

# “Beat It like a Cop”

*The Erotic Cultural Politics of Punishment  
in the Era of Postracialism*

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My concern in this essay is with how those of us involved with problems of black revolution—that is, with the crux of what it means to liberate *humanity*—can further develop a critical stance that deals honestly with the ethicopolitical context in which black art, black performance, black social movements, and black popular culture find expression. I am, in other words, interested in configuring the critical study of hip hop within an accounting of the materiality of antiblack sexual violence in which the modern world is grounded, especially as hip hop emerges through the transmutation of the state’s terroristic repression of black revolution in the 1960s and 1970s into the sexualized violence of the present prison industrial complex. My focus, then, is on how the context of a world in which, since the dawn of the African slave trade, black people are structurally positioned outside the human family, and its claims to integrity, honor, and visibility can inform how we read black expressive cultures. I suggest that rigorous adherence to this context is rare in cultural critique.

The work of current hip hop superstar Lil’ Wayne offers an intriguing entrée into examining antiblack sexual violence and presents us with an opportunity to read the cultural politics of punishment in the era of “postracialism.” In his hit song “Mrs. Officer,” from his 2008 album *Tha Carter III*, Lil’ Wayne (Dwayne Carter) raps about getting pulled over by a female cop who then pulls him into her patrol car and makes him have sex with her. The song celebrates his sexual prowess, but does so over a jarring subtext of state power. The women who desire Lil’ Wayne’s sexual attentions are cops; his machismo climaxes with the refrain, “Rodney

King, baby, yeah, I beat it like a cop.” This explicit reference to a landmark event in the history of black struggle—the 1992 beating of Rodney King, the subsequent acquittal of the Los Angeles police officers whose protracted assault on King was caught on videotape, and the uprising of inner-city Los Angeles in response—paradoxically generated no controversy whatsoever. What does it mean, then, that the most notorious instance of police brutality in the post–civil rights era becomes, in “Mrs. Officer,” not prelude to rebellion but rather a refrain of sexual conquest? Or, put differently, what do we need to know about the context of what Lewis Gordon has termed “the antiblack world” that produces this hip hop song and in which it becomes popular?<sup>21</sup>

As I argue in this essay, the relationship between erotic practices of state violence and hip hop’s renditions of sex and gender politics is an intimate one. I consider Lil’ Wayne in this light: How can we read the present context of increasing black dispossession and criminalization and the historical context of black struggles for self-determination and representation within contemporary cultural production? How is a popular hip hop song that explicitly recalls an infamous police beating, and implicitly brackets the ensuing historic urban uprising, connected to a sonic and visual landscape that consolidates black suffering and its invisibility today, that further eclipses the historical context of (ongoing) black struggles for self-determination, and that endeavors to marshal all manner of black expression into the new discourse of containment, “postracialism”?

To be clear, my aim here is not so much to proffer claims that popular culture creates certain political effects, either in the name of or against state power, or that Lil’ Wayne and “Mrs. Officer” *do* anything particularly efficacious at all in the political realm. Those arguments are there to be made, but I am interested instead in taking advantage of the opportunity to explore the connections between black freedom struggles and cultural expression. George Lipsitz writes that popular music “when read critically and symptomatically . . . registers change over time in important ways and serves as a vitally important repository for collective memory.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, for Lipsitz, the connection between political action and expressive culture is dialogic and symptomatic. Artists are engaged in a reflective, digestive, and deceptive exchange with the public that makes their art a kind of politicohistorical index. This take on cultural critique is uncontroversial, although controversy may arise in the content of the critic’s interpretation. I suggest that this is especially true with respect to black expressive culture, and hip hop in particular. The growth of hip hop studies in the academy signals the importance of hip hop to cultural history, but it also represents the ongoing storm and saliency of blackness to the study of almost anything. Although there has been far more complexity in critical treatments of late, hip hop studies has tended to approach its

subject either as a vessel of social realism and progressive social change or as its opposite: deadly retrograde, nihilistic, and atavistic—in a word, pathological. Both tendencies are incorrect, and my decision to write about Lil' Wayne is a modest effort to intervene in hip hop studies in order to begin to sketch an alternative critical mode.

In short, to return to my argument in this essay, the single most important factor in reading black expressive culture is the interpretive frame employed. I draw upon a critical seam in the black radical intellectual tradition that has generated a paradigm that understands “race,” as well as the primary categories of social analysis in Western culture (“sex,” “gender,” “labor,” “nation,” etc.), in terms of the defining cataclysm of slavery and the Middle Passage. In this tradition, *antiblackness* signifies both the foundation of the modern world (an immutable calculus of who counts as “human”) and its proliferating elaborations of power (the ever-changing methods of policing blackness as beyond the pale). Saidiya Hartman, for example, argues that there is no *aftermath* to slavery, only its *afterlife*: the essential structural antagonism of antiblackness, the relations of power installed by slavery, continues unabated despite alterations to the political and juridical terms of order. This is what Frantz Fanon meant when he famously wrote, “Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. . . . The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.”<sup>3</sup> What does it mean to meticulously keep to this understanding of ontology? What is the ethicopolitical context it unveils, and how does this context shape our reading of both black revolutionary politics and black expressive cultures, which, as we will see, bleed into each other, indelibly?

### **The “Postracial” as Counterinsurgency’s Afterlife**

A full answer to the questions I pose above would begin with an inquiry into the history of black revolution and the political-economic shifts that have occurred throughout its varied epochs. Of particular salience is the period of the 1960s to 1980s, during which the black liberation struggle reached its revolutionary zenith and was countered by deadly state repression, which proceeded apace with both anticolonial movements abroad and the restructuring of the industrial economy and a revanchist welfare state domestically. Any analysis of hip hop today, then, must account for the ways in which the present state of affairs in hip hop culture is in large measure an effect of ongoing state violence against urban black communities and their concomitant structural dispossession—even if this antiblack violence also appears as an intramural battle, reductively referred to as “black-on-black” conflict or, simplistically, as misogyny and homophobia.

