically-augmented, ideologized, economically-backed, and militarized form of human eyepower was that mobilized by “white” people, primarily Europeans and Americans, who saw others in racialized terms or its proxies and acted accordingly. The numerous legacies left by these habits of seeing and acting can be felt and seen in present expressions of eyepower, whether personal or social, in the United States and around the world. Therefore, if we want to understand the struggles and contestations of the present with a sense of history, the formation, mobilization, and deployment of “white eyes” must be soberly looked at and understood. By describing the negative, the occlusion of justice, it is hoped that we will not only *not* do the same things, that is, inhabit the same “eyes” or modes of looking, but also creatively and critically use our eyepower in fresh and just ways. We should also be on the watch and protect ourselves and others against those present sightings with a similar shape and vibe to overseeing, patrolling, cycloptic, and Jim Crowing eyes, and think critically about the manifestation of these modes of looking in our own perceptions of other people and in the social, political, and religious bodies we are members of. Let us also act to prevent further unjust looks from developing and from being habitualized, mobilized, and organized by various social bodies. We must be vigilant, in contemplation and in action, to fight any monsters that might arrive both within and without. In the words of Pope Francis,

*Let us ask for the grace not to close our eyes to God who sees us and to our neighbour who asks something of us. Let us open our eyes to God, purifying the eye of our hearts of deceitful and fearful images, from the god of power and retribution, the projection of human pride and fear.*⁸⁶⁸

actions are inscribed in their gestures toward other black people or people of color. See bell hooks, *Writing Beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), especially chapters 1 and 2. Fully exploring this important issue would have taken us too far afield from the current work which focuses on white people (a focus which inevitably and regrettably makes white people the main characters of the show yet again).

⁸⁶⁸ Pope Francis, “Homily,” Jubilee for Socially Excluded People.

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