This historical context of revolution, counterinsurgency, and political economic restructuring is also the terrain on which colorblindness emerges as official state policy and hegemonic discourse. Although colorblind ideology and its jurisprudence have been well interrogated by scholars across the legal, social sciences, and humanities faculties, and the failure of the civil rights reforms to adequately ameliorate inequality and poverty has been well documented, such critical reviews studiously avoid connecting colorblindness—the ideology and its politicojuridical structures—to its material base, to the dirty work of a white supremacist state apparatus deeply mired in criminal enterprise. The repression of black revolutionary struggle, through and beyond the murderous activities of COINTELPRO, was designed to establish a legacy of intimate violence—and in this way was a clear indication of the erotic power presented in the black liberation movement. In the words of former political prisoner Dhoruba Bin Wahad, COINTELPRO was nothing less than “a program of domestic warfare” in which the black family and black children were the ultimate targets.<sup>4</sup> FBI documents famously declared: “The Negro youth and moderates must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teaching, they will be dead revolutionaries.”<sup>5</sup>

When we review the testimonials of former Black Panther Party (BPP) members, portraying a more nuanced portrait of the day-to-day experiences in the organization, then we can begin to understand the FBI’s stated focus on disrupting the “indoctrination” of black children in terms of a much deeper preoccupation with destroying the erotic revolution already under way *within* the black community. Afeni Shakur, a former section leader in the New York chapter of the party, described the interpersonal gender relations she encountered as an important factor in her joining the Panthers. “When I first met Sekou [Odinga] and Lumumba [Shakur] it was the first time in my life that I ever met men who didn’t abuse women. As simple as that. It had nothing to do with anything about political movements. It was just that never in my life had I met men who didn’t abuse women, and who loved women because they were women and because they were people.”<sup>6</sup>

While male chauvinism certainly loomed large within the BPP, and played out in terms of discrimination against women, sexual manipulation and harassment, and even violence, such sexism and Shakur’s experience, taken together, indicate two crucial facts about the Panthers that bear on how we understand the contextual dimension of erotic rebellion. First, divisive sexism in the party reflects the white supremacist patriarchal society in which the Panthers emerged. Former Panther and Black Liberation Army (BLA) member Safiya Bukhari put it thusly: “The division in the Black community between the Black male and Black female did not just come about on its own. It was carefully thought out and cultivated. . . . We

had taken on the persona of sexist America, but with a Black hue. It was into this context that the Black Panther Party was born, declaring that we were revolutionaries and a revolutionary had no gender.”<sup>7</sup>

Bukhari’s point that “a revolutionary had no gender” amplifies the second fact about the Panthers worth noting here. The BPP was engaged in transforming the depraved meanings of sex and gender intrinsic to America’s fascistic antiblackness. The organizing violence of Western civilization has entailed a graphically sexualized dichotomy between rational and sensory nature, between white and nonwhite persons, and in particular, the conceptualization of black people as an undisciplined mass of sexual savages. Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “In the case of the Jew, one thinks of money and its cognates. In that of the Negro, one thinks of sex.”<sup>8</sup> Fanon went on to name the sexual neurosis of white supremacy as “negrophobia,” instructing us to read the terror of racism as sexual revulsion, as a disavowed desire for “immoral and shameful things”—black bodies, the lusted-after objects of colonial desire, imagined by the colonizer and slave master alike as hypersexual and bestial.<sup>9</sup> Greg Thomas thus observes that the specific historical crucibles of racialization—slavery and colonialism—as the cultural-historical processes by which “race” is produced through violent carnality, are simultaneously the cultural-historical processes by which “sex” or “sexuality” is conferred, *as if* these social processes are “natural” and not in fact normative, and are not in fact one and the same.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, Bin Wahad astutely observes that COINTELPRO had a prominent “psycho-sexual” dimension.<sup>11</sup>

If we follow Fanon closely, however, we must extend and modify Bin Wahad’s assessment of the “psycho-sexual” in order to calibrate it to Bukhari’s genderless revolutionary. For Fanon, the psychopolitical repression marked by the phallic order of white racist culture is sociogenic: it does not simply produce individual pathology but rather generates negrophobic genders and sexualities as a rule, constructed as they are in the phallic order of the West around “phobogenic” victims conceived not as human beings but rather as “walking, stalking, human-sized erections.”<sup>12</sup> Neither the white man nor the white woman, therefore, can be properly categorized as “heterosexual”: “That is because the Negrophobic woman is in fact nothing but a putative sexual partner—just as the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual.”<sup>13</sup> Thomas, in addressing Fanon’s own negrophobia, “internalized by a colonized elite,” and typically read by the liberal academy in the West as “homophobia” or “misogyny,” notes that negrophobia is delimited neither by gender nor by sexuality, and thus a similar analysis of phobias surrounds black females who are no less construed by white supremacy as hypersexual. Moreover, Thomas completes and distills Fanon by concluding that “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” are racially exclusive formulations of repression in that they are reserved

for white bodies alone. The erotic identities of negrophobic white men and women are both anchored in black male and female bodies, which, as Thomas explains, since these black objects of desire “are scripted as sub-human, cannot possibly participate in the human sexuality of heterosexuality or even repressed homosexuality, proper . . . Black people are barred from this category of human being and its specious categories of modern, human sexuality.”<sup>14</sup> Within the context of negrophobia, then, Thomas concludes that the “genders and sexualities of the white West can in no way conform to their own social ideals or descriptions. . . . The myth of Black *and white* heterosexuality and homosexuality should be destroyed.”<sup>15</sup>

Is this what Bukhari means by “a revolutionary has no gender”? Was COINTELPRO an erotically violent pogrom precisely because it was responding to the profoundly destabilizing psychosexual implications of revolutionary blackness? Sex and gender politics under revolutionary struggle affirm that racial formation and sexual subjection are inextricably linked, and confirm that slave relations *remain*, rather than *were*, a vortex of sexual violence. Writing about slavery, Hartman offers a key insight for our investigation into the erotics of black struggle when she notes that “gender, if at all appropriate in this scenario, must be understood as indis-sociable from violence.”<sup>16</sup> In the era of COINTELPRO, the hydraulics of state terror continue to be formulated in terms of gender relations and sex. Bukhari notes the effect of a COINTELPRO murder of a Panther comrade in broad daylight on a busy Harlem street in March 1971:

The person was a paid killer, receiving thousands of dollars. [Robert’s] bodyguard had been pistol-whipped, and he was killed, and the police did nothing. It was clear that they were working in conjunction with the killers. So our paranoia wasn’t really paranoia at all—we actually had a basis in fact to be on the defensive. . . . We sandbagged the office and our living quarters, and security was beefed up. We weren’t allowed to be around family members, and the children were put in safe locations. We were trying to protect our families and to continue as best we could doing our work. But finally it was decided that the Party could no longer function aboveground because of the conditions.<sup>17</sup>

This scene from the COINTELPRO dossier should be read alongside the history of plantation slavery, wherein black males and females were forced to produce offspring to enhance the wealth of the slave owner. The deployment of sexual crimes to reproduce the relations of slavery (motherless and fatherless breeding) points to how, in Sylvia Wynter’s terms, blackness is the symbolic negation of womanhood and manhood, as much as it is of whiteness—thereby underscoring how sexual violence and the explosion of gender categorization evince the fundamental antagonism of blackness for the social formation of the United States.<sup>18</sup>

The absolute vulnerability of black domesticity signified by the COINTELPRO scene related by Bukhari above is structurally analogous to the slave quarters. We must use both “private” and “home” under erasure since there is no sanctuary for black bodies because captivity is a constituent element of black life, whether under slavery, COINTELPRO, or the present prison industrial complex where the war on drugs and the police practice of raiding black homes and neighborhoods becomes the context for the rise of militarized policing and asset forfeiture laws that permit law enforcement to confiscate the features of the black domestic sphere without criminal conviction or even due process.<sup>19</sup> The notion that black “home” is an oxymoron, no different than prison, is an insight that echoes across the generations of black critical expression, from Malcolm X to George Jackson to hip hop; we need to nuance this analysis with the recognition that it represents sexual violence against the erotic possibilities of black liberation, wherein black family, “blood,” and the integrity of human sexuality, functionally outlawed by antiblackness, are resurrected as a possibility by the radical imaginings of the Panthers. In her well-known take on this terrain, Hortense Spillers reads slavery as the institutionalization of bodily rupture. For Spillers, the articulation of sex, violence, and use means that black people cannot form bodies—they exist, rather, as mere flesh. Without bodies to claim as their own, writes Spillers, they are also structurally precluded from claiming “relations” between themselves.<sup>20</sup> Black mothers and fathers cannot claim their children: black flesh is always already claimed by direct relations of force.<sup>21</sup>

COINTELPRO’s intended destruction of the black family and community represents what Orlando Patterson describes in his comparative study of slavery as “natal alienation”: the slave is isolated from both descending and ascending generations; mothers and fathers are precluded from being able to make any claims on their children; while their descendants are deprived of the identity and belonging that genealogy provides. For this reason, Patterson pronounces the slave to be a “genealogical isolate.”<sup>22</sup> The generation of black children that suffered abandonment due to state violence and the restructuring of the political economy, genealogically isolated from their revolutionary parents living in exile, incarcerated, or killed by COINTELPRO, would come to be referred to as “the hip hop generation.” Michael Eric Dyson notes how hip hop artist Tupac Shakur embodies this context, describing how his mother and stepfather’s activism deeply impacted Shakur. Dyson notes that Tupac was grieved by the gruesome pattern of family interference and destruction that he witnessed growing up around the Panthers. FBI agents seeking the whereabouts of his stepfather, Mutulu Shakur, constantly approached Tupac at school.<sup>23</sup> Afeni Shakur, Tupac’s mother, speaks about the disorientation and pain that Tupac endured in these situations: “When you talk about the pain

that the child felt, especially when you realize that you can't change it, it is hard. It is such a deep place."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Afeni Shakur discusses one of her comrades in the New York Panther 21 trial of 1970–71 who was forced into exile in Algeria:

It's really a very cruel thing; his child now is almost two, and he's only seen her when she was very small, when she was just born. This is the beginning of the many broken hearts and broken dreams, you know, in the Party. It just was something else, something that I'll never be able to forgive this government for. I think that that's one of my biggest beefs, that Sekou is unable to walk the streets and talk to people like he's supposed to because he's so beautiful. I heard that in Algeria, the children come to the window and they're just screaming, "Sekou, Sekou, Sekou." They're always around the house because they love that man. I understand it. I could just see it. I know that it happens. I mean it's not hard for me to believe.<sup>25</sup>

Shakur clearly communicates the fundamental meaning of the state's war against the black community during the long civil rights era and definitively rebuts the racist discourse about black family pathology that sought to legitimate the state's rupture of black parental rights and of the rights of black children to be parented.

In Ksisay Sadiki's video documentary-in-progress called "Panther Cubs," children of the Panthers, themselves now adults with children of their own, talk about the effects of growing up under conditions of revolutionary struggle and counter-insurgency warfare. One "Panther cub" describes the experience as akin to being a survivor of domestic violence, incest, or rape, in that the state repression is so utterly disavowed by the society at large, and, in addition, their parents had to impose a strict code of silence in their families for their own protection, that the children were left with no voice with which to articulate the violence and no external reflection to affirm their experience. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes this as "the peaceful violence that the world is steeped in."<sup>26</sup>

The discourse on colorblindness, then, emerges from a context of profound anxiety and self-consciousness about the ongoing impunity and brutality of the state's relationship to black Americans. The concerted effort to define racism as merely individual acts of bias betrays a desire to hide the reality of gratuitous violence against black bodies and institutionalized oppression against black communities. Whereas colorblindness emerged from the midst of a raw and violent period of social protest and state repression, seeking to transform the meaning of these struggles from a political contest to merely a matter of criminality, "postracialism" appears after four decades of law and order retrenchment. With respect to hip hop culture today, the black revolution—and all meaningful assertions of black



resistance—must be killed off in order that the colorblind nation, with its enormous market and cultural interest in hip hop, may live.

### Lil' Wayne and Erotic Rebellion

From the promises that break by themselves to the breaks with great promise, in the words of Sekou Sundiata, the hip hop generation rose from the devastation of the state's war against black revolutionaries to carry on the tradition of irreverence and creative artistry that historians like Robin D. G. Kelley remind us have been a central component of black expressive vernacular culture since at least the baaadman tales of Jelly Roll Morton in the late nineteenth century and the age-old tradition of "signifyin'."<sup>27</sup> Lil' Wayne's "Mrs. Officer" is of this tradition and mystifies it at the same time—and in this way it is a quintessential anthem for the "postracial" era. The sobering realities of economic and political pressure for artists today, however, mean that we need to read the historical milieu and the cultural text together against the grain of both Western bourgeois academic discourse on "intersectionality" and didactic antiracist politics.

For Greg Thomas, evaluating black expressive culture in light of the context of gratuitous violence and the police power means recognizing that black culture embodies an "ethics of violence" that enables or encourages it to oppose, counter, and correct the antiblack violence in which the world is steeped.<sup>28</sup> In other words, it's not that black people are or black culture is pathologically violent; rather, the world has been pathologically violent toward blacks for over six centuries, and therefore, black expressions of violence are ethical as "counter-violence." Indeed, because the formation of the modern world took place through the *sexual* violation of black bodies, racialization, the making of race and what that means in terms of power, occurs at the nexus of sex and violence.<sup>29</sup> Because of the intrinsically sexual nature of this antiblack violence, then, Thomas's study of hip hop describes what he calls "sexual poetic justice" in black expressive cultures as a doorway to rethinking black subjugation and revolution by undermining the eroticism that patriarchy invests in the rape of women and allowing a new eroticism to emerge from the violence of resistance, from *its* pleasures.<sup>30</sup>

For example, before sending a promise note of revenge to "women abusers" everywhere, Lil' Kim raps in "Cell Block Tango (He Had It Comin')" with Queen Latifah and Macy Gray on the 2003 sound track to the movie version of the musical *Chicago*: "I'm not guilty, just tryna protect mine / It ain't my fault he ran into my knife twenty times."<sup>31</sup> Thomas is clear that this unabashed affinity for sexual counterviolence in hip hop shares a tradition of outlaw sexual poetic justice with blues songstresses of an earlier

era, such as Bessie Smith and Dinah Washington, who sang “Send Me to the ‘Lectric Chair,” “‘cause I done cut my good man’s throat.” But sexual poetic justice in hip hop is also closely connected with Black Power—era women who dismissed what is “legal” for what is right and necessary. In the famous 1974–75 trial *State v. Joan Little*, the nation learned that Little had killed her sexual assailant, the jailor of the Beaufort County Jail in Washington, North Carolina, where she had been an inmate at the time. After the killing, Little became a fugitive, but she turned herself in, and just as she had on the night of her attempted rape, she defended herself again at trial: “I ran because it was self-defense. . . . If the authorities there [in Beaufort County] had gotten to me before any other body . . . I never would have been here to tell what really happened.”<sup>32</sup> There was significant debate within the local community as to whether a young, poor, single, independent, and sexually active black woman could even be violated in the first place—reflecting, in short, the insights of black feminists such as Spillers for whom the black woman’s relation to civil society is the fungible, violent relation of an object, ontologically deprived of bodily integrity. As Genna McNeil observes, Little’s decision to remain in North Carolina to defend herself at trial affirmed her status as a “self-assertive and defiant” woman of autonomy and resistance, “rather than solely self-defensive.”<sup>33</sup>

Bukhari’s experience in the BLA extends Little’s description of the state’s policing of black female sexuality and the necessary articulation of counterviolence and sexual justice. Imprisoned in April 1975 as a result of a COINTELPRO attack that killed two of her comrades, Bukhari writes about her ordeal trying to get medical treatment from authorities at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women. “Inside the prison, I was denied care. The general feeling was that they could not chance hospitalization for fear I would escape; as such, they preferred to take a chance on my life.”<sup>34</sup> Noting that when “help,” or the “doctor,” did attend to the women prisoners in the facility it simply wrought even greater havoc than mere neglect, Bukhari documents a pattern of abuse that we must recognize as sexual violence: “Their lives are in the hands of a ‘doctor’ who examines a woman whose right ovary has been removed and tells her there is tenderness in the missing ovary. This ‘doctor’ examines a woman who has been in prison for six months and tells her that she is six weeks pregnant and there is nothing wrong with her. She later finds her baby has died and mortified inside of her. Alternatively, he tells you that you are not pregnant and three months later, you give birth to a seven-pound baby boy.”<sup>35</sup> Bukhari started hemorrhaging in December 1976, and sought help at the clinic. “No help of any consequence was given, so I escaped.”<sup>36</sup> While on escape, a doctor counsels her that she needs surgery; two months later, Bukhari was recaptured. In a manner of resistance that recalls Little’s conviction to stand trial in North Carolina to affirm her right to her body, Bukhari

decides to use the lack of medical care as her defense for the escape “to accomplish two things: (1) expose the level of medical care at the prison and (2) put pressure on them to give me the care I needed.”<sup>37</sup> By the time she finally got medical attention in June 1978, it was too late: “I was so messed up inside that everything but one ovary had to go . . . I was forced to have a hysterectomy.”<sup>38</sup>

The erotic power and presence to free oneself meets up with the “repetition compulsion” that reterritorializes the black body, from rape victim to “murderer,” teenager to “criminal,” community activist to “terrorist,” abandoned child to “gangster.” As Toni Morrison notes in *Beloved*, “Freeing yourself is one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self is another.”<sup>39</sup> Black violence is a precondition for actual engagement between blacks and civil society, a fact that Fanon explained and Black Power verified. Whether the rebellious slave, the BPP armed for self-defense, the hip hop artist throwing sonic and metaphorical bombs, or the counterviolence of sexual poetic justice, lyrical or actual—the main reason why violence by blacks is profoundly destabilizing to civil society is what it calls into question: “the epistemological violence of the existing map,” as Wilderson puts it.<sup>40</sup> Hip hop, in its potential as a diegesis of black revolution, often-times as the erotic continuation in a different form of the black liberation fighters of an earlier generation, in its ongoing stance of refusal and lyrical counterviolence to the sexual terror of COINTELPRO, explores a variety of representational strategies that we should read within the context of an “ethics of violence.”

Lil’ Wayne exemplifies the tradition of erotic rebellion from Smith and Washington to Little and Bukhari in some respects. The meanings and potential meanings in “Mrs. Officer” are both well buried and hidden in plain sight, and in a playful and erotic insouciance, Lil’ Wayne enjoins a tradition of humor, irreverence, and illicit eroticism in which black pleasure intersects with politics, identity, and power. Lil’ Wayne appropriates and recasts stereotypes of black men as hypersexual beings with large penises (“my hands so big you thought I told ya to pull it over”) and insatiable appetites (“my face on every wanted poster”). Where Ice-T used to refer to himself as a “white woman’s dream,” a tongue-in-cheek conjuring, and at the same time, parodying, of the historical mythology of the black male’s sexual largess and prowess, Lil’ Wayne’s “gifts” or “skills” command the attention of *all* females, represented as the whole police force of “lady cops”: “I’m wanted by every lady cop all over.” He transforms the definitive trope of undesirability, the ubiquitous stereotype of black male criminality (“my face on every wanted poster”), into a sign of his sexual desirableness—even, dare say, that he is husband material. (“I know you wish your name was Mrs. Carter, huh?”) Handcuffs come to mark sexual excitement rather than state violence, and rough treatment is a welcomed

expression of brimming desire and unrepressed eroticism (“put me in handcuffs/start ripping my pants off”), drawing on the well-developed play in sadomasochism between pleasure and pain. And the resulting screams of ecstasy—“Wee Ooh Wee Ooh Wee”—emitted from the “lady cop” inside the patrol car where Lil’ Wayne is “beating it like a cop” mimic the sound of a police siren, turning the omnipresent portent of danger in urban black communities into a gong sound of erotic triumph.

Following Carolyn Cooper’s study of Jamaican dancehall, Lil’ Wayne’s expression of hypersexuality, typically dismissed as vulgar, “obscene,” or apolitical, should itself be read as an intervention in state discourses of power. In the Jamaican context, this expression would be described in terms of the dancehall reference to “slackness,” which Cooper suggests should be understood as “an ideological revolt against law and order; an undermining of consensual standards of decency.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Cooper sees “slackness” in terms of a specific conception of the erotic, as encompassing the aspirational desires of the economically marginalized, expressed sexually and materially. Jamaican folkways maintain that the body is a vessel transporting the soul; and as such, the body must be protected from exploitation and adorned in splendor, reflecting the “incontestable” worth of the soul it encases.<sup>42</sup> The history of slavery has subjected the body to grotesque forms of exploitation, of course. “For a stubborn ‘hard core’ of the Jamaican people,” states Cooper, this historical burden means that “work must be seen as yielding reasonable rewards or it will not be done willingly.”<sup>43</sup> Lil’ Wayne’s “slackness,” in other words, comments on racialized tropes about commodifiable bodies while marshaling the body itself toward this end.

Cooper’s evocation of “slackness” connects us to Ronald Judy, who lays weight on the matter of black bodies categorically excluded from Western culture’s requisite registers of human legibility, such as “labor.” For Judy, hard-core black cultural forms such as hip hop convey black identity after the end of work. He evokes the hard core in this way:

It is no longer possible to be black against the system. Black folk are dead, killed by their own faith in willfully being beyond, and in spite of, power. Will beyond power has no passion, only affect. Black folk have killed themselves by striving to conserve themselves in a willful affect—the productive labor of modern subjects, aka work. Black folk, who have always been defined in relation to work, went the way of work. . . . Real black folk are already dead, walking around consuming themselves in search of that which is no longer possible, that which defines them. . . . A nigga is that which emerges from the demise of human capital, what gets articulated when the field nigger loses value as labor. The nigga is unemployed, null and void, walking around like . . . a nigga who understands that all possibility converts from capital, and capital does not derive from work.<sup>44</sup>

The hypersexuality of Lil' Wayne embodies aspirational desires and at the same time represents an utter disdain for civil society's rules overseeing material gain and upward mobility. In "Mrs. Officer," he erotically adorns his body with accumulated capital, as it were, as well as the symbolism of social and sexual potency (e.g., luxury automobiles, jewelry, body art) without the exploitative drag of actually exposing his labor to the alienation of surplus value, and thereby becoming someone else's private property. More to the point, however, is that Judy's notation on "work" is simultaneously a historical analysis, a cultural reading, and an ontological intervention. While labor exploitation has historically been a commonality of black existence in the West, the fact that black labor power is largely tangential (surplus) to the present era of neoliberal global capitalism does not signify a change in black positionality within the social structure. Rather, it reveals "work" to be inessential to black dispossession and incidental to antiblack violence in the modern world—after all, labor is not the primary reason for the slave's existence. As Wilderson has put it, whereas the police beat and shoot the worker because she or he has gone on strike, they beat and shoot the black person simply because she or he exists as such. In these terms, then, Lil' Wayne is today's leading artisan of "slackness." While he appears to embody what critics of hip hop and youth culture tediously harp on (apathetic, amoral, and undisciplined), in fact, such slackness bespeaks an awareness *in the body* as to one's accumulation and fungibility for purposes of society's aggrandizement.

### **Lil' Wayne and the Persona of Sociohistorical Violence**

Within the contested field of representation and the counternarratives of black performance that I point to above, racialized policing and punishment emerges simultaneously with a traumatic sexual violence that constitutes an effaced engagement with the history of plantation slavery and its production of modes of black selfhood, its desires and practices. Deciphering how hip hop navigates this terrain can be instructive to our larger concern with antiblackness in the era of "postracialism" because hip hop masculinities are seen as always and already preoccupied with their erasure, "emasculatation." The "emasculatation" of the black male has served as a primary trope for reading both the founding scene of black male subjectivity and as an explanatory figure for a range of discussions premised on a pathological "black manhood."<sup>45</sup> In "Mrs. Officer," Lil' Wayne's assumption of masculine authority must pass over the structural positionality of black women, situated historically between the violent sexual aggression of both white and black men. The interdependent terms of racialized antagonism through which black and white masculinities are ideologically engendered as opposites—as subordinate and dominant sub-

jects competing for positions of mastery—means that women are reduced to mediums for realizing male power. Although Lil' Wayne begins the video as the policed subject in the scenario, this dynamic inverts itself quickly so that instead of a “lady cop,” we see only black male cops policing women of color. The male cops arrest the women from their vehicles at traffic roadblocks and process them through central booking: fingerprinting, mugshots, perp lineup. The features of criminal arrest thus become the eroticized scene of captive black female sexuality, controlled by male authority.

“Mrs. Officer” aims for a degree of cross-racial male bonding in its viewing audience, and the key to understanding this bonding is Lil' Wayne's urgency in suppressing the unspoken history of institutionalized sexual violence against black men; the female body, and especially the woman of color, is the medium through which this suppression is accomplished. For instance, the everyday reality of sexual violence in the form of police harassment and brutality on black and brown men, which in 1997 played out notoriously in New York City in the form of Abner Louima's brutal hours-long gang rape and torture by at least a dozen NYPD officers—essentially, as Lil' Wayne raps in “Mrs. Officer,” “she pulled me over/pulled me out the rover/then she pulled me closer/threw me in the back of the car/put me in handcuffs/start ripping my pants off ”—this racialized sexual violence by men on other men becomes impermissible knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

Something interesting happens during the performance of what cannot be spoken—the sexual violence of the law. Lil' Wayne and the black men in the video find empowerment *through* the law, as police officers, not *against* it, affirming that while hip hop and young black men in general constitute the prototypical (sexual) threat against which “civilization” must defend, the “gains” of the post-civil rights era are such that they also must aspire to the very venues of society and state geared toward their captivity.<sup>47</sup> To wit, *because of* the uniform, not *despite* it, blacks remain the objects, not the subjects, of cultural narratives about policing; they are still the targets of the police power even while performing such power themselves. In this sense, then, Lil' Wayne's presentation in “Mrs. Officer” of a criminalized blackness appears simultaneously as a (sexual) political problem *and* the apparatus marshaled to its containment. As Wilderson puts it, “few characters aestheticize White supremacy more effectively and persuasively than a Black male cop.”<sup>48</sup> The white male viewer is thus returned to his safe place of self-identification and mastery, but at the same time has been able to indulge in that commonplace white fixation with black male sexuality as something threatening and dangerous. In short, what is happening in “Mrs. Officer,” then, is that white men are alternately fantasizing about and repulsed by the conquest of women of color, the conquest of black men, *and* their own conquest *by* black men.

But none of this can be spoken. Indeed, it is nigh unrepresentable, although such relations are clearly well documented historically, albeit mostly in literature rather than in history or the social sciences. Toni Morrison's famous chain-gang scene in *Beloved* depicts the subordination of black men to the sexual gratification or dominance of white male masters in starkly oblique terms: "Chain-up completed, they knelt down. . . . Kneeling in the mist they waited for the whim of a guard, or two, or three. . . . Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot to his head as the price, maybe, of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus. Paul D did not know that then. He was looking at his palsied hands, smelling the guard, listening to his soft grunts so like the doves."<sup>49</sup> According to Darieck Scott, Morrison attempts to figure both "the sexual exploitation of men and the silence surrounding" this violence.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Lil' Wayne himself attempts to bracket out his own personal sexual violation as a young boy, passing it off as entirely unspectacular in terms of violence.

In a scene from an unauthorized documentary, *The Carter*, released on the Internet in 2009, Lil' Wayne jokes openly about being raped at age eleven with the encouragement of his surrogate father, Baby. In the documentary, he goes on to tell Lil' Twist, a fifteen-year-old member of Wayne's record label Young Money, "I loved it. . . . I'm a do you like Baby and them did me"—meaning that he is going to get Lil' Twist raped too.<sup>51</sup> In a subsequent appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* on March 3, 2009, Kimmel asks Lil' Wayne if it is true that he lost his virginity at age eleven. Clearly taken aback by the question, Wayne first attempts to laugh it off but then tells his story. Kimmel and his other guest that evening, none other than the "respected" television news anchor Charlie Gibson, tease Lil' Wayne about the incident, construing it as irrefutable proof of Wayne's intrinsic sexual prowess, and ignoring Wayne's concession that it was a harmful experience to him.

Although Lil' Wayne's recounting of his violation on national television left out the critical role of his parent, he is acutely aware on *The Carter* that it was his putative father Baby who authorized his rape: "I'm a do you like Baby and them did me." In his reading of the film *Antwone Fisher* (2002), another narrative that depicts black masculinity as under assault by intramural factors—namely, again, black parental figures—rather than besieged by the structural antagonism of antiblackness and the external violence it induces within the black community, Wilderson observes the complex manner in which white supremacy exerts the technologies of accumulation and fungibility on blacks while giving the appearance that the technologies emerge from within black people themselves.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, Lil' Wayne's personal story stresses that "black masculinity" and "black family" are oxymorons<sup>53</sup>—not because Baby's overseeing of the rape violates the parent's role as protector, nor because the event indel-

ibly impacted Lil' Wayne's development of a "healthy" masculine identity; rather, because of Fanon's claim that blackness is a void beyond human recognition and incorporation, and therefore, the relational categories of filiation, let alone the customary aspects of sexuality such as "pleasure" and "desire" ("I loved it . . . it was good"), are inapplicable. When Fanon states that the black person has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the Other, in regard to Lil' Wayne's sexual violation this means that his suffering cannot be heard or recognized for what it is. The stunning exchange on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* illustrates as much:

KIMMEL: Is it true that you lost your viginity at age eleven?

LIL' WAYNE: Wow . . . wow . . . that's very true, very very true.

KIMMEL: Same with Charlie . . .

GIBSON: I didn't know you *could* lose your virginity at eleven years old.

(*laughter all around*)

KIMMEL: *We* can't (*gesturing between himself and Gibson*), but *he* did (*indicating Lil' Wayne*). . . . Do you feel like that affected you negatively, in your adulthood?

LIL' WAYNE: Yeah, it did, yeah.

KIMMEL: You have a son of your own now. . . . How old is he?

LIL' WAYNE: He's four months.

KIMMEL: Is he a virgin?

(*laughter*)

From Paul D to Lil' Wayne, black sexual subjection is pleasurable to white male dominators (and their audiences), endlessly fungible across space and time. Kimmel and Gibson may appear to be relating to Lil' Wayne through the valence of masculine bonding, and yet, Kimmel and Gibson note that the putative common bond with Lil' Wayne—being men—is in fact a ruse: "I didn't know you *could* lose your virginity at eleven years old." "*We* can't, but *he* did." The "gender conceits of empire," as Thomas puts it, bars blacks: white supremacy allocates manhood and womanhood to white bodies alone.<sup>54</sup> Black existence is without analog, and therefore, despite recognizing that for themselves being raped at age eleven would be bad, wrong, and, indeed, grounds for someone's criminal prosecution, Kimmel and Gibson find great mirth in Lil' Wayne's experience. In this fashion, Lil' Wayne's effort to laugh off his victimization, to enjoin the (white) masculine narrative that would crowd out any manifestation of structural antagonism, is undone, unwittingly reiterating Hartman's prescient words: "every attempt to emplot the slave in a narrative ultimately resulted in his or her obliteration."<sup>55</sup> Lil' Wayne's laughter is the sound track of social death.

Lil' Wayne's performance in "Mrs. Officer," as well as in *The Carter* if not on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, seems to begin with the assumption that black



masculinity *is* the law, rather than an oxymoron indicative of a structural antagonism into which black humanity has been captured by the *force* of law. In order to redeem himself as such—as a man—Lil’ Wayne must “beat it like a cop”: black femininity must take the rap for his “ontological excess.”<sup>56</sup> The fourteen-year-old girl who carried out the older men’s directives to “Suck Lil’ Wayne’s little dick! Girl, you know you’re such a good dick sucker!” (as Lil’ Wayne recalls it in *The Carter*) remains anonymous, conveniently sucked into a void of her own, alongside Lil’ Wayne, into the space where differing levels of consent and coercion are collapsed into the desires of more powerful men. That Lil’ Wayne’s rape came directly at the hands of this fourteen-year-old girl makes the absence of *her* consent no less significant. To consider this episode in both of their lives in any terms other than coercion is to discount the modalities of accumulation and fungibility organizing black bodies in the modern world, wherein captive flesh is “available for all manner of figuration and fantasy.”<sup>57</sup> The assaultive power of Lil’ Wayne’s assailant was, at best, “a displacement of the *organized* violence consistently required of captivity and, further, a dissimulation of the *institutionalized* sexual power” of slavery’s afterlife.<sup>58</sup>

In “Mrs. Officer,” then, we could decipher the “illocutionary force” of the figure of the female cop in similar terms as prepubescent Lil’ Wayne’s fourteen-year-old “rapist.”<sup>59</sup> Whereas the mediating role of the fourteen-year-old girl ostensibly softens the force of Lil’ Wayne’s sexual exploitation by his surrogate father, the fact that the cop in “Mrs. Officer” is female mystifies the sexual violence of white supremacy. The *woman cop* (in other words, the fact that the police officer is female) is necessary to obscure the sexual desire of the white male spectator for the black male body; she is needed to soften the image (and thus mute the reality) of sexualized state violence against black bodies; she lends the black male power: Lil’ Wayne purports to turn surveillance by the state into a conquest of his own. The *woman cop* (the fact that the woman is a police officer) is requisite for obscuring the widespread realities of female victimization and making misogyny more palatable: as a *cop*, she deserves a beating or getting fucked; as a *cop* in the black community, she started it; as a *cop*, she is not really female and he is not really using her as a sexual object (since state power is seen as synonymous with male authority, not female). Lil’ Wayne is attempting to delineate his subjectivity within the crucible of antiblack violence and sexual repression, carving out a space for the embodied performance of black eroticism, always and already illicit, dangerous, and subversive; yet, what I am suggesting is significant here is *how* he counters state violence: by imagining a counterviolence—which, mind you, he is positioned to ethically authorize, but the form this performance takes requires successive layers of gendered and sexual repression. Hardly what we mean by “sexual poetic justice.”

## A “Life Lived in Loss”

Properly contextualized, I suggest that “Mrs. Officer” shows how reading black erotic struggle through hip hop is to not only consider the sexual violence of COINTELPRO, but also to confront how hip hop is today both the scene and the medium for COINTELPRO’s redux. Hip hop provides more than a renewed platform on which representations of black masculinity converge with images of criminality and incarceration; it discursively secures for contemporary audiences the notion of racialized sexual violence disseminated by the slave master and lynch mob of earlier periods: the music video for “Mrs. Officer” serves as medium for the continual circulation and “global touring,” to use Nicole Fleetwood’s term, of the black male rapist.<sup>60</sup> It is not Lil’ Wayne who accomplishes this, however, but rather this is what it means to live “a life lived in loss,” as Stephen Best and Hartman put it, constantly under the crosshairs of a violent antiblack sexual desire.<sup>61</sup> We can thus see that in hip hop a certain “apprehension about unchecked black male aggression” remains a central feature of the contemporary period, as it has during every previous era since the dawn of European slave trading.<sup>62</sup>

The “postracial” is thus not simply a return to earlier modes of racist culture, nor is it merely a continuation of an unbroken white supremacist society. Considered within its proper ethico-political context, then, black cultural expression reveals the contemporary culture of politics, the “post-racial,” to be tendered in a collective antipathy toward the lived experience of black people, a political theater for the staging of discrepant structures of feeling arising from contrasting conceptions of suffering between black and nonblack, and marked by a dexterous capacity to disavow the ethical force of black counterviolence and erotic rebellion. Lil’ Wayne and hip hop performance have much to tell us about the world of the “postracial”—but the lesson is clearly not that we are on the brink of a world without race, a world without blackness as the central syncretic hinge on which human recognition swings.

## Notes

1. Lewis Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (New York: Humanity Books, 1995).

2. George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), viii.

3. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, [1952] 1967), 110.

4. Jim Fletcher, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Assata Shakur, Tanaquil Jones, and Sylvère Lotringer, eds., *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War against Black Revolutionaries* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993), 18.

5. Cited in Fletcher et al., eds., *Still Black, Still Strong*, back cover.

6. Afeni Shakur, "Evolution of a Revolutionary," in Kuwasi Balagoon, Joan Bird, Cetewayo, Robert Collier, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Richard Harris, Ali Bey Hassan, Jamal Joseph, Abayama Katara, Kwando Kinshasa, Baba Odinga, Shaba Ogun Om, Curtis Powell, Afeni Shakur, Lumumba Shakur, and Clark Squire, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21* (New York: Random House, 1971), 292.

7. Safiya Bukhari, *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison, and Fighting for Those Left Behind* (New York: Feminist Press, 2010), 54–55. Sex and gender formation are complex issues for black diasporic communities, and a more in-depth treatment of this issue with regard to black revolutionary struggle than I can provide here would need to analyze the radical imaginings of the Panthers within an African diasporic context that attends to the organizational and strategic moves of the party themselves as expressions of gender and sex politics—all the while, of course, recognizing that the conditions of unrelenting state terror under which black power was elaborated brooked no sanctuary or respite.

8. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 160.

9. *Ibid.*, 154–56.

10. Greg Thomas, "Erotics of Aryanism/Histories of Empire: How 'White Supremacy' and 'Hellenomania' Construct 'Discourses of Sexuality,'" *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 239.

11. Dhoruba Bin Wahad, "War Within," in *Still Black, Still Strong*, 24–25.

12. Greg Thomas, *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 88.

13. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 156.

14. Thomas, *Sexual Demon*, 88, 89.

15. *Ibid.*, 88.

16. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 86.

17. Bukhari, *The War Before*, 29.

18. Cited in Greg Thomas, "The 'S' Word: Sex, Empire, and Black Radical Tradition (after Sylvia)," in *Caribbean Reasonings: After Man, Towards the Human: Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter*, ed. Anthony Bogues (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2005), 79–80.

19. Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 127.

20. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 2003), 203–29.

21. Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 138.

22. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 5.

23. Michael Eric Dyson, *Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2001), 57.

24. Quoted in Dyson, *Holler If You Hear Me*, 57.

25. Afeni Shakur, "Evolution of a Revolutionary," in *Look for Me in the Whirlwind*, 294–95.

26. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), 81; Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 120–22.

27. Sekou Sundiata, "Shout Out," *Blue Oneness of Dreams* (Polygram, 1997);

- Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 187.
28. Greg Thomas, "Fire and Damnation: Hip-Hop ('Youth Culture') and 1956 in Focus," 50th Anniversary of the 1st International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, vol. II, *Presence Africaine: Revue Culturelle du Monde Noir* 175–177 (2006): 300–312.
  29. Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University Press of Minnesota, 2008).
  30. Greg Thomas, *Hip-Hop Revolution in the Flesh: Power, Knowledge, and Pleasure in Lil' Kim's Lyricism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 44.
  31. *Ibid.*, 44. See also [www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/chicago/cellblocktangoheaditcomin.htm](http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/chicago/cellblocktangoheaditcomin.htm).
  32. Genna Rae McNeil, "The Body, Sexuality, and Self-Defense in *State vs. Joan Little*, 1974–75," *Journal of African American History* 93, no. 2 (2008): 237, 235.
  33. *Ibid.*, 245.
  34. Bukhari, *The War Before*, 9.
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. *Ibid.*
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. *Ibid.*
  39. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Plume, 1988), 95.
  40. Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 123.
  41. Carolyn Cooper, "Erotic Maroonage: Embodying Emancipation in Jamaican Dancehall Culture," unpublished paper from the Ninth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University, November 1–3, 2007, [yale.edu/glc/belisario/cooper.pdf](http://yale.edu/glc/belisario/cooper.pdf), 1.
  42. *Ibid.*, 2.
  43. *Ibid.*, 3.
  44. Ronald A. T. Judy, "On the Question of Nigga Authenticity," *boundary 2* 21, no. 3 (1994): 212.
  45. Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 131.
  46. Related to this point is the basic fact that whites comprise approximately 75 percent of the hip hop consumer base.
  47. Jared Sexton, "The Ruse of Engagement: Black Masculinity and the Cinema of Policing," *American Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2009): 49.
  48. Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 103.
  49. Morrison, *Beloved*, 107, 108.
  50. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 132–33.
  51. Amanda Hess, "Lil' Wayne Jokes about His Own Rape," *Washington City Paper*, 12 January 2010, [washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/sexist/2010/01/12/lil-wayne-jokes-about-his-own-rape](http://washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/sexist/2010/01/12/lil-wayne-jokes-about-his-own-rape).
  52. Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 104.
  53. *Ibid.*, 100.
  54. Thomas, *Sexual Demon*, 46.
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  56. Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 100.
  57. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 114.
  58. *Ibid.*, 113–14.

59. Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice," in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992), 267.

60. Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 133.

61. Stephen Best and Saidiya Hartman, "Fugitive Justice," *Representations* 92, no. 1 (2005): 5, 2.

62. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 144.

